



The
AMERICAN
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the
English
Language



HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

To look up an entry in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, use the search window above. For best results, after typing in the word, click on the “Search” button instead of using the “enter” key.

Some compound words (like *bus rapid transit*, *dog whistle*, or *identity theft*) don’t appear on the drop-down list when you type them in the search bar. For best results with compound words, place a quotation mark before the compound word in the search window.

[guide to the dictionary](#)



THE USAGE PANEL

The Usage Panel is a group of nearly 200 prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. Annual surveys have gauged the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions.

[The Panelists](#)



AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY APP

The new American Heritage Dictionary app is now available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#).



THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY BLOG

The articles in our [blog](#) examine new words, revised definitions, interesting images from the fifth edition, discussions of usage, and more.

THE 100 WORDS®

See word lists from the best-selling 100 Words Series!

[Find out more!](#)



INTERESTED IN DICTIONARIES?

Check out the Dictionary Society of North America at <http://www.dictionariesociety.com>

prob·lem  (prŏb ləm)

Share: [Post](#)

n.

1. A question to be considered, solved, or answered: *math problems*.

2.

a. A situation, matter, or person that is hard to deal with or understand: *was having problems breathing; considered the main problem to be his boss*. See Usage Note at [dilemma](#).

b. A personal matter that causes one difficulty or needs to be dealt with: *felt her tyrannical boss had deep-seated problems*.

3. A misgiving, objection, or complaint: *I have a problem with his cynicism*.

adj.

1. Difficult to deal with or control: *a problem child*.

2. Dealing with a moral or social problem: *a problem play*.

Idiom:

no problem

1. Used to express confirmation of or compliance with a request.

2. Used to acknowledge an expression of gratitude.

[Middle English *probleme*, from Old French, from Latin *problēma*, *problēmat-*, from Greek, from *proballein*, to throw before, put forward : *pro-*, before; see [PRO-](#)² + *ballein*, *blē-*, to throw; see [g^wela-](#) [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

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](#)

[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 in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

American Heritage Dictionary Products



[The American Heritage Dictionary, 5th Edition](#)
 [The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms](#)
 [The American Heritage Roget's Thesaurus](#)
 [Curious George's Dictionary](#)
 [The American Heritage Children's Dictionary](#)

• CONTACT US

- [Customer Service](#)
- [Make Me An Author](#)
- [Ebooks Help with Glose Reader](#)

• ABOUT US

- [Company Profile](#)
- [Leadership Team](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [HarperCollins Careers](#)
- [HarperCollins Imprints](#)
- [HarperGreen](#)
- [Social Media Directory](#)
- [Accessibility](#)

• FOR READERS

- [Browse Reading Guides](#)

• FOR AUTHORS

- [Submit a Manuscript](#)
- [Report Piracy](#)
- [Agent Portal](#)

• MEDIA

- [Publicity Contacts](#)
- [Press Room](#)

• SERVICES

- [HarperCollins Speakers Bureau](#)
- [Library Services](#)
- [Academic Services](#)
- [Desk & Exam Copies](#)
- [Review Copies](#)
- [OpenBook API](#)
- [Marketing Partnerships](#)

• COVID-19 RESOURCES & PERMISSIONS

- [Permissions for Adult Online Readings](#)
- [Permissions for Kids Online Readings](#)

• SALES & RIGHTS

- [Booksellers & Retailer Ordering](#)
- [HarperCollins Catalogs](#)
- [Permissions](#)
- [Subsidiary Rights](#)

- [Media Rights and Content Development](#)

• GLOSE APP

- [iPhone](#)
- [Android](#)

• GLOBAL DIVISIONS

- [HarperCollins US](#)
- [HarperCollins Canada](#)
- [HarperCollins Christian](#)
- [HarperCollins Australia](#)
- [HarperCollins India](#)
- [HarperCollins UK](#)

 HarperCollins Publishers

News Corp

[Terms of Use](#) •
 [Terms of Sale](#) •
 [Your Ad Choices](#) •
 [Privacy Policy](#) •
 [California Privacy Policy](#) •
 [Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

Copyright 2022 HarperCollins Publishers All rights reserved.

*This website is best viewed in Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari. Some characters in pronunciations and etymologies cannot be displayed properly in Internet Explorer.