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ma·lign  (mə·līn)

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tr.v. **ma·ligned**, **ma·lign·ing**, **ma·ligns**

To make evil, harmful, and often untrue statements about (someone).

adj.

1. Evil or harmful in nature or effect: "*He felt that the malign influence of the house had governed his own disintegration*" (Thomas Wolfe).

2. Intending or threatening harm or ill will; malevolent: "*a snarling, bickering husky ... heavy-chested, with a malign eye*" (Jack London).

[Middle English *malignen*, to attack, from Old French *malignier*, from Late Latin *malignārī*, from Latin *malignus*, malign; see **gena-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#). *Adj.*, from Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *malignus*.]

ma·lign *er n.*

ma·lign *ly adv.*

Synonyms: malign, defame, traduce, vilify, slander, calumniate, libel

These verbs mean to make evil, harmful, often untrue statements about another. *Malign* stresses malicious intent: "*Have I not taken your part when you were maligned?*" (William Makepeace Thackeray).

Defame suggests damage to reputation through misrepresentation: *The plaintiff had been defamed and had legitimate grounds for a lawsuit.*

Traduce connotes the humiliation or disgrace resulting from such damage: "*My character was traduced by Captain Hawkins ... even the ship's company cried out shame*" (Frederick Marryat).

Vilify pertains to open, deliberate, vicious defamation: "*As long as there have been personal fouls and holding penalties, sports fans have vilified referees for making bad calls*" (Jason Zinoman).

Slander and *calumniate* apply to oral expression: *He slandered his political opponent. She calumniated and ridiculed her former employer.*

Libel involves the communication of written or pictorial material: *The celebrity sued the tabloid that libeled her.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

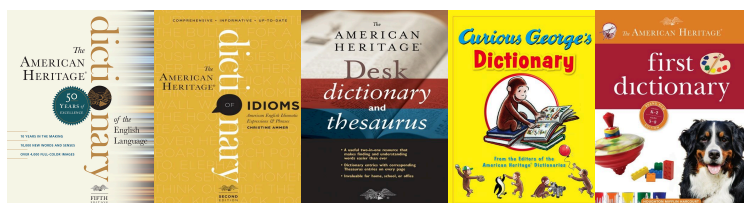
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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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