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AMERICAN
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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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ca·su·al·ty  (kăzh -əl-tē)

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n. pl. **ca·su·al·ties**

1.

a. One who is injured or killed in an accident: *a train wreck with many casualties.*

b. One who is injured, killed, captured, or missing in action through engagement with an enemy: *Battlefield casualties were high.*

2. One that is harmed or eliminated as a result of an action or circumstance: *The corner grocery was a casualty of the expanding supermarkets.*

3. An accident, especially one involving serious injury or loss of life.

[Middle English *casuelte*, chance, accident, from Old French, from Medieval Latin *cāsuālitās*, from Latin *cāsuālis*, fortuitous; see [CASUAL](#).]

Usage Note: In military usage, a *casualty* is a serviceperson who has been killed, injured, captured, or in some other way rendered unable to serve. When used in nonmilitary situations, such as newspaper reports about accidents, the word *casualty* is usually used to mean a person who is either killed or injured. Sometimes, however, people use *casualties* to refer only to individuals who have died, not to those who have been injured. This usage is often considered an error. In our 2013 survey, 60 percent of the Usage Panel disapproved of a sentence where *casualties* was used to mean "fatalities" only: *Officials have reported 21 casualties from yesterday's earthquake. In addition to those fatalities, 79 people were seriously injured.*

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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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