



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>

fact  (făkt)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

1. Knowledge or information based on real occurrences: *an account based on fact; a blur of fact and fancy.*

2.

a. Something demonstrated to exist or known to have existed: *Genetic engineering is now a fact. That Chaucer was a real person is an undisputed fact.*

b. A real occurrence; an event: *had to prove the facts of the case.*

c. Something believed to be true or real: *a document laced with mistaken facts.*

3. A thing that has been done, especially a crime: *an accessory before the fact.*

4. Law A conclusion drawn by a judge or jury from the evidence in a case: *a finding of fact.*

Idiom:

in (point of) fact

In reality or in truth; actually.

[Latin *factum*, deed, from neuter past participle of *facere*, to do; see **dhē-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Usage Note: Since the word *fact* means "a real occurrence, something demonstrated to exist or known to have existed," the phrases *true facts* and *real facts*, as in *The true facts of the case may never be known*, would seem to be redundant. But *fact* has a long history of use in the sense of "an allegation of fact" or "something that is believed to be true," as in this remark by union leader Albert Shanker: "*This tract was distributed to thousands of American teachers, but the facts and the reasoning are wrong.*" This usage has led to the notion of "incorrect facts," which causes qualms among critics who insist that facts must be true. The usages, however, are often helpful in making distinctions or adding emphasis.

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.