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tongue  (tŭng)

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n.

1.

a. The fleshy, movable, muscular organ, attached in most vertebrates to the floor of the mouth, that is the principal organ of taste, an aid in chewing and swallowing, and, in humans, an important organ of speech.

b. An analogous organ or part in invertebrate animals, as in certain insects or mollusks.

2. The tongue of an animal, such as a cow, used as food.

3. A spoken language or dialect.

4.

a. Speech; talk: *If there is goodness in your heart, it will come to your tongue.*

b. The act or power of speaking: *She had no tongue to answer.*

c. **tongues** Speech or vocal sounds produced in a state of religious ecstasy.

d. Style or quality of utterance: *her sharp tongue.*

5. The bark or baying of a hunting dog that sees game: *The dog gave tongue when the fox came through the hedge.*

6. Something resembling a tongue in shape or function, as:

a. The vibrating end of a reed in a wind instrument.

b. A flame.

c. The flap of material under the laces or buckles of a shoe.

d. A spit of land; a promontory.

e. A bell clapper.

f. The harnessing pole attached to the front axle of a horse-drawn vehicle.

7. A protruding strip along the edge of a board that fits into a matching groove on the edge of another board.

v. **tongued, tongu-ing, tongues**

v.tr.

1. *Music* To separate or articulate (notes played on a brass or wind instrument) by shutting off the stream of air with the tongue.

2.

a. To touch or lick with the tongue.

b. To give (someone) a French-kiss.

3.

a. To provide (a board) with a tongue.

b. To join by means of a tongue and groove.

4. *Archaic* To scold.

v.intr.

1. *Music* To articulate notes on a brass or wind instrument.

2. To project: *a spit of land tonguing into the bay.*

Idioms:

have/speak with a forked tongue

To speak deceitfully; prevaricate or lie.

bite/hold (one's) tongue

To be or keep silent.

loosen (someone's) tongue

To cause (someone) to speak freely or carelessly or to divulge information.

lose (one's) tongue

To lose the capacity to speak, as from shock.

on the tip of (one's) tongue

On the verge of being recalled or expressed.

[Middle English, from Old English *tunge*; see **d ghū-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

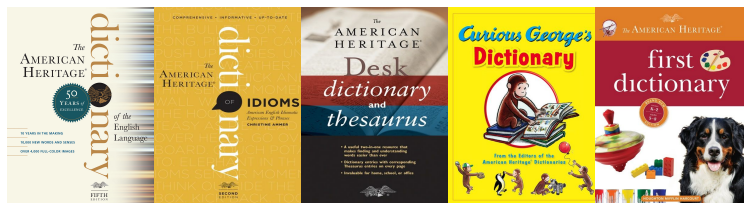
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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