



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>

count·er² (koun tər)

Share: [Tweet](#)

- n.*
1. A flat surface on which money is counted, business is transacted, or food is prepared or served.
 2. *Games* A piece, as of wood or ivory, used for keeping a count or a place.
 3.
 - a. An imitation coin; a token.
 - b. A piece of money.

Idioms:

over the counter

1. Without being listed or available on an officially recognized stock exchange but in trade by direct negotiation between buyers and sellers: *bought stocks over the counter*.
2. Without a doctor's prescription being legally required: *cold medicine that is available over the counter*.

under the counter

In an illegal or surreptitious manner; illicitly: *arrested for selling prescription drugs under the counter*.

[Middle English *countour*, from Anglo-Norman *counteour*, from Medieval Latin *computātōrium*, countinghouse, from Latin *computāre*, to calculate; see [COUNT](#)¹.]

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

counter-

Share: [Tweet](#)

- pref.*
1. Contrary; opposite; opposing: *counterclaim*.
 2. Corresponding; complementary: *counterfoil*.

[Middle English *countre-*, from Old French *contre-*, from Latin *contrā*; see **kom** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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

Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

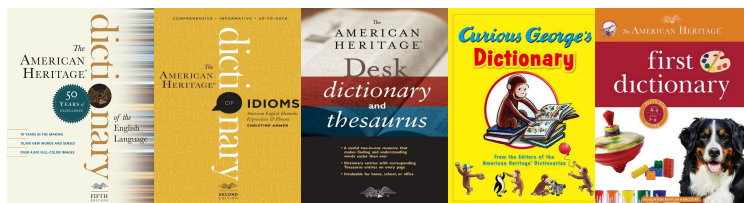
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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.