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fac·tor  (făk tər)

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n.

1. One that actively contributes to an accomplishment, result, or process: "*Surprise is the greatest factor in war*" (Tom Clancy). See Synonyms at [element](#).

2.

a. One who acts for someone else; an agent.

b. One who purchases accounts receivable at a discount.

3. *Mathematics* One of two or more quantities that divides a given quantity without a remainder. For example, 2 and 3 are factors of 6; a and b are factors of ab.

4. A quantity by which a stated quantity is multiplied or divided, so as to indicate an increase or decrease in a measurement: *The rate increased by a factor of ten.*

5. A gene. No longer in technical usage.

6. *Physiology* A substance that functions in a specific biochemical reaction or bodily process, such as blood coagulation.

v. **fac·tored**, **fac·tor·ing**, **fac·tors**

tr.v.

To determine or indicate explicitly the factors of: *If you factor 70, you get 2, 5, and 7.*

intr.v.

To engage in purchasing accounts receivable at a discount.

Phrasal Verb:

factor in

To figure in: *factored vacations in when preparing the schedule.*

[Middle English *factour*, perpetrator, agent, from Old French *facteur*, from Latin *factor*, maker, from *facere*, to make; see **dhē-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

fac tor·a·ble *adj.*

fac tor·ship *n.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

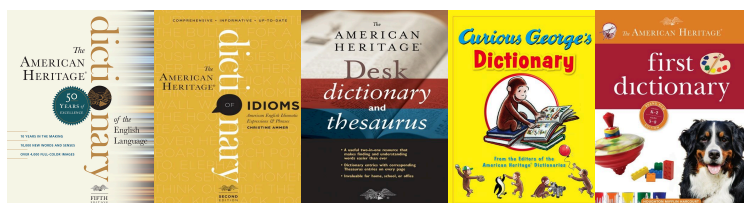
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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