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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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bait¹ (bāt)

Share:

n.

1.

a. Food or other lure placed on a hook or in a trap and used in the taking of fish, birds, or other animals.

b. Something, such as a worm, used for this purpose.

2. An enticement, temptation, or provocation: *He did not take the bait by responding to the taunt and getting drawn into an argument.*

v. bait·ed, bait·ing, baits

v.tr.

1. To place a lure in (a trap) or on (a fishing hook).

2. To entice or provoke, especially by trickery or strategy: *He baited me into selling him my bike by saying how much I deserved a better one.*

3. To set dogs upon (a chained animal, for example) for sport.

4. To taunt or torment (someone), as with persistent insults or ridicule: *"He baited him mercilessly and had all sorts of unpleasant names for him" (Ruth Prawer Jhabvala).*

5. To feed (an animal), especially on a journey.

v.intr.

Archaic

To stop for food or rest during a trip.

[Middle English, from Old Norse *beita*, food, fodder, fish bait. V., from Old Norse *beita*, to put animals to pasture, hunt with dogs; see **bheid-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

bait *er n.*

Usage Note: The word *baited* is sometimes incorrectly substituted for the etymologically correct but unfamiliar word *bated* ("abated; suspended") in the expression *bated breath*.

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bait² (bāt)

Share:

v.

Variant of [bate](#)².

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

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:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

[Semitic Roots](#)

The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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