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ear·nest¹  (ûr nĭst)

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adj.

Showing or expressing sincerity or seriousness: *an earnest gesture of goodwill*. See Synonyms at [serious](#).

Idiom:

in earnest

1. With a purposeful or sincere intent: *settled down to study in earnest for the examination*.
2. Serious; determined: *"Both sides are deeply in earnest, with passions that approximate those of civil war"* (Conor Cruise O'Brien).

[Middle English *ernest*, from Old English *eornoste*; see **er**-¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

ear nest·ly *adv.*

ear nest·ness *n.*

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ear·nest²  (ûr nĭst)

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n.

1. Earnest money.
2. A token of something to come; a promise or assurance.

[Middle English *ernest*, variant of *ernes*, alteration of Old French *erres*, pl. of *erre*, pledge, from Latin *arra*, alteration of *arrabō*, from Greek *arrabōn*, earnest-money, of Canaanite origin; see **rb** [in the Appendix of Semitic roots](#).]

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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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