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tell ¹ (tĕl)

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v. **told**(tōld), **tell·ing**, **tells**

v. *tr.*

1.

a. To communicate by speech or writing; express with words: *She told him that the store was closed. Tell me the truth.*

b. To give a detailed account of; narrate: *told what happened; told us a story.*

c. To notify (someone) of something; inform: *He told us of his dream to sail around the world.*

d. To make known; disclose or reveal: *tell a secret; tell fortunes.*

e. To inform (someone) positively; assure: *I tell you, the plan will work.*

f. To give instructions to; direct: *told the customers to wait in line.*

2. To discover by observation; discern: *We could tell that he was upset.*

3. To name or number one by one; count: *telling one's blessings; 16 windows, all told.*

v. *intr.*

1. To relate a story or give an account of an event: *The sailor told of having been adrift for days.*

2. To reveal something that is not supposed to be revealed, especially something that someone has done wrong: *She promised not to tell on her friend.*

3. To have an effect or impact: *In this game every move tells.*

n.

An unintentional or unconsciously exhibited behavior that reveals or betrays one's state of mind, as when playing poker.

Phrasal Verb:

tell off *Informal*

To rebuke severely; reprimand.

Idiom:

tell time

To determine the time of day indicated by the positions of the hands on a clock.

[Middle English *tellen*, from Old English *tellan*; see **del**-² in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

tell a·ble *adj.*

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tell ² (tĕl)

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n.

A mound, especially in the Middle East, made up of the remains of a succession of previous settlements.

[Arabic *tall*; see **tl** in the Appendix of Semitic roots.]

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Tell 🗣️ (tĕl), **William** fl. early 14th cent.?

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Swiss patriot who, according to legend, sparked a rebellion against Habsburg rule after he was forced to shoot an apple off his son's head with a crossbow.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

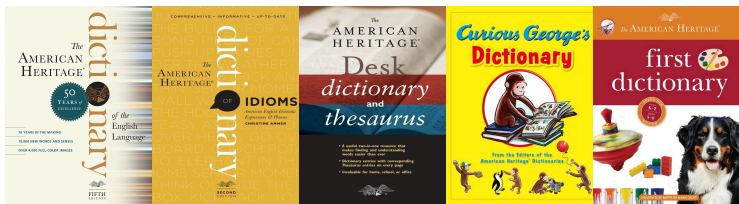
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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