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AMERICAN
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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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etch  (ěch)

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v. **etched**, **etch-ing**, **etch-es**

v.tr.

1.

a. To cut into the surface of (glass, for example) by the action of acid, especially by coating the surface with wax or another protective layer and drawing lines with a needle and then using the acid to form the lines on the unprotected parts of the surface.

b. To make or create by this method: *etch a design on glass*.

2.

a. To draw or write by cutting or scraping: *etched his initials in the metal*.

b. To cut or scrape something in or on: *etched the metal with a knife*.

3. To impress or delineate clearly: *a landscape that is forever etched in my memory; trees that are etched against the sky*.

v.intr.

To engage in etching.

[Dutch *etsen*, from German *ätzen*, from Middle High German *etzen*, from Old High German *ezzen*, to eat; see **ed-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

etch **er 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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