

periodically

ADVERB

Etymology

Summary

Formed within English, by derivation.

Etymons: **periodical** *adj.*, **-ly** *suffix*².

< **periodical** *adj.* + **-ly** *suffix*². Compare **French** *périodiquement* (1611 in Cotgrave as *periodiquement*).

Meaning & use

1.a. At regularly recurring or definite intervals. Now chiefly Science.

1646–

- 1646** They commonly doe both proceed unto perfection, and have legitimate exclusions, and **periodically** succeed each other.
Sir T. Browne, Pseudodoxia Epidemica iii. xvii. 149

1722 The chorus of planets moving **periodically**, by uniform laws, in their several orbits about [the sun].
W. Wollaston, Religion of Nature v. 80

1847 *Geocyclic*, circling the earth **periodically**.
J. Craig, New Universal Dictionary

1867 This displacement will diminish and increase **periodically** according to a simple harmonic function of the time.
W. Thomson & P. G. Tait, Treatise on Natural Philosophy vol. I. ii. 274

1933 They vary **periodically** in brightness owing to an actual pulsation or physical change of the star.
A. S. Eddington, Expanding Universe i. 10

1995 As cells age the amount of adenylate cyclase expressed increases, and..a suspension oscillates **periodically**.
Philosophical Transactions (Royal Society) B. vol. 349 188/2

sciences

1.b. From time to time, occasionally.

1825–

- 1825** It may even be doubted, whether Turkey and Egypt are upon an average much less populous for the plagues which **periodically** lay them waste.
J. R. McCulloch, *Principles of Political Economy* ii. v. 198
- 1860** Over this summit the glacier is pushed, and has its back **periodically** broken.
J. Tyndall, *Glaciers of Alps* i. vii. 51
- 1898** The crazes by which teachers are **periodically** stamped.
Educational Review vol. 15 412
- 1938** He ought to inspect his office **periodically** at nights.
R. Narayan, *Dark Room* vi. 77
- 1958** The ingenious and at times embarrassing ploys with which English novelists **periodically** assert their amateur..status.
Times Literary Supplement 15 August p. viii/2
- 1992** The taxis are run by Russian gangsters who **periodically** attack the 'black skins' or Caucasians and overturn their stalls.
Independent 1 December 11/7

2. In a magazine or periodical; in the style or character of a periodical. *rare*.

1838–

- 1838** The crime is not the writing mischievously, or shamefully, but of writing **periodically**.
Fraser's Magazine vol. 17 315
- 1897** They were published **periodically** in the New York 'Sun' and 'Black and White', and have been in part reprinted in the 'Edinburgh Edition'.
Dictionary of National Biography at Stevenson, Robert Louis
- 1912** In 1879 he contributed his first novel, 'Life's Atonement', **periodically** to 'Chambers's Journal'.
Dictionary of National Biography at Murray, David Christie

Pronunciation

BRITISH ENGLISH

/ˌpɪəriˈɒdɪkli/ 
peer-ee-OD-uh-klee

U.S. ENGLISH

/ˌpɪriˈadək(ə)li/ 
peer-ee-AH-duh-kuh-lee

Pronunciation keys

Frequency

periodically typically occurs about six times per million words in modern written English.

periodically is in frequency band 5, which contains words occurring between 1 and 10 times per million words in modern written English. [More about OED's frequency bands](#)

Frequency data is computed programmatically, and should be regarded as an estimate.

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