



The  
AMERICAN  
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the  
English  
Language

  


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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](#)



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**gram·mar**  (grām ər)

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*n.*

1.

a. The study of how words and their component parts combine to form sentences.

b. The study of structural relationships in language or in a language, sometimes including pronunciation, meaning, and linguistic history.

2.

a. The system of inflections, syntax, and word formation of a language.

b. The system of rules implicit in a language, viewed as a mechanism for generating all sentences possible in that language.

3.

a. A normative or prescriptive set of rules setting forth the current standard of usage for pedagogical or reference purposes.

b. Writing or speech judged with regard to such a set of rules.

4. A book containing the morphologic, syntactic, and semantic rules for a specific language.

5.

a. The basic principles of an area of knowledge: *the grammar of music*.

b. A book dealing with such principles.

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[Middle English *gramere*, from Old French *gramaire*, alteration of Latin *grammatica*, from Greek *grammatikē*, from feminine of *grammatikos*, of letters, from *gramma*, *grammat-*, letter; see **gerbh-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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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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