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hus·band  (hŭz bənd)

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n.

1. A man joined to another person in marriage; a male spouse.
2. *Chiefly British* A manager or steward, as of a household.
3. *Archaic* A prudent, thrifty manager.

tr.v. **hus·band·ed**, **hus·band·ing**, **hus·bands**

1. To use sparingly or economically; conserve: *husband one's energy*.
2. *Archaic* To become a husband to.

[Middle English *huseband*, from Old English *hūsbōnda*, from Old Norse *hūsbōndi* : *hūs*, house + *bōndi*, *būandi*, householder, present participle of *būa*, to dwell; see **bheu-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Word History: The English word *husband*, even though it is a basic kinship term, is not a native English word. It comes ultimately from the Old Norse word *hūsbōndi*, meaning "master of a house," which was borrowed into Old English as *hūsbōnda*. The second element in *hūsbōndi*, *bōndi*, means "a man who has land and stock" and comes from the Old Norse verb *būa*, meaning "to live, dwell, have a household." The master of the house was usually a spouse as well, of course, and it would seem that the main modern sense of *husband* arises from this overlap. When the Norsemen settled in Anglo-Saxon England, they would often take Anglo-Saxon women as their wives; it was then natural to refer to the husband using the Norse word for the concept, and to refer to the wife with her Anglo-Saxon (Old English) designation, *wīf*, "woman, wife" (Modern English *wife*). Interestingly, Old English did have a feminine word related to Old Norse *hūsbōndi* that meant "mistress of a house," namely, *hūsbonde*. Had this word survived into Modern English, it would have sounded identical to *husband*—surely leading to ambiguities.

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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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