



likely adjective

like·ly | \ 'lī-klē \

likelier; likeliest

Definition of *likely* (Entry 1 of 2)

1 : having a high probability of occurring or being true : very probable

// rain is *likely* today

2 : apparently qualified : SUITABLE

// a *likely* place

3 : RELIABLE, CREDIBLE

// a *likely* enough story

4 : PROMISING

// a *likely* candidate

5 : ATTRACTIVE

// a *likely* child

likely adverb

Definition of *likely* (Entry 2 of 2)

Synonyms & Antonyms

More Example Sentences

Learn More about *likely*

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Synonyms & Antonyms for *likely*

Synonyms: Adjective

probable

Synonyms: Adverb

assumably, doubtless, presumably, probably

Antonyms: Adjective

doubtful, dubious, improbable, questionable, unlikely

Antonyms: Adverb

improbably

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Examples of *likely* in a Sentence

Adjective

// That seems to be the most *likely* explanation.

// This looks like a *likely* spot for a picnic.

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Recent Examples on the Web: Adjective

// Multiple legal experts told USA TODAY laws cited by several of Trump's allies *likely* did not apply to her actions.

— Nicholas Wu, *USA TODAY*, "Pelosi says she 'had no intention' to tear up Trump's State of the Union until she read it," 16 Feb. 2020

// To ask that the checks be rewritten after 15 years would be an imposition and *likely* not well received.

— Abigail Van Buren, *oregonlive*, "Dear Abby: Husband wonders if couple's sleeping arrangement is 'normal'," 15 Feb. 2020

These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'likely.' 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 *likely*

Adjective

14th century, in the meaning defined at sense 1

Adverb

14th century, in the meaning defined above

History and Etymology for *likely*

Adjective and Adverb

Middle English, from Old English *geſclic* fitting (from *geſc* like) and Old Norse *glīkligr*, *līkligr*, from *glīkr* like; akin to Old English *geſc*

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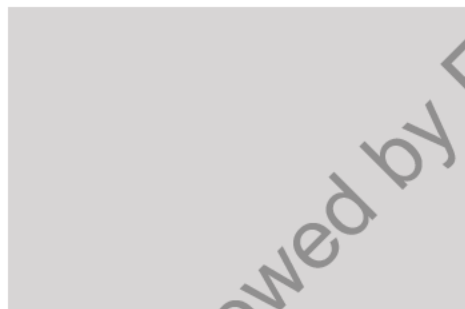
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Time Traveler for *likely*

Time Traveler **The first known use of *likely* was in the 14th century**

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From the Editors at Merriam-Webster



The Good, The Bad, & The Semantically Imprecise - 9/21

Dictionary Entries near *likely*

- likelihead
- likelihood
- likeliness
- likely**
- likely-looking
- like magic

Phrases Related to *likely*

- more than likely
- most likely
- not bloody likely!
- not likely

St
La
18
Lo
Bo

like-minded

[See More Nearby Entries](#)

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More Definitions for *likely*

likely adjective

English Language Learners Definition of *likely* (Entry 1 of 2)

—used to indicate the chance that something will happen

: seeming to be true

: seeming to be right or suited for a purpose

likely adverb

English Language Learners Definition of *likely* (Entry 2 of 2)

: without much doubt

See the full definition for *likely* in the English Language Learners Dictionary

likely adjective

like·ly | \ 'lī-klē \

likelier; likeliest

Kids Definition of *likely* (Entry 1 of 2)

- 1** : very possibly going to happen
// That glass is *likely* to fall.
- 2** : seeming to be the truth : BELIEVABLE
// That is the most *likely* explanation.
- 3** : giving hope of turning out well : PROMISING
// They found a *likely* spot for a picnic.

likely adverb

Kids Definition of *likely* (Entry 2 of 2)

- : without great doubt
// She will *likely* be elected class president.

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More from Merriam-Webster on *likely*

Thesaurus: All synonyms and antonyms for *likely*

Spanish Central: Translation of *likely*

Nglish: Translation of *likely* for Spanish Speakers

Britannica English: Translation of *likely* for Arabic Speakers

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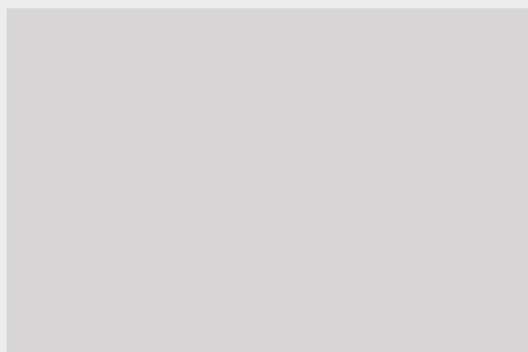
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WORDS AT PLAY

Words We're Watching: 'Plant-

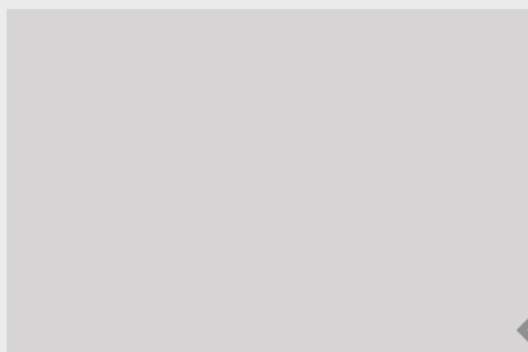
based'

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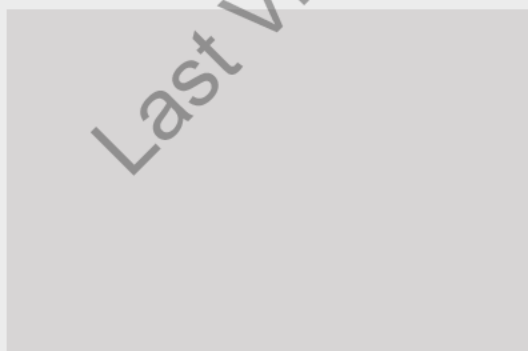
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On Your Mark: 7 Words and

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ASK THE EDITORS

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How to remember which is which

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The awkward case of 'his or her'

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