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or·i·gin  (ôr ə-jĭn, őr -)

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- n.*
1. The point at which something comes into existence or from which it derives or is derived.
 2. often **origins** Ancestry: "*We cannot escape our origins, however hard we try*" (James Baldwin).
 3. The fact of originating; rise or derivation: "*The rumor had its origin in an impulsive remark.*"
 4. *Anatomy* The point of attachment of a muscle that remains relatively fixed during contraction.
 5. *Mathematics* The point of intersection of coordinate axes, as in the Cartesian coordinate system.

[Middle English *origine*, ancestry, from Latin *orīgō*, *orīgin-*, from *orīrī*, to arise, be born; see **er**-¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Synonyms: origin, inception, source, root¹

These nouns signify the point at which something originates. *Origin* is the point at which something comes into existence: "*The origins of some words are unknown.*" When *origin* refers to people, it means parentage or ancestry: "*He came ... of mixed French and Scottish origin*" (Charlotte Brontë).

Inception is the beginning, as of an action or process: "*The researcher was involved in the project from its inception.*"

Source signifies the point at which something springs into being or from which it derives or is obtained: "*The mysterious ... is the source of all true art and science*" (Albert Einstein).

Root denotes what is considered the fundamental cause of or basic reason for something: "*Lack of money is the root of all evil*" (George Bernard Shaw).

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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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