



RANDOM HOUSE
WEBSTER'S

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RANDOM HOUSE
REFERENCE

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Random House Webster's College Dictionary
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the back of anything. 2. the vertical board at the end of a basketball court to which the basket is attached. [1755-65]

backbone (bak/bōn/), *n.* 1. the spinal column; spine. 2. strength of character; resolution. 3. something resembling a backbone in appearance, position, or function. 4. *SPINE* (def. 6). [1250-1300]

back-breaking (bak/bra'king), *adj.* demanding great effort, endurance, etc.: a back-breaking job. [1780-90] —back/break'er, *n.*

back burner (bak/burn'er), *n.* a condition of low priority or temporary deferment: issues put on the back burner until after the election. [1945-50]

back channel (bak/'chan/nel), *n.* a secret, indirect, or irregular means of communication, esp. for sensitive government and diplomacy matters. [1975-80] —back/'chan/nel, *adj.* —back/'chan/nel, *v.*

back-check (bak/'tʃek/), *v.i.* to skate back toward one's defensive zone in ice hockey, obstructing or impeding the progress of opponents on attack. Compare *FORE-CHECK*. [1935-40]

back country (bak/'koun/try), *n.* a sparsely populated rural region remote from a settled area. [1740-50] —back/'coun/try, *adj.*

backcourt (bak/'kōrt/, -kōrt'), *n.* 1. the half of a basketball court in which the basket being defended is located. 2. the part of a tennis court between the base line and the line that marks the in-bounds limit of a service. Compare *FORECOURT* (def. 1). [1765-75]

back-cross (bak/'krɒs/, -kros/), *v.t.* 1. to cross (a hybrid of the first generation) with either of its parents. —*n.* 2. an instance of such crossing. [1900-05]

back-date (bak/'dāt/), *v.t.*, -dat'ed, -dat'ing. to date earlier than the actual date; predate; antedate. [1945-50, Amer.]

back door (bak/'dɔr/), *n.* a secret, furtive, illicit, or indirect method or means. [1520-30] —back/'door/, *adj.*

backdraft (bak/'draɪt/, -draɪt'), *n.* an explosive surge in a fire occurring when air is suddenly mixed with a combustible gas. [1815-25]

backdrop (bak/'drɒp/), *n.* 1. the rear curtain of a stage setting. 2. the background of an event; setting. [1910-15, Amer.]

backed (bakt), *adj.* having a back, backing, setting, or support (often used in combination): a high-backed chair. [1350-1400]

backer (bak/'ər/), *n.* 1. a person who supports or aids a cause, enterprise, etc. 2. a person who bets on a competitor in a race or contest. 3. canvas or other material used for backing. [1535-45]

backfield (bak/'fi:ld/), *n.* 1. the members of a football team who, on offense, are stationed behind the linemen and, on defense, behind the linebackers. 2. their positions considered as a unit. [1910-15, Amer.]

backfill (bak/'fil/), *n.* 1. material used for refilling an excavation. —*v.t.*, *v.i.* 2. to refill (an excavation). [1950-55]

backfire (bak/'fi:ə/), *v.*, -fired, -fir'ing, *n.* —*v.i.* 1. (of an internal-combustion engine) to have a loud, premature explosion in the intake manifold. 2. to bring a result opposite to that planned. 3. to start a fire deliberately in order to check a forest or prairie fire by creating a barren area in advance of it. —*n.* 4. (in an internal-combustion engine) a premature, explosive ignition of fuel in the intake manifold. 5. an explosion coming out of the breech of a firearm. 6. a fire started intentionally to check the advance of a forest fire. [1775-85, Amer.]

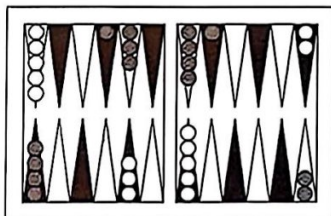
backfit (bak/'fit/), *v.t.*, -fit or -fit'ted, -fit'ting. to retrofit.

backflip (bak/'flɪp/), *n.*, *v.*, -flipped, -flip'ping. —*n.* 1. a backward somersault. 2. a dive executed by somersaulting backward. 3. a complete reversal in attitude. —*v.i.* 4. to perform a backflip. [1930-1935]

backflow (bak/'flɒ/), *n.* a flow of a liquid opposite to the usual or desired direction. [1880-85]

back formation (bak/'fɔ:mə'tiən), *n.* 1. the analogical creation of one word from another word that appears to be a derived or inflected form of the first by dropping the apparent affix or by modification. 2. a word so formed, as *typewriter* from *typewriter*. [1885-90]

backgammon (bak/'gam/ən, bak/'gam/-), *n.* a game for two persons in which pieces are moved around a board having two tables or parts, and then removed according to throws of the dice. [1635-45; BACK² + *gammon*, perh. akin to *GAME*]



backgammon

background (bak/'graʊnd/), *n.* 1. the ground or parts, as of a scene, situated in the rear (opposed to *foreground*). 2. the part of a painted or carved surface against which represented objects and forms are perceived or depicted. 3. one's origin, education, experience, etc., in relation to one's present character or status: a religious background. 4. the social, historical, and other antecedents or causes of an event or condition: the background of the war. 5. the set of conditions against which an occurrence is perceived. 6. a. Also called *back-ground-radiation*, the natural low-intensity radiation from cosmic rays and naturally occurring radioisotopes in rocks, soil, etc. b. intrusive sound or radiation that tends to interfere with the transmission or reception of electronic signals. —*adj.* 7. of, pertaining to, or serving as a background: background noise. —*v.t.* 8. to supply a background for. —*Idiom.* 9. in or into the background, in or into a state of less importance or visibility. [1665-75]

back-ground-er (bak/'graʊnd/ər), *n.* a briefing by an official who has been promised anonymity in reports of the briefing. [1955-60]

back-ground music (bak/'graʊnd mu'sik/), *n.* 1. music, often recorded, intended to provide a soothing background. 2. music composed to accompany and heighten the mood of a visual production, as a movie. [1925-30]

backhand (bak/'hand/), *n.* 1. a stroke, slap, etc., made with the back of the hand turned forward. 2. (in tennis, squash, etc.) a stroke made with the back of the hand facing the direction of movement. 3. handwriting that slopes toward the left. —*adj.* 4. backhanded. 5. (in tennis, squash, etc.) of, pertaining to, or being a stroke made with the back of the hand facing the direction of movement. Compare *FOREHAND* (def. 1). —*adv.* 6. with the back of the hand. 7. backhanded: She returned the ball backhand. —*v.t.* 8. to strike with the back of the hand. 9. to hit, produce, or accomplish with a backhand. 10. to catch (a ball or the like) backhanded. [1650-60]

back-handed (bak/'han/did/), *adj.* 1. performed with the back of the hand turned or facing forward: a backhanded stroke. 2. sloping in a downward direction from left to right: backhanded writing. 3. oblique or ambiguous in meaning: a backhanded compliment. —*adv.* 4. with the hand across the body; backhand: He caught the ball backhanded. [1790-1800] —back/'hand/ed'ly, *adv.* —back/'hand/ed-ness, *n.*

backhoe (bak/'hō/), *n.* an excavating machine with a bucket attached to a hinged boom that digs by being drawn toward the machine. [1940-1945]

backing (bak/'ɪŋ/), *n.* 1. aid or support of any kind. 2. supporters or backers collectively. 3. something that forms the back of anything, esp. for support or protection. [1590-1600]

backlash (bak/'laʃ/), *n.* 1. a sudden, forceful backward movement; recoil. 2. a strong negative reaction, as to some social or political change: a backlash by voters. 3. a. the difference between the thickness of a gear tooth and the width of the space between teeth in the mating gear, designed to allow room for lubricants, expansion, etc. b. play or lost motion between loosely fitting machine parts. 4. a snarled line on the reel of a casting fisherman. [1805-15]

backlight (bak/'li:t/), *n.*, *v.*, -light'ed or -lit, -light'ing. —*n.* 1. a light source placed behind an object, person, or scene to create a highlight that separates the subject from the background. —*v.t.* 2. to illuminate (something) from behind: a backlit screen on a computer. [1950-55]

backlist (bak/'list/), *n.* 1. the books that a publisher has kept in print over several years, as distinguished from newly issued titles. —*v.t.* 2. to place on a backlist. [1945-50]

backload (bak/'ləʊd/), *v.t.* to defer to a later date, as wages, benefits, or costs. [1975-80]

backlog (bak/'lɒg/, -log/), *n.*, *v.*, -logged, -log'ging. —*n.* 1. an accumulation, as of unfinished tasks. 2. a large log at the back of a hearth to keep up a fire. —*v.i.* 3. to accumulate in a backlog. [1675-85]

back matter (bak/'mæt/ər), *n.* the parts of a book that appear after the main text, as bibliography, index, and appendixes. [1945-50]

back number (bak/'nʌm/bər/), *n.* 1. an out-of-date issue of a serial publication. 2. Informal. anything out-of-date. [1805-15, Amer.]

back office (bak/'ɒf/ɪs/), *n.* any department or office that is not usually seen by outsiders. —back/'of'ɪs/, *adj.*

back order (bak/'ɔr/dər/), *n.* an order placed for merchandise that is temporarily out of stock. —back/'ɔr/dər, *v.t.*, *v.i.*

backpack (bak/'pæk/), *n.* 1. a pack or knapsack, to be carried on one's back, sometimes supported on a lightweight metal frame. 2. a piece of equipment designed for use while being carried on the back. —*v.i.* 3. to go on a hike using a backpack. —*v.t.* 4. to place or carry in a backpack or on one's back. [1910-15, Amer.] —back/'pæk/er, *n.* **back pay** or **back pay** (bak/'pæ/), *n.* a payment due for previously done work; also, salary overdue from a past pay period. Also called *back payment*, *back salary*, *back wages*. [1804-09]

back-pedal (bak/'ped/əl, -ped'əld, -ped'al'ing or (esp. Brit.) -ped'al'ing), *v.* 1. to retard the forward motion of a bicycle by pressing backward on the pedal. 2. to retreat from or reverse one's previous stand on a matter. 3. to make quick steps backward, as in retreating against a boxing opponent. [1895-1900]

backrest (bak/'rest/), *n.* a support for one's back. [1855-60]

back road (bak/'rɒd/), *n.* a little-used, often unpaved country road.

back room or **back room** (bak/'ru:m/), *n.* 1. a room in the rear of a building. 2. a place from where powerful or influential persons exercise control in an indirect manner. [1585-95]

back-saw (bak/'sɒ/), *n.* a saw with a reinforced back. [1875-80]

backscatter (bak/'skæt/ər), *n.* 1. the deflection of radiation by scattering in a direction opposite to the direction of incidence. 2. radiation scattered in this manner. [1955-60]

backseat (bak/'set/), *n.* 1. a seat at the rear. 2. an inferior position. [1825-35]

backseat driver (bak/'set draɪv/ər), *n.* 1. an automobile passenger who offers the driver unsolicited advice or criticism. 2. any meddling person who offers unsolicited advice. [1925-30] —back/'set draɪv'ing, *n.*

backside (bak/'saɪd/), *n.* 1. the rear or back part or view of an object, person, scene, etc. 2. rump; buttocks. [1350-1400]

backslapping (bak/'slap'ɪŋ/), *n.* the practice of making an effusive display of friendliness, as by slapping people on the back. [1770-80]

—back/'slap/, *v.t.*, *v.i.*, -slapped, -slap'ping. —back/'slap/er, *n.*

backslash (bak/'slæʃ/), *n.* a short oblique stroke (\): used in some computer operating systems to mark the division between a directory and a subdirectory, as in typing a path. [1985-90]

backslide (bak/'slɪd/), *v.*, -slid, -slid or -slid'den, -slid'ing, *n.* —*v.i.* 1. to relapse into bad habits, sinful behavior, or undesirable activities. —*n.* 2. an instance of backsliding. [1575-85] —back/'slid/er, *n.*