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eat  (ēt)

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v. **ate** (āt), **eat·en** (ēt n), **eat·ing**, **eats**

v.tr.

1.

a. To take into the body by the mouth for digestion or absorption.

b. To take in and absorb as food: *a plant that eats insects; a cell that eats bacteria.*

c. To include habitually or by preference in one's diet: *a bird that eats insects, fruit, and seeds; stopped eating red meat on advice from her doctor.*

2. To destroy, ravage, or use up by or as if by ingesting: *"Covering news in the field eats money" (George F. Will).*

3. To erode or corrode: *waves that ate away the beach; an acid that eats the surface of a machine part.*

4. To produce by eating: *Moths ate holes in our sweaters.*

5. *Slang* To absorb the cost or expense of: *"You can eat your loss and switch the remaining money to other investment portfolios" (Marlys Harris).*

6. *Informal* To bother or annoy: *What's eating him?*

7. *Vulgar slang* To perform cunnilingus or anilingus on. Often used with *out*.

v.intr.

1.

a. To consume food.

b. To have or take a meal.

2. To exercise a consuming or eroding effect: *a drill that ate away at the rock; exorbitant expenses that were eating into profits.*

3. To cause persistent annoyance or distress: *"How long will it be before the frustration eats at you?" (Howard Kaplan).*

Phrasal Verb:

eat up *Slang*

1. To receive or enjoy enthusiastically or avidly: *She really eats up the publicity.*

2. To believe without question: *He'll eat up whatever the broker tells him.*

Idioms:

eat crow

To be forced to accept a humiliating defeat.

eat (one's) heart out

1. To feel bitter anguish or grief.

2. To be consumed by jealousy.

eat (one's) words

To retract something that one has said.

eat out of (someone's) hand

To be manipulated or dominated by another.

eat (someone) alive *Slang*

To overwhelm or defeat thoroughly: *an inexperienced manager who was eaten alive in a competitive corporate environment.*

[Middle English *eten*, from Old English *etan*; see **ed-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.](#)]

eat *er n.*

Synonyms: eat, consume, devour, ingest

These verbs mean to take food into the body by the mouth: *ate a hearty dinner; greedily consumed the sandwich; hyenas devouring their prey; whales ingesting krill.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

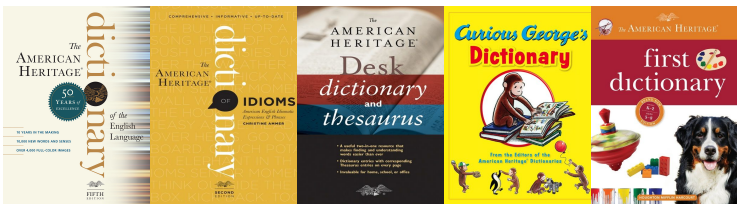
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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