



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>

pe·nal  (pē nəl)

Share: [Tweet](#)

adj.

1. Of, relating to, or prescribing punishment, as for breaking the law.
2. Subject to punishment; legally punishable: *a penal offense*.
3. Serving as or constituting a means or place of punishment: *penal servitude; a penal colony*.

[Middle English, from Old French *peinal* and from Medieval Latin *pēnālis*, both from Latin *poenālis*, from *poena*, penalty, from Greek *poinē*; see **k^wei-¹** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

pe nal·ly *adv.*

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.