



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>

IT

Share:

abbr.
information technology

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

It.

Share:

abbr.
1. Italian
2. Italy

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

it  (ɪt)

Share: [Tweet](#)

pron.

1. Used to refer to that one previously mentioned. Used of a nonhuman entity; an animate being whose sex is unspecified, unknown, or irrelevant; a group of objects or individuals; an action; or an abstraction: *polished the table until it shone; couldn't find out who it was; opened the meeting by calling it to order.*
 2. Used as the subject of an impersonal verb: *It is snowing.*
 3.
 - a. Used as an anticipatory subject or object: *Is it certain that they will win? We found it hard to believe that the car was that old.*
 - b. Used as an anticipatory subject to emphasize a term that is not itself a subject: *It was on Friday that all the snow fell.*
 4. Used to refer to a general condition or state of affairs: *She couldn't stand it.*
 5. Used to refer to a crucial situation or culmination: *This is it—the rivals are finally face to face. That's it! I won't tolerate any more foolishness.*
 6. *Informal* Used to refer to something that is the best, the most desirable, or without equal: *He thinks he's it. That steak was really it!*
 7. *Games* Used to designate a player, as in tag, who attempts to find or catch the other players.
- n.*
An animal that has been neutered: *The cat is an it.*

Idioms:

out of it *Informal*

1. Unaware of or unknowledgeable about the latest trends or developments.
2. In a daze or stupor: *I didn't get enough sleep last night, and today I'm really out of it.*

with it *Informal*

1. Aware of or knowledgeable about the latest trends or developments.
 2. Mentally responsive and perceptive: *I'm just not with it today.*
-

[Middle English, from Old English *hit*; see **ko-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

Our Living Language "I told Anse it likely won't be no need." This quotation from William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* demonstrates a use of *it* that occurs in some vernacular varieties of American speech. *It* is used instead of Standard English *there* when *there* functions as a so-called existential—that is, when *there* indicates the mere existence of something rather than a physical location, as in *It was nothing I could do*. Existential *it* is hardly a recent innovation—it appears in Middle English; in Elizabethan English, as in Marlowe's *Edward II*: "Cousin, it is no dealing with him now"; and in modern American literature as well. Although most British and American varieties no longer have this historical feature, it still occurs in some Southern-based dialects and in African American Vernacular English. · In some American vernacular dialects, particularly in the South (including the Appalachian and Ozark Mountains), speakers may pronounce *it* as *hit* in stressed positions, especially at the beginning of a sentence, as in *Hit's cold out here!* This pronunciation is called a *relic dialect feature* because it represents the retention of an older English form. In fact, *hit* is the original form of the third person singular neuter pronoun and thus can be traced to the beginnings of the Old English period (c. 449-1100). Early in the history of English, speakers began to drop the *h* from *hit*, particularly in unaccented positions, as in *I saw it yesterday*. Gradually, *h* also came to be lost in accented positions, although *hit* persisted in socially prestigious speech well into the Elizabethan period. Some relatively isolated dialects in Great Britain and the United States have retained *h*, since linguistic innovations such as the dropping of *h* are often slow to reach isolated areas. But even in such places, *h* tends to be retained only in accented words. Thus, we might hear *Hit's the one I want* side by side with *I took it back to the store*. Nowadays, *hit* is fading even in the most isolated dialect communities and occurs primarily among older speakers. · This loss of *h* reflects a longstanding tendency among speakers of English to omit *h*'s in unaccented words, particularly pronouns, such as 'er and 'im for *her* and *him*, as in *I told 'er to meet me outside*. This kind of *h*-loss is widespread in casual speech today, even though it is not reflected in spelling.

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

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

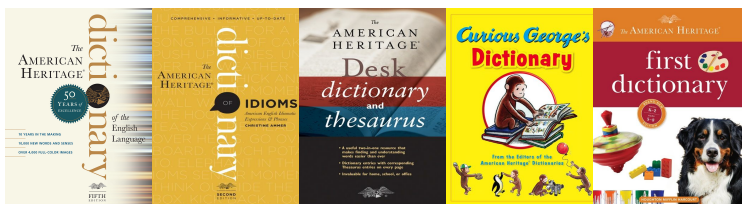
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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](#)

[The
American
Heritage](#)

[The
American
Heritage](#)

[Curious
George's
Dictionary](#)

[The
American
Heritage](#)

- **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](#)



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.