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i·tem  (ī təm)

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n.

1. A single article or unit in a collection, enumeration, or series.
2. A clause of a document, such as a bill or charter.
3. An entry in an account.
4.
 - a. A bit of information; a detail.
 - b. A short piece in a newspaper or magazine.
5. A romantically involved couple: "[They] soon began seeing each other ... and were an item for a year and a half." (Peter J. Boyer).

adv.

Also; likewise. Used to introduce each article in an enumeration or list.

tr.v. **i·temed**, **i·tem·ing**, **i·tems**

Archaic

To record, especially in an itemized list.

[From Middle English, also, moreover, from Latin; see **i-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Word History: The word *item* seems to us to be very much a noun, whether it refers to an article in a collection or a bit of information. But it began its life in English (first recorded before 1398) as an adverb meaning "moreover, also, in addition." *Item* was typically used in front of each object listed in an inventory, as we might put *also*. This use in English simply reflects a meaning of the word in Latin. However, it is easy to see how *item* could be taken to stand for the thing that it preceded, and so we get, for example, the sense "an article included in an enumeration." The first such usages are found in the 1500s, while the sense "a bit of information" is not found until the 1800s.

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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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