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burn ¹ 🔊 (bûrn)

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v. **burned** or **burnt** (bûrnt), **burn-ing**, **burns**

v.intr.

1. To undergo combustion or be consumed as fuel: *The dry wood burned quickly.*
2. To be damaged, injured, or destroyed by fire, heat, radiation, electricity, or a caustic agent: *a house that burned to the ground; eggs that burned and stuck to the pan.*
3. To consume fuel: *a rocket stage designed to burn for three minutes before being jettisoned.*
4.
 - a. To emit heat or light by fire or energy: *campfires burning in the dark; lights burning in the windows.*
 - b. To become dissipated or be dispelled: *The fog burned off as the sun came up. Their anger burned away in time.*
5.
 - a. To suffer death or punishment by fire: *souls burning in hell.*
 - b. To be electrocuted.
6.
 - a. To be very hot; bake: *a desert burning under the midday sun.*
 - b. To feel or look hot: *a child burning with fever.*
 - c. To impart a sensation of heat: *a liniment that burns when first applied.*
7.
 - a. To penetrate something by intense heat, energy, or caustic effect: *The acid burned into the table.*
 - b. To cause a strong impression, especially by emotional intensity: *a look that burned into them; shame burning into my heart.*
8.
 - a. To become irritated or painful, as by chafing or inflammation: *eyes burning from the smoke.*
 - b. To become sunburned or windburned.
9. To be consumed with strong emotion, especially:
 - a. To be or become angry: *an insult that really made me burn.*
 - b. To be very eager: *was burning with ambition.*

v.tr.

1.
 - a. To cause to undergo combustion, especially to the point of destruction: *We burned the scrap wood in the fireplace.*
 - b. To consume (fuel or energy, for example): *burned all the wood that winter.*
2.
 - a. To use as a fuel: *a furnace that burns coal.*
 - b. To metabolize (glucose, for example) in the body.
3. To damage or injure by fire, heat, radiation, electricity, or a caustic agent: *burned the toast; burned my skin with the acid.*
4.
 - a. To make or produce by fire or heat: *burn a hole in the rug.*
 - b. To dispel or dissipate, as by heat: *The sun burned off the fog. Resentments that burned away their tender feelings.*
5.
 - a. To execute or kill with fire: *burning heretics at the stake.*
 - b. To execute by electrocution.
6.
 - a. To irritate or inflame, as by chafing or sunburn.
 - b. To impart a sensation of intense heat to: *The chili burned my mouth.*

c. To make angry: *What really burns me is his arrogance.*

7. To brand (an animal).

8.

a. To engrave or make indelible by burning: *burned his initials into the wood.*

b. To cause to be felt or remembered because of emotional intensity: *The image of the accident was burned into my memory.*

9. To harden or impart a finish to by subjecting to intense heat; fire: *burn clay pots in a kiln.*

10.

a. To defeat in a contest, especially by a narrow margin.

b. *Sports* To outplay or score on (an opponent), especially through quick or deceptive movement.

c. To inflict harm or hardship on; hurt: *"Huge loan losses have burned banks in recent years" (Christian Science Monitor).*

d. To swindle or deceive; cheat: *We really got burned on the used car we bought.*

11.

a. To write data onto (an optical disc).

b. To write (data) onto an optical disc.

n.

1. An injury produced by fire, heat, radiation, electricity, or a caustic agent.

2. A burned place or area: *a cigarette burn in the tablecloth.*

3. An act, process, or result of burning: *The fire settled down to a steady burn.*

4. A sensation of intense heat, stinging pain, or irritation: *a chili burn on the tongue; the burn of alcohol on an open wound.*

5. A sunburn or windburn.

Phrasal Verbs:

burn out

1. To stop burning from lack of fuel: *The campfire eventually burned out.*

2. To wear out or make or become inoperative as a result of heat or friction: *The short circuit burned out the fuse. The computer's motherboard burned out.*

3. To make or become exhausted, especially as a result of long-term stress: *"Hours are long, stress is high, and many recruits drop out or burn out" (Robert J. Samuelson).*

4. To cause (someone) to have to evacuate an area or building because of fire: *The shopkeeper was burned out by arsonists.*

burn up

1. To make angry: *Their rudeness really burns me up.*

2. To travel over or through at high speed: *drag racers burning up the track.*

Idioms:

burn itself out

To stop burning from lack of fuel: *The brush fire finally burned itself out.*

burn (one's) bridges

To eliminate the possibility of return or retreat.

burn the/one's candle at both ends

To exhaust oneself or one's resources by leading a hectic or extravagant life.

burn the midnight oil

To work or study very late at night.

to burn

In great amounts: *They had money to burn.*

[Middle English *burnen*, from Old English *beornan*, to be on fire, and from *bærnan*, to set on fire; see **g^wher-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Synonyms: burn¹, scorch, singe, sear¹, char¹

These verbs mean to injure or alter by means of intense heat or flames. *Burn*, the most general, applies to the effects of exposure to a source of heat or to something that can produce a similar effect: *burned the muffins in the oven; skin burned by the wind and sun*. *Scorch* involves superficial burning that discolors or damages the texture of something: *scorched the shirt with the iron*. *Singe* specifies superficial burning and especially the removal of hair or feathers from a carcass before cooking: *singed his finger lighting the match; plucked and singed the chicken before roasting it*. *Sear* applies to rapid superficial burning using high heat: *seared the meat in a hot skillet*. To *char* is to reduce a substance to carbon or charcoal by partial burning: *trees charred by the forest fire*.

burn ²  (bûrn)

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n.

Scots

A small stream; a brook.

[Middle English, from Old English *burna*; see **bhreū-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

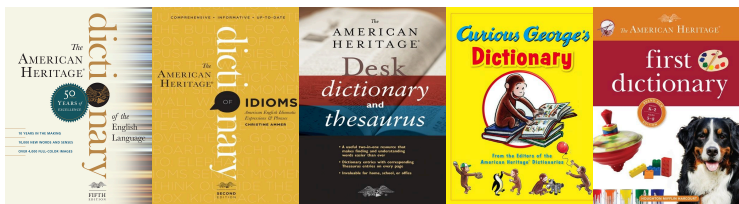
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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