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drift  (drift)

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v. **drift·ed, drift·ing, drifts**

v.*intr.*

1. To be carried along by currents of air or water: *a balloon drifting eastward; as the wreckage drifted toward shore.*
2. To proceed or move unhurriedly or aimlessly: *drifting among the party guests; a day laborer, drifting from town to town.*
3. To live or behave without a clear purpose or goal: *drifted through his college years unable to decide on a career.*
4. To have no continuing focus; stray: *My attention drifted during the boring presentation.*
5. To vary from or oscillate randomly about a fixed setting, position, or mode of operation.
6. To be piled up in banks or heaps by the force of a current: *snow drifting to five feet.*

v.*tr.*

1. To cause to be carried in a current: *drifting the logs downstream.*
 2. To pile up in banks or heaps: *Wind drifted the loose straw against the barn.*
 3. *Western US* To drive (livestock) slowly or far afield, especially for grazing.
- n.*
1. Something moving along in a current of air or water: *a drift of logs in the river.*
 2. A bank or pile, as of sand or snow, heaped up by currents of air or water.
 3. *Geology* Rock debris transported and deposited by or from ice, especially by or from a glacier.
- 4.*
- a. A general trend or tendency, as of opinion. See Synonyms at [tendency](#).
 - b. General meaning or purport; tenor: *caught the drift of the conversation.*
- 5.*
- a. A gradual change in position: *an iceberg's eastward drift.*
 - b. A gradual deviation from an original course, model, method, or intention.
 - c. Variation or random oscillation about a fixed setting, position, or mode of behavior.
6. A gradual change in the output of a circuit or amplifier.
 7. The rate of flow of a water current.
- 8.*
- a. A tool for ramming or driving something down.
 - b. A tapered steel pin for enlarging and aligning holes.
- 9.*
- a. A horizontal or nearly horizontal passageway in a mine running through or parallel to a vein.
 - b. A secondary mine passageway between two main shafts or tunnels.
10. A drove or herd, especially of swine.

[From Middle English, drove, herd, act of driving; see **dhreibh-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

drift *y adj.*

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](#).

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