



The  
AMERICAN  
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the  
English  
Language

  


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To look up an entry in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, use the search window above. For best results, after typing in the word, click on the “Search” button instead of using the “enter” key.

Some compound words (like *bus rapid transit*, *dog whistle*, or *identity theft*) don’t appear on the drop-down list when you type them in the search bar. For best results with compound words, place a quotation mark before the compound word in the search window.

[guide to the dictionary](#)



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**in·i·ti·ate**  (ĩ-nĭsh ě-āt')

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*tr.v.* **in·i·ti·at·ed**, **in·i·ti·at·ing**, **in·i·ti·ates**

1. To set going by taking the first step; begin: *initiated trade with developing nations*. See Synonyms at [begin](#).
2. To introduce to a new field, interest, skill, or activity: *initiated the students into the world of opera*.
3. To admit (someone) into membership, as with a ritual or ceremony.

*adj.* (-ĭt)

1. Initiated or admitted, as to membership or a position of authority.
2. Introduced to something new, such as a new field of knowledge.

*n.* (-ĭt)

1. One who is being or has been initiated into an organization.
2. One who has been introduced to or has attained some knowledge in a particular field.

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

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**in·i ti·a'tor** *n.*

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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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