

lie 1 of 4 verb (1)

'liː

lay 'leɪ ; lain 'leɪn ; lying 'liːɪŋ

[Synonyms of lie >](#)

intransitive verb

1 a : to be or to stay at rest in a horizontal position : be **prostrate** : **REST, RECLINE**

lie motionless

lie asleep

b : to assume a horizontal position → often used with *down*

c archaic : to reside temporarily : stay for the night : **LODGE**

d : to have sexual intercourse → used with *with*

e : to remain inactive (as in concealment)

lie in wait

2 : to be in a helpless or defenseless state

the town *lay* at the mercy of the invaders

3 of an inanimate thing : to be or remain in a flat or horizontal position upon a broad support

books *lying* on the table

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miss //e behind us

- b** : to have a place in relation to something else
the real reason *lies* deeper
- c** : to have an effect through **mere** presence, weight, or relative position
remorse *lay* heavily on him
- d** : to be sustainable or admissible
- 6** : to remain at anchor or **becalmed**
- 7 a** : to have place : **EXIST**
the choice *lay* between fighting or surrendering
- b** : **CONSIST, BELONG**
the success of the book *lies* in its direct style
responsibility *lay* with the adults
- 8** : **REMAIN**
especially : to remain unused, unsought, or uncared for

Lay vs. Lie: Usage Guide

Lay has been used intransitively in the sense of "lie"

going to *lay* down for a quick nap

since the 14th century. The practice was unremarked until around 1770; attempts to correct it have been a fixture of schoolbooks ever since. Generations of teachers and critics have succeeded in taming most literary and learned writing, but intransitive *lay* persists in familiar speech and is a bit more common in general prose than one might suspect. Much of the problem lies in the confusing similarity of the principal parts of the two words. Another influence may be a folk belief that *lie* is for people and *lay* is for things. Some commentators are ready to abandon the

lie

2 of 4 **noun (1)**

'liː

1 chiefly **British** : **LAY** [sense 6](#)

2 : the position or situation in which something lies (see [LIE](#) [entry 1](#))
a golf ball in a difficult *lie*

3 : the **haunt** of an animal (such as a fish) : **COVERT**

4 **British** : an act or instance of lying or resting

lie

3 of 4 **verb (2)**

'liː

lied; lying 'liː-ɪŋ

intransitive verb

1 : to make an untrue statement with **intent** to deceive
She was *lying* when she said she didn't break the vase.
He *lied* about his past experience.

2 : to create a false or misleading impression
Statistics sometimes *lie*.
The mirror never *lies*.

transitive verb

: to bring about by telling lies
He *lied* his way out of trouble.

with **intent** to deceive

He told a *lie* to avoid punishment.

b : an untrue or inaccurate statement that may or may not be believed true by the speaker or writer

the *lies* we tell ourselves to feel better

historical records containing numerous *lies*

2 : something that **misleads** or deceives

His show of remorse was a *lie*.

3 : a charge of lying (see **LIE** entry 3)

Phrases

lie low

1 : to lie prostrate, defeated, or disgraced

2 : to stay in hiding : strive to avoid notice

3 : to **bide** one's time : remain secretly ready for action

Verb (1)

bear

extend

go

head

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prevaricate

Noun (2)

fable

fabrication

fairy tale

falsehood

falsity

fib

mendacity

prevarication

story

tale

taradiddle

tarradiddle

untruth

whopper

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

Choose the Right Synonym for *lie*

LIE, **PREVARICATE**, **EQUIVOCATE**, **PALTER**, **FIB** mean to tell an untruth.

LIE is the blunt term, imputing dishonesty.

lied about where he had been

PREVARICATE softens the bluntness of **LIE** by implying quibbling or confusing the issue.

during the hearings the witness did his best to *prevaricate*

EQUIVOCATE implies using words having more than one sense so as to seem to say one thing but intend another.

equivocated endlessly in an attempt to mislead her inquisitors



fib applies to a telling of a trivial untruth.

fibbed about the price of the new suit

Recent Examples on the Web

Noun

But despite Mike Jones's dark past of *lies* and abusing other women, prosecutors could only tell a jury about his abuse of Diana and her murder.

— Michelle Miller, *CBS News*, 6 May 2023

The owner of Sugar N Spice, Kent Marshall, said the accusations are a *lie*.

— Stryens-fernandes, *al*, 5 May 2023

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

Etymology

Verb (1) and Noun (1)

Middle English, from Old English *licgan*; akin to Old High German *ligen* to lie, Latin *lectus* bed, Greek *lechos*

Noun (2)

Middle English *lige, lie*, from Old English *lyge*; akin to Old High German *lugī*, Old English *lēogan* to lie

First Known Use

Verb (1)

before the 12th century, in the meaning defined at [sense 1a](#)

Noun (1)

1697, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Verb (2)

before the 12th century, in the meaning defined at [intransitive sense 1](#)

Noun (2)

before the 12th century, in the meaning defined at [sense 1a](#)

Time Traveler

The first known use of *lie* was before the 12th century

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

[be/lie at the bottom of](#)

[give the lie to](#)

[lie by](#)

[lie behind](#)

[lie back](#)

[lie around](#)

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Palter, Dissemble, and Other Words for...

How to Use 'Lay' and 'Lie'

6 Words for Unbelievable Stories

Lay vs. Lie

Editor Emily Brewster clarifies the difference.

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Thesaurus

lie

Lie

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Style

MLA

"Lie." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lie>. Accessed 10 May. 2023.

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lie 1 of 4 **verb**

['lī](#)

lay ['lā](#) ; **lain** ['lān](#) ; **lying** ['lī-ɪŋ](#)

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lie low

lie in wait

2 : to be spread flat so as to cover
snow *lying* on the ground

3 : to have direction : **EXTEND**
our route *lay* to the west

4 : to be located
Ohio *lies* east of Indiana

lie 2 of 4 noun

1 : the position in which something lies

2 chiefly British : **LAY** entry 2

lie 3 of 4 verb

lied; lying ('li-ɪŋ)

1 : to make a statement one knows to be untrue

2 : to give a false idea
statistics sometimes *lie*

lie 4 of 4 noun

: something said or done in the hope of deceiving

Etymology

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lie intransitive verb

'lī

lay 'lā ; lain 'lān ; lying

: to be sustainable or capable of being maintained : have grounds under the law

holding that an action of battery would *lie*

– *Scott v. Bradford*, 606 P.2d 554 (1979)

remedies for misrepresentation...will not *lie* for misstatements of opinion

– W. L. Prosser and W. P. Keeton

appeals from the Tax Court *lie* to the...Circuit Court

– D. Q. Posin

Lie 1 of 2 biographical name (1)

'lē

Jonas 1833–1908 Norwegian novelist and dramatist

Lie 2 of 2 biographical name (2)

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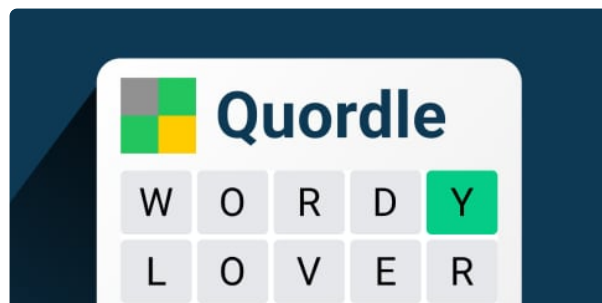
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Weird Plurals

One goose, two geese. One moose, two... moose. Wh...

Irregardless

It is in fact a real word (but that doesn't mean ...

Bring vs. Take

Both words imply motion, but the difference may b...

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Spelling Bee Quiz

Can you outdo past winners
of the National Spelli...

TAKE THE QUIZ

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