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## barrier, *n.*

**Pronunciation:** Brit. /'bærɪə/, U.S. /'bɛriər/

**Forms:** ME **barer**, ME **barrere**, ME–15 **barrer**, ME **barreere**, **barryzer**, ME–15 **barryer**, 15 **baryer**, **barier**, **bariar**, 15– **barrier**.

**Frequency (in current use):**

**Etymology:** Middle English *barrere*, < Anglo-Norman *barrere*, Old French *barrière* (= Provençal *barriera*, Italian *barriera*, Spanish, medieval Latin *barrera*) < late Latin *barrāria*, < *barra* BAR *n.* 'Subsequently influenced by continental French spelling.

**1. gen.** A fence or material obstruction of any kind erected (or serving) to bar the advance of persons or things, or to prevent access to a place.

**a. originally.** A palisade or stockade erected to bar the way of an enemy, or defend a gate or passage; an external defence.

c1380 *Sir Ferumbras* (1879) l. 4668 Enfachoun ys to þe ȝeate y-come..& at þe barers he hym sette.

c1400 (þ ?c1380) *Cleanness* (1920) l. 1239 He brek þe bareres as bylyue, & þe burȝ after.

c1425 WYNTOUN *Cron.* IX. vii. 70 At þe Barreris he faucht sa welle.

c1430 J. LYDGATE *Story of Thebes* III. (R.) Barbicans and bulwerkes..Barreres, chaines, and ditches.

c1440 *Promptorium Parvulorum* 24 Barrere, or barreere [*v.r.* barryzer], *barraria*, *barrus*.

1490 W. CAXTON tr. *Eneydos* lv. 152 Camilla and Mesapus rode all armed..vnto the barryers.

1523 LD. BERNERS tr. J. Froissart *Cronycles* I. xxxviii. 52 He cast hymselfe bytwene the barrers and the gate.

1721 *London Gaz.* No. 5928/6 The outer Barrier of that Place.

*figurative.*

1713 E. YOUNG *Poem on Last Day* III. 61 Who burst the Barriers of my peacefull Grave?

**b. transferred.** A fortress or fortified town which commands the entrance into a country; a 'bulwark'.

1600 P. HOLLAND tr. Livy *Rom. Hist.* IX. xxxii. 337 b Which cittie [Sutrium]..was (as a man would say) the verie Barriers [L. *claustra*] of all Hetruria.

1709 [see sense 1c].

1717 LADY M. W. MONTAGU *Let.* 12 Feb. (1965) I. 306 Belgrade..was formerly the Barrier of Hungary.

†**c.** A fortified frontier; a frontier generally; *spec.* a name formerly given to a district which commanded the frontier of the Netherlands.  
*Obsolete.*

- 1709 J. ADDISON *Tatler* No. 20. ¶10 The Dutch are to have for their Barriers, Newport, Berg, St. Vinoux..Lille.
- 1713 *London Gaz.* No. 5180/2 The Frontier-Places of the Dutch-Barrier.
- 1775 J. ADAIR *Hist. Amer. Indians* 463 Without allowing them any militia, even on their barriers.
- 1835 *Penny Cycl.* III. 502 The Treaty of the Barrier is an instance of a similar species of political adjustment.

**d.** A fence, or railing, to prevent access to any reserved place.

- 1570 B. GOOGE tr. T. Kirchmeyer *Popish Kingdome* IV. f. 51<sup>v</sup> With tapers, all the people come, and at the barriers stay, Where downe vpon their knees they fall, and night and day they pray.
- 1885 *N.E.D.* at *Barrier* *Mod.* Strong barriers were erected at each end of the street.

**e.** Applied to the *carcer* or starting-place in the ancient race-course.

- 1600 P. HOLLAND tr. Livy *Rom. Hist.* VIII. xx. 295 The Barriers [L. *carceres*], from whence the horses and their chariots are let forth.
- 1656 A. COWLEY *Pindaric Odes* in *Wks.* (1710) I. 203 How swiftly [has he] run, And born the Noble Prize away, Whilst other Youths yet at the Barrier stay?
- 1880 C. T. LEWIS & C. SHORT *Lat. Dict.* *Carcer*..the barrier or starting-place in the race-course.

**f.** In continental towns: The gate at which custom duties are collected.

- 1825 T. JEFFERSON *Autobiogr.* I. 86 The oppressions of the tithes..the gabelles, the farms and the barriers.
- [1825 M. M. SHERWOOD *Lady of Manor* (ed. 2) I. iv. 93 Versailles is distant about ten miles from the barriere of Paris.]

*attributive.*

- 1804 *Edinb. Rev.* 4 47 The barrier duties.

**g.** *Coal Mining.* 'A breadth of coal left against an adjoining royalty, for security against casualty arising from water or foul air'.

- 1849 G. C. GREENWELL *Gloss. Terms Coal Trade Northumberland & Durham* 6 Barriers are left of various thicknesses..varying..from 10 to 50 yards.

## 2.

**a. spec. in plural.** The palisades enclosing the ground where a tournament, tilting, or other martial contest or exhibition was held; the lists. Also, a low railing or fence running down the centre of the lists on opposite sides of which, and in opposite directions the combatants rode, reaching their lances across.

- 1581 J. BELL tr. W. Haddon & J. Foxe *Against Jerome Osorius* 79 To challenge me unto the Barriers.
- 1581 J. BELL tr. W. Haddon & J. Foxe *Against Jerome Osorius* 82 One champion is taken from the Barriers.
- 1819 W. SCOTT *Ivanhoe* I. ix. 156 At length the barriers were opened, and five knights..advanced slowly into the area.

†**b.** Hence, the expression *to fight at barriers*, and *Barriers* as the name of a martial exercise in 15th and 16th centuries. *Obsolete* exc. *Historical*.

- 1532 *Act 24 Hen. VIII* xiii Iustes, tourneis, barriers..or other marcial feates.
- 1559 *Seconde Volume of Fabians Chronicle* in *Chronicle of Fabian* (new ed.) sig. AAA.ii Chalengours..at tilt Barriers, and Turney.
- 1583 A. GOLDING tr. J. Calvin *Serm. on Deuteronomie* xii. 67 Like the Game of the Barriers wherein he that winneth today looseth tomorrow.
- 1608 T. MIDDLETON *Familie of Love* (new ed.) iii. sig. E2 To see my Gallants play at Barriers with Scourge-sticks.
- 1616 J. BULLOKAR *Eng. Expositor* *Barriers*, a war~like exercise of men fighting together with short swords, and within some appointed compasse.
- a1625 J. FLETCHER *Noble Gentleman* II. i, in F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher *Comedies & Trag.* (1647) sig. Dd4v/1 You shall not see a maske, or Barriers, Or tilting or a solemn christning.
- 1625 F. BACON *Ess.* (new ed.) xxxvii. 226 For Iusts, and Tourneys, and Barriers; The Glories of them, are chiefly in the Chariots, wherein the Challengers make their Entry.
- a1635 'T. RANDALL' in *Ann. Dubrensia* (1636) sig. C4 What is the Barriers, but a Courtly way Of our more downe right sport, the Cvdgell-play?
- 1646 BP. J. HALL *Balme of Gilead* 104 [He] puts him upon Tiltings, and Barriers, and publique Duels.
- 1839 T. KEIGHTLEY *Hist. Eng.* (new ed.) I. 445 He frequently fought at barriers.

*figurative.*

- 1622 WITHER in E. Farr *Sel. Poetry Reign James I* (1848) 219 These long-gowned warriors, Who play at Westminster, unarm'd, at barriers.

a1680 S. BUTLER *Genuine Remains* (1759) I. 220 As he, who fought at Barriers with Salmasius  
Engag'd with nothing but his Stile and Phrases.

### 3.

**a.** Any natural obstacle which stops or obstructs passage, defends from foes, prevents access, or produces separation; a separating boundary-line.

- a1701 H. MAUNDRELL *Journey Aleppo to Jerusalem* (1703) 32 In order to pass this Barrier, we turn'd up on the left hand.
- 1725 W. BROOME in A. Pope et al. tr. Homer *Odyssey* II. VI. 72 An ocean flows Around our realm, a barrier from the foes.
- 1747 in *Colonial Rec. Pennsylvania* (1851) V. 153 The Colonies of New Jersey and Pennsylvania will have but a very thin Barrier between them.
- c1854 A. P. STANLEY *Sinai & Palestine* (1858) iii. 174 This plain was encompassed with a barrier of heights.
- 1855 W. H. PRESCOTT *Hist. Reign Philip II of Spain* I. II. vi. 207 No mountain barrier lay between France and Flanders.

**b.** The mass of ice which fringes the Antarctic coast, occasionally spec. *the Barrier*.

- 1847 J. C. ROSS *Voy. Antarctic Reg.* I. viii. 222 Some of the numerous fragments of the barrier that were about us.
- 1905 R. F. SCOTT *Voy. 'Discovery'* I. v. 168 The barrier edge, in shadow, looked like a narrowing black ribbon.
- 1930 *Discovery* Mar. 91/1 Flat fields of snow-ice, strictly speaking neither land-ice nor sea-ice, which, under the name of 'barriers' fringe almost the whole circumference of the continent.

**c. Physics.** The region of high potential energy through which a charged particle must pass on leaving or entering a nucleus; also *attributive*.

- 1929 RUTHERFORD in *Proc. Royal Soc. A.* **123** 378 The nucleus, supposed spherical in shape, is thus surrounded by a very high potential barrier.
- 1938 R. W. LAWSON tr. G. von Hevesy & F. A. Paneth *Man. Radioactivity* (ed. 2) ix. 98 The nucleus is thus protected by a barrier at an exceedingly high potential.
- 1955 J. A. WHEELER in W. Pauli *Niels Bohr & Devel. Physics* 166 Odd nuclei have a higher barrier against fission than corresponding even nuclei.
- 1955 J. A. WHEELER in W. Pauli *Niels Bohr & Devel. Physics* 167 The barrier penetration exponent is roughly proportional to the barrier height.

- 1962 J. H. SIMPSON & R. S. RICHARDS *Physical Princ. Junction Transistors* ii. 23 Because electrons flowing from *n*- to *p*-type material or holes flowing from *p*- to *n*-type material require excess energy to mount the potential step, the latter is sometimes called the 'barrier'.

#### 4.

**a.** Anything immaterial that stops advance hostile or friendly, that defends from attack, prevents intercourse or union, or keeps separate and apart.

- 1712 A. POPE tr. Statius *First Bk. Thebais* in *Misc. Poems* 6 Fix, O Muse! the Barrier of thy Song, at Oedipus.
- a1715 BP. G. BURNET *Hist. Own Time* (1724) I. 652 The Tests stood as a barrier to defend us from Popery.
- 1742 E. YOUNG *Complaint: Night the Third* 29 A good Man and an Angel! These between How thin the barrier?
- 1776 E. GIBBON *Decline & Fall* I. 60 Every barrier of the Roman constitution had been levelled by the vast ambition of the dictator.
- 1797 W. GODWIN *Enquirer* II. xii. 480 He..erects a barrier between himself and his reader.
- 1832 H. MARTINEAU *Ireland* 128 The barrier which they believed to separate the rich and the poor in Ireland.
- 1855 J. L. MOTLEY *Rise Dutch Republic* I. II. ii. 271 All history shows how feeble are barriers of paper or lambskin..against the torrent of..absolutism.
- 1883 J. GILMOUR *Among Mongols* xvii. 207 Felt to be barriers to the acceptance of Christianity.

**b.** Frequently with defining word; **sound barrier** (see SOUND *n.*<sup>3</sup>).

- 1923 *Internat. Jرنل. Psycho-anal.* Oct. 495 (*sub-heading*) The Incest Barrier.
- 1957 *Ann. Reg.* 1956 346 Problems of producing aircraft for still higher speeds, with special attention for the next main obstacle—the heat barrier.
- 1958 F. KENYON *Our Bible & Anc. MSS* (ed. 5) i. 36 They [sc. the Dead Sea Scrolls]..enable us..to 'penetrate the Massoretic barrier' by centuries.

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## COMPOUNDS

**C1.** General *attributive*.

**barrier fen** *n.*

- 1855 R. C. SINGLETON tr. Virgil *Georgics* IV, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* I. 215 To cross the barrier-fen.

**barrier-like** *adj.*

- 1839 C. DARWIN in R. Fitzroy & C. Darwin *Narr. Surv. Voy. H.M.S. Adventure & Beagle* III. xxii.  
547 There is a simplicity in the barrier-like beach.

**barrier-net** *n.*

- 1884 D. WATT in S. Dawson *Handbk. Canada* 279 The barrier-nets and weirs of pale-faces.

**C2.**

**barrier-act** *n.* (see quot.).

- 1868 *Chambers's Encycl.* I. 712 Barrier Act..an act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 8th January 1697, intended as a barrier against innovations, and a hindrance to hasty legislation.

**barrier cream** *n.* a protective cream for the skin.

- 1950 *N.Y. Times* 16 Apr. E9/5 A British chemical firm protects workers who handle dyestuffs, chemicals, explosives, oils, acids, alkalis and grease by means of 'barrier creams'. The cream is spread over the hands until an invisible 'glove' is formed.  
1958 *Sunday Times* 20 July 16/5 A reputable barrier cream against sunburn.

**barrier-gate** *n.* a heavy gate closing the opening through a barrier.

- 1834 F. MARRYAT *Peter Simple* II. ii. 33 When we had crossed the moat, we found a barrier-gate locked.

**barrier layer** *n.* in *Physics* an electrical layer lying between two different metals or between a metal and a semiconductor; also *attributive*.

- 1934 *Physical Rev.* **46** 1051 A barrier layer photo-cell..consists of a closed conducting circuit which comprises a semi-conductor forming a link in a metallic circuit.  
1944 C. E. K. MEES *Theory Photogr. Process* xvii. 663 Numerous densitometers consist..merely of a light source, a barrier layer cell, and a microammeter.  
1948 R. C. WALKER *Photoelectr. Cells in Industry* i. 35 The rectifier type of light sensitive cell, often referred to by alternative names such as barrier layer, blocking layer, or self-generative cells.

**barrier-pillar** *n.* (see quotes.).

- 1881 *Trans. Amer. Inst. Mining Engineers 1880–1* **9** 105 *Barrier-pillars*, pillars of coal, larger than ordinary, left at intervals to prevent too extensive crushing when the ground comes to be *robbed*.

**barrier-reef** *n.*

- 1806 M. FLINDERS in *Philos. Trans.* (Royal Soc.) **96** 252 Amongst the barrier reefs.
- 1853 H. T. DE LA BECHE *Geol. Observer* (ed. 2) xi. 181 The Great Barrier Reef, extending off the east coast of Australia for about 1100 miles, with a mean breadth of about 30 miles.
- 1877 A. H. GREEN *Geol. for Students: Physical Geol.* (ed. 2) iv. §3. 136 A mighty wall of coral rock, separated from the land by a deep and broad channel, and bounded on the seaward side by a face almost vertical and of enormous height. Such a reef is called a Barrier reef.

**barrier-treaty** *n.* a treaty fixing the frontier of a country, esp. the ‘Treaty of the Barriers’ between Germany, Great Britain, and Holland, signed at Antwerp 15 November 1715.

- 1712 N. LUTTRELL *Diary* in *Brief Hist. Relation State Affairs* (1857) VI. 719 The barrier treaty made by the lord Townsend with the states general.
- 1804 KING GEORGE III in G. Rose *Diaries* (1860) II. 177 He..considered the Barrier Treaty as..a very effectual one..for preserving the balance of power in Europe.

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**DRAFT ADDITIONS SEPTEMBER 2013**

*Horse Racing.* A device used to ensure a simultaneous start for all competitors in a race; (now *esp.*) a starting gate (STARTING *n.* Compounds 3).

- 1896 *World* 2 Oct. 8/4 In the first race he was all but left with Palmerston when the barrier went up.
- 1898 N. GOULD *Landed at Last* xvii. 161 When the starting barrier flew up, The Labourer was rather fractious, and did not move away quickly.
- 1953 *Bulletin* (Sydney) 7 Oct. 13/1 Soon as the barrier goes up Ginger gives a dozen flyin' pig-roots, nearly plants me, then tears off like he's jet-propelled.
- 1977 *N.Z. Herald* 8 Jan. I. 9/3 In Markham's favour will be his barrier draw, No 1 against See Egg's No 9.
- 2007 T. D. THORNTON *Not by Long Shot* vii. 324 Tom Schwigen instantly flicks his starting switch, releasing the electromagnetic lock holding closed the massive front doors of the barrier.

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**DRAFT ADDITIONS JUNE 2014**

*Chemistry.* In full **activation barrier**. The amount by which the energy of the transition state of a reaction exceeds that of the initial state; the energy that must be supplied to the reactants for a given reaction to begin; cf. *activation energy* *n.* at ACTIVATION *n.*  
Compounds.

- 1932 *Chem. Rev.* **10** 121 Most of the problems of compound formation (valence) and activation energy may be solved by constructing a potential energy surface the low planes of which correspond to compounds stable at ordinary temperatures, provided the barrier separating one minimum from a still lower one is greater than about 20 kg-cal.
- 1981 P. SYKES *Guidebk. to Mechanism in Org. Chem.* (ed. 5) ii. 38 The height of the barrier..is called the free energy of activation for the reaction (the higher it is the slower the reaction).
- 2006 J. M. HORNBACKE *Org. Chem.* (Internat. Student ed.) viii. 270 It has an activation barrier, although small, that must be surmounted for reaction in either the forward or reverse direction.

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**DRAFT ADDITIONS SEPTEMBER 2013**

**'barrierless** *adj.* without a barrier (in various senses); having no barrier or barriers.

- 1827 *Morning Chron.* 8 Aug. The girl..had..allowed the child for a moment to approach the barrierless brink of the river.
- 1922 H. S. HARRISON *St. Teresa* xxii. 432 The elemental passions she had roused in him.., all that barrierless..intimacy.
- 1970 *Daily Tel.* 25 Sept. 2/5 A Morris 1300 Traveller flew across the barrierless central reservation and collided with an Aston Martin.
- 1991 *Nikkei Weekly* (Nexis) 27 July 15 To achieve the goal of a barrierless market from Chile to Canada.
- 2012 B. BAGCHI *Molecular Relaxation in Liquids* viii. 158 Barrierless reactions have been studied using several different spectroscopic techniques.

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**DRAFT ADDITIONS DECEMBER 2004**

*Medicine.* A contraceptive device, such as a condom, cervical cap, etc., used to prevent sperm from reaching and fertilizing an egg, and (esp. in later use) to help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted



infections. Frequently *attributive*, esp. in ***barrier contraception***, ***barrier contraceptive***, ***barrier method***.

- 1938 R. L. DICKINSON *Control of Conception* (ed. 2) vi. 78 Much of the contraceptive value of many products arises from the fact that a physical barrier to the uterine canal is formed. Barrier action is wholly dependent upon physical properties.
- 1967 *Preventive Med. & Family Planning* 77 (*heading*) Barrier methods of contraception.
- 1978 *Oncol.* **35** 98/2 The preliminary data also show that 16.1% of the women using barrier contraception..would develop breast cancer, and 3.4% of women using non-barrier techniques..would experience this disease.
- 1989 J. A. B. COLLIER & J. M. LONGMORE *Oxf. Handbk. Clin. Specialties* (ed. 2) i. 60 Spermicides should not be used without barriers as they provide inadequate contraception cover.
- 1993 *Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica) 11 Mar. 17/2 A barrier contraceptive for women that also protects them from HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases..is likely soon to be commercially available.
- 1999 *Daily Nation* (Nairobi) 9 Dec. 23/6 Addressing HIV/Aids prevention issues as part of prevention of unwanted pregnancy with an emphasis on barrier methods.

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