



Dictionary

Thesaurus

distribute



Games

Word of the Day

Grammar

Wordplay

Slang

Rhymes

Word Finder

Thesaurus

More

## Dictionary

### Definition

Synonyms

Synonym Chooser

Example Sentences

Word History

Rhymes

Entries Near

Cite this Entry

Share

Kids Definition

Legal Definition

More from M-W

Show Less

Save Word

# distribute verb

dis-trib-ute (di-'stri-byūt) also (-byat) British also 'di-stri-byūt

**distributed; distributing**

[Synonyms of distribute](#)

**transitive verb**

**1** : to divide among several or many : **APPORTION**

| distribute expenses

| distributes toys to needy children

**2 a** : to spread out so as to cover something : **SCATTER**

| evenly distribute the seeds

**b** : to give out or deliver especially to members of a group

| distribute newspapers

| distribute leaflets

| distribute a TV show to local stations

**c** : to place or position so as to be properly **apportioned** over or throughout an area

| 200 pounds *distributed* on a 6-foot frame

| distribute the frosting around the top and sides of the cake

**d logic** : to use (a term) so as to convey information about every member of the class named

| The proposition "all men are mortal" *distributes* "man" but not "mortal."

**3 a** : to divide or separate especially into kinds

| distributing specimens into their proper classes

**b** : to return the units of (something, such as typeset matter) to storage

**4** **mathematics** : to use in or as an operation so as to be mathematically distributive (see **DISTRIBUTIVE sense 3a**)

| Addition is not *distributed* over multiplication.

**intransitive verb**

**mathematics** : to be mathematically distributive

| multiplication *distributes* over addition

**distributee** (dis-'tri-byū-'tē) noun

### Synonyms

assort

class

compartment

distinguish

peg

rank

sort

break down

classify

compartmentalize

grade

place

relegate

type

categorize

codify

digest

group

range

separate

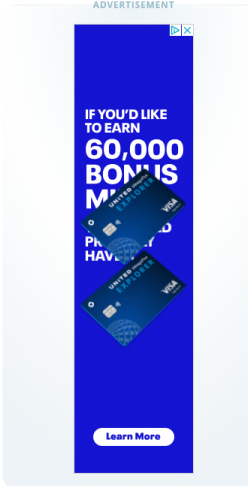
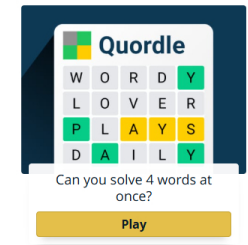
[See All Synonyms & Antonyms in Thesaurus](#)

### Choose the Right Synonym for *distribute*

**DISTRIBUTE, DISPENSE, DIVIDE, DEAL, DOLE OUT** mean to give out, usually in shares, to each member of a group.

**DISTRIBUTE** implies an apportioning by separation of something into parts, units, or amounts.

| *distributed* food to the needy



**DISPENSE** suggests the giving of a carefully weighed or measured portion to each of a group according to due or need.

| *dispensed* wisdom to the students

**DIVIDE** stresses the separation of a whole into parts and implies that the parts are equal.

| three charitable groups *divided* the proceeds

**DEAL** emphasizes the allotment of something piece by piece.

| *deal* out equipment and supplies

**DOLE OUT** implies a carefully measured portion of something that is often in short supply.

| *doled out* what little food there was

Examples of *distribute* in a Sentence

*distribute* the assignments according to seniority

committed to *distributing* the school's limited scholarship money so that it benefits more students

Recent Examples on the Web

Examples are automatically compiled from online sources to show current usage. Opinions expressed in the examples do not represent those of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback.](#)

Device now holds more than 2,500 retail accounts and *distributes* its beer from Bakersfield to Southern Oregon, according to its website.

– Jennah Pendleton, *Sacbee.com*, 26 Apr. 2025

That strategy drew a furious response from some of the city's employee unions, who *distributed* posters comparing Villaraigosa to Wisconsin's then-Gov. Scott Walker, viewed at that time as a strident foe of organized labor.

– David Zahniser, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 Apr. 2025

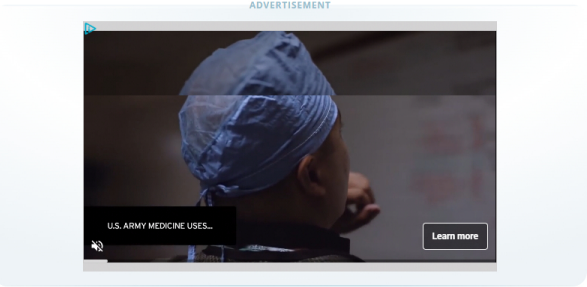
Other outdated methods include: • Rate Limiting: Attackers now *distribute* traffic across massive proxy networks, ensuring no single IP generates enough traffic to trigger blocks.

– Nick Rieniets, *Forbes.com*, 25 Apr. 2025

The product was *distributed* in 12 states, including Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

– Thomas G. Moukawsher, *MSNBC Newsweek*, 25 Apr. 2025

[See All Example Sentences for \*distribute\*](#) >



Word History

**Etymology**

Middle English, from Latin *distributus*, past participle of *distribuere*, from *dis-* + *tribuere* to allot — more at [TRIBUTE](#)

**First Known Use**

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

**Time Traveler**

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

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

Rhymes for *distribute*

[contribute](#) [redistribute](#) [tribute](#)

[See All Rhymes for \*distribute\* >](#)

**Browse Nearby Words**

[distributary](#) **distribute** [distributed](#)

[See All Nearby Words >](#)

**Cite this Entry**

Style MLA

"Distribute." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/distribute>. Accessed 9 May. 2025.

[Copy Citation](#)

**Share**

[f](#) [x](#)

**Kids Definition**

**distribute** *verb*

dis-trib-ute (dis-'trib-yūt ◀▶)

**distributed; distributing**

1 : to divide among several or many  
| *distributed* the food to the needy

2 : to spread out so as to cover something : **SCATTER**

3 : to give out or deliver especially to members of a group  
| *distribute* the directions to the class  
| *distribute* newspapers

4 : to divide or separate especially into kinds

ADVERTISEMENT



**Celebrate Her with ZO®**  
For a limited time, enjoy free 2-day shipping on orders \$150+ for Mother's Day skincare favorites.

**ZO® SKIN HEALTH**

**SHOP NOW**

**Legal Definition**

**distribute** *transitive verb*

dis-trib-ute (di-'stri-byūt ◀▶)

**distributed; distributing**

1 : to divide among several or many : **APPORTION**

2 : to give out or deliver especially to members of a group  
→ see also **DIVIDEND**

**More from Merriam-Webster on *distribute***

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

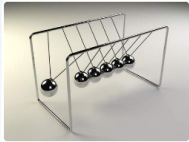
Love words? Need even more definitions?

Subscribe to America's largest dictionary and get thousands more definitions and advanced search—ad free!

MERRIAM-WEBSTER UNABRIDGED

Popular in Grammar & Usage

See More >



'Affect' vs. 'Effect'



Words You Always Have to Look Up



How to Use Em Dashes (—), En Dashes (–), and Hyphens (-)



Why is '-ed' sometimes pronounced at the end of a word?



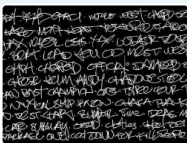
Democracy or Republic: What's the difference?

Popular in Wordplay

See More >



Flower Etymologies For Your Spring Garden



Great Big List of Beautiful and Useless Words, Vol. 1



Rare and Amusing Insults, Volume 3



'Za' and 9 Other Words to Help You Win at SCRABBLE



More Words with Remarkable Origins

Games & Quizzes

See All >

**Quordle**

W O R D Y  
L O V E R  
P L A Y S

**Quordle**  
Can you solve 4 words at once?

**Play**

**BLOSSOM**

T W  
F A

**Blossom Word Game**  
Pick the best words!

**Play**

**MISSING LETTER**

**Missing Letter**  
A daily crossword with a twist

**Play**

**Guess the Color Quiz**  
Questions that use the whole box of crayons.

**Take the quiz**



Learn a new word every day.  
Delivered to your inbox!

Your email address

SUBSCRIBE

[Help](#) [About Us](#) [Advertising Info](#) [Contact Us](#) [Diversity](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Use](#)



© 2025 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated



Information **Ads by Google** [Stop seeing this ad](#) [Why this ad?](#) [h](#) experience.  
Do not sell or share my personal information.