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THE USAGE PANEL

The Usage Panel is a group of nearly 200 prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. Annual surveys have gauged the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions.

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talk  (tôk)

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v. **talked**, **talk·ing**, **talks**

v. *intr.*

1.

a. To exchange thoughts or opinions in spoken or sign language; converse: *We talked for hours.* See Synonyms at [speak](#).

b. To utter or pronounce words: *The baby can talk.*

c. To imitate the sounds of human speech: *The parrot talks.*

2.

a. To express one's thoughts or emotions by means of spoken language: *The candidate talked about the pros and cons of the issue.*

b. To convey one's thoughts in a way other than by spoken words: *talk with one's hands.*

c. To express one's thoughts or feelings in writing: *Voltaire talks about London in this book.*

d. To convey information in text: *The article talks about the latest fashions.*

3.

a. To negotiate with someone; parley: *Let's talk instead of fighting.*

b. To consult or confer with someone: *I talked with the doctor.*

4. To spread rumors; gossip: *If you do that, people will talk.*

5. To allude to something: *Are you talking about last week?*

6. To reveal information concerning oneself or others, especially under pressure: *Has the prisoner talked?*

7. *Informal* To be efficacious: *Money talks.*

v. *tr.*

1. To utter or pronounce (words): *Their son is talking sentences now.*

2.

a. To speak about or discuss (something) or give expression to (something): *talk business; talk treason.*

b. Used to emphasize the extent or seriousness of something being mentioned: *The police found money in the car. We're talking significant amounts of money.*

3. To speak or know how to speak (a language or a language variety): *The passenger talked French with the flight crew. Can you talk the local dialect?*

4. To cause (someone) to be in a certain state or to do something by talking: *They talked me into coming.*

n.

1. An exchange of ideas or opinions; a conversation: *We had a nice talk over lunch.*

2. A speech or lecture: *He gave a talk on art.*

3. Hearsay, rumor, or speculation: *There is talk of bankruptcy.*

4. A subject of conversation: *a musical that is the talk of the town.*

5. often **talks** A conference or negotiation: *peace talks.*

6.

a. A particular manner of speech: *baby talk; honeyed talk.*

b. Empty speech or unnecessary discussion: *a lot of talk and no action.*

c. Jargon or slang: *prison talk.*

7. Something, such as the sounds of animals, felt to resemble human talk: *whale talk.*

Phrasal Verbs:

talk around

1. To persuade: *I talked them around to my point of view.*

2. To speak indirectly about: *talked around the subject but never got to the point.*

talk away

To spend (a period of time) by talking: *We talked the night away.*

talk at

To address (someone) orally with no regard for or interest in a reaction or response.

talk back

To make an impertinent or insolent reply.

talk down

1. To think or speak of as having little worth; depreciate: *talked down the importance of the move.*
2. To speak with insulting condescension: *talked down to her subordinates.*
3. To silence (a person), especially by speaking in a loud and domineering manner.
4. To direct and control (the flight of an aircraft during an approach for landing) by radioed instructions either from the ground or a nearby aircraft.

talk out

1. To discuss (a matter) exhaustively: *I talked out the problem with a therapist.*
2. To resolve or settle by discussion.
3. *Chiefly British* To block (proposed legislation) by filibustering.

talk over

1. To consider thoroughly in conversation; discuss: *talked the matter over.*
2. To win (someone) over by persuasion: *talked them over to our side.*

talk through

To help (someone) do something by giving instructions as the task is being done.

talk up

1. To speak in favor of; promote: *talked the candidate up; talked up the new product.*
2. To speak loudly in a frank, often insolent manner.

Idioms:**talk big** *Informal*

To brag.

talk sense

To speak rationally and coherently.

talk the talk

To speak knowledgeably about something, especially something that one claims or implies one can do well.

[Middle English *talken*; see **del-**² in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

Usage Note: The phrasal verbs *talk about* and (less commonly) *talk of* sometimes have a piece of writing as their subject, as in *The article talks about the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan* and *The book talks of continuing barriers to free trade*. While this usage might seem a natural semantic extension—no different, really, from the similar and widely accepted use of the word *discuss*—some people assert that *talk* properly refers only to actual speech and that using it for a written medium is erroneous. The Usage Panel has become reconciled this construction over the years, however. In our 2001 survey, 58 percent accepted it in the sentence *The book talks about drugs that exist in many of our communities*, and by 2017, that acceptance level had risen to 65 percent. The use of *talk* is even more widely accepted when the medium of expression is writing rather than speech but the actual grammatical subject is a person; in 2017, over 90 percent of the Panel accepted the sentence *In her book, the author talks about drugs that exist in many of our communities*. The very high degree of acceptance for this sentence suggests that the crucial point for many readers is not the actual medium of expression (whether writing or speech) but the sentence or insentence of the grammatical subject.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

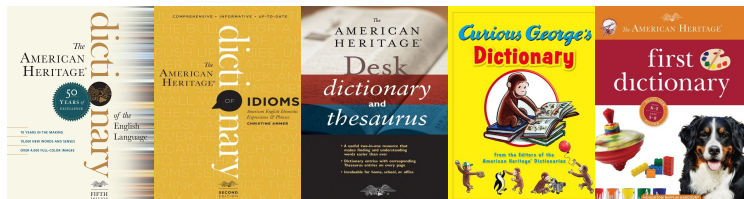
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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