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base¹  (bās)

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n.

1. The lowest or bottom part: *the base of a cliff; the base of a lamp.*

2. *Biology*

a. The part of a plant or animal organ that is nearest to its point of attachment.

b. The point of attachment of such an organ.

3.

a. A supporting part or layer; a foundation: *a skyscraper built on a base of solid rock.*

b. A basic or underlying element; infrastructure: *the nation's industrial base.*

4. The fundamental principle or underlying concept of a system or theory; a basis.

5. A fundamental ingredient; a chief constituent: *a paint with an oil base.*

6. The fact, observation, or premise from which a reasoning process is begun.

7.

a. *Games* A starting point, safety area, or goal.

b. *Baseball* Any one of the four corners of an infield, marked by a bag or plate, that must be touched by a runner before a run can be scored.

8.

a. A center of organization, supply, or activity; a headquarters.

b. The portion of a social organization, especially a political party, consisting of the most dedicated or motivated members.

9.

a. A fortified center of operations.

b. A supply center for a large force of military personnel.

10. A facial cosmetic used to even out the complexion or provide a surface for other makeup; a foundation.

11. *Architecture* The lowest part of a structure, such as a wall, considered as a separate unit: *the base of a column.*

12. *Heraldry* The lower part of a shield.

13. *Linguistics* A morpheme or morphemes regarded as a form to which affixes or other bases may be added.

14. *Mathematics*

a. The side or face of a geometric figure to which an altitude is or is thought to be drawn.

b. The number that is raised to various powers to generate the principal counting units of a number system. The base of the decimal system, for example, is 10.

c. The number raised to the logarithm of a designated number in order to produce that designated number; the number at which a chosen logarithmic scale has the value 1.

15. A line used as a reference for measurement or computations.

16. *Chemistry*

a. Any of a class of compounds whose aqueous solutions are characterized by a bitter taste, a slippery feel, the ability to turn litmus blue, and the ability to react with acids to form salts.

b. A substance that yields hydroxide ions when dissolved in water.

c. A substance that can act as a proton acceptor.

d. A substance that can donate a pair of electrons to form a covalent bond.

17. *Electronics*

a. The region in a transistor between the emitter and the collector.

b. The electrode attached to this region.

18. One of the nitrogen-containing purines (adenine and guanine) or pyrimidines (cytosine, thymine, and uracil) that occurs attached to the sugar component of DNA or RNA.

adj.

1. Forming or serving as a base: *a base layer of soil.*

2. Situated at or near the base or bottom: *a base camp for the mountain climbers.*

3. *Chemistry* Of, relating to, or containing a base.

tr.v. **based, bas·ing, bas·es**

1. To form or provide a base for: *based the new company in Portland.*

2. To find a basis for; establish: *based her conclusions on the report; a film based on a best-selling novel.*

3. To assign to a base; station: *troops based in the Middle East.*

Idiom:

off base

Badly mistaken.

[Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *basis*, from Greek; see **g^Wā-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Synonyms: **base¹, basis, foundation, ground¹, groundwork**

These nouns all pertain to what underlies and supports. *Base* is used broadly in both literal and figurative contexts: *the wide base of the pyramid; a party seeking to expand its power base.*

Basis is used in a nonphysical sense: *"Healthy scepticism is the basis of all accurate observation"* (Arthur Conan Doyle).

Foundation often stresses firmness of support for something of relative magnitude: *"Our flagrant disregard for the law attacks the foundation of this society"* (Peter D. Relic).

Ground is used figuratively, especially in the plural, to mean a justifiable reason: *grounds for divorce.*

Groundwork usually has the sense of a necessary preliminary: *"It [the Universal Declaration of Human Rights] has laid the groundwork for the world's war crimes tribunals"* (Hillary Rodham Clinton).

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base²  (bās)

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adj. **bas·er, bas·est**

1. Having or showing a lack of decency; contemptible, mean-spirited, or selfish.

2.

a. Being a metal that is of little value.

b. Containing such metals: *base coins.*

3. *Archaic* Of low birth, rank, or position.

4. *Obsolete* Short in stature.

n.

Obsolete

A bass singer or voice.

[Middle English *bas*, low, from Old French, from Medieval Latin *bassus*.]

base ly *adv.*

base ness *n.*

Synonyms: **base², low¹, abject, ignoble, mean², sordid**

These adjectives mean lacking in dignity or falling short of the standards befitting humans. *Base* suggests a contemptible, mean-spirited, or selfish lack of human decency: *"that liberal obedience, without which your army would be a base rabble"* (Edmund Burke).

Something *low* violates standards of morality, ethics, or propriety: *low cunning; a low trick.* *Abject* means degrading or miserable: *abject failure; abject poverty.* *Ignoble* means lacking noble qualities, such as elevated moral character: *"For my part I think it a less evil that some criminals should escape than that the government should play an ignoble part"* (Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.)

Mean suggests pettiness, spite, or stinginess: *"Never ascribe to an opponent motives meaner than your own"* (J.M.).

Barrie).

Sordid suggests foul, repulsive degradation: "It is through art ... that we can shield ourselves from the sordid perils of actual existence" (Oscar Wilde).

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

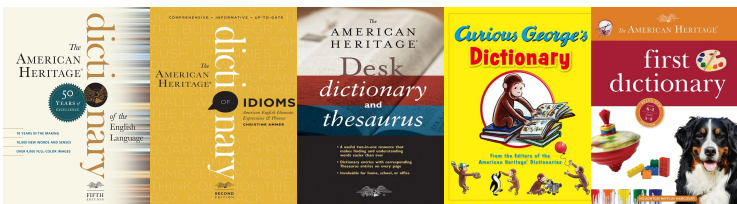
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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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