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cap·i·tal¹  (kăp ĭ-tl)

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n.

1.

a. A town or city that is the official seat of government in a political entity, such as a state or nation.

b. A city that is the center of a specific activity or industry: *the financial capital of the world.*

2.

a. Wealth, especially in the form of financial or physical assets, used in the production or accumulation of more wealth.

b. Accumulated assets or advantages used for economic or political gain: *"The president lacks the political capital to override their objections" (The Economist).*

3.

a. The money invested in a corporation, including debt and equity.

b. Net worth.

c. Capital stock.

4. Capitalists considered as a group or class.

5. A capital letter.

adj.

1. First and foremost; principal: *a decision of capital importance.*

2. First-rate; excellent: *a capital idea.*

3. Relating to or being a seat of government.

4. Extremely serious: *a capital blunder.*

5. Involving death or calling for the death penalty: *a capital offense.*

6. Of or relating to financial assets, especially being or related to those financial assets that add to the net worth of a business: *made capital improvements at the plant site.*

7. Relating to or being a capital letter.

[From Middle English, principal, from Old French, from Latin *capitālis*, from *caput*, head, money laid out; see **kaput-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots. Noun, sense 5, and adjective, sense 7, from the medieval use of uncials in headings of pages and passages.]

Usage Note: The term for a town or city that serves as a seat of government is spelled *capital*. The term for the building in which a legislative assembly meets is spelled *capitol*.

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cap·i·tal²  (kăp ĭ-tl)

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n.

Architecture

The top part of a pillar or column, typically having an ornamental design.

[Middle English, from Anglo-Norman, from Late Latin *capitellum*, diminutive of Latin *caput*, head; see **kaput-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]



(click for a larger image)

capital²

top: at the Kiosk of Qertassi

New Kalabsha, Egypt

bottom: in the cloister of the Monastery of Santa Maria de l'Estany

Estany, Spain



(click for a larger image)

capital²

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

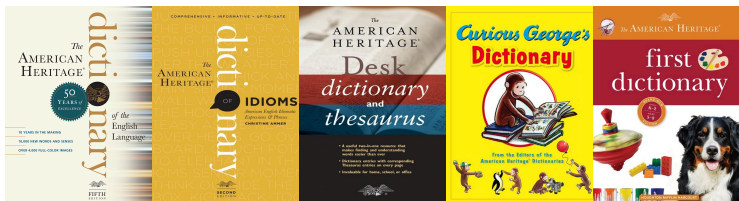
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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