

become definition meaning merriam webster

become definition meaning merriam webster is a phrase that directs attention to the specific explanation and usage of the verb "become" as documented by Merriam-Webster, one of the most respected dictionaries in the English language. Understanding the precise definition and nuances of "become" is essential for both language learners and professionals aiming to use the word accurately in various contexts. This article explores the meaning of "become" according to Merriam-Webster, including its grammatical role, different senses, and examples of usage. Additionally, it examines the etymology, common phrases, and related terms that provide a comprehensive understanding of the word. By the end of this article, readers will gain a well-rounded knowledge of the term "become," enhancing their vocabulary and language skills. The following sections will guide you through the definition, usage, history, and variations of this versatile verb.

- Definition of Become According to Merriam-Webster
- Grammatical Usage and Forms of Become
- Examples and Contexts of Usage
- Etymology and Historical Development
- Common Phrases and Synonyms

Definition of Become According to Merriam-Webster

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "become" primarily as a verb that describes the process of beginning to be something or undergoing a change. It is used to indicate transformation, development, or the act of coming into a particular state or condition. The dictionary provides several senses of the word, capturing its versatile nature in English.

Primary Meanings

According to Merriam-Webster, the verb "become" has the following primary meanings:

- To begin to be: This sense refers to the transition from one state to

another, such as "She will become a doctor."

- To come into existence as: This emphasizes the emergence of a new identity or condition.
- To be suitable or proper for: In this usage, "become" implies appropriateness or fittingness, for example, "That color becomes you."

These meanings illustrate how "become" functions both as a marker of change and as a descriptor of compatibility or suitability.

Grammatical Usage and Forms of Become

The word "become" serves as an irregular verb in English, and its grammatical usage is essential for proper sentence construction. Merriam-Webster outlines its forms and syntactic roles clearly, aiding users in mastering its use.

Verb Forms

"Become" is an irregular verb with the following principal parts:

- Base form: become
- Past tense: became
- Past participle: become

This irregularity requires attention, especially in past tense and perfect constructions, such as "He became famous" and "She has become skilled."

Usage in Sentences

"Become" is commonly used with linking verbs and complements, often followed by nouns, adjectives, or phrases that describe the new state or condition:

- She became a leader in her community.
- The weather became colder as evening approached.
- His behavior became unacceptable.

In addition, "become" can be used intransitively or transitively depending on the context.

Examples and Contexts of Usage

Understanding the application of "become" across different contexts enriches comprehension of its meaning and enhances communication skills. Merriam-Webster provides numerous examples illustrating its diverse use.

Transformation and Change

One of the most common uses of "become" is to express a change in state or identity:

- Children become adults over time.
- The caterpillar became a butterfly.
- Economic conditions became more favorable.

Suitability and Appearance

"Become" also conveys the idea of something being appropriate or enhancing appearance:

- That dress becomes her well.
- His modesty becomes him.
- The new haircut really becomes you.

Idiomatic and Figurative Usages

The word "become" can appear in idiomatic expressions or figurative language to suggest improvement or transformation beyond literal meaning.

Etymology and Historical Development

The etymology of "become" provides insight into its evolution and how its meanings have expanded over time. Merriam-Webster traces its origins to Old English and beyond.

Origins of the Word

The verb "become" originates from the Old English compound "becuman," which means "to come about" or "to come to be." This compound consists of the prefix "be-" and the verb "cuman," meaning "to come." Over centuries, the meaning broadened to include the notions of transformation and suitability.

Evolution of Usage

Throughout Middle English and into Modern English, "become" retained its core meaning of change and addition of new senses related to appropriateness. The shifts in usage reflect changes in societal language patterns and the flexibility of the English lexicon.

Common Phrases and Synonyms

In addition to its dictionary definition, "become" is part of many common phrases and has numerous synonyms that can be used interchangeably depending on context. Merriam-Webster highlights these to assist in vocabulary building.

Common Phrases Featuring Become

- Become of: to happen to or result in something (e.g., "What will become of the project?")
- Become accustomed to: to get used to something
- Become involved: to engage or participate in an activity or situation

Synonyms and Related Words

Synonyms for "become" vary depending on the intended meaning. For transformation, common synonyms include:

- Turn into
- Grow
- Develop into
- Change into

For the sense of suitability, alternatives include:

- Suit
- Fit
- Match
- Enhance

Choosing the correct synonym depends on the sentence context and desired nuance.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the definition of 'become' according to Merriam-Webster?

According to Merriam-Webster, 'become' means to begin to be, come to be, or grow to be.

How does Merriam-Webster describe the meaning of 'become' in grammar?

Merriam-Webster defines 'become' as a linking verb that connects the subject with a subject complement indicating a change of state or condition.

Can 'become' imply transformation according to Merriam-Webster?

Yes, Merriam-Webster states that 'become' can mean to undergo a transformation or change into a different state or form.

Is 'become' used both transitively and intransitively as per Merriam-Webster?

Merriam-Webster notes that 'become' is primarily used intransitively but can be followed by an adjective or noun to indicate what something changes into.

What are some example sentences of 'become' from Merriam-Webster?

Examples include 'She has become a doctor' or 'The weather became colder,' illustrating change or transition.

Does Merriam-Webster include any idiomatic uses of 'become'?

Merriam-Webster highlights phrases like 'become of' meaning what happens to someone or something.

How does Merriam-Webster differentiate 'become' from similar verbs like 'get' or 'grow'?

Merriam-Webster explains that 'become' often implies a more formal or complete change compared to 'get' or 'grow,' which might indicate more gradual or informal change.

What is the etymology of 'become' according to Merriam-Webster?

Merriam-Webster traces 'become' back to Old English 'becuman,' meaning to come to be or happen.

Are there any noted synonyms or antonyms of 'become' listed in Merriam-Webster?

Synonyms include 'turn into,' 'grow into,' or 'develop into,' while antonyms would be to remain unchanged or 'stay.'

Additional Resources

1. The Dictionary of Word Origins: The Histories of More Than 8,000 English-Language Words

This book explores the fascinating histories behind thousands of English words, including "become." It provides detailed etymologies and traces how meanings have evolved over time. Readers interested in the origins and transformations of words will find this resource invaluable for understanding definitions at a deeper level.

2. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Usage

A comprehensive guide to the correct usage of English words and phrases, this book also delves into the nuances of meaning and definition. It explains common confusions and clarifies how words like "become" are properly used in different contexts. This resource is perfect for anyone looking to refine their understanding of English vocabulary.

3. Words on the Move: Why English Won't - and Can't - Sit Still (Like, Literally)

By examining the dynamic nature of language, this book sheds light on how word meanings shift over time. It discusses how definitions like those found in Merriam-Webster evolve with usage. The approachable style makes it easy to

grasp the fluidity of language and the processes by which words acquire new meanings.

4. *The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary*

This narrative chronicles the creation of the most comprehensive English dictionary, highlighting the challenges of defining words precisely. It offers insight into the meticulous work behind dictionary definitions, such as those for "become." Readers gain appreciation for the scholarly efforts that shape our understanding of word meanings.

5. *Lexical Semantics*

Focusing on the study of word meanings and relationships, this academic text provides theories and frameworks for understanding definitions. It includes detailed analysis of verbs like "become," explaining their semantic roles and variations. The book is ideal for linguistics students and anyone interested in the science of meaning.

6. *The Elements of Style*

While primarily a style guide, this classic book emphasizes clarity and precision in word choice. It touches on the importance of understanding word meanings and selecting words appropriately to convey intended definitions. Readers looking to improve their writing and comprehension of English vocabulary will benefit from its concise advice.

7. *English Vocabulary in Use: Advanced*

Designed for advanced learners, this book covers a wide range of English words, including their definitions, usage, and nuances. It explains subtle differences in meaning and helps readers master words like "become." The practical exercises reinforce understanding and promote effective communication.

8. *From Old English to Standard English: A Course Book in Language Variation Across Time*

This book traces the development of the English language, showing how definitions and word uses have changed. It provides historical context for words such as "become," illustrating their semantic shifts. The text is useful for those interested in the evolution of English lexicon and dictionary meanings.

9. *How to Read a Dictionary: The Art and Meaning of Lexicography*

Offering an insider's look at dictionary-making, this book explains how definitions are crafted and why they matter. It discusses the principles behind entries for words like "become," helping readers understand dictionary conventions. This guide enhances one's ability to interpret and use dictionary definitions effectively.

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