



The  
AMERICAN  
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the  
English  
Language

  


## HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

To look up an entry in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, use the search window above. For best results, after typing in the word, click on the “Search” button instead of using the “enter” key.

Some compound words (like *bus rapid transit*, *dog whistle*, or *identity theft*) don’t appear on the drop-down list when you type them in the search bar. For best results with compound words, place a quotation mark before the compound word in the search window.

[guide to the dictionary](#)



## 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.

[The Panelists](#)



## AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY APP

The new American Heritage Dictionary app is now available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#).



## THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY BLOG

The articles in our [blog](#) examine new words, revised definitions, interesting images from the fifth edition, discussions of usage, and more.

**THE 100 WORDS®**

See word lists from the best-selling 100 Words Series!

[Find out more!](#)



## INTERESTED IN DICTIONARIES?

Check out the Dictionary Society of North America at <http://www.dictionariesociety.com>

**ben·e·fac·tion**  (běn ə-făk'shən, bĕn'ə-făk -)

Share: [Tweet](#)

*n.*

1. The act of conferring aid of some sort.
2. A charitable gift or deed.

---

[Late Latin *benefactiō*, *benefactiōn-*, from Latin *benefactus*, past participle of *benefacere*, to do a service : *bene*, well; see **deu-**<sup>2</sup> [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#) + *facere*, to do; see **dhē-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

---

**ben e·fac'tive** (-tĭv) *adj.*

---

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

## 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](#).

## American Heritage Dictionary Products



[The American Heritage Dictionary, 5th Edition](#)  
 [The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms](#)  
 [The American Heritage Roget's Thesaurus](#)  
 [Curious George's Dictionary](#)  
 [The American Heritage Children's Dictionary](#)

## • CONTACT US

- [Customer Service](#)
- [Make Me An Author](#)
- [Ebooks Help with Glose Reader](#)

## • ABOUT US

- [Company Profile](#)
- [Leadership Team](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [HarperCollins Careers](#)
- [HarperCollins Imprints](#)
- [HarperGreen](#)
- [Social Media Directory](#)
- [Accessibility](#)

## • FOR READERS

- [Browse Reading Guides](#)

## • FOR AUTHORS

- [Submit a Manuscript](#)
- [Report Piracy](#)
- [Agent Portal](#)

## • MEDIA

- [Publicity Contacts](#)
- [Press Room](#)

## • SERVICES

- [HarperCollins Speakers Bureau](#)
- [Library Services](#)
- [Academic Services](#)
- [Desk & Exam Copies](#)
- [Review Copies](#)
- [OpenBook API](#)
- [Marketing Partnerships](#)

## • COVID-19 RESOURCES & PERMISSIONS

- [Permissions for Adult Online Readings](#)
- [Permissions for Kids Online Readings](#)

## • SALES & RIGHTS

- [Booksellers & Retailer Ordering](#)
- [HarperCollins Catalogs](#)
- [Permissions](#)
- [Subsidiary Rights](#)

- [Media Rights and Content Development](#)

## • GLOSE APP

- [iPhone](#)
- [Android](#)

## • GLOBAL DIVISIONS

- [HarperCollins US](#)
- [HarperCollins Canada](#)
- [HarperCollins Christian](#)
- [HarperCollins Australia](#)
- [HarperCollins India](#)
- [HarperCollins UK](#)



News Corp

[Terms of Use](#) • 
 [Terms of Sale](#) • 
 [Your Ad Choices](#) • 
 [Privacy Policy](#) • 
 [California Privacy Policy](#) • 
 [Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

Copyright 2022 HarperCollins Publishers All rights reserved.

\*This website is best viewed in Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari. Some characters in pronunciations and etymologies cannot be displayed properly in Internet Explorer.