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qua·ter·ni·on  (kwə-tûr nē-ən)

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n.

1. A set of four persons or items.

2. *Mathematics* Any number of the form $a + bi + cj + dk$ where a , b , c , and d are real numbers, $ij = k$, $i^2 = j^2 = -1$, and $ij = -ji$. Under addition and multiplication, quaternions have all the properties of a field, except multiplication is not commutative.

[Middle English *quaternioun*, from Late Latin *quaterniō*, *quaterniōn-*, from Latin *quaternī*, by fours, from *quater*, four times; see **k^wetwer-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

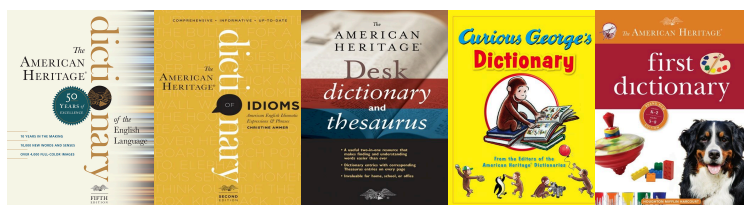
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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