



The  
AMERICAN  
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the  
English  
Language

  


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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.

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**ap·pre·hend**  (ăp'ri-hënd )

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v. **ap·pre·hend·ed**, **ap·pre·hend·ing**, **ap·pre·hends**

v.tr.

1. To take into custody; arrest: *apprehended the murderer.*
2. To grasp mentally; understand: "*Science is the systematic method by which we apprehend what is true about the real world in which we live*" ([Richard Dawkins](#)). See Synonyms at [understand](#).
3. To become conscious of, as through the emotions or senses; perceive: "*She began to look with her own eyes; to see and to apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life*" (*Kate Chopin*).
4. Archaic To anticipate with worry or dread.

v.intr.

To understand something.

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[Middle English *apprehenden*, from Old French *apprehender*, from Latin *apprehendere*, to seize : *ad-*, *ad-* + *prehendere*, to grasp; see **ghend-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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**ap'pre-hend** er *n.*

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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](#)

[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](#).

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