



The
AMERICAN
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the
English
Language



HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

To look up an entry in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, use the search window above. For best results, after typing in the word, click on the “Search” button instead of using the “enter” key.

Some compound words (like *bus rapid transit*, *dog whistle*, or *identity theft*) don’t appear on the drop-down list when you type them in the search bar. For best results with compound words, place a quotation mark before the compound word in the search window.

[guide to the dictionary](#)



THE USAGE PANEL

The Usage Panel is a group of nearly 200 prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. Annual surveys have gauged the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions.

[The Panelists](#)



AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY APP

The new American Heritage Dictionary app is now available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#).



THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY BLOG

The articles in our [blog](#) examine new words, revised definitions, interesting images from the fifth edition, discussions of usage, and more.

THE 100 WORDS®

See word lists from the best-selling 100 Words Series!

[Find out more!](#)



INTERESTED IN DICTIONARIES?

Check out the Dictionary Society of North America at <http://www.dictionariesociety.com>

pre·cip·i·tate  (prĭ-sĭp ĭ-tāt')

Share: [Tweet](#)

v. pre·cip·i·tat·ed, pre·cip·i·tat·ing, pre·cip·i·tates

v.tr.

1. To cause to happen, especially suddenly or prematurely: *an announcement that precipitated a political crisis.*
2. To cause to fall down from a height; hurl downward: *"The finest bridge in all Peru broke and precipitated five travelers into the gulf below" (Thornton Wilder).*
3. To put suddenly into a certain state or condition: *"He was like a man who had never known liberty and was all at once precipitated into it" (Taylor Caldwell).*
4. *Meteorology* To cause (a form of water, as rain or snow) to fall from the air.
5. *Chemistry* To cause (a solid substance) to be separated from a solution.

v.intr.

1. *Meteorology* To fall from the air as a form of water, such as rain or snow.
2. *Chemistry* To be separated from a solution as a solid.

adj. (-tīt)

1. Moving rapidly and heedlessly; speeding headlong.
2. Acting with or marked by excessive haste and lack of due deliberation. See Synonyms at [impetuous](#).
3. Occurring suddenly or unexpectedly.

n. (-tāt', -tīt)

1. *Chemistry* A solid or solid phase separated from a solution.
2. A product resulting from a process, event, or course of action.

[Latin *praecipitāre*, *praecipitāt-*, to throw headlong, from *praeceps*, *praecipit-*, headlong : *prae-*, pre- + *caput*, *capit-*, head; see **kaput-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

pre·cip i·tate·ly (-tīt-lē) *adv.*

pre·cip i·tate·ness *n.*

pre·cip i·ta'tive *adj.*

pre·cip i·ta'tor *n.*

Usage Note: The adjective *precipitate* and the adverb *precipitately* were once applied to physical steepness but are now used primarily of rash, headlong actions: *Their precipitate entry into the foreign markets led to disaster. He withdrew precipitately from the race. Precipitous* currently means "steep" in both literal and figurative senses: *the precipitous rapids of the upper river; a precipitous drop in commodity prices*. But *precipitous* and *precipitously* are also frequently used to mean "abrupt, hasty," which takes them into territory that would ordinarily belong to *precipitate* and *precipitately*: *their precipitous decision to leave*. Many people object to this usage out of a desire to keep *precipitate* and *precipitous* distinct, but the extension of meaning from "steep" to "abrupt" is perfectly natural. After all a *precipitous increase in reports of measles* is also an abrupt or sudden event. In fact, a majority of the Usage Panel now accepts this usage. In our 2004 survey, 65 percent accepted the sentence *Pressure to marry may cause precipitous decision-making that is not grounded in the reality of who you are and what you want from life*.

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

Semitic Roots

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](#).

American Heritage Dictionary Products



<u>The</u>	<u>The</u>	<u>The</u>
<u>American</u>	<u>American</u>	<u>American</u>
<u>Heritage</u>	<u>Heritage</u>	<u>Heritage</u>
<u>Dictionary,</u>	<u>Dictionary.</u>	<u>Roget's</u>
5th Edition	of Idioms	Thesaurus

[Curious George's Dictionary](#) [The American Heritage Children's Dictionary](#)

- **CONTACT US**
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Make Me An Author](#)
- [Ebooks Help with Glose Reader](#)
- **ABOUT US**
- [Company Profile](#)
- [Leadership Team](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [HarperCollins Careers](#)
- [HarperCollins Imprints](#)
- [HarperGreen](#)
- [Social Media Directory](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- **FOR READERS**
- [Browse Reading Guides](#)
- **FOR AUTHORS**
- [Submit a Manuscript](#)
- [Report Piracy](#)
- [Agent Portal](#)
- **MEDIA**
- [Publicity Contacts](#)
- [Press Room](#)
- **SERVICES**
- [HarperCollins Speakers Bureau](#)
- [Library Services](#)
- [Academic Services](#)
- [Desk & Exam Copies](#)
- [Review Copies](#)
- [OpenBook API](#)
- [Marketing Partnerships](#)
- **COVID-19 RESOURCES & PERMISSIONS**
- [Permissions for Adult Online Readings](#)
- [Permissions for Kids Online Readings](#)
- **SALES & RIGHTS**
- [Booksellers & Retailer Ordering](#)
- [HarperCollins Catalogs](#)
- [Permissions](#)
- [Subsidiary Rights](#)
- [Media Rights and Content Development](#)
- **GLOSE APP**
- [iPhone](#)
- [Android](#)
-
-
-
- **GLOBAL DIVISIONS**
- [HarperCollins US](#)
- [HarperCollins Canada](#)
- [HarperCollins Christian](#)
- [HarperCollins Australia](#)
- [HarperCollins India](#)
- [HarperCollins UK](#)
-
-
-
-
-
-

*This website is best viewed in Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari. Some characters in pronunciations and etymologies cannot be displayed properly in Internet Explorer.