



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>

col·or  (kŭl ər)

Share: [Tweet](#)

n.

1. That aspect of things that is caused by differing qualities of the light reflected or emitted by them, definable in terms of the observer or of the light, as:

a. The appearance of objects or light sources described in terms of the individual's perception of them, involving hue, lightness, and saturation for objects, and hue, brightness, and saturation for light sources.

b. The characteristics of light by which the individual is made aware of objects or light sources through the receptors of the eye, described in terms of dominant wavelength, luminance, and purity.

c. A gradation or variation of this aspect, especially when other than black, white, or gray; a hue: *fireworks that exploded in brilliant colors.*

2. A substance, such as a dye, pigment, or paint, that imparts a hue.

3.

a. The use of different colors in visual representation.

b. The different colors used in visual representation: *one of the earliest movies in color.*

4.

a. The general appearance of the skin, especially as an indication of good health: *regained her color after a few days' rest.*

b. A reddening of the face, as a blush or sign of anger.

5. Skin pigmentation considered as a racial characteristic or a marker of racial identity, especially when other than white: *"My father told me if I go west, there's integration; you don't worry about color" (Itabari Njeri).* See Usage Note at [person of color](#).

6. **colors**

a. A colored item, such as a badge, ribbon, or piece of clothing, serving as an identifying mark: *wore the colors of their college.*

b. A flag or banner, as of a country or military unit: *a ship flying the colors of Brazil.*

c. The salute made during the ceremony of raising or lowering a flag.

7. **colors** One's opinion or position: *Stick to your colors.*

8. **often colors** Character or nature: *revealed their true colors.*

9.

a. An outward and often deceptive appearance: *a tale with the merest color of truth.*

b. Appearance of authenticity: *testimony that lends color to an otherwise absurd notion.*

c. *Law* The appearance of a legal claim, as to a right or office.

10.

a. Vividness or variety in expression: *a story told with a lot of color.*

b. Commentary distinguished by vivid details or background information, as during a sports broadcast: *A former coach provided the color for the championship game.*

11. Local color.

12. The use or effect of pigment in painting, as distinct from form.

13. *Music* Quality of tone or timbre.

14. A particle or bit of gold found in auriferous gravel or sand.

15. *Physics* See [color charge](#).

16. *Astronomy* See [color index](#).

v. col·ored, col·or·ing, col·ors

v.tr.

1. To impart color to or change the color of.

2.

a. To give a distinctive character or quality to; modify: "*Both books are colored by the author's childhood experiences*" (Deborah M. Locke).

b. To exert an influence on; affect: *The war colored the soldier's life.*

3.

a. To misrepresent, especially by distortion or exaggeration: *color the facts.*

b. To gloss over; excuse: *a parent who colored the children's lies.*

v.intr.

1.

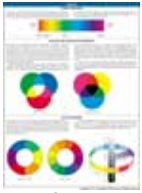
a. To take on color.

b. To change color.

2. To become red in the face; redden or blush.

[Middle English *colour*, from Old French, from Latin *color*; see **kel-**¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

col or·ern.



(click for a larger image)

color

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers. All rights reserved.

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

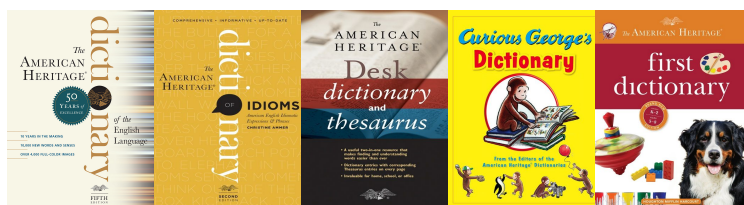
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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



[The American Heritage Dictionary, 5th Edition](#)
 [The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms](#)
 [The American Heritage Roget's 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](#)

 HarperCollins Publishers

News Corp

[Terms of Use](#) •
 [Terms of Sale](#) •
 [Your Ad Choices](#) •
 [Privacy Policy](#) •
 [California Privacy Policy](#) •
 [Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

Copyright 2022 HarperCollins Publishers All rights reserved.

*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.