

A “child” is defined as a young person who has not reached adulthood yet. The definition and usage of the words “child” and “children” include unborn babies. In fact, even the phrase “with child” means “pregnant.” “Child” might also refer to someone’s son or daughter, regardless of age, for example, “my adult children.”

Unborn humans are frequently referred to as “unborn children” in many U.S. federal and state laws.

[18 U.S. Code § 1841 - Protection of unborn children | U.S. Code | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

[Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 22, § 50030 - Child | State Regulations | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

[1 Tex. Admin. Code § 370.401 - Perinates | State Regulations | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

[Kevin J. BURNS, etc., et al., Petitioners, v. Linda ALCALA et al. | Supreme Court | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

[477 Neb. Admin. Code, ch. 19, § 005 - 599 CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM \(CHIP\) | State Regulations | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

[10 U.S. Code § 919a - Art. 119a. Death or injury of an unborn child | U.S. Code | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)


[15 Miss. Code. R. 16-1-44.7.1 - Procedures Required | State Regulations | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

[Hicks v. State of Alabama | Gender Justice | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

[007.33.22 Ark. Code R. 012 - Rule 36 - Abortion Procedures | State Regulations | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

The child’s personality, health, vulnerability to stress and relationship to mom, all begin in the womb.

 Copilot Search

 **child** [CHɪld] 

**Noun**

1. a young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority:  
*"she'd been playing tennis since she was a child" · "the film is not suitable for children"*

Similar: [youngster](#) [little one](#) [boy](#) [girl](#) [baby](#) [newborn](#)

• a son or daughter of any age:  
*"when children leave home, parents can feel somewhat redundant"*

Similar: [descendant](#) [offshoot](#) [heir](#) [successor](#) [issue](#)

• an immature or irresponsible person:  
*"she's such a child!"*

[child definition - Search](#)

https://www.oed.com/dictionary/child\_n?tl=true

# child

NOUN

Factsheet Etymology **Meaning & use** Pronunciation Forms Frequency Compounds & derived words

**QUOTATIONS**  
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**CONTENTS**

- I. With reference to state or age.
  - ▶ I.1. An unborn or newly born human being; a fetus, an infant. In...
  - ▶ I.2. A young person of either sex, usually one below the age of...

**i. With reference to state or age.**

**I.1.a. An unborn or newly born human being; a fetus, an infant.** Old English-

In early use occasionally contextually; a male infant (cf. quot. OE<sup>1</sup>).

The primary sense appears to have been 'fetus'. When further senses developed, this was often expressed by *babe*, *baby*, *infant*, but *child* is retained in phrases such as 'to have a child'; see also *with child* at Phrases P.1, *childbirth* *n.*, *child* *v.*, etc.

OE Ealle hi ymbsnidon heora cild on þam eahteoðan dæge & him naman gesceopon.

[child, n. meanings, etymology and more | Oxford English Dictionary](#)

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/child

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Thesaurus child Chatbot Games Word of the Day

# child

noun

**noun**

Did you know?

Synonyms

Example Sentenc...

Word History

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**child** *noun*

**'chī(-ə)ld**

**plural children** **'chil-drən** -dərən

**often attributive**

**Synonyms of child** >

**1 a** : a young person especially between infancy and puberty  
 | a play for both *children* and adults

**b** : a person not yet of the age of majority (see **MAJORITY sense 2a**)  
 | Under the law she is still a *child*.

**c** : a **childlike** or **childish** person  
 | He is a *child* in most business matters.

**2 a** : a son or daughter of human parents  
 | Do you have any *children*?

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**Dictionary**

**noun**

Did you know?

Synonyms

Example Sentenc...

Word History

Phrases Containing

2 **a** : a son or daughter of human parents  
| Do you have any *children*?

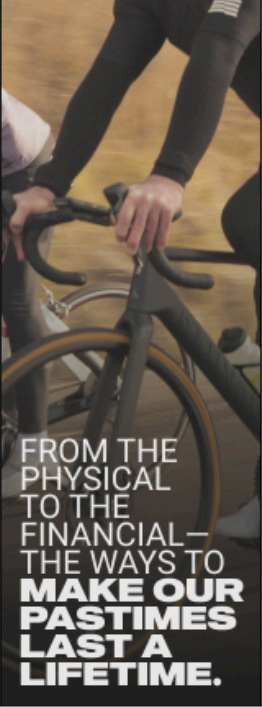
**b** : **DESCENDANT**  
| the *children* of Israel

3 **a** : an unborn or recently born person  
... Meghan Markle, married Prince Harry, now pregnant with *child*.  
— Laura Simonetti

**b** **dialect** : a female infant

[CHILD Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/child)

https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/child



**child** /ˈtʃajəld/ *noun*

*plural* **children** /ˈtʃɪldrən/

**Britannica Dictionary definition of CHILD** .....

[count]

**1** : a young person

- the birth of a *child*
- She's pregnant with their first *child*.
- a play for both *children* and adults
- I went there once **as a child**. [=when I was a child]

— often used before another noun.

- a *child* prodigy
- a *child* actor
- *child* development
- *child* psychologists


**2** : a son or daughter

- All of their *children* are grown now.
- an elderly couple and their adult *children*

[Child Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/child)

https://www.dictionary.com/browse/child

American British

**child**<sup>1</sup> 

[chahyld]  Phonetic (Standard)  IPA

**noun**  
plural *children*

- a person between birth and puberty or full growth.  
*books for children.*
- a son or daughter; offspring considered with regard to parents.  
*All my children are married.*
- a baby or infant.  
*A child of six months can recognize family members.*
- a human fetus.  
*My sister is seven months pregnant with a healthy child.*
- a childish person.  
*He's such a child about money.*

Dictionary.com

child<sup>1</sup> ^  
noun (10)

Child<sup>2</sup> ^  
noun (2)

Other Word Forms

Word History and Origins

Idioms and Phrases

Example Sentences

Related Words

Word of the Day

[CHILD Definition & Meaning | Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/child)


https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/child

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≡ **Collins** child

English French | German | Italian | Spanish | Portuguese | Hindi

Definitions Summary Synonyms Sentences Pronunciation ▶

**child** 

**in American English**

(tʃaɪld )

**noun**

**Word forms:** plural 'children

**Origin:** ME, pl. *childre* (now dial. *childer*; *children* is double pl.) < OE *cild*, pl. *cild*, *cildru* < IE \**gelt-*, a swelling up < base \**gel-*, rounded (sense development: swelling → womb → fetus → offspring > Goth *kilthei*, womb, L *globus*, sphere

- a human infant; baby
- an unborn human offspring; fetus
- a boy or girl in the period before puberty
- a son or daughter; offspring

[CHILD definition in American English | Collins English Dictionary](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/child)



Search



HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY

To look up an entry in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, use the search window above. For best results, after typing in the word, click on the "Search" button instead of using the "enter" key.

Some compound words (like *bus rapid transit*, *dog whistle*, or *identity theft*) don't appear on the drop-down list when you type them in the search bar. For best results with compound words, place a quotation mark before the compound word in the search window.

**child** (child)

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*n. pl. chil-dren* (chil'dron)

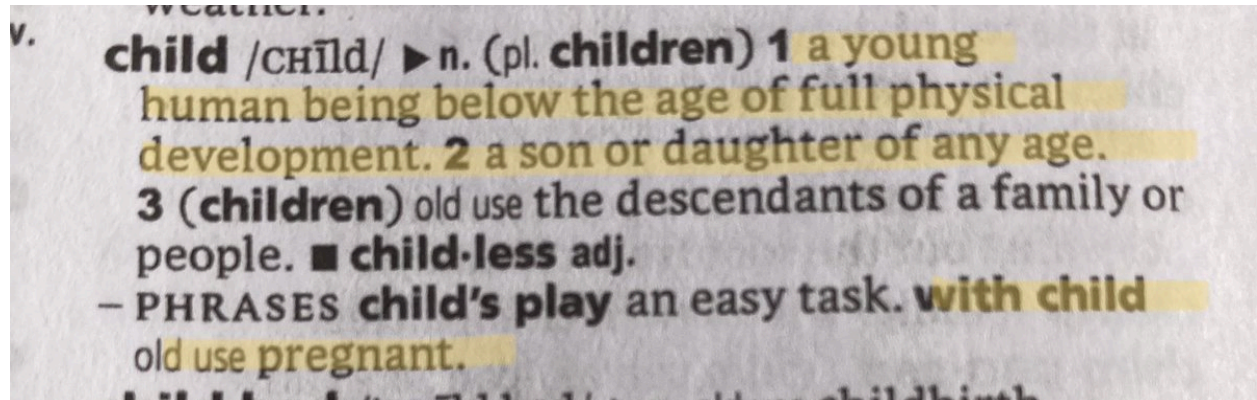
1.
  - a. A person between birth and puberty.
  - b. A person who has not attained maturity or the age of legal majority.
2.
  - a. An unborn infant; a fetus.
  - b. An infant; a baby.
3. One who is childish or immature.
4. Someone to whom a specified person is a parent.
5. A member of a tribe; descendant: *children of Abraham*.
6.
  - a. An individual regarded as strongly affected by another or by a specified time, place, or circumstance: *a child of nature*; *a child of the Sixties*.
  - b. A product or result of something specified: "*Times Square is a child of the 20th century*" (*Richard F. Shepard*).

**Idiom:**

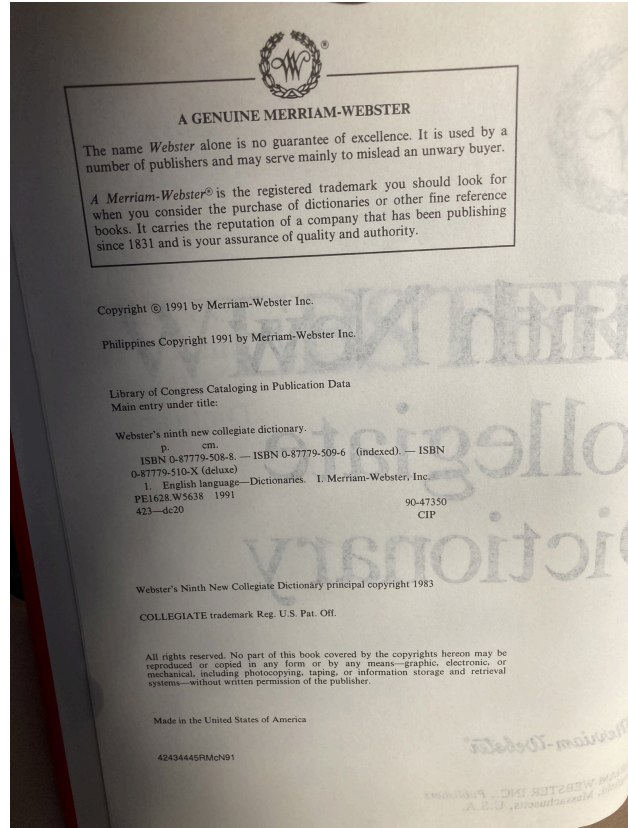
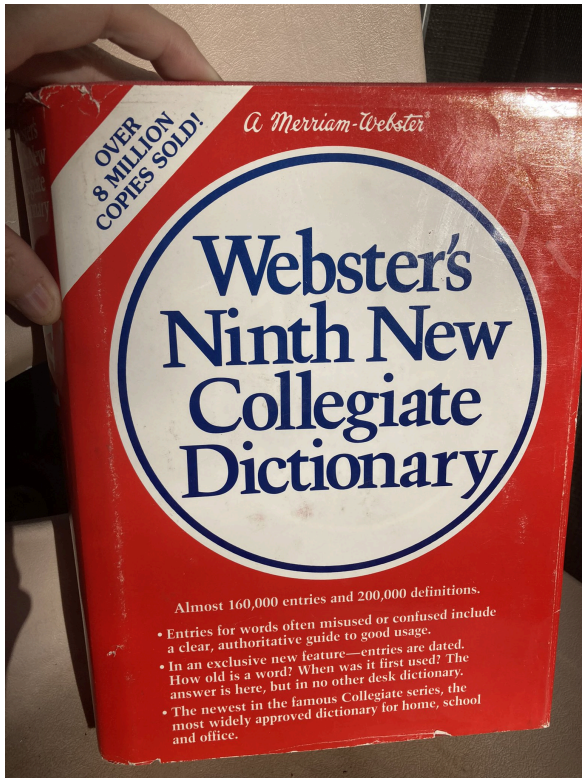
**with child**

Pregnant.

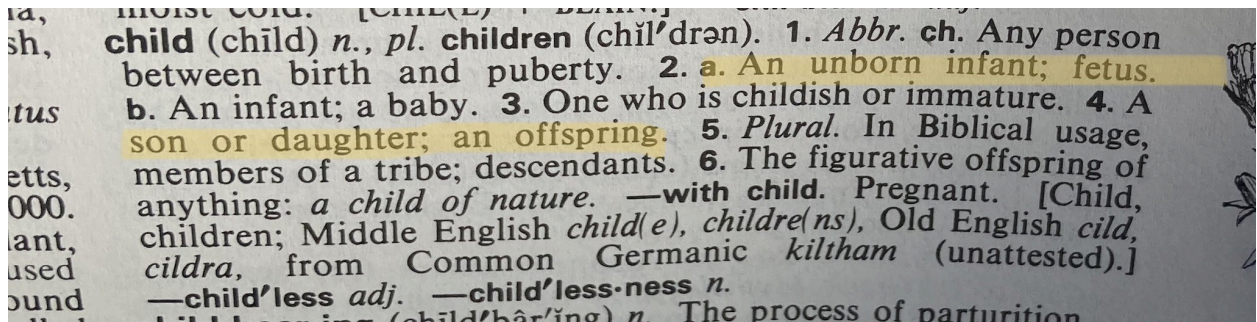
[American Heritage Dictionary Entry: child](#)

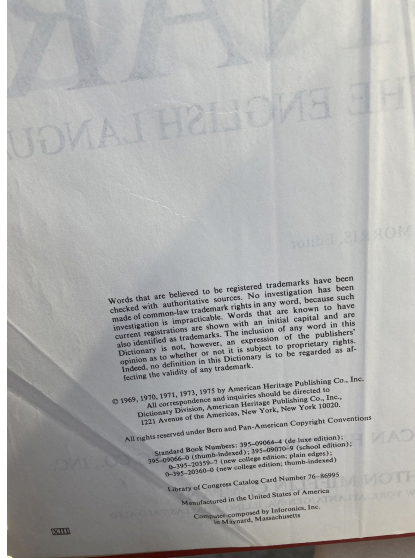
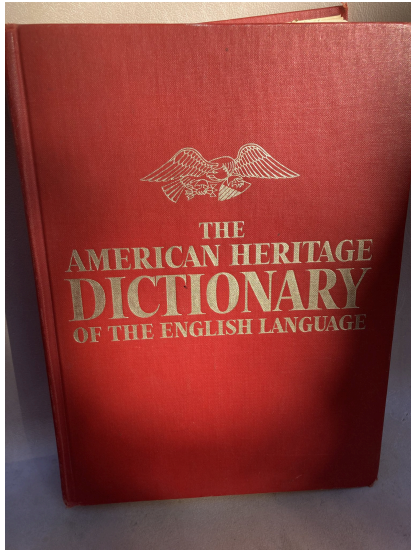






Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Inc., 1991





*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1975.

**Even pro-choice women have referred to their aborted or miscarried children as “child” or “baby” and have referred to their abortion experience as giving “birth” or like having painful “labor contractions.”**

[Pro-choice women who have miscarried are outraged by The Guardian - Secular Pro-Life](#)

[Medication abortions may be more painful than women expect, study finds](#)

<https://x.com/StudentsforLife/status/1743010420758065632>

[I Saw My Baby | Abortion Pill Stories | Live Action](#)

[https://youtu.be/m8F0LqNYM70?si=axg7Ya-NHht\\_2b8R&t=170](https://youtu.be/m8F0LqNYM70?si=axg7Ya-NHht_2b8R&t=170)

[Real Stories | This Is Chemical Abortion](#)

[Woman describes 'nightmarish' abortion pill experience 'No one had warned me' | Live Action](#)

[My Medical Abortion](#)

<https://youtu.be/m8F0LqNYM70>

## Prenatal Psychosocial Development

The baby's personality, health, temperament, vulnerability to stress and relationship to mom, all begin in the womb.

One article entitled, "Fetal Psychology" from the publication "Psychology Today" pointed out that "birth may be a grand occasion, [but] it is a trivial event in development. Nothing neurologically interesting happens.... the real action starts weeks earlier... The roots of human behavior, researchers now know, begin to develop early—just weeks after conception.... well before she typically knows that she is pregnant."

The brain and heart are among the very first organs to form in the growing embryo.

The unborn child can react to noise by 9 weeks, move around in various ways and breathe in the amniotic fluid. By the end of the second trimester, he can hear, even recognize his mom's voice, "respond to a familiar story" read to him, is believed to be able to dream during REM sleep, and "towards the end of pregnancy, can see." The unborn child can react excitedly to the mother's laugh. "Along with their ability to see, hear and feel, comes the capacity to learn and remember."

"At 32 weeks of gestation--two months before a baby is considered fully prepared for the world, or "at term" --a fetus is behaving almost exactly as a newborn.... 'Behavior doesn't begin at birth... It begins *before* and develops in predictable ways.' One of the most important influences on development is the fetal environment."

"Babies are born with distinct differences and patterns of activity that suggest individual temperament."

The unborn child "gets an enormous amount of 'hormonal bathing' through the mother, so its chronobiological rhythms are influenced by the mother's sleep/wake cycles, her eating patterns, her movements." When mothers experience a lot of stress or pressures, the hormones given out can also affect the child's temperament and development.

[Fetal Psychology | Psychology Today](#)

Unborn babies can smile at the sound of their father's voice.

<https://x.com/annamlulis/status/1989029014128746529?s=20>

Twin fetuses as young as 14 weeks gestation were observed *making conscious gestures* towards each other and towards the womb's uterine wall. [Wired to Be Social: The Ontogeny of Human Interaction - PMC](#) Modern ultrasound imaging has captured unborn babies as they jumped around, waved, yawned and sucked their thumbs. [Incredible Video Shows Unborn Babies Jumping Around, Waving, Yawning and Sucking Their Thumb - LifeNews.com](#)

**Unborn babies can cry, as young as 20 weeks gestation.** [Do Babies Cry in the Womb? Plus, What It May Mean \(healthline.com\)](#)

**They can also grimace and squirm in response to pain.** [Sorting pain out of salience: assessment of pain facial expressions in the human fetus - PMC](#)

The RMC Health system stated on their website that “Research has shown that, during pregnancy, your baby feels what you feel—and with the same intensity. That means if you’re crying, your baby feels the same emotion, as if it’s their own.

During the gestational period, your baby is preparing themselves for life in the outside world. How do they do this? By interpreting the messages you’re sending them throughout your pregnancy. A study from the University of California-Irvine found that the emotional state of a mother influences the development of her baby both before and after birth.” Depression and anxiety for pregnant mothers can increase the risk of the child developing some sort of neurological or psychiatric problem later on.

[Feeling The Pregnant Blues | Do Mom and Baby Share Emotions](#)

Dr. Elysia Davis, the director of the Denver University Neurodevelopmental Research Program, reported that for “women who have higher levels of stress hormones during pregnancy, including higher levels of cortisol... their babies and children tend to be more reactive in terms of the child’s response to stress.... We see persisting influences of the **prenatal environment** out through childhood, through six to eight years of age, where we’re seeing that these exposures to stress hormones do seem to be having a persisting influence on children’s development... Mom’s psychological well-being and stress exposure during the fetal period is... really important.”

[Pregnant mother’s stress can affect unborn baby – The Denver Clarion](#)

Per a research article: “No other period in **a child’s life** matches the speed of brain development than **the first nine months in the womb**. Rapid growth goes hand in hand with enormous potential, but also with great vulnerability.... Maternal stress, depression, and anxiety are associated with later child behavioral and mental health issues. Investing in maternal mental health during pregnancy will improve healthy fetal brain growth, and, ultimately lead to a happier and healthier next generation.”

[From the Womb into the World: Protecting the Fetal Brain from Maternal Stress During Pregnancy - Marion I. van den Heuvel, 2022](#)

“The Kochi Medical School in Japan found that verbal abuse during pregnancy is linked to an almost 50% increase in the risk of a baby being born with hearing problems. The stress that comes from verbal abuse could cause major problems for the unborn baby in the future.”

[Does arguing while pregnant affect babies? - Document - Gale OneFile: Health and Medicine](#)

The UK NHS stated on their website: “Babies are very aware of any friction between the people around them. Arguments and upsets are not good for your baby’s brain development, both before and after they are born. It makes it harder for them to feel safe and secure and build strong bonds.... It is very important that babies are not around abusive relationships either before or after they are born. It puts them at risk of physical or emotional harm.”

[Relationships In Pregnancy](#)

In December, 2020, the State of California declared “ACE’s and toxic stress” a ***public health crisis and a “root cause to some of the most harmful, persistent, and expensive societal and health challenges facing our world today.”*** Their key finding was that “ACEs are Causally Associated with the Toxic Stress Response.” The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine defined the “Toxic Stress Response” as “prolonged activation of the stress response systems that can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment, well into the adult years...”

The report identified prenatal exposure to maternal stress and depression as an example of “childhood psychosocial adversity” that, if left unmitigated, could increase the child’s risk of harmful biological changes, potentially leading to behavioral, mental, social and health problems into adulthood.

[Roadmap for Resilience \(ca.gov\)](#)