

The meaning of **free**

An exploration of the word in a selection of its nuances.

Definition* of “free”	Sample sentence
a. [chemistry] uncombined, unpaired.	New research is finding that free radicals may actually be good for you.
a. excluded.	Rich in polyphenols, fair trade dark chocolate can be enjoyed guilt-free when eaten in moderation.
a. gratis.	The child’s meal comes with a free toy.
a. [of trade] open.	The free market is often touted as a benefit of capitalism.
a. liberal (not miserly).	The businessman’s free nature extends only to his mates.
a. void of something, usually undesirable.	The despot is free of moral burden.
v. to be rid of something.	In crossing the border, they thought they would be free of any further threat of attack.
a. permitted to take a specific action.	Because it appeared to be within the letter of the law, the decision-makers believed they were free to act without considering broader humanitarian and ethical obligations.
a. without direct cost to the recipient.	The centre offers free meals, entertainment, and accommodation.
a. wild.	Flitting from branch to branch, the tiny bird was free.
a. able to act with liberty.	The woman fled from her home so that she might be free.
<u> </u> <i>and easy</i>	A sad longing accompanied the recollection of her grandmother’s free and easy hand when it came to butter on fresh-baked bread.
a. unrestrained.	
a. able to act in accordance with one’s own will.	While they were, in principle, free to look for work, the community prevented them from having safe and meaningful employment.
a. [of speech] frank; fair-spoken.	The commentators continued to cast insults and slurs, arguing they had a right to free speech.
v. to liberate.	The medical professionals sought to free the man from conditions that adversely impacted his health.

Definition* of “free”**Sample sentence**

a. liberated; not limited or controlled.

The woman wants her child to know what it is to be free.

v. to make available for a particular purpose.

The man frees the rope from the post for a use known to no one but him.

a. [of nations] not subject to foreign rule or despotism.

The girl longed to be accepted into a free country, not knowing that in such a place she would still be unable to leave the house alone without being held accountable for what might befall her.

a. no longer confined or imprisoned.

Far across the ocean, a grieving mother says, “Finally, he is free.”

a. noble; joyful.

The woman’s free spirit sees her greet each day with smiling hope.

*Definitions based on information from *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd edition, with revisions and addenda, 1966), the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, [Oxford Living Dictionaries](#), [Etymonline](#), [National Center for Biotechnology Information](#).