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signal

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noun

sig·nal

'sig-nəl'

Synonyms of *signal* >

1

: **SIGN, INDICATION**

2

a : an act, event, or watchword that has been agreed on as the occasion of concerted action

b : something that incites to action

3

: something (such as a sound, gesture, or object) that conveys notice or warning

4

a : an object used to transmit or convey information beyond the range of human voice

b : the sound or image conveyed in telegraphy, telephony, radio, radar, or television

c : a detectable physical quantity or impulse (such as a voltage, current, or magnetic field strength) by which messages or information can be transmitted

signal

2 of 3

verb

signaled or signalled; signaling or signalling

'sig-nəl-īŋ'

transitive verb

1

: to notify by a signal

signal the fleet to turn back

2

a : to communicate or indicate by or as if by **signals**

signaled the end of an era

b : to constitute a characteristic feature of (a meaningful linguistic form)

intransitive verb

: to make or send a signal

signaler

noun

variants or **signaller**

signal

3 of 3

adjective

: distinguished from the ordinary : **NOTABLE**

a signal achievement



flag tocsin

becken flag gesture

motion wave

astral bright distinguished

eminent illustrious luminous

noble notable noteworthy

outstanding preeminent prestigious

redoubtable star superior

[See all Synonyms & Antonyms in Thesaurus >](#)

Examples of *signal* in a Sentence

He likes her but he is sending the wrong *signals* with his constant teasing.

The teacher gave us the *signal* to finish what we were working on and hand in our tests.

Faulty wiring in the train station caused a *signal* to malfunction.

[See More](#) 

Recent Examples on the Web

The test, developed by Guardant Health, detects cancer *signals* in the bloodstream by identifying the presence of circulating tumor DNA (ctDNA)—fragments of DNA that cancer cells release.

— Staff Author, *Health*, 22 Mar. 2024

That divide — epitomized by the green bubbles that show an Android owner's messages — sent a *signal* that other smartphones were lower quality than the iPhone, according to the lawsuit.

— Tripp Mickle, *New York Times*, 21 Mar. 2024

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



Word History

Etymology

Noun

Middle English, from Medieval Latin *signale*, from Late Latin, neuter of *signalis* of a sign, from Latin *signum*

Adjective

modification of French *signalé*, past participle of *signaler* to distinguish, from Old Italian *segnalare* to signal, distinguish, from *segnale* signal, from Medieval Latin *signale*

First Known Use

Noun

15th century, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Verb

1800, in the meaning defined at [transitive sense 1](#)

Adjective

1591, in the meaning defined [above](#)

Time Traveler

The first known use of *signal* was in the 15th century

[See more words from the same century](#)

Phrases Containing *signal*

[distress signal/call](#)[traffic signal](#)[distress signal](#)[hand signal](#)[signal-caller](#)[turn signal](#)[sound/signal the retreat](#)[virtue-signal](#)

Dictionary Entries Near *signal*

[signage](#)**signal**[signal board](#)[See More Nearby Entries >](#)

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Kids Definition

signal

1 of 3 **noun**sig·nal 'sig-nəl ◀▶

- 1 : an act, event, or word that serves to start some action
- 2 : a sound or motion of a part of the body made to give warning or command
- 3 : an object placed to give notice or warning
| a traffic *signal*
- 4 **a** : the message, sound, or effect transmitted in electronic communication (as radio or television)

b : a radio wave or electric current that transmits a message or effect (as in radio or television)

signal 2 of 3 verb

signaled or signalled; signaling or signalling -nə-līŋ

- 1 : to notify by a signal
- 2 : to communicate by or as if by signals

• **signaler** noun

signal 3 of 3 adjective

- 1 : unusually great
| a *signal* honor
| a *signal* achievement

- 2 : used in signaling
| a *signal* light

• **signally** -nə-lē **adverb**

Etymology

Noun

Middle English *signal* "signal, sign," derived from Latin *signalis* "of a sign," from earlier *signum* "mark, sign, image" — related to [SIGN](#)

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uncertainty into
opportunity



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

Britannica.com: [Encyclopedia article about *signal*](#)

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