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dec-i·mal  (dēs ə-məl)

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n.

1.

a. A linear array of digits that contains a single period, called the decimal point, is possibly preceded by a minus sign (-), and represents a real number, with each successive digit to the right of the decimal point indicating a multiple of the next negative power of 10, and each successive digit to the left of the decimal point indicating a multiple of the next non-negative power of ten, beginning with $10^0 = 1$. For example, 245.3 represents the real number $(2 \times 10^2) + (4 \times 10^1) + (5 \times 10^0) + (3 \times 10^{-1}) = 200 + 40 + 5 + \frac{3}{10}$, and -1.04 represents the real number $(-1 \times 10^0) + (-4 \times 10^{-2})$.

Also called *mixed decimal*.

b. Such an array of digits in which there are no nonzero digits to the left of the decimal point, representing a real number between -1 and 1. Also called *decimal fraction*.

2. A number written using the base 10.

adj.

1. Expressed or expressible as a decimal.

2.

a. Based on 10.

b. Numbered or ordered by groups of 10.

[Medieval Latin *decimālis*, of tenths or tithes, from Latin *decima*, a tenth part or tithe, from *decem*, ten; see **dek** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

dec i·mal·ly *adv.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

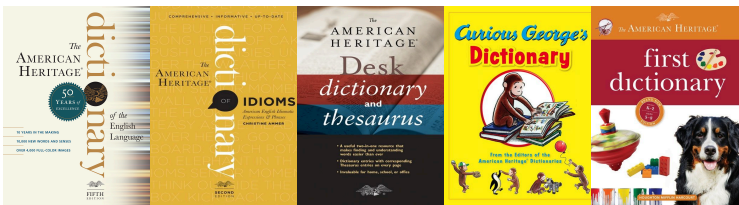
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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