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de·cline  (dī-klīn)

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v. **de·clined**, **de·clin·ing**, **de·clines**

v.*intr.*

1. To express polite refusal: *I wanted to invite them but I was afraid they would decline.*

2.

a. To slope downward; descend: *The roof declines at a steep angle.*

b. To bend downward; droop: *boughs declining toward the ground.*

3. To degrade or lower oneself; stoop: *refused to decline to their level of behavior.*

4. To deteriorate gradually; fail: *His health has been declining for years.*

5.

a. To sink, as the setting sun.

b. To draw to a gradual close: *We made our way home as the day declined.*

v.*tr.*

1. To refuse politely: *I declined their offer of help.* See Synonyms at [refuse](#)¹.

2. To cause to slope or bend downward.

3. *Grammar* To inflect (a noun, a pronoun, or an adjective) for number and case.

n.

1. The process or result of declining, especially:

a. A gradual deterioration, as in numbers, activity, or quality: *"overwhelming evidence that fish stocks ... are in decline" (Jonathan Bocknek).*

b. A downward movement or fall, as in price.

c. A deterioration of health: *the patient's rapid decline.*

2. A downward slope; a declivity: *the sharp decline of the dunes to the sea.*

[Middle English *declinen*, from Old French *decliner*, from Latin *dēclīnāre*, to turn away, bend downward, change the form of a word : *dē-*, *de-* + *-clīnāre*, to lean, bend; see **klei-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

de·clin **a·ble** *adj.*

de·clin **er** *n.*

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

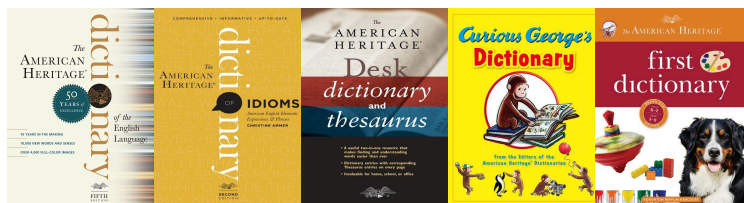
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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