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hab·it  (hăb ĭt)

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n.

1.

a. A recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition: *made a habit of going to bed early.*

b. An established disposition of the mind or character: *a pessimistic habit.*

c. Customary manner or practice: *an early riser by habit.*

d. An addiction, especially to a narcotic drug.

2. Characteristic appearance, form, or manner of growth, especially of a plant or crystal: *"The habit of an apple tree is fine for the small garden" (Robert Dash).*

3.

a. A distinctive set of clothing or style of dressing, especially of a religious order.

b. A riding habit.

4. *Archaic* Physical constitution.

tr.v. hab·it·ed, hab·it·ing, hab·its

1. To clothe; dress.

2. To clothe in a habit, especially a nun's habit.

[Middle English, clothing, from Old French, clothing, behavior, custom, from Latin *habitus*, from past participle of *habēre*, to have; see **ghabh-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Synonyms: habit, practice, custom, wont

These nouns denote patterns of behavior established by continual repetition. *Habit* applies to a behavior or practice so ingrained that it is often done without conscious thought: *"Habit rules the unreflecting herd"* (William Wordsworth). *Practice* denotes an often chosen pattern of individual or group behavior: *"You will find it a very good practice always to verify your references, sir"* (Martin Joseph Routh).

Custom is behavior as established by long practice and especially by accepted conventions: *"No written law has ever been more binding than unwritten custom supported by popular opinion"* (Carrie Chapman Catt).

Wont refers to a customary and distinctive practice: *"Miss Roxy sat bolt upright, as was her wont"* (Harriet Beecher Stowe).

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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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