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cleave¹  (klēv)

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v. **cleft** (klĕft) or **cleaved** or **clove** (klōv), **cleft** or **cleaved** or **clo·ven** (klō vən), **cleav·ing**, **cleaves**
v.tr.

1. To split with a sharp instrument. See Synonyms at [tear](#)¹.
2. To make or accomplish by or as if by cutting: *cleave a path through the ice.*
3. To pierce or penetrate: *The wings cleaved the foggy air.*
4. *Chemistry* To split (a complex molecule) into simpler molecules.

v.intr.

1. To split or be capable of splitting, especially along a natural line of division: *Certain brittle woods cleave easily.*
2. To penetrate or pass through something, such as water or air.

[Middle English *cleven*, from Old English *clēofan*; see **gleubh-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

cleav a·ble *adj.*

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cleave²  (klēv)

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intr.v. **cleaved**, **cleav·ing**, **cleaves**

1. To adhere, cling, or stick fast.
2. To be faithful: *cleave to one's principles.*

[Middle English *cleven*, from Old English *cleofian*.]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

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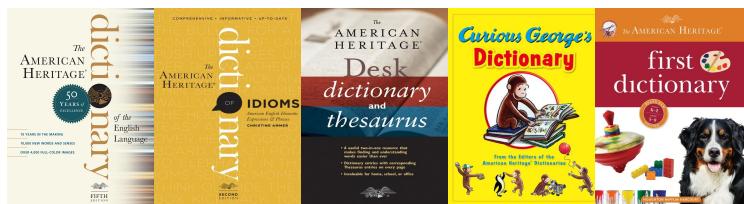
[Indo-European Roots](#)

[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

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