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AMERICAN  
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the  
English  
Language


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**dif·fi·cul·ty**  (dĭf ɪ-kŭl'tē, -kəl-)

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*n. pl.* **dif·fi·cul·ties**

1. The condition or quality of being difficult: *the difficulty of a task.*
2. Something not easily done, accomplished, comprehended, or solved: *We face a difficulty that requires unconventional thinking.*
3. often **difficulties** A troublesome or embarrassing state of affairs, especially of financial affairs: *lost his job and found himself in difficulties.*
4. A disagreement or dispute: *a company trying to settle difficulties with labor.*

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[Middle English *difficulte*, from Old French *difficulte*, from Latin *difficultās*, from *difficilis*, difficult : *dis-*, *dis-* + *facilis*, easy; see **dhē-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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**Synonyms:** difficulty, hardship, rigor, vicissitude

These nouns denote something that requires great effort to overcome: *grappling with financial difficulties; the hardships endured by the settlers; undergoing the rigors of prison; withstood the vicissitudes of an army career.*

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## Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

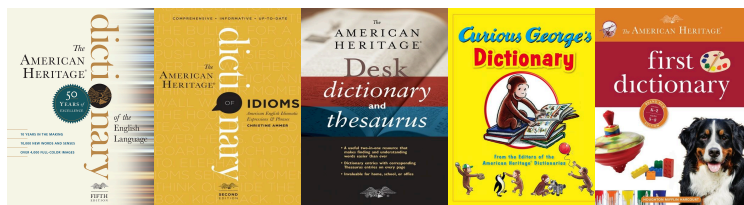
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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