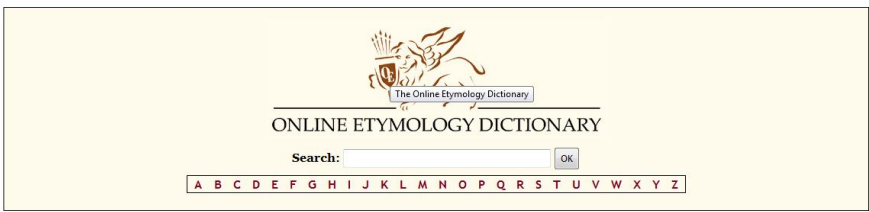


Home Page


This is a map of the wheel-ruts of modern English. Etymologies are not definitions; they're explanations of what our words meant and how they sounded 600 or 2,000 years ago.

The dates beside a word indicate the earliest year for which there is a surviving written record of that word (in English, unless otherwise indicated). This should be taken as approximate, especially before about 1700, since a word may have been used in conversation for hundreds of years before it turns up in a manuscript that has had the good fortune to survive the centuries.

The basic sources of this work are Weekley's "An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English," Klein's "A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language," "Oxford English Dictionary" (second edition), "Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology," Holthausen's "Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Englischen Sprache," and Kipfer and Chapman's "Dictionary of American Slang." [A full list of print sources used in this compilation can be found here.](#)

Since this dictionary went up, it has benefited from the suggestions of dozens of people I have never met, from around the world. Tremendous thanks and appreciation to all of you.

Logo**URL**

<http://www.etymonline.com/>

Subject

Etymology - Dictionaries

Accessibility

Free

Language

English

Publisher

Douglas Harper

Brief History

Douglas Harper is the compiler of this dictionary. This dictionary started its journey in online form in 2001. The copyright date (2001-2016) is available below every page of the website.

Scope and Coverage

Douglas Harper (aka "The Sciolist") compiled the etymology dictionary to record the history and evolution of more than 30,000 words, including slang and technical terms. The core body of its etymology information stems from Ernest Weekley's An Etymological Dictionary of Modern

English (1921). Other sources include the Middle English Dictionary and the Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology (by Robert Barnhart and others). As of June 2015, there were nearly 50,000 entries in this dictionary.

Kind of Information

An entry includes the origin of the term, mentioning the date of inception, the date of transformation, preliminary form, transformed entity, first usage etc. Part of speech of the term is incorporated. Hyperlinked see references are also present in italics. Some examples are given below for clear understanding.

a (1)

indefinite article, mid-12c., a variation of Old English *an* (see ***an***) in which the *-n-* began to disappear before consonants, a process mostly complete by mid-14c. The *-n-* also was retained before words beginning with a sounded *-h-* until c. 1600; it still is retained by many writers before unaccented syllables in *h-* or *(e)u-*, but is now no longer normally spoken as such. The *-n-* also lingered (especially in southern England dialect) before *-w-* and *-y-* through 15c.

a (2)

as in *twice a day*, etc., from Old English *an* "on," in this case "on each." The sense was extended from time to measure, price, place, etc. The habit of tacking *a* onto a gerund (as in *a-hunting we will go*) died out 18c.

a capella

1876, earlier *alla capella* (1847), from Italian, "in the manner of the chapel," literally "according to the chapel," from *cappella* "chapel" (see ***chapel***). Originally in reference to older church music (pre-1600) which was written for unaccompanied voices; applied 20c. to unaccompanied vocal music generally.

two (adj.)

Old English *twa* "two," fem. and neuter form of *twegen* "two" (see ***twain***), from Proto-Germanic **twa* (source also of Old Saxon and Old Frisian *twene*, *twa*, Old Norse *tveir*, *tvau*, Dutch *twee*, Old High German *zwe*, *zwo*, German *zwei*, Gothic *twai*), from PIE **duwo*, variant of *dwo* "two" (source also of Sanskrit *dvau*, Avestan *dva*, Greek *duo*, Latin *duo*, Old Welsh *dou*, Lithuanian *dvi*, Old Church Slavonic *duva* "two," first element in Hittite *ta-ugash* "two years old").

Two-fisted is from 1774. *Two cheers for _____*, expressing qualified enthusiasm first recorded 1951 in E.M. Forster's title "Two Cheers for Democracy." *Two-dimensional* is recorded from 1883; figurative sense of "lacking substance or depth" is attested from 1934.

Special Features

- ❖ Besides every entry there is a blue coloured 'Book' symbol which leads the user to the meaning of the term in Dictionary.com.
- ❖ Provision for liking the page in Facebook is available here.
- ❖ The brand-new official Online Etymology Dictionary app (app for iOS) for China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau is linked in the homepage.
- ❖ Direct link to Etymonline shopping is present.

- ❖ Detailed list of principal and other sources of the dictionary is incorporated.

Arrangement Pattern Terms are arranged alphabetically. For example under the alphabet “B” there are terms like Baath, Baba, Babbitt etc. arranged in alphabetic sequence.

Remarks The Online Etymology Dictionary has been referenced by Ohio University's library as a relevant etymological resource and cited in the Chicago Tribune as one of the "best resources for finding just the right word". It is cited in numerous articles as a source for explaining the history and evolution of words. There is a problem with accuracy at times. One of several examples is the word "consequence": In terms of chronology, “Modern French” is incorrect; it should be ‘Middle French’. Helpful would be for the author to include on each entry's page a small check/tick-box for the user to indicate that the etymology is incorrect, e.g.: "Tick/check this box if you have reason to believe this etymology is incorrect", followed by three comment boxes on every entry, which ask the user to explain why the etymology is incorrect, provide the correct etymology, and provide the reference of the source/resource that shows the accurate etymology.

Comparable Tools

- The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Etymology (<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192830982.001.0001/acref-9780192830982>)
- Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages (<http://dictionaries.brillonline.com/latin>)

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