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# The New Oxford American Dictionary

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SECOND EDITION

FIRST EDITION

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SECOND EDITION

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noting or relating  
enior magistrate  
sul and praetor  
la curialis ('curul-  
early 17th cent.  
ior' (in which the  
he seat of office.

. of a woman or  
actively curved

the fact of being  
thing is curved  
earth | it has a dis-  
metry the degree  
straight line, or  
ie. ■ a numerical  
dle English: via  
from curvare (see

it gradually devi-  
r all of its length  
d curve. ■ a place  
ght path: the vol-  
ing contour of a  
graph (whether  
e quantity varies  
ion curve. ■ a sys-  
o students based  
her students, re-  
e of the subject  
all another term

trans.] her mouth  
is with long curved  
retched, curve the  
: from Latin cur-  
The noun dates

a ball that is  
a strong down-  
drop suddenly  
ne plate.  
r careful or ener-

ing) [intrans.] rare  
rgetically. ▶late  
inutive of cura,  
om Latin curvo

obtained by or  
these designs cm  
18th cent.: from  
the pattern of

with a curved

rv-i-est) having  
initial (esp. of  
ptuous. —cush-

re-dwelling mar-  
hensile tail, or  
ustralia. ■ Few  
several species  
cuscus maculatus  
ntalis). See also  
ench and Dutch  
lands.

(esp. of water)  
d. ▶early 20th  
cent.

est son of Ham  
2 the southern  
ed in Egyptian  
ie Bible it is the

rtish a wood-  
gin.  
shaw squash  
with a curved  
origin.

—cush yam) ■  
es a number of  
PEE. ■ Dioscorea  
edible tuber  
ate 19th cent.

32–1810), US  
89–1810. Afri-  
Massachusetts  
first person

be nominated by President Washington to serve as  
an associate justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Cushing's disease** /'kʊʃɪŋz/ ▶ *n.* Cushing's syn-  
drome as caused by a tumor of the pituitary gland.

**Cushing's syndrome** ▶ *n.* Medicine a metabolic dis-  
order caused by overproduction of corticosteroid  
hormones by the adrenal cortex and often involving  
obesity and high blood pressure. ▶1930s: named  
after Harvey W. Cushing (1869–1939), American sur-  
geon.

**cush-ion** /'kʊʃən/ ▶ *n.* a pillow or pad stuffed with  
a mass of soft material, used as a comfortable sup-  
port for sitting or leaning on. ■ something provid-  
ing support or protection against impact: the pad  
forms a cushion between carpet and floor | figurative a poll  
showed the candidate with a 14-point cushion. ■ the elas-  
tic lining of the sides of a billiard table, from which  
the ball rebounds. ■ the layer of air supporting a  
hovercraft or similar vehicle.

▶ *v.* [trans.] soften the effect of an impact on: the bag  
cushions equipment from inevitable knocks. ■ figurative  
mitigate the adverse effects of: he called for federal as-  
sistance to cushion the blow for farmers. ▶Middle Eng-  
lish: from Old French cussin, based on a Latin word  
meaning 'cushion for the hip,' from coxa 'hip,  
thigh'. —cush-ioned *adj.* —cush-ion-y *adj.*

**cush-ion cap-i-tal** ▶ *n.* Architecture a capital resem-  
bling a cushion pressed down by a weight, seen par-  
ticularly in Romanesque churches.

**Cush-itic** /'kʊʃɪtɪk; kʊʃ-/ ▶ *n.* a group of East  
African languages of the Afro-Asiatic family spoken  
mainly in Ethiopia and Somalia, including Somali  
and Oromo.

▶ *adj.* of or relating to this group of languages. ▶early  
20th cent.: from CUSH + -ITIC.

**cush-y** /'kʊʃə-/ ▶ *adj.* (cush-ier, cush-i-est) informal  
1 (of a job, task, or situation) undemanding, easy, or  
secure: cushy jobs that pay you to ski. 2 (of furniture)  
comfortable. ▶World War I (originally Anglo-Indi-  
an): from Urdu kushi 'pleasure,' from Persian kush.  
—cush-i-ness *n.*

**cusk** /kʌsk/ ▶ *n.* another term for **TORSK**. ▶early 17th  
cent.: of unknown origin.

**cusk-eel** ▶ *n.* a small, eel-like fish with a tapering  
body and fins that form a pointed tail, typically  
found in deep water. • Family Ophidiidae: numer-  
ous genera.

**cusp** /kʌsp/ ▶ *n.* 1 a pointed end where two curves  
meet, in particular: ■ Architecture a projecting point  
between small arcs in Gothic tracery. ■ a cone-  
shaped prominence on the surface of a tooth, esp. of  
a molar or premolar. ■ Anatomy a pocket or fold in  
the wall of the heart or a major blood vessel that  
fills and distends if the blood flows backward, so  
forming part of a valve. ■ Mathematics a point at  
which the direction of a curve is abruptly reversed.  
■ each of the pointed ends of a crescent, esp. of the  
moon. 2 Astrology the initial point of an astrological  
sign or house: he was Aries on the cusp with Taurus.  
■ figurative a point between two different situations  
or states, when a person or thing is poised between  
the two or just about to move from one to the other:  
those on the cusp of adulthood. ▶late 16th cent. (sense  
2): from Latin cuspis 'point or apex'. —cusp-ate  
/'kʌspət; -pət/ *adj.* —cused *adj.* —cusp-i-date  
/'kʌspəˌdæt/ *adj.*

**cusp-id** /'kʌspɪd/ ▶ *n.* a tooth with a single cusp or  
point: a canine tooth. ▶mid 18th cent.: from Latin  
cuspis, cusp-id 'point or apex'.

**cusp-i-dor** /'kʌspəˌdɔːr/ ▶ *n.* a spittoon. ▶mid 18th  
cent.: from Portuguese, literally 'spitter'.

**cusping** /'kʌspɪŋ/ ▶ *n.* 1 formation of a cusp or  
cusps: if you use the incorrect pressure there will be serious  
cusping and uneven wear on the tire. 2 Architecture a  
decorative feature consisting of cusps.

**cuss** /kʌs/ informal ▶ *n.* 1 an annoying or stubborn  
person or animal: he was certainly an unsociable cuss.  
2 another term for **CURSE** (sense 2).  
▶ *v.* another term for **CURSE** (sense 2).

**cuss-ed** /'kʌsəd/ ▶ *adj.* informal stubborn; annoying:  
why do you have to be so cussed? ▶mid 19th cent. (origi-  
nally U.S.): variant of **CURSED**. —cuss-ed-ly *adv.*  
—cuss-ed-ness *n.*

**cuss word** ▶ *n.* informal a swear word.

**cus-tard** /'kʌstərd/ ▶ *n.* a dessert or sweet sauce made  
with milk, eggs, and sugar. ▶late Middle English  
custarde, custarde (denoting an open pie containing  
meat or fruit in a spiced or sweetened sauce thick-  
ened with eggs), from Old French crouste (see **CRUST**).

**cus-tard apple** ▶ *n.* 1 a large, fleshy, tropical fruit  
with a sweet yellow pulp. See also **CHERIMOYA** and

**SWEETSOP**. 2 the tree that bears this fruit, native to  
Central and South America. • Genus *Amnona*, family  
Annonaceae: several species.

**Cus-ter** /'kʌstər/ ▶ *n.* George (Armstrong) (1839–76), U.S.  
cavalry officer. He served with distinction during  
the Civil War. In 1876, he was killed, along with all  
of his men (266) in a clash (popularly known as  
Custer's Last Stand) with the Sioux Indians at Little  
Bighorn in Montana.

**cus-to-dian** /'kʌsˌtədiən/ ▶ *n.* a person who has re-  
sponsibility for or looks after something, such as a  
museum, financial assets, or a culture or tradition:  
the custodians of pension and insurance funds. ■ a person  
employed to clean and maintain a building. ▶late  
18th cent.: from **CUSTODY**, on the pattern of  
guardian. —cus-to-dian-ship /-ˌʃɪp/ *n.*

**cus-to-dy** /'kʌstədi/ ▶ *n.* the protective care or  
guardianship of someone or something: the property  
was placed in the custody of a trustee. ■ imprisonment:  
my father was being taken into custody. ■ Law parental  
responsibility, esp. as allocated to one of two di-  
vorcing parents: he was trying to get custody of their  
child. ▶late Middle English: from Latin custodia, from  
custos 'guardian'. —cus-to-dial /kəˌstədiəl/ *adj.*

**cus-tom** /'kʌstəm/ ▶ *n.* 1 a traditional and widely ac-  
cepted way of behaving or doing something that is  
specific to a particular society, place, or time: the old  
English custom of dancing around the maypole | custom de-  
manded that a person should have gifts for the child. [in  
sing.] a thing that one does habitually: it was my cus-  
tom to nap for an hour every day. ■ Law established  
practice or usage having the force of law or right.  
2 chiefly Brit. regular dealings with a shop or busi-  
ness by customers: if you keep me waiting, I will take my  
custom elsewhere.

▶ *adj.* made or done to order for a particular cus-  
tomer: a custom guitar. ▶Middle English: from Old  
French costume, based on Latin consuetudo, from con-  
suetus, past participle of consuevere 'accustom,' from con-  
(expressing intensive force) + suescere 'become  
accustomed'.

**cus-tom-al** ▶ *n.* variant spelling of **CUSTOMAL**.

**cus-tom-ary** /'kʌstəˌmeri/ ▶ *adj.* according to the cus-  
toms or usual practices associated with a particular  
society, place, or set of circumstances: it is customary  
to mark an occasion like this with a toast. ■ according to  
a person's habitual practice: I put the kettle on for our  
customary cup of tea. ■ Law established by or based on  
custom rather than common law or statute.

▶ *n.* (pl. -aries) historical another term for **CUSTOMAL**.  
▶late Middle English (as a noun): from medieval  
Latin costumarius, from *costuma*, from Anglo-Norman  
French *custume* (see **CUSTOM**). —cus-tom-ari-ly  
/'kʌstəˌme(ə)rɪli/ *adv.* —cus-tom-ari-ness *n.*

**cus-tom-built** ▶ *adj.* another term for **CUSTOM-MADE**.

**cus-tom-er** /'kʌstəmər/ ▶ *n.* 1 a person or organiza-  
tion that buys goods or services from a store or busi-  
ness: Mr. Harrison was a regular customer at the Golden  
Lion | [as *adj.*] customer service. 2 a person or thing of  
a specified kind that one has to deal with: the fish is a  
slippery customer and very hard to catch | Jon won over  
Lucie's father, but her mother is a tough customer.

**cus-tom house** (also **cus-toms house**) ▶ *n.* chiefly his-  
torical the office at a port or frontier where customs  
duty is collected.

**cus-tom-ize** /'kʌstəˌmɪz/ ▶ *v.* [trans.] (often be cus-  
tomized) modify (something) to suit a particular in-  
dividual or task: the suit can be customized for every sky-  
diving need.

**cus-tom-made** ▶ *adj.* made to a particular customer's  
order.

**cus-toms** /'kʌstəmz/ ▶ *plural n.* the official depart-  
ment that administers and collects the duties levied  
by a government on imported goods: cocaine seizures  
by customs have risen this year | [as *adj.*] a customs officer.  
■ the place at a port, airport, or frontier where offi-  
cials check incoming goods, travelers, or luggage:  
arriving refugees were whisked through customs. ■ (usu.  
customs duties) the duties levied by a government  
on imported goods. ▶late Middle English: originally  
in the singular, denoting a customary due paid to a  
ruler, later duty levied on goods on their way to  
market.

**cus-toms union** ▶ *n.* a group of countries that have  
agreed to charge the same import duties as each  
other and usually to allow free trade between them-  
selves.

**cus-tu-mal** /'kʌstəməl; kʌschə-/ (also **cus-to-mal**) ▶ *n.*  
historical a written account of the customs of a  
manor or other local community or large establish-  
ment. ▶late 16th cent.: from medieval Latin

customale 'customs book,' neuter of *customalis*, from  
*costuma* 'custom.'

**cut** /kʌt/ ▶ *v.* (cut-ting; past and past part. cut) [trans.]  
1 make an opening, incision, or wound in (some-  
thing) with a sharp-edged tool or object: he cut his big  
toe on a sharp stone | he cut open Mackay's face with the  
end of his hockey stick | [intrans.] figurative his scorn cut  
deeper than knives. 2 remove (something) from some-  
thing larger by using a sharp implement: I cut his  
photograph out of the paper | some prisoners had their  
right hands cut off. ■ informal castrate (an animal, esp.  
a horse). ■ remove the foreskin of a penis: circum-  
cise. ■ (cut something out) make something by cut-  
ting: I cut out some squares of paper. ■ (cut something  
out) remove, exclude, or stop eating or doing some-  
thing undesirable: start today by cutting out fatty foods.

■ (cut something out) separate an animal from the  
main herd. 3 divide into pieces with a knife or  
other sharp implement: cut the beef into thin slices | he  
cut his food up into teeny pieces. ■ make divisions in  
(something): land that has been cut up by streams into  
forested areas. ■ separate (something) into two; sever:  
they cut the rope before he choked. ■ (cut something  
down) make something, esp. a tree, fall by cutting it  
through at the base. ■ (cut someone down) (of a  
weapon, bullet, or disease) kill or injure someone:  
Barker had been cut down by a sniper's bullet. 4 make or  
form (something) by using a sharp tool to remove  
material: workmen cut a hole in the pipe. ■ make or de-  
sign (a garment) in a particular way: [as *adj.*] (cut) an  
impeccably cut chalk-stripe suit. ■ make (a path, tunnel,  
or other route) by excavation, digging, or chopping:  
plans to cut a road through a rain forest | [intrans.] investi-  
gators called for a machete to cut through the bush | fig-  
urative a large woman with a voice that cut through  
crowds. 5 trim or reduce the length of (something,  
esp. grass or a person's hair or fingernails) by using  
a sharp implement: cutting the lawn | cut back all the  
year's growth to about four leaves. 6 reduce the amount  
or quantity of: buyers will bargain hard to cut the cost of  
the house they want | I should cut down my sugar intake |

[intrans.] they've cut back on costs | the state passed a law  
to cut down on drunk-driving | the paper gut cuts into  
profits. ■ abridge (a text, movie, or performance) by  
removing material: he had to cut unnecessary additions  
made to the opening scene. ■ Computing delete (part of a  
text or other display) completely or so as to insert a  
copy of it elsewhere. See also **CUT AND PASTE**. ■ (in  
sports) remove (a player) from a team's roster. ■ end  
or interrupt the provision of (something, esp. power  
or food supplies): we resolved to cut oil supplies to terri-  
tories controlled by the rebels | if the pump develops a fault,  
the electrical supply is immediately cut off. ■ (cut some-  
thing off) block the usual means of access to a place:  
the caves were cut off from the outside world by a land-  
slide. ■ absent oneself deliberately from (something  
one should normally attend, esp. school): Robert was  
cutting class. ■ switch off (an engine or a light). 7 (of  
a line) cross or intersect (another line): the point  
where the line cuts the vertical axis. ■ [intrans.] (cut  
across) pass or traverse, esp. so as to shorten one's  
route: the following aircraft cut across to join him. ■ [in-  
trans.] (cut across) have an effect regardless of (divi-  
sions or boundaries between groups): subcultures that cut  
across national and political boundaries. ■ [intrans.]  
(cut along) informal dated leave or move hurriedly:  
you can cut along now. 8 dated ignore or refuse to re-  
cognize (someone). 9 [intrans., often in imperative]  
stop filming or recording. ■ move to another shot in  
a movie: cut to a dentist's surgery. ■ [trans.] make (a  
movie) into a coherent whole by removing parts or  
placing them in a different order. 10 make (a  
sound recording). 11 divide (a pack of playing  
cards) by lifting a portion from the top, either to re-  
veal or draw a card at random or to place the top  
portion under the bottom portion. 12 Golf slice (the  
ball). 13 adulterate (a drug) or dilute (alcohol) by  
mixing it with another substance: speed cut with rat  
poison. 14 (cut it) informal come up to expectations;  
meet requirements: this CD player doesn't quite cut it.  
[shortened form of the idiom cut the mustard.]

▶ *phrasal v.* ▶ *n.* cut in 1 interrupt someone while they  
are speaking: 'It's urgent,' Raoul cut in. ■ dated inter-  
rupt a dancing couple to take over from one part-  
ner. 2 pull in too closely in front of another vehicle  
after having overtaken it: she cut in on a station wagon,  
forcing the driver to brake. 3 (of a motor or other  
mechanical device) begin operating, esp. when

Pronunciation Key a ago; ər over; 'ə or 'ə up; 'ər or 'ər  
fur; a hat; ă rate; ă car; ch chew; e let; ē see; e(ə) air;  
i fit; i by; i(ə) ear; ŋ sing; ŋ go; ŋ for; o boy; ō good; ō  
goo; ou out; sh she; th thin; th then; (h)w why; zh vision