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dictionary

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English
Language



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debt  (dět)

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n.

1. Something owed, such as money, goods, or services: *used the proceeds to pay off her debts; a debt of gratitude.*
2. An obligation or liability to pay or render something to someone else: *students burdened with debt.*
3. The condition of owing: *a young family always in debt.*
4. Financial instruments, such as bonds, mortgages, and loans, that represent a claim to payment and rights of creditorship: *invested in government debt; a company issuing debt.*
5. A moral or legal obligation to make reparations or undergo punishment for committing an offense: *a criminal repaying his debt to society.*

[Middle English *dette*, from Old French, from Vulgar Latin **dēbita*, pl. of Latin *dēbitum*, debt, neuter past participle of *dēbēre*, to owe; see **ghabh-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

debt *less adj.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

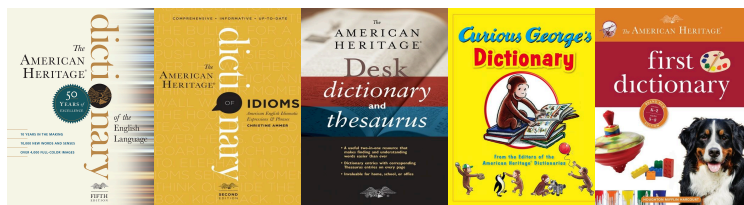
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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