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dis·cern  (dĭ-sûrn)

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tr.v. **dis·cerned**, **dis·cern·ing**, **dis·cerns**

1. To perceive with the eyes; detect or distinguish: *discern a figure in the shadows.*
2. To recognize or understand as being distinct or different: *Researchers finally discerned the purpose of the gene.* See Synonyms at [see](#)¹.

[Middle English *discernen*, from Old French *discerner*, from Latin *discernere*, to separate : *dis-*, apart; see [DIS-](#) + *cernere*, to perceive; see [krei-](#) [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

dis·cern *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:

[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](#).

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