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glitch (glích)

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n.

1. A minor malfunction, mishap, or technical problem; a snag: *a computer glitch; a navigational glitch; a glitch in the negotiations.*
2. A false or spurious electronic signal caused by a brief, unwanted surge of electric power.
3. *Astronomy* A sudden change in the period of rotation of a neutron star.

[Probably from Yiddish *glitsh*, a slip, lapse, from *glitshn*, to slip, from Middle High German *glitschen*, alteration of *glīten*, to glide, from Old High German *glītan*; see **ghel-**² [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.](#)]

glitch *y adj.*

Word History: One of the two earliest known appearances of the word *glitch* is found in John Glenn's contribution to the book *Into Orbit* (1962), an account of Project Mercury (the United States' first human spaceflight program) by the seven astronauts who participated: "*Another term we adopted to describe some of our problems was 'glitch.'*" Glenn then gives the technical sense of the word the astronauts had adopted: "*Literally, a glitch is a spike or change in voltage in an electrical current.*" The word may have already been in use by engineers and other specialists for some time, though. Later in the book, it is explained again and is simply said to be a slang word for a "hitch." Since the appearance of the term in the context of electronics, *glitch* has passed beyond technical use and now covers a wide variety of malfunctions and mishaps.

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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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