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when  (wĕn, hwĕn)

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adv.

At what time: *When will we leave?*

conj.

1. At the time that: *in the spring, when the snow melts.*
2. As soon as: *I'll call you when I get there.*
3. Whenever: *When the wind blows, all the doors rattle.*
4. During the time at which; while: *When I was young, I was sick all the time.*
5. Whereas; although: *She stopped short when she ought to have continued.*
6. Considering that; if: *How can he get good grades when he won't study?*

pron.

1. What or which time: *Since when has this been going on?*
2. At or during the time that: *Where were you on the night when the murder took place?*

n.

The time or date: *Have they decided the where and when?*

[Middle English, from Old English *hwenne*; see **k^wo-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Usage Note: In informal style *when* is often used after forms of *be* in definitions: *A dilemma is when you don't know which way to turn*. Although useful, this construction is widely regarded as incorrect or unsuitable for formal discourse. In formal style such definitions should be recast to eliminate *is when*, either by supplying a generic term that may be modified by a restrictive adjective clause (*A dilemma is a situation in which you don't know which way to turn*) or by making the *when*-clause adverbial (*You are in a dilemma when you don't know which way to turn*). *When* is acceptable, however, when a noun phrase that denotes a point in time is being defined or described: *The best time to drink this tea is when you are sleepy*.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

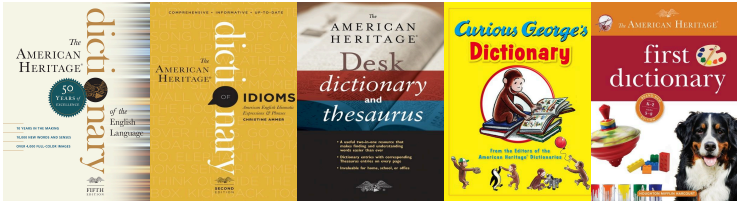
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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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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