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duty



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duty

[noun](#)

du·ty | \ 'dü-tē  also 'dyü-\

plural duties

Definition of *duty*

(Entry 1 of 2)

1 : conduct due to parents and superiors : [respect](#) filial duty and obedience— John Locke

2a : [obligatory](#) tasks, conduct, service, or functions that arise from one's position (as in life or in a group)
was his duty to support his family
Her primary duty at the meeting was to take attendance.
performs a variety of administrative *duties*

b(1) : assigned service or business was put on kitchen duty
jury duty

(2) : active military service returning from duty overseas

(3) : a period of being on duty report for duty at 7 a.m.

3a : a moral or legal obligation felt it was their duty to help

b : the force of moral obligation will be ready when duty calls

4 : [tax](#) especially : a tax on imports a 15 percent duty

5a : [work sense 1c](#)

b(1) : the service required (as of an electric machine) under specified conditions

(2) : functional application : [use](#) got double duty out of the trip

(3) : use as a substitute making the word do duty for the thing— Edward Sapir

off duty

: free from assignment or responsibility a police officer who was *off duty* at the time

on duty

: engaged in or responsible for an assigned task or duty not allowed to take personal calls while *on duty*

duty

[adjective](#)

Definition of *duty* (Entry 2 of 2)

1 : done as a [duty](#) pay a duty call on her elderly aunt

2 : being on duty : assigned to specified tasks or functions the duty officer

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Synonyms for *duty*

Synonyms: Noun

[assessment](#), [imposition](#), [impost](#), [levy](#), [tax](#)

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Choose the Right Synonym for *duty*

Noun

[function](#), [office](#), [duty](#), [province](#) mean the acts or operations expected of a person or thing. [function](#) implies a definite end or purpose or a particular kind of work. the *function* of language is two-fold: to communicate emotion and to give information — Aldous Huxley [office](#) is typically applied to the function or service associated with a trade or profession or a special relationship to others. they exercise the *offices* of the judge, the priest, the counsellor — W. E. Gladstone [duty](#) applies to a task or responsibility imposed by one's occupation, rank, status, or calling. it is the judicial *duty* of the court, to examine the whole case — R. B. Taney [province](#) applies to a function, office, or duty that naturally or logically falls to one. I felt it was not my *province* to inquire — Anne Brontë

[task](#), [duty](#), [job](#), [chore](#), [stint](#), [assignment](#) mean a piece of work to be done. [task](#) implies work imposed by a person in authority or an employer or by circumstance. charged with a variety of *tasks* [duty](#) implies an obligation to perform or responsibility for performance. the *duties* of a lifeguard [job](#) applies to a piece of work voluntarily performed; it may sometimes suggest difficulty or importance. the *job* of turning the company around [chore](#) implies a minor routine activity necessary for maintaining a household or farm. every child was assigned *chores* [stint](#) implies a carefully allotted or measured quantity of assigned work or service. a 2-month *stint* as a reporter [assignment](#) implies a definite limited task assigned by one in authority. a reporter's *assignment*

Examples of *duty* in a Sentence

Noun

His primary *duty* at the event is to take attendance. If new employees are unable to carry out their *duties*, they may be fired.

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Recent Examples on the Web: Noun

Guyger, who is white, was off-*duty* at the time of the shooting, which occurred one year ago on Friday.— [Dakin Andone And Elliott C. McLaughlin, CNN, "Jury selection to begin in trial of Dallas officer Amber Guyger, who shot a man in his own apartment," 6 Sep. 2019](#) The ship was a hive of activity as the crew pulled double-*duty*.— [NBC News, "After Hurricane Dorian, Celebrity cruise ship in Bahamas reroutes to deliver food, aid," 6 Sep. 2019](#)

These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'duty.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback.](#)

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First Known Use of *duty*

Noun

13th century, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Adjective

1806, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

History and Etymology for *duty*

Noun and Adjective

Middle English *duete*, from Anglo-French *deueté, dueté*, from *deu due*

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More Definitions for *duty*

duty

[noun](#)

Financial Definition of *duty*

What It Is

In the tax and import/export world, a **duty** (or customs duty) is money collected under a [tariff](#).

How It Works

A duty is a federal tax on imports or exports. For example, Americans who travel abroad can bring back a certain number of dollars' worth of items without paying a duty. If the traveler brings back more than the allowed dollar amount worth of items, he or she must pay the tax (which varies according to the type of item, the type of travel, and other factors).

One of the best known tariff agreements is the controversial North American Free Trade Agreement, which went into effect on January 1, 1994. NAFTA required the elimination of [duties](#) on half of U.S. goods shipped to Mexico and the gradual phaseout of other tariffs among the U.S., Canada and Mexico over a 14-year period.

The World Trade Organization, which was created in 1995 and replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, is an international body that acts as a trade-dispute settlement organization and offers a forum to discuss new and existing trade rules and tariffs.

Why It Matters

[Duties](#) are used by governments to generate revenue or to protect domestic industries from competition. Duties can make it more expensive for Americans to purchase foreign goods, causing a decline in imports, a decline in the supply of the good, and a resulting increase in the price of the good. The price increase usually motivates domestic producers to increase their output of the product. Some [economists](#) argue that the resulting higher consumer prices, higher producer revenues and profits, and higher government revenues make duties a way to effectively transfer money from U.S. consumers to the U.S. Treasury. Some economists also argue that duties interfere with free market ideals by diverting resources to industries in which the U.S. is a less efficient, high-cost producer.

Source: [Investing Answers](#)

duty

[noun](#)



English Language Learners Definition of *duty*

: something that is done as part of a job
 : something that you must do because it is morally right or because the law requires it
 : active military service

[See the full definition for *duty* in the English Language Learners Dictionary](#)

duty

[noun](#)

du·ty | \ 'dü-tē , 'dyü-\
 plural duties

Kids Definition of *duty*

1 : something a person feels he or she ought to do because it is morally right Dad says it's his *duty* to take care of Grandma.
 2 : something a person is required to do by law jury *duty*
 3 : an action done as part of a job or position a principal's *duties*
 4 : the time during which a person must do his or her job The police officer was on *duty*.
 5 : active military service He returned from *duty* overseas.
 6 : a tax especially on imports into a country

Keep scrolling for more

duty

[noun](#)

du·ty
 plural duties

Legal Definition of *duty*

1 : tasks, service, or functions that arise from one's position performing a police officer's *duties* also : a period of being on duty — see also [jury duty](#)

2 : an obligation assumed (as by contract) or imposed by law to conduct oneself in conformance with a certain standard or to act in a particular way duty of good faith duty to warn of danger— see also [public duty doctrine](#), [special duty doctrine](#)

— **duty of candor** \ -'kan-dər \

: a duty obligating directors of a corporation to disclose all material facts known to them about a transaction when they are seeking shareholder approval

— **duty of care**

: a duty to use due care toward others in order to protect them from unnecessary risk of harm

— **duty of fair representation**

: a duty obligating a labor union to represent the employees in its collective bargaining unit fairly and in good faith

— **duty of loyalty**

: a duty obligating directors of a corporation to refrain from using their positions to further their own interests rather than the interests of the shareholders (as by self-dealing or fraud)

— **fiduciary duty**

: a duty obligating a fiduciary (as an agent or trustee) to act with loyalty and honesty and in a manner consistent with the best interests of the beneficiary of the fiduciary relationship (as a principal or trust beneficiary)

3 : [tax](#) especially : a tax on imports

off duty

: not engaged in a duty a police officer who is *off duty*

on duty

: engaged in a duty

History and Etymology for *duty*

Anglo-French *deuté* indebtedness, obligation, from *deu* owing, due, from Old French — see [due](#)

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labile 

readily or continually undergoing change

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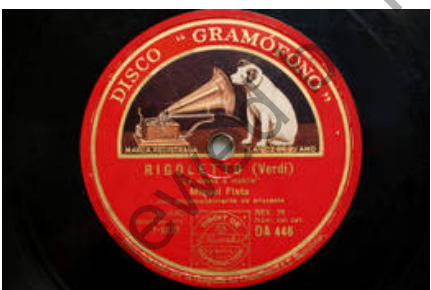
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