

# The Merriam-Webster Dictionary



Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, Publishers  
Springfield, Massachusetts



**A GENUINE MERRIAM-WEBSTER**

The name *Webster* alone is no guarantee of excellence. It is used by a number of publishers and may serve mainly to mislead an unwary buyer.

*Merriam-Webster™* is the name you should look for when you consider the purchase of dictionaries or other fine reference books. It carries the reputation of a company that has been publishing since 1831 and is your assurance of quality and authority.

Copyright © 1998 by Merriam-Webster, Incorporated

Philippines Copyright 1998 by Merriam-Webster, Incorporated

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data  
Main entry under title:

The Merriam-Webster dictionary.

p. cm.  
ISBN 0-87779-606-8 (alk. paper)  
I. English language — Dictionaries. I. Merriam-Webster Inc.  
PE1628.M353 1998  
423—dc21

97-39927  
CIP

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, principal copyright 1995

All rights reserved. No part of this book covered by the copyrights hereon may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, taping, or information storage and retrieval systems—without written permission of the publisher.

Made in the United States of America

2425RRD0302



**set** \-'set\ *vb* 1 : TROUBLE, HARASS 2 : ASSAIL; *also* SURROUND  
**setting** *adj* : persistently present  
**side** \bi-'sid\ *prep* 1 : by the side of (sit ~ me) 2 : BESIDES 3 : not relevant to  
**side** *adv, archaic* : BESIDES  
**sides** \bi-'sidz\ *prep* 1 : other than 2 : together with  
**sides** *adv* 1 : as well : ALSO 2 : MOREOVER  
**siege** \bi-'sēj\ *vb* : to lay siege to; *also* : to press with requests — **besieger** *n*  
**smear** \-'smir\ *vb* : SMEAR  
**smirch** \-'smərch\ *vb* : SMIRCH, SOIL  
**som** \'bē-zəm\ *n* : BROOM  
**sot** \bi-'sāt\ *vb* **besotted**; **besotting** 1 : INFATUATE  
 ! : to make dull esp. by drinking  
**spatter** \-'spa-tər\ *vb* : SPATTER  
**speak** \bi-'spēk\ *vb* -**spoke** \-'spōk\; -**spoken** \-'spō-kən\; -**speak**-ing 1 : PREARRANGE 2 : ADDRESS  
 ! : REQUEST 4 : INDICATE, SIGNIFY 5 : FORETELL  
**sprinkle** \-'sprɪŋ-kəl\ *vb* : SPRINKLE  
**st** \'best\ *adj, superlative of GOOD* 1 : excelling all others 2 : most productive (as of good or satisfaction)  
 ! : LARGEST, MOST  
**st** *adv, superlative of WELL* 1 : in the best way 2 : MOST  
**st** *n* : something that is best  
**st** *vb* : to get the better of : OUTDO  
**stial** \'bes-chəl\ *adj* 1 : of or relating to beasts 2 : resembling a beast esp. in brutality or lack of intelligence  
**stiality** \bes-chē-'a-lə-tē, 'bēs-\ *n, pl -ties* 1 : the condition or status of a lower animal 2 : display or gratification of bestial traits or impulses  
**stiar** \'bes-chē-'er-ē\ *n, pl -aries* : a medieval allegorical or moralizing work on the appearance and habits of animals  
**stir** \bi-'stər\ *vb* : to rouse to action  
**st man** *n* : the principal groomsman at a wedding  
**stow** \bi-'stō\ *vb* 1 : PUT, PLACE, STOW 2 : to present as a gift — **bestowal** *n*  
**stride** \bi-'strɪd\ *vb* -**strode** \-'strōd\; -**stridden** \-'strɪd-ən\; -**striding** : to ride, sit, or stand astride  
**et** \'bet\ *n* 1 : something that is wagered, risked, or pledged usu. between two parties on the outcome of a contest; *also* : the making of such a bet 2 : OPTION (the back road is your best ~)  
**et** *vb* **bet** *also* **betted**; **betting** 1 : to stake on the outcome of an issue or a contest (**bet** \$2 on the race) 2 : to make a bet with 3 : to lay a bet  
**et** *abbr* between  
**eta** \'bā-tə\ *n* : the 2d letter of the Greek alphabet — B or β  
**eta blocker** \-'blā-kər\ *n* : any of a group of drugs that tend to decrease heart action and increase coronary blood flow  
**eta-carotene** \-'kar-ə-'tēn\ *n* : an isomer of carotene found in dark green and dark yellow vegetables and fruits  
**etake** \bi-'tāk\ *vb* -**took** \-'tūk\; -**taken** \-'tākən\; -**taking** : to cause (oneself) to go  
**eta particle** *n* : a high-speed electron; *esp* : one emitted by a radioactive nucleus  
**eta ray** *n* 1 : BETA PARTICLE 2 : a stream of beta particles  
**etel** \'bēt-əl\ *n* : a climbing pepper whose leaves are chewed together with lime and betel nut as a stimulant esp. by southern Asians  
**etel nut** *n* : the astringent seed of an Asian palm that is chewed with betel leaves  
**ête noire** \bet-'nwār, 'bāt-\ *n, pl bêtes noires* \same or -'nwārz\ [F, lit., black beast] : a person or thing strongly disliked or avoided  
**ethel** \'be-thəl\ *n* [Heb *bēth'el* house of God] : a place of worship esp. for seamen  
**ethink** \bi-'thɪŋk\ *vb* -**thought** \-'thót\; -**thinking** : REMEMBER; *also* : PONDER

**betide** \bi-'tɪd\ *vb* : to happen to  
**betimes** \bi-'tɪmz\ *adv* : in good time : EARLY syn soon, seasonably, timely  
**betoken** \bi-'tō-kən\ *vb* 1 : PRESAGE 2 : to give evidence of syn indicate, attest, bespeak, testify  
**betray** \bi-'trā\ *vb* 1 : to lead astray; *esp* : SEDUCE 2 : to deliver to an enemy 3 : ABANDON 4 : to prove unfaithful to 5 : to reveal unintentionally; *also* : SHOW, INDICATE syn mislead, delude, deceive, beguile — **betrayal** *n* — **betray**-er *n*  
**betroth** \bi-'trōth, -'trōth\ *vb* : to promise to marry — **betrothal** *n*  
**betrothed** *n* : the person to whom one is betrothed  
**better** \'be-tər\ *adj, comparative of GOOD* 1 : greater than half 2 : improved in health 3 : more attractive, favorable, or commendable 4 : more advantageous or effective 5 : improved in accuracy or performance  
**better** *vb* 1 : to make or become better 2 : SURPASS, EXCEL  
**better** *adv, comparative of WELL* 1 : in a superior manner 2 : to a higher or greater degree; *also* : MORE  
**better** *n* 1 : something better; *also* : a superior esp. in merit or rank 2 : ADVANTAGE  
**better** *verbal auxiliary* : had better (you ~ hurry)  
**betterment** \'be-tər-mənt\ *n* : IMPROVEMENT  
**bettor** or **better** \'be-tər\ *n* : one that bets  
**between** \bi-'twēn\ *prep* 1 : by the common action of (earned \$10,000 ~ the two of them) 2 : in the interval separating (an alley ~ two buildings); *also* : in intermediate relation to 3 : in point of comparison of (choose ~ two cars)  
**between** *adv* : in an intervening space or interval  
**betwixt** \bi-'twɪks\ *adv or prep* : BETWEEN  
**bevel** \'be-vəl\ *n* 1 : a device for adjusting the slant of the surfaces of a piece of work 2 : the angle or slant that one surface or line makes with another when not at right angles  
**bevel** *vb* -**eled** or -**elled**; -**eling** or -**elling** 1 : to cut or shape to a bevel 2 : INCLINE, SLANT  
**beverage** \'bev-rɪj\ *n* : a drinkable liquid  
**bevy** \'be-vē\ *n, pl bevies* 1 : a large group or collection 2 : a group of animals and esp. quail together  
**bewail** \bi-'wāl\ *vb* : LAMENT syn deplore, bemoan, grieve, moan, weep  
**beware** \-'wər\ *vb* : to be on one's guard : be wary of  
**bewilder** \bi-'wɪl-dər\ *vb* : PERPLEX, CONFUSE syn mystify, distract, puzzle — **bewilderment** *n*  
**bewitch** \-'wɪch\ *vb* 1 : to affect by witchcraft 2 : CHARM, FASCINATE syn enchant, attract, captivate — **bewitchment** *n*  
**bey** \'bā\ *n* 1 : a former Turkish provincial governor 2 : the former native ruler of Tunis or Tunisia  
**beyond** \bē-'ænd\ *adv* 1 : FARTHER 2 : BESIDES  
**beyond** *prep* 1 : on or to the farther side of 2 : out of the reach or sphere of 3 : BESIDES  
**bezel** \'bē-zəl, 'be-'n\ *n* 1 : a rim that holds a transparent covering (as on a watch) 2 : the faceted part of a cut gem that rises above the setting  
**bf** *abbr* boldface  
**BG** or **B Gen** *abbr* brigadier general  
**bhāng** \'bɑŋ\ *n* [Hindi *bhāng*] : a mildly intoxicating preparation of the leaves and flowering tops of uncultivated hemp  
**Bi** *symbol* bismuth  
**BIA** *abbr* Bureau of Indian Affairs  
**bi-annual** \bi-'æn-ju-əl\ *adj* : occurring twice a year — **bi-annual-ly** *adv*  
**bi-as** \bi-'æs\ *n* 1 : a line diagonal to the grain of a fabric 2 : PREJUDICE, BENT  
**bias** *adv* : on the bias : DIAGONALLY  
**bias** *vb* **biased** or **biassed**; **biassing** or **biassing** : PREJUDICE  
**biathlon** \bi-'ath-lən, -'län\ *n* : a composite athletic contest consisting of cross-country skiing and target shooting with a rifle

**bib** \'bɪb\ *n* : a cloth or plastic shield tied under the chin to protect the clothes while eating  
**bib** *abbr* Bible; biblical  
**bi-belot** \'bē-bə-'lō\ *n, pl bibelots* \same or -'lōz\ : a small household ornament or decorative object  
**bi-bli** \'bi-blə\ *n* [ME, fr. OF, fr. ML *biblia*, fr. Gk, pl. of *biblion* book, fr. *byblos* papyrus, book, fr. *Byblos*, ancient Phoenician city from which papyrus was exported] 1 *cap* : the sacred scriptures of Christians comprising the Old and New Testaments 2 *cap* : the sacred scriptures of Judaism; *also* : those of some other religion 3 : a publication that is considered authoritative for its subject — **bibli-cal** \'bi-blɪ-kəl\ *adj*  
 ☞ For table, see next page.  
**bi-bli-og-ra-phy** \bi-blē-'ā-grə-fē\ *n, pl -phies* 1 : the history or description of writings or publications 2 : a list of writings (as on a subject or of an author) — **bi-bli-og-ra-pher** \-fər\ *n* — **bi-bli-og-ra-phy** \-ə-'grə-fɪk\ *also* **bi-bli-og-ra-phy-cal** \-fɪ-kəl\ *adj*  
**bi-bli-ophile** \'bi-blē-'ə-fɪl\ *n* : a lover of books  
**bi-bu-lous** \'bi-byə-ləs\ *adj* 1 : highly absorbent 2 : fond of alcoholic beverages  
**bi-cam-er-al** \'bi-'ka-mə-rəl\ *adj* : having or consisting of two legislative branches  
**bi-car-b** \bi-'kɑr-b\ *n* : SODIUM BICARBONATE  
**bi-car-bon-ate** \bi-'kɑr-bə-'nāt, -nət\ *n* : an acid carbonate  
**bicarbonate of soda** : SODIUM BICARBONATE  
**bi-cente-nary** \bi-'sen-'te-nə-rē, bi-'sent-'n-er-ē\ *n* : BICENTENNIAL — **bicentenary** *adj*  
**bi-cente-ni-al** \bi-'sen-'te-ni-əl\ *n* : a 200th anniversary or its celebration — **bicentennial** *adj*  
**bi-ceps** \'bi-'seps\ *n, pl biceps* *also* **bicipes** [NL, fr. L, two-headed, fr. *bi-* two + *caput* head] : a muscle (as in the front of the upper arm) having two points of origin  
**bicker** \'bi-kər\ *n* : ALTERCATION  
**bicker** *vb* : to engage in a petty quarrel  
**bi-coast-al** \bi-'kōst-'əl\ *adj* : living or working on both the East and West coasts of the U.S.  
**bi-con-cave** \bi-'(ə)kən-'kāv, (ə)bi-'kən-'kāv\ *adj* : concave on both sides  
**bi-con-vox** \bi-'(ə)kən-'veks, (ə)bi-'kən-'veks\ *adj* : convex on both sides  
**bi-cus-pid** \bi-'kəs-pəd\ *n* : PREMOLAR  
**bicycle** \'bi-'sɪ-kəl\ *n* : a light 2-wheeled vehicle with a steering handle, saddle, and pedals  
**bicycle** *vb* -**cycled**; -**cycling** \-'sɪ-k(ə)-lɪŋ, -sɪ-\ : to ride a bicycle — **bicy-cle** \-k(ə)-lər\ *n* — **bicy-clist** \-k(ə)-lɪst\ *n*  
**bid** \'bɪd\ *vb* **bade** \'bad, 'bād\ or **bid**; **bid-den** \'bɪd-ən\ or **bid** *also* **bade**; **bid-ding** 1 : COMMAND, ORDER 2 : INVITE 3 : to give expression to 4 : to make a bid : OFFER — **bid-der** *n*  
**bid** *n* 1 : the act of one who bids; *also* : an offer for something 2 : INVITATION 3 : an announcement in a card game of what a player proposes to accomplish 4 : an attempt to win or gain (a ~ for mayor)  
**bid-da-ble** \'bi-də-bəl\ *adj* 1 : OBEDIENT, DOCILE 2 : capable of being bid  
**bid-dy** \'bɪ-dē\ *n, pl biddies* : HEN; *also* : a young chicken  
**bide** \'bɪd\ *vb* **bode** \'bōd\ or **bid-ed**; **bided**; **bid-ing** 1 : to wait for 2 : WAIT, TARRY 3 : DWELL  
**bi-det** \bi-'dā\ *n* : a bathroom fixture used esp. for bathing the external genitals and the posterior parts of the body  
**bi-di-rec-tion-al** \bi-'dɪ-'rek-sh(ə)-nəl\ *adj* : involving, moving, or taking place in two usu. opposite directions — **bi-di-rec-tion-al-ly** *adv*  
**bi-en-ni-al** \bi-'e-nē-əl\ *adj* 1 : taking place once in two years 2 : lasting two years 3 : producing leaves the first year and fruiting and dying the second year — **biennial** *n* — **bi-en-ni-al-ly** *adv*  
**bi-en-ni-um** \bi-'e-nē-əm\ *n, pl -niums* or **-nia** \-ə\ [L, fr. *bi-* two + *annus* year] : a period of two years



: done as if by a machine : AUTOMATIC **syn** instinctive, impulsive, spontaneous — **mechanically** \k(ə)lē *adv*

**mechanical drawing** *n*: drawing done with the aid of instruments

**mechanics** \mi-ˈka-niks\ *n sing or pl 1*: a branch of physics that deals with energy and forces and their effect on bodies **2**: the practical application of mechanics (as to the operation of machines) **3**: mechanical or functional details

**mechanism** \ˈme-kə-ˈni-zəm\ *n 1*: a piece of machinery; *also*: a process or technique for achieving a result **2**: mechanical operation or action **3**: the fundamental processes involved in or responsible for a natural phenomenon (the visual ~)

**mechanistic** \ˈme-kə-ˈnis-tik\ *adj 1*: mechanically determined (~ universe) **2**: MECHANICAL — **mechanistically** \-ti-k(ə)lē *adv*

**mechanize** \ˈme-kə-ˈnīz\ *vb -nized; -nizing 1*: to make mechanical **2**: to equip with machinery esp. in order to replace human or animal labor **3**: to equip with armed and armored motor vehicles — **mechanization** \ˈme-kə-nə-ˈzā-shən\ *n* — **mechanizer** *n*

**med** *abbr 1* medical; medicine **2** medieval **3** medium

**MED** *abbr* master of education

**medal** \ˈmed-əl\ *n* [MF *medaille*, fr. OIt *medaglia* coin worth half a denarius, medal, fr. (assumed) VL *medalis* half, alter. of LL *medialis* middle, fr. L *medius*] **1**: a small usu. metal object bearing a religious emblem or picture **2**: a piece of metal issued to commemorate a person or event or to award excellence or achievement

**medalist** or **medalist** \ˈmed-əl-ist\ *n 1*: a designer or maker of medals **2**: a recipient of a medal as an award

**medallion** \mə-ˈdal-yən\ *n 1*: a large medal **2**: a tablet or panel bearing a portrait or an ornament

**meddle** \ˈmed-əl\ *vb meddled; meddling*: to interfere without right or propriety — **meddler** \ˈmed-əl-ər\ *n*

**meddlesome** \ˈmed-əl-səm\ *adj*: inclined to meddle

**media** \ˈmē-dē-ə\ *n, pl medi-ās*: MEDIUM **4**

**medial** \ˈmē-dē-əl\ *adj*: occurring in or extending toward the middle

**median** \ˈmē-dē-ən\ *n 1*: a value in an ordered set of values below and above which there are an equal number of values **2**: MEDIAN STRIP

**median** *adj 1*: being in the middle or in an intermediate position **2**: relating to or constituting a statistical median

**median strip** *n*: a strip dividing a highway into lanes according to the direction of travel

**mediate** \ˈmē-dē-ɪ-ət\ *vb -ated; -ating 1*: to act as an intermediary; *esp*: to work with opposing sides in order to resolve (as a dispute) or bring about (as a settlement) **2**: to bring about, influence, or transmit (as a physical process or effect) by acting as an intermediate or controlling agent or mechanism **syn** intercede, intervene, interpose, interfere — **mediation** \ˈmē-dē-ɪ-ə-shən\ *n* — **mediator** \ˈmē-dē-ɪ-ə-tər\ *n*

**medic** \ˈme-dik\ *n*: one engaged in medical work; *esp*: CORPSMAN

**medicable** \ˈme-di-kə-bəl\ *adj*: CURABLE

**medicaid** \ˈme-di-ˈkæd\ *n, often cap*: a program of financial assistance for medical care designed for those unable to afford regular medical service and financed jointly by the state and federal governments

**medical** \ˈme-di-kəl\ *adj*: of or relating to the science or practice of medicine or the treatment of disease — **medically** \-k(ə)lē *adv*

**medical examiner** *n*: a public officer who performs autopsies on bodies to find the cause of death

**medication** \ˈmi-ˈdi-kə-mənt, ˈme-di-kə-\ *n*: a substance used in therapy

**medicare** \ˈme-di-ˈker\ *n, often cap*: a government

program of financial assistance for medical care esp. for the aged

**medicate** \ˈme-də-ˈkæt\ *vb -cated; -cating*: to treat with medicine

**medication** \ˈme-də-ˈkā-shən\ *n 1*: the act or process of medicating **2**: MEDICINE **1**

**medicinal** \mə-ˈdis-ˈnəl\ *adj*: tending or used to cure disease or relieve pain — **medicinally** *adv*

**medicine** \ˈme-də-sən\ *n 1*: a substance or preparation used in treating disease **2**: a science and art dealing with the prevention and cure of disease

**medicine ball** *n*: a heavy stuffed leather ball used for conditioning exercises

**medicine man** *n*: a priestly healer or sorcerer esp. among the American Indians : SHAMAN

**medico** \ˈme-di-ˈkō\ *n, pl -cos*: a medical practitioner or student

**medieval** or **medieval** \ˈmē-dē-ˈē-vəl, ˈmē-, mē-ˈdē-vəl\ *adj 1*: of, relating to, or characteristic of the Middle Ages **2**: extremely outmoded or antiquated — **medievalism** \-və-ˈli-zəm\ *n* — **medievalist** \-list\ *n*

**mediocre** \ˈmē-dē-ˈō-kər\ *adj* [ME, fr. MF, fr. L *mediocris*, fr. *medius* middle + *ocris* stony mountain] : of moderate or low quality : ORDINARY — **mediocrity** \-ˈā-kra-tē\ *n*

**meditate** \ˈme-də-ˈtāt\ *vb -tated; -tating 1*: to muse over : CONTEMPLATE, PONDER **2**: INTEND, PLAN — **meditation** \ˈme-də-ˈtā-shən\ *n* — **meditatively** *adv*

**Mediterranean** \ˈme-də-tə-ˈrā-nē-ən, -ˈrā-nyən\ *adj*: of or relating to the Mediterranean Sea or to the lands or people around it

**medium** \ˈmē-dē-əm\ *n, pl mediums or media* \-dē-ə\ [L] **1**: something in a middle position; *also*: a middle position or degree **2**: a means of effecting or conveying something **3**: a surrounding or enveloping substance **4**: a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment **5**: a mode of artistic expression **6**: an individual held to be a channel of communication between the earthly world and a world of spirits **7**: a condition or environment in which something may function or flourish

**medium** *adj*: intermediate in amount, quality, position, or degree

**mediumistic** \ˈmē-dē-ə-ˈmis-tik\ *adj*: of, relating to, or being a spiritualistic medium

**medley** \ˈmed-lē\ *n, pl medleys 1*: HODGEPODGE **2**: a musical composition made up esp. of a series of songs

**medulla** \mə-ˈdū-lə\ *n, pl -las or -lae* \-(ə)lē, -lī\ *n*: an inner or deep anatomical part; *also*: the posterior part (*medulla oblongata* \-i-ä-ˈblōŋ-ˈgā-tə\ of the vertebrate brain that is continuous with the spinal cord)

**meed** \ˈmēd\ *n*: a fitting return

**meek** \ˈmēk\ *adj 1*: characterized by patience and long-suffering **2**: deficient in spirit and courage **3**: MODERATE — **meekly** *adv* — **meekness** *n*

**meer-schaum** \ˈmir-shəm, -ˈshəm\ *n* [G, fr. *Meer* sea + *Schaum* foam] : a tobacco pipe made of a light white clayey mineral

**meet** \ˈmēt\ *vb met* \ˈmet\; **meeting 1**: to come upon : FIND **2**: JOIN, INTERSECT **3**: to appear to the perception of **4**: OPOSE, FIGHT **5**: to join in conversation or discussion; *also*: ASSEMBLE **6**: to conform to **7**: to pay fully **8**: to cope with **9**: to provide for **10**: to be introduced to

**meet** *n*: an assembling esp. for a hunt or for competitive sports

**meet** *adj*: SUITABLE, PROPER

**meeting** \ˈmē-tiŋ\ *n 1*: an act of coming together : ASSEMBLY **2**: JUNCTION, INTERSECTION

**meeting-house** \-ˈhauz\ *n*: a building for public assembly and esp. for Protestant worship

**mega-** or **meg-** *comb form 1*: great : large (*megahit*)