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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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con·flate  (kən-flāt)

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tr.v. **con·flat·ed**, **con·flat·ing**, **con·flates**

1. To bring together; meld or fuse: "*The problems [with the biopic] include ... dates moved around, lovers deleted, many characters conflated into one*" (Ty Burr).
2. To combine (two variant texts, for example) into one whole.
3. To fail to distinguish between; confuse. See Usage Note below.

[Latin *cōnflāre*, *cōnflāt-* : *com-*, *com-* + *flāre*, to blow; see **bhlē-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

con·fla tion *n.*

Usage Note: Traditionally, *conflate* means "To bring together; meld or fuse," as in the sentence *I have trouble differentiating Jane Austen's heroines; I realized I had conflated Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse into a single character in my mind*. In our 2015 survey, 87 percent of the Usage Panelists accepted this traditional usage. Recently, a new sense for *conflate* has emerged, meaning "To mistake one thing for another," as if it were a synonym for *confuse*. In 2015, our usage panelists found this new sense to be marginally acceptable, with 55 percent accepting the sentence *People often conflate the national debt with the federal deficit; when the senator talked about reducing the debt, he was actually referring to the deficit*.

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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:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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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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