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frag·ile  (frăj əl, -īl')

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adj.

1. Easily broken, damaged, or destroyed.
2. Lacking physical or emotional strength; delicate: *a fragile personality.*
3. Lacking substance; tenuous or flimsy: *a fragile claim to fame.*

[French, from Old French, from Latin *fragilis*, from *frangere*, *frag-*, to break; see **bhreg-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

frag ile·ly *adv.*

fra·gil i·ty (frə-jīl ɪ-tē), **frag ile·ness** *n.*

Synonyms: fragile, breakable, frangible, flimsy, brittle

These adjectives mean easily broken or damaged. *Fragile* applies to objects that are not made of strong or sturdy material and that require great care when handled: *fragile porcelain plates.*

Breakable and *frangible* mean capable of being broken but do not necessarily imply inherent weakness: *breakable toys; frangible bullets designed to break apart on impact.*

Flimsy refers to what is easily broken because of inferior materials or workmanship: *"Flimsy and loosely built structures collapsed like houses of cards under the terrific wrenching and shaking"* (Richard L. Humphrey).

Brittle refers to inelasticity that makes something especially likely to fracture or snap when it is subjected to pressure: *brittle bones.* See Also Synonyms at [weak](#).

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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:

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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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