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The American Heritage[®] Dictionary *of the English Language*

FOURTH EDITION



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mul•ti•sto•ry (mŭl'tī-stōr'ē, -stōr'ē) also **mul•ti•sto•ried** (-stōr'ēd, -stōr'ē) *adj.* Having several stories: a multistory hotel.

mul•ti•sys•tem•ic (mŭl'tē-sī-stēm'ik, -stēm'ik, -tī-) *adj.* Relating to a disease or condition that affects many organ systems of the body.

mul•ti•task•ing (mŭl'tē-tās'king, -tī-) *n.* The concurrent operation by one central processing unit of two or more processes. —**mul•ti•task'** *v.*

mul•ti•thread•ed (mŭl'tē-thrēd'ēd, -tī-) *adj.* Computer Science 1. Having more than one thread of execution. Used of applications. 2. Supporting multithreaded applications. Used of programming languages.

mul•ti•track (mŭl'tī-trāk') *adj.* 1. Having, using, or produced with multiple recording tracks: a multitrack tape recorder. 2. Having several different aspects, elements, or functions: multitrack negotiations; a multitrack business executive. 3. Having or using several schedules: students in a multitrack program with staggered vacations.

mul•ti•tude (mŭl'tī-tōd', -tīd'ēd) *n.* 1. The condition or quality of being numerous. 2. A very great number. 3. The masses; the populace: the concerns of the multitude. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin multitudo, from multus, many. See **mel**² in Appendix I.]

Synonyms multitude, host, legion, army These nouns all denote a very great number of people or things. Multitude is the most general term: a multitude of reasons. Host and legion both stress impressively, sometimes countlessly large numbers: a host of ideas; a legion of complaints. Army emphasizes order and often purposeful association: an army of ants.

mul•ti•tu•di•nous (mŭl'tī-tōd'n-əs, -tīd'ēd-) *adj.* 1. Very numerous; existing in great numbers. 2. Consisting of many parts. 3. Populous; crowded. [From Latin multitudo, multitudo, multitude. See **MULTITUDE**.] —**mul•ti•tu•di•nously** *adv.* —**mul•ti•tu•di•nouslyness** *n.*

mul•ti•us•er (mŭl'tē-yōd'zər, -tī-) *adj.* Of or relating to a device or product, such as a computer system, that can be used by more than one person at the same time.

mul•ti•va•lent (mŭl'tī-vā'lənt, mŭl'tī-vā'lənt) *adj.* 1. Chemistry Polyvalent. 2. Genetics Of or relating to the association of three or more homologous chromosomes during the first division of meiosis. 3. Immunology Having several sites of attachment for an antibody or antigen. 4. Having various meanings or values: subtle, multivalent allegory. —**mul•ti•va•lence** *n.*

mul•ti•var•iate (mŭl'tē-vār'ē-īt, -āt', -vār'ē-, -tī-) *adj.* Having or involving more than one variable: multivariate statistical analysis.

mul•ti•ver•sity (mŭl'tī-vūr'sī-tē) *n., pl. -ties* A university that has numerous constituent and affiliated institutions, such as separate colleges, campuses, and research centers. [MULTI- + (UNI)VERSITY.]

mul•ti•vi•ta•min (mŭl'tā-vī'tā-mīn) *adj.* Containing many vitamins. ♦ *n.* A preparation containing many vitamins.

mul•ti•vol•tine (mŭl'tī-vōl'tēn) *adj.* Producing several broods in a single season: multivoltine moths. [MULTI- + French -voltine, having a given number of broods in one season (from Italian volta, time, turn; see **VOLT**²).]

Mult•no•mah Falls (mŭlt-nō'mə) A waterfall, 189.1 m (620 ft) high, in a tributary of the Columbia River east of Portland, Oregon.

mum¹ (mŭm) *adj.* Not verbalizing; silent. ♦ *interj.* Used as a command to stop speaking. —**idiom:** mum's the word Say nothing of the secret you know: Mum's the word on the surprise party. [Middle English, perhaps imitative of closing one's lips.]

mum² (mŭm) *intr.v.* mummied, mummied, mums 1. To act or play in a pantomime. 2. To go merrymaking in a mask or disguise especially during a festival. [Middle English mummen, from Old French momer, to wear a mask.]

mum³ (mŭm) *n.* Chiefly British Mother. [Short for MUMMY².]

mum⁴ (mŭm) *n.* A chrysanthemum.

mum⁵ (mŭm) *n.* A strong beer originally brewed in Brunswick, Germany. [German Mumme.]

Mum•bai (mŭm'bī') Formerly **Bom•bay** (bōm-bā'). A city of west-central India on coastal Mumbai Island and adjacent Salsette Island. It is India's main port and commercial center. Population: 9,925,891.

mum•ble (mŭm'bəl) *v.* -bled, -bling, -bles —*tr.* 1. To utter indistinctly by lowering the voice or partially closing the mouth: mumbled distinctly by lowering the voice or partially closing the mouth or as if an insincere apology. 2. To chew slowly or ineffectively without or as if without teeth. —*intr.* 1. To speak words indistinctly, as by lowering the voice or partially closing the mouth. 2. To chew food slowly or ineffectively, as if with the gums. ♦ *n.* A low indistinct sound or utterance. [Middle English momelen, from Middle Dutch mommelen.] —**mum•bler** *n.* —**mum•bly** *adv.*

mum•ble•ty•peg (mŭm'bəl-tē-pēg', -blē-pēg') also **mum•ble•the•peg** (-bəl-thə-) *n.* A game in which players toss a jackknife in various prescribed ways, with the object being to make the blade stick firmly into the ground. [From the phrase mumble the peg, from the fact that originally the loser had to pull up with the teeth a peg driven into the ground.]

mum•bo•jū•m•bo or **mum•bo•jū•m•bo** (mŭm'bō-jūm'bō) *n., pl. -bos* 1. Unintelligible or incomprehensible language; gibberish. 2. Language or ritualistic activity intended to confuse. 3. A complicated or oblique or ritualistic activity intended to confuse. 4. An object believed to have supernatural powers; a fetish. [Perhaps of Mandingo origin.]

mu•meson *n.* See **muon**.

Mum•ford (mŭm'fərd), **Lewis** 1895–1990. American social critic and writer whose works, such as *The Culture of Cities* (1938) and *The Machine in the Garden* (1968), decry dehumanizing technology and call for a

mum•mer (mŭm'ər) *n.* 1. A masked or costumed mermaid, especially at a festival. 2a. One who acts or plays in a pantomime as a mask, pantomime. [Middle English, from Old French momer, from mermer, to wear a mask, pantomime.]

mum•mer•y (mŭm'ər-ē) *n., pl. -ies* 1. A performance by mummers. 2. A pretentious or hypocritical show or ceremony. [From Old French momerie, from Old French momer, to wear a mask, pantomime.]

mum•mi•chog (mŭm'fī-chōg') *n.* A stout-bodied killifish (family *Lucania heteroclitus*) of the Atlantic coast south of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, valued especially as bait. [Narragansett *moamiteag*.]

mum•mi•fy (mŭm'fī-fi') *v.* -fied, -fying, -fies —*tr.* 1. To turn into a mummy by embalming and drying. 2. To cause to shrivel or dry up. —*intr.* To shrivel or dry up like a mummy. —**mum•mi•fied** (-fī-kā'shən) *n.*

mum•my¹ (mŭm'ē) *n., pl. -mies* 1. The dead body of a human animal that has been embalmed and prepared for burial, as according to the practices of the ancient Egyptians. 2. A withered, shriveled, or preserved body that resembles an embalmed body. 3. A mummy, medicinal material from embalmed corpses, from Old French momie, from Medieval Latin mumia, from Arabic mūmiya, from Persian wax, from Persian.]

mum•my² (mŭm'ē) *n., pl. -mies* Informal Mother. [Alteration of MOMMY or MUM³.]

mummy bag *n.* A sleeping bag that is tapered at the ends to conserve additional heat.

mumps (mŭmps) *pl.n.* (used with a sing. or pl. verb) An acute inflammatory, contagious disease caused by a paramyxovirus and characterized by swelling of the salivary glands, especially the parotids, and sometimes of the pancreas, ovaries, or testes. This disease, mainly affecting children, can be prevented by vaccination. [Perhaps from pl. of dialectal mump, grimace.]

munch (mŭnch) *v.* munched, munching, munches —*tr.* 1. To chew food audibly or with a steady working of the jaws. 2. To eat with pleasure. —*tr.* To chew or eat (food) audibly or with pleasure. [Middle English monchen.] —**munch'er** *n.*

Munch (mōōngk), **Edvard** 1863–1944. Norwegian artist whose works include etchings, lithographs, and paintings, such as *The Scream* (1893) and *Frieze of Life* (1897).

Mun•chau•sen syndrome (mŭn'chou'zən, mŭn'chou'zən) A psychological disorder characterized by the repeated fabrication or omission of disease symptoms or trauma for the purpose of gaining medical attention or treatment. [After Baron Karl Friedrich Hieronymus von MÜNCHHAUSEN (because the fabricated diseases recalled his fictional accounts of his life).]

Munchausen syndrome by proxy *n.* A psychological disorder in which a parent or other caregiver gains attention from medical professionals by repeatedly causing or fabricating disease symptoms in a child.

Münch•hau•sen (mŭnch'hau'zən) also **Mun•chau•sen** (mŭn'chou'zən, mŭn'chou'zən), **Baron Karl Friedrich Hieronymus von** 1720–1797. German soldier and raconteur known for his fantastic stories about his adventures as a hunter, sportsman, and soldier.

munch•ies (mŭn'chēz) *pl.n.* Slang 1. Food for snacking. 2. A snack. 3. Food for snacking. Often used with *the*: an attack of the munchies.

munch•kin (mŭnch'kīn) *n.* 1. A very small person. 2. Informal child. 3. Informal A minor official. [After the *Munchkins*, characters in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum.]

Mun•cie (mŭn'sē) A city of east-central Indiana northeast of Indianapolis. Established on the site of an earlier Delaware settlement, it was the setting for Robert and Helen Lynd's pioneering sociological work *Middletown* (1929). Population: 71,035.

Mun•da (mŭn'dā) *n.* An Austro-Asiatic language family spoken in northeast India and adjacent regions and including Santali.

mun•dane (mŭn-dān', mŭn'dān') *adj.* 1. Of, relating to, or typical of this world; secular. 2. Relating to, characteristic of, or concerned with commonplaces; ordinary. [Middle English *mondeine*, from Old French *mondein*, from Latin *mundanus*, from *mundus*, world.] —**mun•danely** *adv.* —**mun•dane/ness**, **mun•dan/ity** (-dān'ē-ty) *n.*

mung bean (mŭng) *n.* 1. An Asian plant (*Vigna radiata*) in the pea family, widely cultivated for its edible seeds and pods. It is the source of bean sprouts. 2. The seeds or pods of this plant. [Hindi *mung*, from Sanskrit *mudgah*.]

mu•ni (myōō'nē) Informal *adj.* Municipal. ♦ *n., pl. -nis* A municipality.

Mu•nich (myōō'nīk) A city of southeast Germany near the Bavarian Alps southeast of Augsburg. Founded in 1158, it has long been the capital of Bavaria. Adolf Hitler organized the Nazi Party here after World War I and signed the Munich Pact, widely regarded as a symbol of appeasement, with Great Britain, France, and Italy in 1938. The city was largely rebuilt after extensive Allied bombing in World War II. Population: 1,255,623.

mu•nic•i•pal (myōō-nīs'pāl) *adj.* 1a. Of, relating to, or typical of a municipality. b. Having local self-government. c. Issued on the authority of a local or state government. 2. Of or relating to the internal affairs of a nation. ♦ *n.* A municipal bond: invested in tax-free municipal bonds. [Latin *municipalis*, from *municipium*, town, from *municipus*, public officer, duty; see **mei**¹ in Appendix I.] —**mu•nic•i•pally** *adv.*

municipal bond *n.* An often tax-exempt bond issued by a county, state, or other government for the financing of public projects.

mu•nic•i•pal•i•ty (myōō-nīs'pāl'ē-ty) *n., pl. -ties* 1. A political subdivision, such as a city, town, or village, incorporated for local self-government.

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