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AMERICAN
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the
English
Language



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du·ty  (d tē, dy -)

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n. pl. du·ties

1.

a. An act or a course of action that is required of one by position, social custom, law, or religion: *the duties of being a critical care nurse*.

b. Required action or service: *jury duty*; *beyond the call of duty*. See Synonyms at [function](#).

c. Active military service: *a tour of duty*.

2.

a. Moral or legal obligation: *It is your duty to tell the truth*.

b. The compulsion felt to meet such obligation: *acting out of duty*.

3. A tax charged by a government, especially on imports.

4.

a. The application of something for a purpose; use: *The dining room table also does duty as a desk*.

b. A measure of efficiency expressed as the amount of work done per unit of energy used.

5. The total volume of water required to irrigate a given area in order to cultivate a specific crop until harvest.

Idioms:

duty bound

Obligated: *You are duty bound to help your little sister and brother*.

off duty

Not engaged in or responsible for assigned work.

on duty

Engaged in or responsible for assigned work.

[Middle English *duete*, from Anglo-Norman, from *due*, variant of Old French *deu*, due; see [DUE](#).]

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