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dis·mal  (dĭz məl)

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adj.

1. Causing gloom or depression; dreary: *dismal weather*; *took a dismal view of the economy*.
2. Characterized by ineptitude, dullness, or a lack of merit: *a dismal book*; *a dismal performance on the cello*.
3. *Obsolete* Dreadful; disastrous.

n.

Chiefly South Atlantic US See [pocosin](#).

[Middle English, unlucky days, unlucky, from Anglo-Norman, unlucky days, from Medieval Latin *diēs malī* : Latin *diēs*, pl. of *diēs*, day; see **dyeu-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#) + Latin *malī*, pl. of *malus*, evil; see **mel-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

dis mal·ly *adv.*

dis mal·ness *n.*

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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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