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blem·ish  (blēm īsh)

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n.

1. A small mark that makes the appearance of something less attractive.
2. An imperfection that mars or impairs; a flaw.

tr.v. **blem·ished**, **blem·ish·ing**, **blem·ish·es**

1. To cause to have a small mark or marks that diminish attractiveness: *skin blemished by an allergy.*
2. To mar or impair by a flaw: *accusations that blemished his reputation.*

[Middle English *blemisshen*, to damage, mar, from Old French *blesmir*, *blemir*, *blemiss-*, to make pale, of Germanic origin; see **bhel-**¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

blem ish·er *n.*

Synonyms: **blemish**, **imperfection**, **fault**, **defect**, **flaw**¹

These nouns denote loss or absence of perfection. A *blemish* is something thought to mar the appearance or character of a thing: "*Industry in art is a necessity—not a virtue—and any evidence of the same, in the production, is a blemish*" (James McNeill Whistler).

Imperfection and *fault* apply more comprehensively to any deficiency or shortcoming: "*A true critic ought to dwell rather upon excellencies than imperfections*" (Joseph Addison). "*Each of us would point out to the other her most serious faults, and thereby help her to remedy them*" (Anna Howard Shaw).

Defect denotes a serious functional or structural shortcoming: "*Ill breeding ... is not a single defect, it is the result of many*" (Henry Fielding).

A *flaw* is an imperfection that may be hidden or of apparent insignificance but that often has serious consequences: *Experiments revealed a very basic flaw in the theory.*

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