



The
AMERICAN
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the
English
Language



HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

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](#)



THE USAGE PANEL

The Usage Panel is a group of nearly 200 prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. Annual surveys have gauged the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions.

[The Panelists](#)



AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY APP

The new American Heritage Dictionary app is now available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#).



THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY BLOG

The articles in our [blog](#) examine new words, revised definitions, interesting images from the fifth edition, discussions of usage, and more.

THE 100 WORDS®

See word lists from the best-selling 100 Words Series!

[Find out more!](#)



INTERESTED IN DICTIONARIES?

Check out the Dictionary Society of North America at <http://www.dictionarysociety.com>

waste  (wāst)

Share: [Tweet](#)

v. wast·ed, wast·ing, wastes

v.tr.

1. To use, consume, spend, or expend thoughtlessly or carelessly.
2. To cause to lose energy, strength, or vigor; exhaust, tire, or enfeeble: *Disease wasted his body.*
3. To fail to take advantage of or use for profit; lose: *waste an opportunity.*

4.

- a. To destroy completely: *The invaders wasted the village.*
- b. *Slang* To kill; murder.

v.intr.

1. To lose energy, strength, weight, or vigor; become weak or enfeebled: *wasting away from an illness.*
2. To pass without being put to use: *Time is wasting.*

n.

1. The act or an instance of wasting or the condition of being wasted: *a waste of talent; gone to waste.*
2. A place, region, or land that is uninhabited or uncultivated; a desert or wilderness.
3. A devastated or destroyed region, town, or building; a ruin.

4.

- a. An unusable or unwanted substance or material, such as a waste product: *industrial wastes.*
- b. Something, such as steam, that escapes without being used.

5. Garbage; trash.

6. The undigested residue of food eliminated from the body; excrement.

adj.

1. Regarded or discarded as worthless or useless: *waste trimmings.*
2. Used as a conveyance or container for refuse: *a waste bin.*
3. Excreted from the body: *waste matter.*

Idiom:

waste (one's) breath

To gain or accomplish nothing by speaking.

[Middle English *wasten*, from Old North French *waster*, from Latin *vāstāre*, to make empty, from *vāstus*, empty; see [eu-](#) [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Synonyms: waste, blow¹, dissipate, fritter¹, squander

These verbs mean to spend or expend without restraint and often to no avail: *wasted my inheritance; blew a fortune at the casino; dissipated their energies in pointless argument; frittering away her entire allowance; squandered his talent on writing jingles.*

Antonym: save¹

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

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](#)

[Semitic Roots](#)

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](#).

American Heritage Dictionary Products



[The American Heritage Dictionary, 5th Edition](#)
[The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms](#)
[The American Heritage Roget's Thesaurus](#)

[Curious George's Dictionary](#)
[The American Heritage Children's Dictionary](#)

- **CONTACT US**
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Make Me An Author](#)
- [Ebooks Help with Glose Reader](#)
- **ABOUT US**
- [Company Profile](#)
- [Leadership Team](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [HarperCollins Careers](#)
- [HarperCollins Imprints](#)
- [HarperGreen](#)
- [Social Media Directory](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- **FOR READERS**
- [Browse Reading Guides](#)
- **FOR AUTHORS**
- [Submit a Manuscript](#)
- [Report Piracy](#)
- [Agent Portal](#)
- **MEDIA**

- [Publicity Contacts](#)
- [Press Room](#)
- **SERVICES**
- [HarperCollins Speakers Bureau](#)
- [Library Services](#)
- [Academic Services](#)
- [Desk & Exam Copies](#)
- [Review Copies](#)
- [OpenBook API](#)
- [Marketing Partnerships](#)
- **COVID-19 RESOURCES & PERMISSIONS**
- [Permissions for Adult Online Readings](#)
- [Permissions for Kids Online Readings](#)
- **SALES & RIGHTS**
- [Booksellers & Retailer Ordering](#)
- [HarperCollins Catalogs](#)
- [Permissions](#)
- [Subsidiary Rights](#)

- [Media Rights and Content Development](#)
- **GLOSE APP**
- [iPhone](#)
- [Android](#)
-
-
-
- **GLOBAL DIVISIONS**
- [HarperCollins US](#)
- [HarperCollins Canada](#)
- [HarperCollins Christian](#)
- [HarperCollins Australia](#)
- [HarperCollins India](#)
- [HarperCollins UK](#)
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

[Terms of Use](#) • [Terms of Sale](#) • [Your Ad Choices](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [California Privacy Policy](#)
[Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

Copyright 2022 HarperCollins Publishers All rights reserved.

*This website is best viewed in Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari. Some characters in pronunciations and etymologies cannot be displayed properly in Internet Explorer.