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dictionary

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cell  (sĕl)

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n.

1. A narrow confining room, as in a prison or convent.
2. A small enclosed cavity or space, such as a compartment in a honeycomb or within a plant ovary or an area bordered by veins in an insect's wing.
3. *Biology* The smallest structural unit of an organism that is capable of independent functioning, consisting of cytoplasm, usually one nucleus, and various other organelles, all surrounded by a semipermeable cell membrane.
4. *Architecture* See [web](#).
5. The smallest organizational unit of a clandestine group or movement, such as a banned political movement or a terrorist group. A cell's leader is often the only person who knows members of the organization outside the cell.
6. *Electricity*
 - a. A single unit for electrolysis or conversion of chemical into electric energy, usually consisting of a container with electrodes and an electrolyte; a battery. Also called *electrochemical cell*.
 - b. A single unit that converts radiant energy into electric energy: *a solar cell*.
7. A fuel cell.
8.
 - a. A geographic area or zone surrounding a transmitter in a cellular telephone system.
 - b. A cellphone.
9. *Computers* A basic unit of storage in a computer memory that can hold one unit of information, such as a character or word.
10. A storm cell.
11. A small humble abode, such as a hermit's cave or hut.
12. A small religious house dependent on a larger one, such as a priory within an abbey.
13. A box or other unit on a spreadsheet or similar array at the intersection of a column and a row.

v. celled, cell-ing, cells

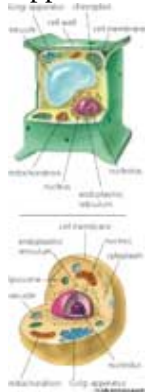
v. tr.

To store in a honeycomb.

v. intr.

To live in or share a prison cell.

[Middle English *celle*, from Old English *cell* and from Old French, both from Latin *cella*, chamber; see **kel-**¹ in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]



(click for a larger image)

cell

top: plant cell

bottom: animal cell

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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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