

< background

✕

Dictionary

Thesaurus

background ^{1 of 2} noun

back·ground ('bak-, (g)raʊnd 🔊)

often attributive[Synonyms of *background* >](#)

- 1 a** : the scenery or ground behind something
a picture of her son with mountains in the *background*
background scenery for the play
- b art** : the part of a painting representing what lies behind objects in the foreground
dark shadows in the *background* of the painting
- c** : an image that displays on a computer screen underneath the various available [icons](#) and [windows](#)
using a family photograph as her computer *background*
- 2** : an [inconspicuous](#) position
shy people who try to stay in the *background*
- 3 a** : the conditions that form the setting within which something is experienced
... set in a *background* of tropical luxuriance.
— Tom Marvel
- b (1)** : the circumstances or events [antecedent](#) to a phenomenon or development
the economic *background* of the American Civil War
took place against a *background* of increasing tension



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- 4 a** : intrusive sound or radiation (see [RADIATION](#) *sense 2b*) that interferes with received or recorded electronic signals
a recording with a lot of *background* noise
- b physics** : a more or less steady level of noise above which the effect (such as [radioactivity](#)) being measured by an apparatus (such as a [Geiger counter](#)) is detected
especially : a somewhat steady level of radiation in the natural environment (as from cosmic rays)
- 5** : a level of computer processing at which the processor uses time not required for a primary task to work on an additional task
→ compare [FOREGROUND](#) *entry 1*

background 2 of 2 verb

backgrounded; backgrounding; backgrounds

transitive verb

- 1** : to provide with [background](#)
... a richly *backgrounded* study of a silent movie star ...
— Hollis Alpert
- 2** : to give less attention or emphasis to (something) : to place (something) in the background
Graham peoples her novel with genuine, endearing characters and keeps the grisly murders tactfully *backgrounded* ...
— *Publishers Weekly Reviews*

Phrases



Dictionary

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Noun

backdrop

ground

[See all Synonyms & Antonyms in Thesaurus >](#)**Choose the Right Synonym for *background***

BACKGROUND, SETTING, ENVIRONMENT, MILIEU, MISE-EN-SCÈNE mean the place, time, and circumstances in which something occurs.

BACKGROUND often refers to the circumstances or events that precede a phenomenon or development.

the shocking decision was part of the *background* of the riots



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MILIEU applies especially to the physical and social surroundings of a person or group of persons.

an intellectual *milieu* conducive to artistic experimentation

MISE-EN-SCÈNE strongly suggests the use of properties to achieve a particular atmosphere or theatrical effect.

a gothic thriller with a carefully crafted *mise-en-scène*

Noun

Objects in the foreground are drawn larger than those in the *background*.

a photograph of a house with mountains in the *background*

red letters printed on a white *background*

An ethnic conflict that was simmering away *in the background* finally erupted into civil war.

Let me provide you with some *background* on this problem.

Recent Examples on the Web

Noun

Subsequently, a *background* casting agency working on the crime comedy decided it

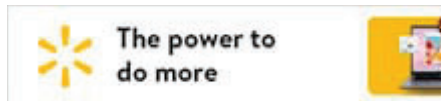


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These examples are programmatically compiled from various online sources to illustrate current usage of the word 'background.' Any opinions expressed in the examples do not represent those of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback](#) about these examples.



First Known Use

Noun

1672, in the meaning defined at [sense 1a](#)

Verb

1768, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Time Traveler



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Words containing background

[background music](#)[background noise](#)[background radiation](#)[cosmic background radiation](#)[cosmic microwave background](#)[in the background](#)[into the background](#)[on background](#)[back gray](#)**background**[backgrounder](#)[See More Nearby Entries >](#)**Style**

MLA

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Twitter

background noun

back·ground 'bak-,graünd

- 1** : the scenery or ground that is behind a main figure or object (as in a painting)
- 2** : a position that attracts little attention
always tries to keep in the *background*
- 3 a** : the setting within which something takes place
b : the events leading up to a situation
c : information needed to understand a problem or situation
d : the total of a person's experience, knowledge, and education
- 4 a** : a somewhat steady level of radiation in the natural environment (as from cosmic rays or radio activity)
b : undesired sound that is heard in a system (as in radio or a tape recording) that produces sound from other sources



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English: [Translation of *background* for Spanish Speakers](#)

Britannica English: [Translation of *background* for Arabic Speakers](#)

Last Updated: 13 Apr 2024 - Updated example sentences

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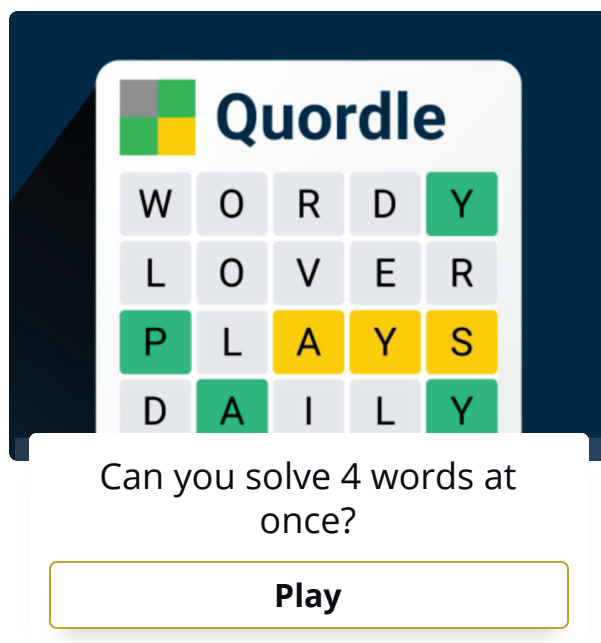
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You can make only 12 words. Pick the best ones!

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Can you outdo past winners of the National Spelli...

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