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sur·prise  (sər-prīz)

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tr.v. **sur·prised, sur·pris·ing, sur·pris·es**

1. To cause to feel wonder, astonishment, or amazement, as at something unanticipated: *Thinking I was at home, she was surprised to see me in the office. We were surprised that he could recover so quickly.*

2.

a. To encounter or discover suddenly or unexpectedly; take or catch unawares: *She surprised him as he was reading her diary.*

b. To attack or capture suddenly and without warning: *surprised the sentries in a predawn raid, wounding several.*

3.

a. To cause (someone) to do or say something unintended or to be in an unintended condition: *"There passed a scene ... that surprised me into courage to come forward" (Fanny Burney).*

b. To elicit or detect through surprise: *"She occasionally surprised a look on Jemima's face" (Marcia Willett).*

n.

1. The act of surprising or the condition of being surprised: *Imagine my surprise on seeing you here.*

2. Something, such as an unexpected encounter, event, or gift, that surprises.

[Middle English *surprisen*, to overcome, from Old French *surprise*, feminine past participle of *surprendre*, to surprise : *sur-*, *sur-* + *prendre*, to take (from Latin *prehendere*, *prēndere*, to seize; see **ghend-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)).]

sur·pris *er n.*

sur·pris *ing·ly adv.*

Synonyms: surprise, astonish, amaze, astound, dumbfound, flabbergast

These verbs mean to affect a person strongly as being unexpected or unusual. To *surprise* is to fill with often sudden wonder or disbelief as being unanticipated or out of the ordinary: *"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity" (George S. Patton).*

Astonish suggests overwhelming surprise: *The sight of such an enormous crowd astonished us.* *Amaze* implies astonishment and often bewilderment: *The violinist's virtuosity has amazed audiences all over the world.* *Astound* connotes shock, as from something unprecedented in one's experience: *We were astounded at the beauty of the mountains.* *Dumbfound* adds to *astound* the suggestion of perplexity and often speechlessness: *His question dumbfounded me, and I could not respond.* *Flabbergast* is used as a more colorful equivalent of *astound*, *astonish*, or *amaze*: *"He was utterly flabbergasted by the accusation and for a few moments he was quite unable to reply" (Alexander McCall Smith).*

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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:

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