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de·grade  (dĭ-grād)

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v. de·grad·ed, de·grad·ing, de·grades

v.tr.

1. To lower in quality or value; make inferior or less valuable: *land that was degraded by overgrazing; a virus that degrades the computer's performance.*

2. To lower in dignity; dishonor or disgrace: *seemed to feel that he was degrading himself in accepting the invitation.*

See Synonyms at [debase](#).

3. To reduce in grade, rank, or status; demote.

4. *Geology* To lower or wear away by erosion or weathering.

5. To cause (an organic compound) to undergo degradation.

v.intr.

1. To fall to a lower rank or status.

2. To undergo degradation; decompose: *a chemical that degrades rapidly.*

[Middle English *degraden*, from Old French *degrader*, from Late Latin *dēgradāre* : Latin *dē-*, *de-* + Latin *gradus*, step; see [ghredh-](#) [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

de·grad *er n.*

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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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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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