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chance  (chāns)

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n.

1.

a. The unknown and unpredictable element in happenings that seems to have no assignable cause.

b. A force assumed to cause events that cannot be foreseen or controlled; luck: *Chance will determine the outcome.*

2. often **chances** The likelihood of something happening; possibility or probability: *Chances are good that you will win. Is there any chance of rain?*

3. An accidental or unpredictable event: *"He sprang to his feet and turned to run. At the same moment by a lucky chance the moon broke through the clouds" (Arthur Conan Doyle).*

4. A favorable set of circumstances; an opportunity: *a chance to escape.*

5. A risk or hazard; a gamble: *took a chance that the ice would hold me.*

6. Games A raffle or lottery ticket.

7. Baseball An opportunity to make a putout or an assist that counts as an error if unsuccessful.

adj.

Caused by or ascribable to chance; unexpected, random, or casual: *a chance encounter; a chance result.*

tr.v. **chanced, chanc-ing, chanc-es**

1. To take the risk or hazard of: *We thought we could jump over the puddle, but we were not willing to chance it.*

2. To have the fortune (to be or do something); happen: *"My eye chanced to fall on the wizened houseplant on the windowsill" (Elisabeth Brink).*

3. Used with the impersonal subject *it* and a following clause or infinitive to indicate the occurrence of a usually unexpected or chance event: *"Now it chanced that this car-line was owned by gentlemen who were trying to make money" (Upton Sinclair).*

Phrasal Verb:

chance on (or upon)

To find or meet accidentally; happen upon: *While in Paris we chanced on two old friends.*

Idioms:

by chance

1. Without plan; accidentally: *They met by chance on a plane.*

2. Possibly; perchance: *Is he, by chance, her brother?*

on the off chance

In the slight hope or possibility.

[Middle English, unexpected event, from Old French, from Vulgar Latin **cadentia*, from Latin *cadēns*, *cadent-*, present participle of *cadere*, to fall, befall; see **kad-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

Synonyms: [chance](#), [random](#), [casual](#), [haphazard](#), [desultory](#)

These adjectives apply to what is determined not by deliberation but by happenstance. *Chance* stresses lack of intention or premeditation: *a chance meeting with a friend.*

Random implies the absence of a specific pattern or objective: *at the mercy of random events.*

Casual stresses the indiscriminate or unpredictable nature of chance events: *"the casual mutation of one of your liver cells from normal to cancerous" (John Barth).*

Haphazard implies a carelessness or lack of control: *"If unmarried significant others are invited to participate in the family support groups at all, it tends to be on a haphazard, informal basis" (Kristin Henderson).*

Desultory denotes a sporadic or aimless sequence of events: *"I lay on a shared cot listening to desultory gunfire" (Jan Clausen).* See Also Synonyms at [happen](#), [opportunity](#).

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

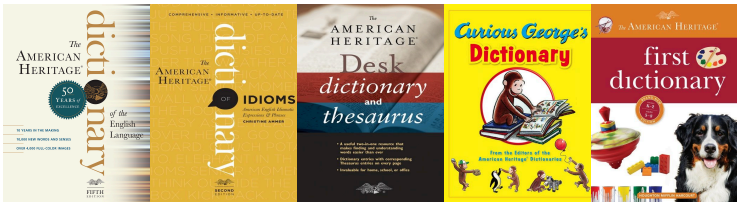
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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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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