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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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breath  (brĕth)

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n.

1.

a. The act or process of breathing; respiration: *swam down to the reef, holding his breath.*

b. A single act of breathing: *Take a deep breath.*

2.

a. The air inhaled and exhaled in respiration: *as long as there is breath in my lungs.*

b. Air that is exhaled, as evidenced by vapor or odor: *It's so cold you can see your breath.*

3. The capacity to breathe, especially in a natural and unlabored manner: *suffering from shortness of breath.*

4. Spirit or vitality: *colors that lend breath to his paintings.*

5. A momentary pause or rest: *If I could have a breath before I go on.*

6. A momentary stirring of air: *Not a breath of air stirred the leaves.*

7. A softly spoken sound; a whisper: *There was hardly a breath of protest.*

8. Linguistics Exhalation of air without vibration of the vocal cords, as in the articulation of *p* and *s*.

Idioms:

in one/the same breath

At or almost at the same time.

out of breath

Breathing with difficulty, as from exertion; gasping.

under (one's) breath

In a muted voice or whisper.

[Middle English *breth*, from Old English *bræth*; see **g^whrē-** [in the Appendix of 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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