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AMERICAN
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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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wom·an  (w ɪ m ə n)

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n. pl. **wom·en** (wɪm ɪ n)

1. An adult female human.
2. Women considered as a group; womankind: “*Woman feels the invidious distinctions of sex exactly as the black man does those of color*” (Elizabeth Cady Stanton).
3. An adult female human belonging to a specified occupation, group, nationality, or other category. Often used in combination: *an Englishwoman; congresswoman; a saleswoman*.
4. A female servant or subordinate.
5. *Informal*
 - a. A wife.
 - b. A female lover or sweetheart. See Usage Notes at [chairman](#), [female](#), [lady](#), [man](#).

Idioms:

(one's) own woman

Independent in judgment or action: *She has always been her own woman.*

to a woman

Without exception.

[Middle English, from Old English *wimman*, variant of *wīfman* : *wīf*, woman + *man*, person; see [MAN](#).]

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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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