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sur·face  (sûr fəs)

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n.

1.

a. The outer or the topmost boundary of an object.

b. A material layer constituting such a boundary.

2. *Mathematics*

a. The boundary of a three-dimensional figure.

b. The two-dimensional locus of points located in three-dimensional space.

c. A portion of space having length and breadth but no thickness.

3. The superficial or external aspect: *"a flamboyant, powerful confidence man who lives entirely on the surface of experience" (Frank Conroy).*

4. An airfoil.

adj.

1. Relating to, on, or at a surface: *surface algae in the water.*

2. Relating to or occurring on or near the surface of the earth.

3.

a. Superficial.

b. Apparent as opposed to real.

v. **sur·faced**, **sur·fac·ing**, **sur·fac·es**

v.tr.

1. To provide with a surface or apply a surface to: *surface a table with walnut; surface a road with asphalt.*

2. To bring to the surface: *surface a submarine.*

3. To make known; expose or reveal: *the first news report that surfaced the allegations.*

v.intr.

1. To rise to the surface.

2. To emerge after concealment.

3. To work or dig a mine at or near the surface of the ground.

Idiom:

on the surface

To all intents and purposes; to all outward appearances: *a soldier who, on the surface, appeared brave and patriotic.*

[French : *sur-*, above (from Old French; see [SUR-](#)) + *face*, face (from Old French; see [FACE](#)).]

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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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