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whis·key also **whis·ky**  (wĭs kē, hwĭs -)

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n. pl. whis·keys also *whis·kies*

1. An alcoholic liquor distilled from grain, such as corn, rye, or barley, and containing approximately 40 to 50 percent ethyl alcohol by volume.
2. A drink of such liquor.

[Shortening and alteration of [USQUEBAUGH](#).]

Word History: The words *water*, *whiskey*, and *vodka* flow from a common source, the Indo-European root **wed-*, "water, wet." This root could appear in several guises, as **wed-*, **wod-*, or **ud-*. *Water* is a native English word that goes back by way of prehistoric Common Germanic **watar* to the Indo-European suffixed form **wod-ōr*, with an *o*. *Whiskey* is a shortened form of *usquebaugh*, which English borrowed from Irish Gaelic *uisce beatha* and Scottish Gaelic *uisge beatha*. This compound descends from Old Irish *uisce*, "water," and *bethad*, "of life," meaning literally "water of life." (It thus meant the same thing as the name of another drink, *aquavit*, which comes from Latin *aqua vītæ*, "water of life.") *Uisce* comes from the Indo-European suffixed form **ud-skio-*. Finally, the name of another alcoholic drink, *vodka*, comes into English from Russian, where it means literally "little water," as it is a diminutive of *voda*, "water"—a euphemism if ever there was one. *Voda* comes from the same Indo-European form as English *water*, but has a different suffix: **wod-ā*.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

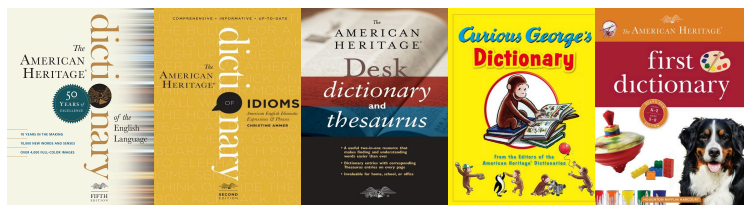
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