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brake¹  (brāk)

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n.

1. A device for slowing or stopping motion, as of a vehicle, especially by contact friction.
2. Something that slows or stops action.

v. **braked, brak-ing, brakes**

v.tr.

To reduce the speed of with or as if with a brake.

v.intr.

1. To operate or apply a brake.
2. To be slowed or stopped by or as if by the operation of a brake.

[Early Modern English *brake*, bridle, curb (for a horse), perhaps from Middle Dutch or Middle Low German, nose ring, curb, flax brake; see [BRAKE](#)².]

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brake²  (brāk)

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n.

1. A toothed device for crushing and beating flax or hemp.
2. A heavy harrow for breaking clods of earth.
3. An apparatus for kneading large amounts of dough.
4. A machine for bending and folding sheet metal.

tr.v. **braked, brak-ing, brakes**

1. To crush (flax or hemp) in a toothed device.
2. To break up (clods of earth) with a harrow.

[Middle English, from Middle Dutch, from Middle Low German; see **bhreg-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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brake³  (brāk)

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n.

A lever or handle on a machine such as a pump.

[Middle English, from Old French *brac*, from oblique form of *bras*, arm; see [BRACER](#)².]

brake⁴  (brāk)

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n.

1. Any of various ferns of the genus *Pteris* having pinnately compound leaves and including several popular houseplants.
2. Any of certain other ferns, such as bracken.

[Middle English, probably back-formation from *braken*; see [BRACKEN](#).]

brake⁵  (brāk)

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n.

An area overgrown with dense brushwood, briars, and undergrowth; a thicket.

[Middle English, from Middle Low German; see **bhreg-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

brake⁶  (brāk)

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n. also **break**

A high horse-drawn carriage with four wheels.

v.

Archaic

A past tense of [break](#).

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:

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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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