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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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tooth  (t th)

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n. pl. teeth (tēth)

1.

a. One of a set of hard, bonelike structures in the mouths of vertebrates, usually attached to the jaw or rooted in sockets and typically composed of a core of soft pulp surrounded by a layer of hard dentin that is coated with cementum or enamel at the crown and used for biting or chewing food or as a means of attack or defense.

b. A similar hard projection in an invertebrate, such as one of a set of projections on the hinge of a bivalve or on the radula of a snail.

2. A projecting part resembling a tooth in shape or function, as on a comb, gear, or saw.

3. A small, notched projection along a margin, especially of a leaf. Also called *dent*².

4. A rough surface, as of paper or metal.

5.

a. often **teeth** Something that injures or destroys with force: *the teeth of the blizzard*.

b. teeth Effective means of enforcement; muscle: "*This ... puts real teeth into something where there has been only lip service*" (*Ellen Convisser*).

v. (t th, t th) **toothed, tooth-ing, tooths**

v.tr.

1. To furnish (a tool, for example) with teeth.

2. To make a jagged edge on.

v.intr.

To become interlocked; mesh.

Idioms:

get/sink (one's) teeth into Slang

To be actively involved in; get a firm grasp of.

show/bare (one's) teeth

To express a readiness to fight; threaten defiantly.

to the teeth

Lacking nothing; completely: *armed to the teeth; dressed to the teeth*.

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



(click for a larger image)

tooth

top: cross section of a human tooth

bottom: teeth on mechanical gears

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

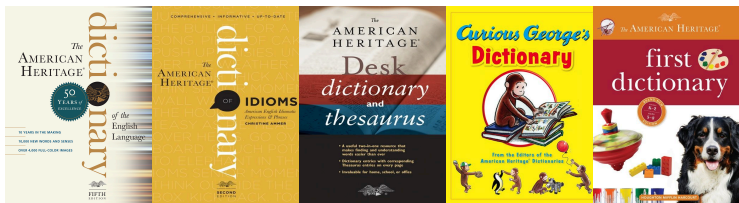
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

Indo-European Roots

Semitic Roots

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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