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AMERICAN
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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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in·i·tial  (ĩ-nĭsh əl)

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- adj.*
1. Of, relating to, or occurring at the beginning; first: *took the initial step toward peace.*
 2. Designating the first letter or letters of a word.
- n.*
1.
 - a. The first letter of a proper name.
 - b. **initials** The first letter of each word of a person's full name considered as a unit: *stationery monogrammed with her initials.*
 2. The first letter of a word.
 3. A large, often highly decorated letter set at the beginning of a chapter, verse, or paragraph.
- tr.v. in·i·tial·ed, in·i·tial·ing, in·i·tial·s also in·i·tial·ed or in·i·tial·ing*
To mark or sign with initials, especially for purposes of authorization or approval.

[Latin *initiālis*, from *initium*, beginning; see **ei-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

in·i tial·ly *adv.*



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initial
detail of an illuminated manuscript

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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:

[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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