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deuce¹  (d s, dy s)

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n.

1.

a. A playing card having two spots or the side of a die bearing two pips.

b. A cast of dice totaling two.

2. A tied score in tennis in which each player or side has 40 points, or 5 or more games, and one player or side must win 2 successive points to win the game, or 2 successive games to win the set.

tr.v. **deuced, deuc-ing, deuc-es**

To make the score of (a tennis game or set) deuce.

[Middle English *deus*, from Old French, two, from Latin *duōs*, masculine accusative of *duo*; see **dwo-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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deuce²  (d s, dy s) *Informal*

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n.

1. The devil: *"Love is a bodily infirmity ... which breaks out the deuce knows how or why"* (William Makepeace Thackeray).

2. An outstanding example, especially of something difficult or bad: *a deuce of a family row*.

3. A severe reprimand or expression of anger: *got the deuce for being late*.

4. Used as an intensive: *What the deuce were they thinking of?*

[Probably from Low German *duus*, a throw of two in dice games, bad luck, ultimately from Latin *duo*, two; see [DEUCE](#)¹.]

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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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