

< rack

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Dictionary

Thesaurus

rack

 1 of 9 **noun (1)**

'rak 🔊

[Synonyms of rack >](#)

- 1** : a framework, stand, or grating on or in which articles are placed
- 2** : an instrument of torture on which a body is stretched
- 3 a (1)** : a cause of anguish or pain
(2) : acute suffering
b : the action of straining or wrenching
- 4 a** : a bar with teeth on one face for gearing with a pinion or worm gear to transform rotary motion to linear motion or vice versa (as in an automobile steering mechanism)
b : a notched bar used as a ratchet to engage with a pawl, click, or detent
- 5** : a pair of antlers
- 6** : [BED](#), [SACK](#)
- 7** : a triangular frame used to set up the balls in a pool game
also : the balls as set up
- 8** : a framework for holding fodder for livestock

'rak-, fül 🔊 **noun**

rack

 2 of 9 **verb (1)**



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2 : to place (balls, such as pool balls) in a rack**3 a** : to stretch or strain violently**b** : to raise (rents) oppressively**c** : to harass or oppress with high rents or extortions**4** : to torture on the rack**5** : to work or treat (material) on a rack**6** : to work by a rack and pinion or worm so as to extend or contract
*rack a camera***7** : to seize (ropes, such as parallel ropes of a tackle) together*intransitive verb*

: to become forced out of shape or out of plumb

noun'ra-kiŋ-lē  **adverb****rack** 3 of 9 **noun (2)****1** : the rib section of a lamb's forequarters used for chops or as a roast→ see [lamb illustration](#)**2** : the neck and spine of a forequarter of veal, pork, or especially mutton**rack** 4 of 9 **noun (3)**



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rack 5 of 9 noun (4)

: either of two gaits of a horse:

a : [PACE sense 4b](#)**b** : a fast showy 4-beat gait similar to the pace but in which the feet of the same side do not touch down at the same time**rack** 6 of 9 verb (2)**racked; racking; racks***intransitive verb***of a horse**

: to go at a rack

rack 7 of 9 noun (5)

: a wind-driven mass of high often broken clouds

rack 8 of 9 verb (3)**racked; racking; racks***intransitive verb*

: to fly or scud in high wind

rack 9 of 9 verb (4)**racked; racking; racks***transitive verb*

: to draw off (wine) from the lees



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. under great emotional stress

Do you rack or wrack your brain?

Wrack and *rack* are etymologically distinct, meaning they come from different words. Many usage guides will advise that you should use *wrack* for meanings such as "to utterly ruin," and *rack* for "to cause to suffer torture, pain, anguish, or ruin." If you follow this advice, the proper choice for what you do to your brain when thinking very hard is *rack*. However, *wrack* has long been used as a variant of *rack*, and numerous fine writers have avowedly wracked their brains or found something nerve-wracking.

Is it racked or wracked with pain?

Some guides feel that "racked with pain" is the preferable choice, although *wrack* is in many cases an acceptable variant. The verbs are often conflated despite their very different origins (the former from Middle Dutch *rekken*, meaning "to stretch," and the latter from the Middle English word for shipwreck, *wrak*).

"Do you rack up or wrack up debts?"

While there are a number of settings in which *wrack* is considered an acceptable variant of *rack*, the accumulation of debts is not one of them. In this context *rack up* typically means "to achieve, score; to accumulate."



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pad

sack

Verb (3)

afflict

agonize

anguish

bedevil

beset

besiege

curse

excruciate

harrow

persecute

plague

torment

torture

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

Choose the Right Synonym for *rack*

AFFLICT, TRY, TORMENT, TORTURE, RACK mean to inflict on a person something that is hard to bear.

AFFLICT is a general term and applies to the causing of pain or suffering or of acute annoyance, embarrassment, or any distress.

ills that *afflict* the elderly

TRY suggests imposing something that strains the powers of endurance or of self-control.

children often *try* their parents' patience



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tortured by a sense of guilt

RACK stresses straining or wrenching.

a body *racked* by pain

Recent Examples on the Web

Noun

Simply remove the main food tray and place it on the top *rack* of the dishwasher for easy clean-up.

— Amy Stanford, *Peplemag*, 21 July 2023

When the chicken breasts come off the grill *rack*, clean it and add thick planks of zucchini, which will cook in just a few minutes.

— Sally Pasley Vargas, *BostonGlobe.com*, 18 July 2023

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These examples are programmatically compiled from various online sources to illustrate current usage of the word 'rack.' Any opinions expressed in the examples do not represent those of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback](#) about these examples.

Etymology



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perhaps from [RACK entry 1](#)

Noun (3)

alteration of *wrack*

Verb (2)

probably alteration of [ROCK entry 1](#)

Noun (5)

Middle English *rak* rain cloud, rapid movement

Verb (4)

Middle English *rakken*, from Old French (Norman & Picard dialect) *reequier*, probably from Late Latin *reaedificare* to rebuild, repair, improve, from Latin *re-* + *aedificare* to build — more at [EDIFY](#)

First Known Use

Noun (1)

14th century, in the meaning defined at [sense 8](#)

Verb (1)

15th century, in the meaning defined at [transitive sense 4](#)

Noun (2)

1570, in the meaning defined at [sense 2](#)

Noun (3)

1592, in the meaning defined [above](#)

Noun (4)

1580, in the meaning defined [above](#)

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Verb (3)

1590, in the meaning defined [above](#)

Verb (4)

15th century, in the meaning defined [above](#)

Time Traveler

The first known use of *rack* was in the 14th century

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



- go to rack and ruin
- luggage rack
- dish rack
- rack one's brain
- rack up
- spice rack

[See More](#) ▾



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racist

rack

rackabones

See More Nearby Entries >

Style

MLA

"Rack." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rack>. Accessed 3 Aug. 2023.

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1 of 4

noun

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<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rack#:~:text=rack> 1 of 9 noun %281%29 'rak Synonyms,grating on or in which articles are placed

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3 : a framework or stand on or in which articles are placed

hat *rack*

bicycle *rack*

4 : a bar with teeth on one side for fitting together with those of a pinion

5 : a pair of antlers

rack 2 of 4 verb

1 : to cause to suffer torture, pain, sorrow, or ruin

racked by a cough

2 : to stretch or strain violently

racked his brains for the answer

3 : to place (as pool balls) in a rack

rack 3 of 4 noun

: either of two gaits of a horse:

a : [PACE sense 2b](#)

b : a fast showy gait similar to the pace but in which the feet of the same side do not touch down at the same time

rack 4 of 4 noun

: a cut of meat from a lamb or pig that includes some of the rib section



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Britannica English: [Translation of *rack* for Arabic Speakers](#)

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