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

FOURTH EDITION



 **HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY**
Boston New York

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The American Heritage dictionary of the English language.—4th ed.
p. cm.
ISBN 0-395-82517-2 (hardcover) — ISBN 0-618-08230-1 (hardcover with CD ROM)
1. English language—Dictionaries
PE1628 .A623 2000
423—dc21
00-025369

Manufactured in the United States of America

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terjection of a future event. **2.** The episode or scene depicted by means of this device.

flash-freeze (flāsh/'frēz) *tr.v.* -froze (-frōz), -frozen (-frōzən), -freezing, -freezes **1.** To freeze (produce, meat, or fish) immediately after harvesting, butchering, or catching. **2.** To freeze (a biological specimen, for example) instantaneously by exposure to an environment of very low temperature.

flash-gun (flāsh/'gūn) *n.* A dry-cell powered photographic apparatus that holds and electrically triggers a flashbulb. Also called *flash unit*.

flash-ing (flāsh/'ing) *n.* Sheet metal used to reinforce and weatherproof the joints and angles of a roof.

flash lamp *n.* An electric lamp for producing a high-intensity light of very short duration for use in photography.

flash-light (flāsh/'lit) *n.* **1.** A small portable lamp usually powered by batteries. **2.** A brief brilliant flood of light from a photographic lamp.

flash memory *n.* A computer chip with a read-only memory that retains its data when the power is turned off and that can be electronically erased and reprogrammed without being removed from the circuit board, often used in fax machines.

flash-o-ver (flāsh/'ōvər) *n.* **1.** An unintended electric arc, as between two pieces of apparatus. **2.** The temperature point at which the heat in an area or region is high enough to ignite all flammable material simultaneously.

flash photolysis *n.* A method of investigating fast photochemical reactions in gases in which a gas is exposed to very brief, intense flashes of light and the resulting products are analyzed spectroscopically.

flash point also **flash-point** (flāsh/'point) *n.* **1.** The lowest temperature at which the vapor of a combustible liquid can be made to ignite momentarily in air. **2.** The point at which eruption into significant action, creation, or violence occurs: "The shutdown did not increase international tensions to the flash point" (Seymour M. Hersh).

flash-tube also **flash tube** (flāsh/'tūb) *n.* A gas discharge tube used in an electronic flash to produce a brief, intense flash of light.

flash unit *n.* **1.** An electronic flash system containing both a power supply and a flashtube in a single compact unit. **2a.** See *flashgun*. **b.** A flashgun and reflector.

flash welding *n.* See *flash butt welding*.

flash-y (flāsh/'ē) *adj.* -ier, -iest **1.** Cheap and showy; gaudy. See synonyms at *gaudy*. **2.** Giving a momentary or superficial impression of brilliance. —*flash-i-ly adv.* —*flash-i-ness n.*

flask (flāsk) *n.* **1.** A small container, such as a bottle, having a narrow neck and usually a cap, especially: **a.** A flat, relatively thin container for liquor. **b.** A container or case for carrying gunpowder or shot. **c.** A vial or round long-necked vessel for laboratory use. **2.** A frame for holding a sand mold in a foundry. [Middle English, cask, keg, from Old French *flasque*, from Late Latin *flascō*, of Germanic origin.]

flat¹ (flāt) *adj.* **flat-ter**, **flat-test** **1.** Having a horizontal surface without a slope, tilt, or curvature. **2.** Having a smooth, even, level surface: *a skirt sewed with fine flat seams*. **3.** Having a relatively broad surface in relation to thickness or depth: *a flat board*. See synonyms at *level*. **4.** Stretched out or lying at full length along the ground; prone. **5.** Free of qualification; absolute: *a flat refusal*. **6.** Fixed; unvarying: *a flat rate*. **7.** Lacking interest or excitement; dull: *a flat scenario*. **8a.** Lacking in flavor: *a flat stew that needs salt*. **b.** Having lost effervescence or sparkle: *flat beer*. **9a.** Deflated. Used of a tire. **b.** Electrically discharged. Used of a storage battery. **10.** Of or relating to a horizontal line that displays no ups or downs and signifies the absence of physiological activity: *A flat electroencephalogram indicates a loss of brain function*. **11.** Commercially inactive; sluggish: *flat sales for the month*. **12.** Unmodulated; monotonous: *a flat voice*. **13.** Lacking variety in tint or shading; uniform: "The sky was bright but flat, the color of oyster shells" (Anne Tyler). **14.** Not glossy; mat: *flat paint*. **15.** *Music a.* Being below the correct pitch. **b. Being one half step lower than the corresponding natural key: *the key of B flat*. **16.** Designating the vowel *a* as pronounced in *bad* or *cat*. **17.** *Nautical* Taut. Used of a sail. ♦ *adv.* **1a.** Level with the ground; horizontally. **b.** On or up against a flat surface; at full length. **2.** So as to be flat. **3a.** Directly; completely: *flat broke*. **b.** Exactly; precisely: *arrived in six minutes flat*. **4.** *Music* Below the intended pitch. **5.** *Business* Without interest charge. ♦ *n.* **1.** A flat surface or part. **2.** A stretch of level ground. Often used in the plural: *salt flats*. **3.** A shallow frame or box for seeds or seedlings. **4.** A movable section of stage scenery, usually consisting of a wooden frame and a decorated panel of wood or cloth. **5.** A flatcar. **6.** A deflated tire. **7.** A shoe with a flat heel. **8.** A large flat piece of mail. **9.** A horse that competes in a flat race. Also called *runner*. **10.** *Music a.* A sign (b) used to indicate that a note is to be lowered by a half step. **b.** A note that is lowered a half step. **11.** *Football* The area of the field to either side of an offensive formation. ♦ *v.* **flat-ter**, **flat-ting**, **flats** —*tr.* **1.** To make flat; flatten. **2.** *Music* To lower (a note) a semitone. —*intr.* *Music* To sing or play below the proper pitch. [Middle English, from Old Norse *flatr*. See *plat-* in Appendix I.] —*flat-ly adv.* —*flat-ness n.***

flat² (flāt) *n.* **1.** An apartment on one floor of a building. **2.** *Archaic* A story in a house. [Alteration of Scots *flet*, inner part of a house, from Middle English, from Old English *flōr*, dwelling. See *plat-* in Appendix I.]

flat-bed (flāt/'bēd) *n.* **1.** An open truck bed or trailer with no sides, used to carry large objects such as heavy machinery, cars, or houses. **2.** A railroad flatcar.

flatbed press *n.* A printing press in which the type, locked into a chase, is supported by a flat surface or bed and paper is applied to the type either by a flat platen or by a cylinder against which the bed moves.



flatbed



flattop

flatbed scanner *n.* An optical scanner in which the scanning head moves across a stationary page.

flat-boat (flāt/'bōt) *n.* A boat with a flat bottom and square ends used for transporting freight on inland waterways.

flat-bot-tom (flāt/'bōtəm) or **flat-bot-tomed** (-bōt'əmd) *adj.* Having a flat bottom: *a flat-bottom boat*; *a flat-bottomed skillet*.

flat-bread (flāt/'brēd) *n.* Any of various breads made from usually unleavened dough and baked in flat, often round loaves.

flat-car (flāt/'kār) *n.* A railroad freight car without sides or a roof.

flat-earth-er (flāt/'ērthər) *n.* One who stubbornly adheres to outmoded or discredited ideas: "If you don't accept the ideas derived from Adam Smith... then you are [considered] a flat-earth-er" (James Fallows). [From the long-discredited belief that the earth is flat.] —*flat-earth-er adj.*

flat-file database (flāt/'fil) *n.* A database system in which each database contains only one file, which is not linked to any other file.

flat-fish (flāt/'fish) *n., pl.* **flatfish** or **-fishes** Any of numerous chiefly marine fishes of the order Pleuronectiformes, including the flounders, soles, and halibuts, having a laterally compressed body with both eyes on the upper side.

flat-foot (flāt/'fōt) *n.* **1. pl.** -feet (-fēt) A condition in which the arch of the foot is abnormally flattened down so that the entire sole makes contact with the ground. **2. pl.** -foots *a.* *Informal* A person with flat feet. **b. *Slang* A police officer. ♦ *intr.v.* -footed, -footing, -foots To walk in a flat-footed manner: "He flat-footed along, twirling his club" (James T. Farrell).**

flat-footed (flāt/'fōtəd) *adj.* **1.** Of or afflicted with flatfoot. **2a.** Steady on the feet. **b. *Informal* Without reservation; forthright: *a flat-footed refusal*. **3.** Unable to react quickly; unprepared: *The new product caught their competitors flat-footed*. —*flat-foot-ed-ly adv.* —*flat-foot-ed-ness n.***

flat-hat (flāt/'hāt) *intr.v.* -hat-ted, -hat-ting, -hats To fly an airplane close to the ground and at a high or dangerous speed.

Flat-head (flāt/'hēd) *n., pl.* **Flathead** or **-heads** **1a.** A Native American people inhabiting western Montana and northern Idaho, now located principally on Flathead Lake. **b.** A member of this people. **c.** The Salishan language of the Flathead. **2.** See *Interior Salish*. [Translation of French *Têtes-Plates*, flat heads, translation of a name used by neighboring tribes (from the fact that the Flathead did not ornamentally taper the skull as neighboring peoples did).]

flat-head catfish (flāt/'hēd) *n.* A large American catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*) having a yellowish body with brown markings and common in streams of the Mississippi Valley and southeast United States.

Flathead River A river rising in southeast British Columbia, Canada, and flowing about 386 km (240 mi) generally southward across the Montana border to Flathead Lake then south and west to the Clark Fork River. The lake is surrounded by mountains and is a popular recreation region.

flat-iron (flāt/'īrən) *n.* An iron for pressing clothes, especially one that is heated externally, as on a hearth or stove.

flat-land (flāt/'lānd, -lənd) *n.* **1.** Land that varies little in elevation. **2.** **flatlands** A geographic area composed chiefly of land that varies little in elevation. —*flat-land'er n.*

flat-let (flāt/'lit) *n.* Chiefly *British* An efficiency apartment.

flat-ling (flāt/'ling) also **flat-lings** (-lings) *adv.* Chiefly *British* With the flat side or edge of a sword.

flat-out *adv.* *Informal* **1.** In a direct manner; bluntly: *told me the truth flat out*. **2.** At top speed: *running flat out*.

flat-out (flāt/'out) *adj.* *Informal* Thoroughgoing; out-and-out: *a flat-out promotional campaign*; *a flat-out deception*.

flat oyster *n.* See *European oyster*.

flat-panel display (flāt/'pānəl) *n.* A thin lightweight video display used in laptop and notebook computers and employing liquid crystals, electroluminescence, or a similar alternative to cathode-ray tubes. Also called *flat screen*.

flat pick *n.* A flat, often triangular plectrum held between the finger and thumb, used in picking and strumming a guitar or similar stringed instrument. —*flat-'pick'* (flāt/'pik) *v.* —*flat-'pick'er n.*

flat race *n.* A horserace run over level ground with no obstacles such as fences or hazards.

flat screen *n.* See *flat-panel display*.

flat silver *n.* Utensils, such as knives, forks, or spoons, made of silver or silver plate.

flat tax *n.* An income tax having a single rate for all taxpayers regardless of income level and type.

flat-ten (flāt/'n) *v.* -tened, -ten-ing, -tens —*tr.* **1.** To make flat or flatter. **2.** To knock down; lay low: *The boxer was flattened with one punch*. —*intr.* To become flat or flatter. —*flat-ten'er n.*

flat-ter (flāt/'ər) *v.* -tered, -ter-ing, -ters —*tr.* **1.** To compliment excessively and often insincerely, especially in order to win favor. **2.** To please or gratify the vanity of: "What really flatters a man is that you think him worth flattering" (George Bernard Shaw). **3a.** To portray favorably: *a photograph that flatters its subject*. **b.** To show off becomingly or advantageously. —*intr.* To practice flattery. [Middle English *flateren*, from Old French *flater*, of Germanic origin. See *plat-* in Appendix I.] —*flat-ter'er n.* —*flat-ter-ing-ly adv.*

flat-ter² (flāt/'ər) *n.* **1.** A flat-faced swage or hammer used by blacksmiths. **2.** A die plate for flattening metal into strips, as in the manufacture of watch springs.

flat-ter-y (flāt/'ə-rē) *n., pl.* -ies **1.** The act or practice of flattering. **2.** Excessive or insincere praise.

Flat-ter-y (flāt/'ə-rē), Cape A headland of northwest Washington at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. It was discovered by Capt. James Cook in 1778.

flat-tish (flāt/'tish) *adj.* Somewhat flat.

flat-top (flāt/'tōp) *n.* *Informal* **1.** An aircraft carrier. **2.** A short hair-cut in which the hair is brushed straight up and cropped flat across the top.

flat-u-lence (flāch/'ə-ləns) *n.* **1.** The presence of excessive gas in the digestive tract. **2.** Self-importance; pomposity.

flat-u-lency (flāch/'ə-lən-sē) *n.* Flatulence.

flat-u-lent (flāch/'ə-lənt) *adj.* **1.** Of, afflicted with, or caused by flatulence. **2.** Inducing or generating flatulence. **3.** Pompous; bloated.

flat-ware (flāt/'wār) *n.* **1.** Tableware that is fairly flat and fashioned usually of a single piece, as plates. **2.** Table utensils such as knives, forks, and spoons.

flat-wa-ter (flāt/'wō'tər, -wōt'ər) *adj.* Of or on a level or slow-moving watercourse: *flat-water canoeing*; *a flat-water race*.

flat-wise (flāt/'wīz) also **flat-ways** (-wāz') *adv.* With the flat side down or in contact with a surface.

flat-work (flāt/'wōrk) *n.* Laundry, such as sheets and linens, that can be ironed by a mangle rather than by hand.

flat-worm (flāt/'wōrm) *n.* Any of various parasitic and nonparasitic worms of the phylum Platyhelminthes, such as a tapeworm or a planarian, characteristically having a soft, flat, bilaterally symmetrical body and no body cavity. Also called *platyhelminth*.

Flau-bert (flō-'bār'), Gustave 1821-1880. French writer considered a forerunner of naturalism and known for his precise literary style. His works include the novels *Madame Bovary* (1857) and *Salammbô* (1862) and the short story "A Simple Heart" (1877). —*Flau-bert'ian* (-shan, -tē-ən) *adj.*

flaunt (flōnt) *v.* **flaunt-ed**, **flaunt-ing**, **flaunts** —*tr.* **1.** To exhibit ostentatiously or shamelessly: *flaunts his knowledge*. See synonyms at *show*. **2.** *Usage* Problem To show contempt for; scorn. —*intr.* **1.** To parade oneself ostentatiously; show oneself off. **2.** To wave grandly; *penants flaunting in the wind*. [Origin unknown.] —*flaunt'er n.* —*flaunt-ing-ly adv.*

Usage Note *Flaunt* as a transitive verb means "to exhibit ostentatiously." She flaunted her wealth. To flout is "to show contempt for." She flouted the proprieties. For some time now flaut has been used in the sense "to show contempt for," even by educated users of English. This usage is still widely seen as erroneous and is best avoided.

flaunty (flōnt'ē) *adj.* -ier, -iest Inclined to flaunt; ostentatious. —*flaunt-i-ly adv.* —*flaunt-i-ness n.*

flau-ta (flou/'tā) *n.* A corn tortilla rolled around a filling, such as beef, chicken, or cheese, into a thin cylinder and sometimes deep-fried. [Spanish, flute, probably from Old Provençal *flaut*. See FLUTE.]

flaut-ist (flō/'tist, flou-'t-) *n.* One who plays the flute; a flutist. [Italian *flautista*, from *flauto*, flute, from Old Provençal *flaut*. See FLUTE.]

flav- *pref.* Variant of *flavo-*.

flav-anone (flā'və-nōn) *n.* A colorless crystalline compound, C₁₅H₁₀O₂, derived from flavone. [FLAV(O)- + -AN(E) + -ONE.]

flav-es-cent (flā-vēs'ənt) *adj.* Turning yellow; yellowish. [Latin *flavescēns*, *flavescens*, present participle of *flavescere*, to turn yellow, inchoative of *flavere*, to be yellow, from *flāvus*, yellow. See *bhel-* in Appendix I.]

flav-in (flā'vin) also **flav-vine** (-vēn') *n.* **1.** Any of various water-soluble yellow pigments, including riboflavin, found in plant and animal tissue as coenzymes of flavoprotein. **2.** A ketone, C₁₅H₁₂N₄O₂, that gives color to various natural yellow pigments.

flavin adenine dinucleotide *n.* *Abbr.* FAD A coenzyme, C₂₇H₃₃N₇O₁₅P₂, that is a derivative of riboflavin and functions in certain oxidation-reduction reactions in the body.

flav-vine (flā'vēn) *n.* **1.** A brownish-red crystalline powder, C₁₅H₁₂N₄O₂, used as an antiseptic. **2.** Variant of *flavin*.

flavin mononucleotide *n.* *Abbr.* FMN A derivative of riboflavin, C₁₇H₂₁N₄O₆P, that functions as a coenzyme of various flavoproteins in certain oxidation-reduction reactions in the body.

flavo- or flav- *pref.* **1.** Yellow: *flavin*. **2.** Flavin: *flavoprotein*. [Latin *flāvus*, yellow. See *bhel-* in Appendix I.]

flav-one (flā'vōn) *n.* A crystalline compound, C₁₅H₁₀O₂, the parent substance of a number of important yellow pigments, occurring on the leaves or in the stems and seed capsules of many primroses.

flav-onoid (flā'və-nōid') *n.* Any of a large group of plant substances that includes the anthocyanins.

flav-o-pro-te-in (flā'vō-prōtē'n, -tē'n) *n.* Any of a group of enzymes containing flavin bound to protein and acting as dehydrogenation catalysts in biological reactions.

flavor (flā'vər) *n.* **1.** Distinctive taste; savor: *a flavor of smoke in bacon*. See synonyms at *taste*. **2.** A distinctive yet intangible quality felt to be characteristic of a given thing: "What matters in literature... is surely the idiosyncratic, the individual, the flavor or color of a particular human suffering" (Harold Bloom). **3.** A flavoring: *contains no artificial flavors*. **4.** *Archaic* Aroma; fragrance. ♦ *tr.v.* -vored, -vor-ing, -vors To give flavor to. [Middle English *flavour*, aroma, from Old French *flavor*, from Vulgar Latin **flātor*, from Latin *flāre*, to blow. See *bhlē-* in Appen-

dix I.] —*flā-vor'er n.* —*flā-vor-less adj.* —*flā-vor-ous (-əs), flā-vor-some (-səm) adj.* —*flā-vor-y adj.*

flav-er-ful (flā'vər-fəl) *adj.* Full of flavor; savory. —*flav-er-ful-ly adv.*

flav-or-ing (flā'vər-ing) *n.* A substance, such as an extract or spice, that imparts flavor.

flav-or-ist (flā'vər-ist) *n.* One whose profession is blending artificially isolated chemicals to create the taste and smell of a particular food.

flav-or of the month *n.* Something currently popular; a trend or fashion. —*flav-or-of-the-month'* (flā'vər-əv-thə-mūnth') *adj.*

flav-our (flā'vər) *n.* & *v.* Chiefly *British* Variant of *flavor*.

flaw¹ (flō) *n.* **1.** An imperfection, often concealed, that impairs soundness: *a flaw in the crystal that caused it to shatter*. See synonyms at *blemish*. **2.** A defect or shortcoming in something intangible: *They share the character flaw of arrogance*. **3.** A defect in a legal document that can render it invalid. ♦ *tr.* & *intr.v.* **flawed**, **flaw-ing**, **flaws** To make or become defective. [Middle English *flawe*, splinter, perhaps from Old Norse *flaga*, slab of stone. See *plāk-* in Appendix I.]

flaw² (flō) *n.* **1a.** A brief gust or blast of wind. **b.** A passing storm; a squall. **2.** *Obsolete* A burst of passion. [Probably of Scandinavian origin; akin to Swedish *flaga*, gust of wind.] —*flaw-y adj.*

flaw-less (flō/'lis) *adj.* Being entirely without flaw or imperfection. See synonyms at *perfect*. —*flaw-less-ly adv.* —*flaw-less-ness n.*

flax (flāks) *n.* **1a.** A widely cultivated plant, *Linum usitatissimum*, having pale blue flowers, seeds that yield linseed oil, and slender stems from which a textile fiber is obtained. **b.** The fine, light-colored textile fiber obtained from this plant. **c.** Any of various other plants of the genus *Linum* or of similar or related genera. **2.** A pale grayish yellow. [Middle English, from Old English *flæx*. See *plek-* in Appendix I.]

flax-en (flāk'sən) *adj.* **1.** Made of or resembling flax. **2.** Having the pale grayish-yellow color of flax fiber: *flaxen braids*.

flax-seed (flāks'sēd') *n.* The seed of flax, the source of linseed oil and emollient medicinal preparations.

flax-y (flāk'sē) *adj.* -ier, -iest Resembling flax, as in texture.

flay (flā) *tr.v.* **flayed**, **flay-ing**, **flays** **1.** To strip off the skin or outer covering of. **2.** To strip of money or goods; fleece. **3.** To whip or lash. **4.** To assail with stinging criticism; excoriate. [Middle English *flen*, from Old English *flēan*.] —*flay'er n.*

F-layer *n.* **1.** The highest region of the ionosphere, extending at night from about 190 to 400 kilometers (120 to 250 miles) above the earth. Also called *F region*. **2.** Either of two layers, designated F₁ and F₂, into which this region is divided during the day, extending respectively from about 145 to 240 kilometers (90 to 150 miles) and from about 190 to 400 kilometers (120 to 250 miles) above the earth.

fl. dr. *abbr.* fluid dram

flea (flē) *n.* **1.** Any of various small, wingless, bloodsucking insects of the order Siphonaptera that have legs adapted for jumping and are parasitic on warm-blooded animals. **2.** Any of various small crustaceans that resemble or move like fleas, such as the water flea. —*idiom:* **a flea in (one's) ear** An annoying hint or a stinging rebuke. [Middle English *fle*, from Old English *flēah*.]

flea-bag (flē'bag') *n.* *Informal* **1.** A seedy, rundown hotel or other lodging place. **2.** An animal considered to be inferior or in poor condition.

flea-bane (flē'bān') *n.* Any of various plants of the genus *Erigeron*, having variously colored, many-rayed, daisylike flower heads.

flea beetle *n.* Any of various small beetles of the subfamily Alticinae that have hind legs adapted for jumping and feed on the foliage of certain plants.

flea-bite (flē'bite) *n.* **1a.** The bite of a flea. **b.** The small red mark caused by a flea's bite. **2.** A trifling loss, inconvenience, or annoyance.

flea-bit-ten (flē'bit'n) *adj.* **1.** Covered with fleas or fleabites. **2.** *Informal* Seedy; dilapidated: