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attribute ^{1 of 2} noun

at-trib-ute ('a-trə-,byüt)

Synonyms of attribute >

- 1 : a quality, character, or characteristic ascribed to someone or something
| has leadership *attributes*
- 2 : an object closely associated with or belonging to a specific person, thing, or office
| a scepter is the *attribute* of power
especially : such an object used for identification in painting or sculpture
- 3 **grammar** : a word ascribing a quality
especially : **ADJECTIVE**

attribute ^{2 of 2} verb

at-trib-ute (ə-'tri-,byüt) -byət

attributed; attributing

transitive verb

- 1 : to explain (something) by indicating a cause
| He *attributed* his success to hard work.
- 2 **a** : to regard as a characteristic of a person or thing
| should not *attribute* adult reasoning to children
- b** : to reckon as made or originated in an indicated fashion
| *attributed* the invention to a Russian
- c** : **CLASSIFY, DESIGNATE**

attributable (ə-'tri-byü-tə-bəl) -byə- adjective

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P	L	A	Y	S
D	A	I	L	Y

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Did you know?

Attribute means something rather similar to "pay tribute". So, for example, an award winner who pays tribute to an inspiring professor is, in a sense, attributing her success to the professor. Though if you attribute your fear of dogs to an incident in your childhood, you're not exactly praising the nasty dog that bit you way back when. The second sense of *attribute* is slightly different: If you attribute bad motives to a politician, it means you think he or she is doing things for the wrong reasons (even if you don't have any proof). When *attribute* is accented on its first syllable, it's being used as a noun, usually as a synonym for *quality*. So, for

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instance, you may believe that an even temper is an attribute of the best presidents, or that cheerfulness is your spouse's best attribute.

Synonyms

Noun

characteristic	feature	trait
attribution	quality	criterion

Verb

ascribe	credit
---------	--------

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

Choose the Right Synonym for *attribute*

Noun

QUALITY, PROPERTY, CHARACTER, ATTRIBUTE mean an intelligible feature by which a thing may be identified.

QUALITY is a general term applicable to any trait or characteristic whether individual or generic.

| material with a silky *quality*

PROPERTY implies a characteristic that belongs to a thing's essential nature and may be used to describe a type or species.

| the *property* of not conducting heat

CHARACTER applies to a peculiar and distinctive quality of a thing or a class.

| remarks of an unseemly *character*

ATTRIBUTE implies a quality ascribed to a thing or a being.

| the *attributes* of a military hero

Verb

ASCRIBE, ATTRIBUTE, ASSIGN, IMPUTE, CREDIT mean to lay something to the account of a person or thing.

ASCRIBE suggests an inferring or conjecturing of cause, quality, authorship.

| forged paintings formerly *ascribed* to masters

ATTRIBUTE suggests less tentativeness than **ASCRIBE**, less definiteness than **ASSIGN**.

| *attributed* to Rembrandt but possibly done by an associate

ASSIGN implies ascribing with certainty or after deliberation.

| *assigned* the bones to the Cretaceous period

IMPUTE suggests ascribing something that brings discredit by way of accusation or blame.

| tried to *impute* sinister motives to my actions

CREDIT implies ascribing a thing or especially an action to a person or other thing as its agent, source, or explanation.

| *credited* his teammates for his success

Examples of *attribute* in a Sentence

Noun

| The interviewer asked me what I consider to be my best **attribute**.

| Both candidates possess the **attributes** we want in a leader.



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Verb

attributed the quick rescue to the well-trained police force

a psychotherapist who's a little too quick to **attribute** every emotional problem or character defect to an unhappy childhood

Recent Examples on the Web

① 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.](#)

Noun

Taste, vision and the ability to motivate others are purely human **attributes**, as automation eliminates the mechanical component of these qualities.

— Mark Minevich, *Forbes.com*, 20 Aug. 2025

Besides the physical **attributes** of the buildings, Gorski said the economy over the past three decades played a significant role in the conversions.

— Brian E. Clark, *Chicago Tribune*, 17 Aug. 2025

Verb

In the 22 months following the October 7, 2023 attacks by Hamas, 89 fatalities were **attributed** to malnutrition or starvation, mostly children and teens.

— Dawoud Abu Alkas, *USA Today*, 23 Aug. 2025

Logsdon **attributed** the mistake to unclear phrasing in the bond decision.

— Monroe Trombly, *Louisville Courier Journal*, 22 Aug. 2025

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

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Word History

Etymology

Noun and Verb

Middle English, from Latin *attributus*, past participle of *attribuere* to attribute, from *ad-* + *tribuere* to bestow — more at [TRIBUTE](#)

First Known Use

Noun

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

Verb

1530, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Time Traveler

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

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

Phrases Containing *attribute*

[attribute \(something\) to
\(someone or something\)](#)

Rhymes for *attribute*

absolute	arrowroot	bitterroot
constitute	convolute	destitute
disrepute	dissolute	execute
institute	involute	kiwifruit

[See All Rhymes for *attribute* >](#)

Browse Nearby Words

[attributal](#) **attribute**
[attribute \(something\) to \(someone or something\)](#)

[See All Nearby Words >](#)

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Kids Definition

attribute 1 of 2 **noun**

at·tri·bute 'a-trə-, byūt «

- 1 : a quality belonging to a particular person or thing
- 2 : a word that indicates a quality
especially : **ADJECTIVE**

attribute 2 of 2 **verb**

at-trib-ute (ə-ˈtrib-yet) - .yüt

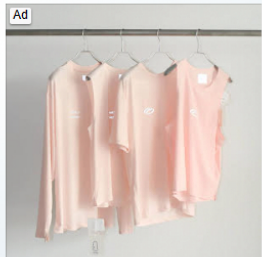
attributed; attributing

- 1 : to explain as the cause of
| *attribute* our success to hard work
- 2 : to think of as likely to be a quality of a person or thing
| *attribute* stubbornness to mules

• **attributable** (-yet-ə-bəl) adjective

• **attribution** ,a-trē-ˈbyū-shən noun

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Nglish: [Translation of *attribute* for Spanish Speakers](#)

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

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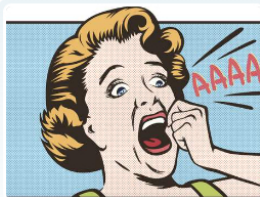
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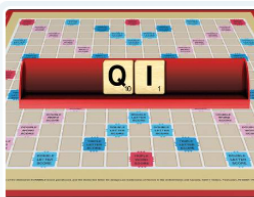
The Difference Between 'i.e.' and 'e.g.'



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

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