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OF

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abbr.

1. Old French
- 2.
- a. outfield
- b. outfielder

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of  (ŭv, ɔv; əv *when unstressed*)

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prep.

1. Derived or coming from; originating at or from: *customs of the South*.
2. Caused by; resulting from: *a death of tuberculosis*.
3. Away from; at a distance from: *a mile east of here*.
4. So as to be separated or relieved from: *robbed of one's dignity; cured of distemper*.
5. From the total or group comprising: *give of one's time; two of my friends; most of the cases*.
6. Composed or made from: *a dress of silk*.
7. Associated with or adhering to: *people of your religion*.
8. Belonging or connected to: *the rungs of a ladder*.
- 9.
- a. Possessing; having: *a person of honor*.
- b. On one's part: *very nice of you*.
10. Containing or carrying: *a basket of groceries*.
11. Specified as; named or called: *a depth of ten feet; the Garden of Eden*.
12. Centering on; directed toward: *a love of horses*.
13. Produced by; issuing from: *products of the vine*.
14. Characterized or identified by: *a year of famine*.
- 15.
- a. With reference to; about: *think highly of her proposals; will speak of it later*.
- b. In respect to: *slow of speech*.

16. Set aside for; taken up by: *a day of rest*.
17. Before; until: *five minutes of two*.
18. During or on a specified time: *of recent years*.
19. By: *beloved of the family*.
20. Used to indicate an appositive: *that idiot of a driver*.
21. Archaic On: "*A plague of all cowards, I say*" (Shakespeare).

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

Usage Note: The "double genitive" construction, in which a possessive form appears as the object of the preposition *of*, as in *a friend of my father's* or *a book of mine*, is looked down on by some grammarians and usage critics. But this construction has been used in English since the 1300s and serves a useful purpose. It can help sort out ambiguous phrases like *Bob's photograph*, which could mean either "a photograph of Bob" (i.e., revealing Bob's image) or "a photograph that is in Bob's possession." *A photograph of Bob's*, on the other hand, can only be a photo that Bob has in his possession and may or may not show Bob's image. There are also cases in which the double genitive may be more elegant; for example, many speakers find such sentences as *That's your only friend that I've ever met* or *That's your only friend I've ever met* to be awkward or impossible, but rephrasing using the double genitive provides an acceptable alternative, as in *That's the only friend of yours that I've ever met*. • Adverbs of degree, such as *too*, *that*, and *so*, tend to cause a shift in the word order of a sentence under certain circumstances. For instance, it's common to speak of "a long movie" or "a big deal," but not of "a too long movie" or "a that big deal." The customary way of rewording in these cases is to place the adverb and adjective before the indefinite article rather than after it: *too long a movie*; *that big a deal*. Often, especially in speech, an *of* is inserted as well: *too long of a movie*; *that big of a deal*. But this construction using *of* is considered ungrammatical; in our 2012 survey, 74 percent of the Usage Panel found the sentence *That's too long of a movie for me to sit through* unacceptable. A somewhat smaller number, but still a majority—58 percent—disapproved of *He wanted to apologize, but I told him it wasn't that big of a deal*.

Our Living Language Some speakers of vernacular English varieties, particularly in isolated or mountainous regions of the Southern United States, use phrases such as *of a night* or *of an evening* in place of *at night* or *in the evening*, as in *We'd go hunting of an evening*. This *of* construction is used only when referring to a repeated action, where Standard English uses *nights*, *evenings*, and the like, as in *We'd go hunting nights*. It is not used for single actions, as in *She returned at night*. • These *of* and *-s* constructions are related. The *-s* construction, which dates back to the Old English period (c. 449-1100), does not signify a plurality but is similar to the so-called genitive suffix *-s*, which often indicates possession, as in *the king's throne*. Just as this example can also be phrased as *the throne of the king*, *nights* can be reformulated as *of a night*. This reformulation has been possible since the Middle English period (c. 1100-1500). Sometimes the original *-s* ending remains in the *of* construction, as in *We'd walk to the store of evenings*, but usually it is omitted. Using *of* with adverbial time phrases has not always been confined to vernacular speech, as is evidenced by its occurrence in sources ranging from the Wycliffite Bible (1382) to Theodore Dreiser's 1911 novel *Jennie Gerhardt*: "*There was a place out in one corner of the veranda where he liked to sit of a spring or summer evening*." • Using such *of* constructions reflects a long-standing tendency for English speakers to eliminate the case endings that were once attached to nouns to indicate their role as subject, object, or possessor. Nowadays, word order and the use of prepositional phrases usually determine a noun's role. Despite the trend to replace genitive *-s* with *of* phrases, marking adverbial phrases of time with *of* is fading out of American vernacular usage, probably because one can form these phrases without *-s*, as in *at night*.

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