



The
AMERICAN
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the
English
Language



HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

To look up an entry in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, use the search window above. For best results, after typing in the word, click on the “Search” button instead of using the “enter” key.

Some compound words (like *bus rapid transit*, *dog whistle*, or *identity theft*) don’t appear on the drop-down list when you type them in the search bar. For best results with compound words, place a quotation mark before the compound word in the search window.

[guide to the dictionary](#)



THE USAGE PANEL

The Usage Panel is a group of nearly 200 prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. Annual surveys have gauged the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions.

[The Panelists](#)



AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY APP

The new American Heritage Dictionary app is now available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#).



THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY BLOG

The articles in our [blog](#) examine new words, revised definitions, interesting images from the fifth edition, discussions of usage, and more.

THE 100 WORDS®

See word lists from the best-selling 100 Words Series!

[Find out more!](#)



INTERESTED IN DICTIONARIES?

Check out the Dictionary Society of North America at <http://www.dictionarysociety.com>

bul·wark  (b 1 wərk, -wôrk', būl -)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

1. A wall or embankment raised as a defensive fortification; a rampart.
2. Something serving as a defense or safeguard: *"We have seen the necessity of the Union, as our bulwark against foreign danger" (James Madison).*
3. A breakwater.
4. often **bulwarks** The part of a ship's side that is above the upper deck.

tr.v. bul·warked, bul·wark·ing, bul·warks

1. To fortify with a wall, embankment, or rampart.
2. To provide defense or protection for: *"the wetland that bulwarked the pond" (Edward Hoagland).*

[Middle English *bulwerk*, from Middle Dutch *bolwerk*, from Middle High German *bolwerc* : *bole*, plank; see **bhel-**² [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#) + *werc*, work (from Old High German; see **werg-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)).]

Synonyms: bulwark, barricade, breastwork, earthwork, rampart, bastion, parapet

These nouns refer literally to structures used as a defense against attack. A *bulwark* is a strong defensive barrier, often an embankment or wall-like fortification, from which fire can be directed. A *barricade* is an improvised barrier meant to stop or slow an advancing threat. *Breastwork* denotes a low defensive wall, especially a temporary one hurriedly built. An *earthwork* is an embankment made of soil, and may include a trench or moat. A *rampart*, the main defensive structure around a guarded place, is permanent, high, and broad. A *bastion* is a projecting section of a fortification from which defenders have a wide range of view and fire. *Parapet* applies to any low fortification, typically a wall atop a rampart. Of these words *bulwark*, *bastion*, and *rampart* are the most frequently used to refer figuratively to something regarded as being a safeguard or a source of protection: *"The only sure bulwark of continuing liberty is a government strong enough to protect the interests of the people, and a people strong enough ... to maintain its sovereign control over its government" (Franklin D. Roosevelt).* *"the University of Virginia, a school founded by Jefferson to be a bastion of free thought" (Garry Wills).* *"The sense of being a couple ... is the strongest rampart against the relentless threat of our divorce culture" (Judith S. Wallerstein).*

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

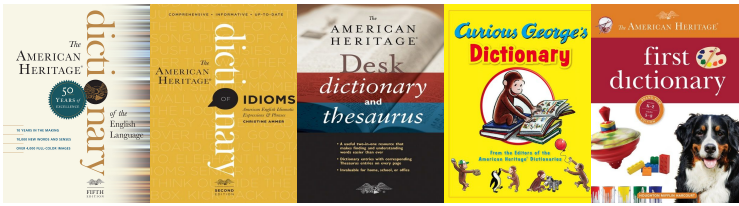
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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](#).

American Heritage Dictionary Products



[The American Heritage Dictionary, 5th Edition](#) [The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms](#) [The American Heritage Roget's Thesaurus](#) [Curious George's Dictionary](#) [The American Heritage Children's Dictionary](#)

- **CONTACT US**
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Make Me An Author](#)
- [Ebooks Help with Glose Reader](#)
- **ABOUT US**
- [Company Profile](#)
- [Leadership Team](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [HarperCollins Careers](#)
- [HarperCollins Imprints](#)
- [HarperGreen](#)
- [Social Media Directory](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- **FOR READERS**
- [Browse Reading Guides](#)
- **FOR AUTHORS**
- [Submit a Manuscript](#)
- [Report Piracy](#)
- [Agent Portal](#)
- **MEDIA**

- [Publicity Contacts](#)
- [Press Room](#)
- **SERVICES**
- [HarperCollins Speakers Bureau](#)
- [Library Services](#)
- [Academic Services](#)
- [Desk & Exam Copies](#)
- [Review Copies](#)
- [OpenBook API](#)
- [Marketing Partnerships](#)
- **COVID-19 RESOURCES & PERMISSIONS**
- [Permissions for Adult Online Readings](#)
- [Permissions for Kids Online Readings](#)
- **SALES & RIGHTS**
- [Booksellers & Retailer Ordering](#)
- [HarperCollins Catalogs](#)
- [Permissions](#)
- [Subsidiary Rights](#)

- [Media Rights and Content Development](#)
- **GLOSE APP**
- [iPhone](#)
- [Android](#)
-
-
-
- **GLOBAL DIVISIONS**
- [HarperCollins US](#)
- [HarperCollins Canada](#)
- [HarperCollins Christian](#)
- [HarperCollins Australia](#)
- [HarperCollins India](#)
- [HarperCollins UK](#)
-
-
-
-
-
-



[Terms of Use](#) • [Terms of Sale](#) • [Your Ad Choices](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [California Privacy Policy](#) • [Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

Copyright 2022 HarperCollins Publishers All rights reserved.

*This website is best viewed in Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari. Some characters in pronunciations and etymologies cannot be displayed properly in Internet Explorer.