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AMERICAN
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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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dour  (d ɪr, dour)

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adj. **dour·er, dour·est**

1. Marked by sternness or harshness; forbidding: *a dour, self-sacrificing life.*
2. Silently ill-humored; gloomy: *the proverbially dour New England Puritan.*
3. Sternly obstinate; unyielding: *a dour determination.*

[Middle English, possibly from Middle Irish *dúr*, probably from Latin *dūrus*, hard; see **deru-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

dour *ly adv.*

dour *ness n.*

Usage Note: The word *dour*, which is etymologically related to *duress* and *endure*, traditionally rhymes with *tour*. The pronunciation that rhymes with *sour* is a standard variant that has been in use for more than a century. In our 1996 survey, 65 percent of the Usage Panel preferred the traditional pronunciation, and 33 percent preferred the variant. In our 2011 survey, opinion was almost evenly split, with 52 percent preferring the traditional pronunciation and 48 percent preferring the variant. These results suggest that the variant could overtake the traditional pronunciation in preference.

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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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