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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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ker·chief  (kûr chĭf, -chĕf')

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n. pl. ker·chiefs also *ker·chieves* (-chĭvz, -chĕvz)

1. A square scarf, often worn as a head covering.
2. A handkerchief.

[Middle English *coverchef*, *curchef*, from Anglo-Norman *courchief* (variant of Old French *couvrechef*) and from Old French *couvrechef*: *covrir*, to cover; see [COVER](#) + *chef*, head; see [CHIEF](#).]

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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:

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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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