



The
AMERICAN
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the
English
Language



HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

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](#)



THE USAGE PANEL

The Usage Panel is a group of nearly 200 prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. Annual surveys have gauged the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions.

[The Panelists](#)



AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY APP

The new American Heritage Dictionary app is now available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#).



THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY BLOG

The articles in our [blog](#) examine new words, revised definitions, interesting images from the fifth edition, discussions of usage, and more.

THE 100 WORDS®

See word lists from the best-selling 100 Words Series!

[Find out more!](#)



INTERESTED IN DICTIONARIES?

Check out the Dictionary Society of North America at <http://www.dictionariesociety.com>

gaunt·let¹ also **gant·let**  (gônt līt, gänt -)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

1. A protective glove, usually extending over some of the forearm, worn as part of medieval armor.
2. Any of various protective gloves, usually with an extended or flared cuff, as used in certain sports such as fencing and motorcycle riding, in cooking to handle hot objects, and other activities.
3. A challenge: *throw down the gauntlet; take up the gauntlet.*
4. A dress glove cuffed above the wrist.

[Middle English, from Old French *gantelet*, diminutive of *gant*, glove, from Frankish **want*.]



(click for a larger image)

gauntlet1

late 16th-century English

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

gant·let¹  (gônt līt, gänt -)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

A section of double railroad tracks formed by the temporary convergence of two otherwise parallel tracks in such a way that each set remains independent while traversing the same ground, affording passage at a narrow place without need of switching.

tr.v. **gant·let·ed**, **gant·let·ing**, **gant·lets**

To converge (railroad tracks) to form a gantlet.

[Variant of [GAUNTLET](#)².]



(click for a larger image)

gantlet1

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

gaunt·let² also **gant·let**  (gônt līt, gänt -)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

1.
 - a. A form of punishment or torture in which people armed with sticks or other weapons arrange themselves in two lines facing each other and beat the person forced to run between them.
 - b. The lines of people so arranged.
2.
 - a. An arrangement of two lines of menacing or demanding people or things through which one must pass: *moved through a gauntlet of shouting reporters*.
 - b. A series of difficult or trying experiences: *survived the gauntlet of adolescent humiliations*.

[Alteration (influenced by [GAUNTLET](#)¹) of *gantlope*, from Swedish *gatlopp* : *gata*, lane (from Old Norse; see [ghē- in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)) + *lopp*, course, running (from Middle Low German *lōp*).]

Word History: The two words spelled *gauntlet* may share associations with medieval violence, but they have separate origins. The word *gauntlet* used in the idiom *to throw down the gauntlet* comes from the Old French word *gantellet*, a diminutive of *gant*, "glove." (The idiom makes reference to the medieval custom of throwing down a glove in challenging an adversary to combat.) The *gauntlet* used in *to run the gauntlet* is an alteration of the earlier English form *gantlope*, which came from the Swedish word *gatlopp*, a compound of *gata*, "lane," and *lopp*, "course," a word related to *lope* and *leap*. The Swedish word for this traditional form of punishment, in which two lines of people beat a person forced to run between them, probably became known to English speakers as a result of the Thirty Years' War. Sweden played a leading role in the coalition of Protestant countries that fought against Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, and at the end of the war, in 1648, the Swedish empire emerged as a great power of Europe. It was during this period of expanding Swedish influence that *gatlopp* entered English. It seems, however, that from the moment English speakers borrowed the word, they inserted an *n* into the pronunciation of *gatlopp*—in the earliest known attestation of the word in English, dating from 1646, it is spelled *gantelope*. The English word was then influenced by the spelling of the other *gauntlet*, "a protective glove," eventually leading to the identical spellings used today.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

gant·let²  (gônt līt, gänt -)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

Variant of [gauntlet](#)¹.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

gant·let³  (gônt līt, gänt -)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

Variant of [gauntlet](#)².

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

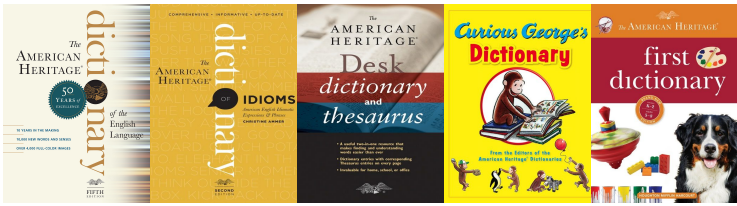
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

[Semitic Roots](#)

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](#).

American Heritage Dictionary Products



[The American Heritage Dictionary, 5th Edition](#) [The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms](#) [The American Heritage Roget's Thesaurus](#) [Curious George's Dictionary](#) [The American Heritage Children's Dictionary](#)

- **CONTACT US**
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Make Me An Author](#)
- [Ebooks Help with Glose Reader](#)
- **ABOUT US**
- [Company Profile](#)
- [Leadership Team](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [HarperCollins Careers](#)
- [HarperCollins Imprints](#)
- [HarperGreen](#)
- [Social Media Directory](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- **FOR READERS**
- [Browse Reading Guides](#)
- **FOR AUTHORS**
- [Submit a Manuscript](#)
- [Report Piracy](#)
- [Agent Portal](#)
- **MEDIA**

- [Publicity Contacts](#)
- [Press Room](#)
- **SERVICES**
- [HarperCollins Speakers Bureau](#)
- [Library Services](#)
- [Academic Services](#)
- [Desk & Exam Copies](#)
- [Review Copies](#)
- [OpenBook API](#)
- [Marketing Partnerships](#)
- **COVID-19 RESOURCES & PERMISSIONS**
- [Permissions for Adult Online Readings](#)
- [Permissions for Kids Online Readings](#)
- **SALES & RIGHTS**
- [Booksellers & Retailer Ordering](#)
- [HarperCollins Catalogs](#)
- [Permissions](#)
- [Subsidiary Rights](#)

- [Media Rights and Content Development](#)
- **GLOSE APP**
- [iPhone](#)
- [Android](#)
-
-
-
- **GLOBAL DIVISIONS**
- [HarperCollins US](#)
- [HarperCollins Canada](#)
- [HarperCollins Christian](#)
- [HarperCollins Australia](#)
- [HarperCollins India](#)
- [HarperCollins UK](#)
-
-
-
-
-
-



[Terms of Use](#) • [Terms of Sale](#) • [Your Ad Choices](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [California Privacy Policy](#) • [Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

Copyright 2022 HarperCollins Publishers All rights reserved.

*This website is best viewed in Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari. Some characters in pronunciations and etymologies cannot be displayed properly in Internet Explorer.