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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.

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con·gen·i·tal  (kən-jĕn ĭ-tl)

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adj.

1. Of or relating to a condition that is present at birth, as a result of either heredity or environmental influences: *a congenital heart defect; congenital syphilis.*
2. *Usage Problem* Being or having an essential characteristic as if by nature; inherent or inveterate: "*the congenital American optimism that denies conflicts and imagines all stories having happy endings*" (Robert J. Samuelson).

[From Latin *congenitus* : *com-*, *com-* + *genitus*, born, past participle of *gignere*, to bear; see **genə-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

con·gen i·tal·ly *adv.*

Usage Note: The Usage Panel is divided evenly on the use of *congenital* to mean "inveterate." In our 2008 survey, only 50 percent accepted this word in a sentence with the phrase "the most congenital skeptic."

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

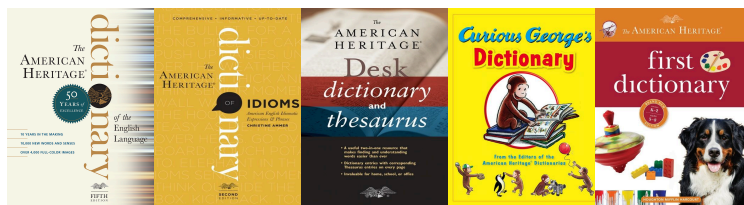
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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