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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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but·tress  (bŭt rĭs)

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n.

1. A structure, usually brick or stone, built against a wall for support or reinforcement.
2. Something resembling a buttress, as:
 - a. The flared base of certain tree trunks.
 - b. A horny growth on the heel of a horse's hoof.
3. Something that serves to support, prop, or reinforce: *"The law is by its very nature a buttress of the status quo"* (J. William Fulbright).

tr.v. **but·tressed, but·tress·ing, but·tress·es**

1. To support or reinforce with a buttress.
2. To sustain, prop, or bolster: *"The author buttresses her analysis with lengthy dissections of several of Moore's poems"* (Warren Woessner).

[Middle English *buteras*, from Old French *bouterez*, from *bouter*, to strike against, of Germanic origin; see **bhau-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]



(click for a larger image)



(click for a larger image)

buttress

top: buttressed wall of the Savino-Storozhensky Monastery
Zvenigorod, Russia

bottom: buttresses of a tree in a Costa Rican rainforest

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Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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