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knowl·edge  (nŏl ĭj)

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n.

1. The state or fact of knowing: *Humans naturally aspire to knowledge.*
2. Familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study: *has great knowledge of these parts; has only limited knowledge of chemistry.*
3. The sum or range of what has been perceived, discovered, or learned: *the extraordinary knowledge housed in the library.*
4. Archaic Carnal knowledge.

[Middle English *knoulech* : *knouen*, to know; see [KNOW](#) + *-leche*, *n. suff.*]

Synonyms: knowledge, information, learning, erudition, scholarship, lore¹

These nouns refer to what is known, as through study or experience. *Knowledge* is the broadest: "*Science is organized knowledge*" (Herbert Spencer).

Information often implies a collection of facts and data: "*A man's judgment cannot be better than the information on which he has based it*" (Arthur Hays Sulzberger).

Learning usually refers to knowledge gained by schooling and study: "*Learning ... must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence*" (Abigail Adams).

Erudition implies profound, often specialized knowledge: "*Some have criticized his poetry as elitist, unnecessarily impervious to readers who do not share his erudition*" (Elizabeth Kastor).

Scholarship is the mastery of a particular area of learning reflected in a scholar's work: *A good journal article shows ample evidence of the author's scholarship.* *Lore* is usually applied to knowledge gained through tradition or anecdote about a particular subject: *Many American folktales concern the lore of frontier life.*

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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:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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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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