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experience, *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /ɪkˈspɪəriəns/, /ɛkˈspɪəriəns/,

U.S. /ɪkˈspɪriəns/, /ɛkˈspɪriəns/

Forms: Also ME–15 **experiens**, **experians**, **experyens**, ME–15 **experyence**.

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < French *expérience*, < Latin *experientia*, < *experient-em*, present participle of *experiri* to try, put to the test.

†1.

a. The action of putting to the test; trial. **to make experience of:** to make trial of. *Obs.*

- 1393 J. GOWER *Confessio Amantis* I. 14 At Avynon the experience Therof haþ 3oue an euidence.
 a1425 (▶ c1395) *Bible* (Wycliffite, L.V.) (Royal) (1850) Gen. xlii. 15 Now y schal take experience [1382 experyment] of 3ou.
 1596 SPENSER *Second Pt. Faerie Queene* v. i. sig. M7, Of all the which..She [sc. Astræa] caused him [sc. Artegall] to make experience Vpon wyld beasts.
 1631 J. SHIRLEY *Schoole of Complement* I. i, Make Experience of my loyalty, by some service.
 1668 BP. J. WILKINS *Ess. Real Char.* Ep. Ded. sig. A ij^v, The Art of Shorthand..much wondered at by Travailers, that have seen the experience of it in England.

†b. A tentative procedure; an operation performed in order to ascertain or illustrate some truth; an experiment. *Obs.*

- c1384 CHAUCER *Hous of Fame* II. 280, I prove it..Be experience, for if that thou Threw in a water now, a stone [etc.].
 c1420 *Pallad. on Husb.* VIII. 47 Nowe have I made inoculacion Of pere and appultree: the experience Hath preved wel.
 1576 G. BAKER tr. C. Gesner *Newe Jewell of Health* II. f. 112, The Auchour..hath both seene, and done many experiences worthy memorie.
 1652 W. BLITH *Eng. Improver Improved* ix. 60 They will tell you a story of I know not what experiences they have made, when alas they never knew that an Experiment must hold in all its parts.
 1678 R. RUSSEL tr. Jabir ibn Haiyan *Wks. Geber* II. i. iv. i. 86 All which..we shall..declare, with their Causes and with easie Experiences.
 1763 E. CARTER in Pennington *Mem.* (1816) I. 301, I was..assured, by people who have made the experience, that [etc.].

†2. Proof by actual trial; practical demonstration. **to put in experience:** to fulfil in practice. *Obs.*; passing into 3.

- 1393 J. GOWER *Confessio Amantis* II. 138 Thus hath this king experience, How fooles done the reverence To gold.
- c1400 (▶ 1391) CHAUCER *Treat. Astrolabe* (Cambr. Dd.3.53) (1872) II. §1. 15, I..found the point of my rewle..a lite[!] with-in the degree & than haddy of this conclusioun the ful experience.
- 1447 O. BOKENHAM *Lyvys Seyntys* (1835) 5, I had hereof good experyence.
- 1490 CAXTON tr. *Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1885) xxii. 469 Ye maye well perceyve the experyence of it every day.
- a1513 R. FABYAN *New Cronycles Eng. & Fraunce* (1516) I. cxix. f. lvii, Sene they wolde not receyue Peace of theyr Bretheme, they shuld of other receyue warre and wreche, The whiche was after put in experience by Ethelfridus Kynge of Northumberland.
- 1594 MARLOWE & T. NASHE *Dido* IV. iv, And now to make experience of my love, Fair sister Anna, lead my lover forth.
- 1614 W. RALEIGH *Hist. World* I. v. i. §1. 309 The experience that Pyrrhus hath giuen, of the Roman power, in his daies.
- 1715 D. DEFOE *Family Instructor* I. i. iii. 68, I have a full Experience of that, and thought my Happiness always compleat in it.

3. The actual observation of facts or events, considered as a source of knowledge.

- 1377 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* B. XVIII. 151 Thorw experience..I hope þei shal be saued.
- 1563 W. FULKE *Goodle Gallerye Causes Meteors* II. f. 13, Therefore the Mariners by experience tryinge that one flame..signified tempest at hand, supposed the same flame to be the goddesse Helena.
- 1577 B. GOOGE tr. C. Heresbach *Foure Bks. Husbandry* III. f. 121^v, To powre into his mouth wine and oyle..we finde by experience, is very good.
- 1651 R. WITTIE tr. J. Primrose *Pop. Errours* I. xiv. 51 Experience teacheth that Agarick purges fleame.
- 1736 BP. J. BUTLER *Analogy of Relig.* I. ii. 35 It is not so much a Deduction of Reason, as a Matter of Experience.
- 1765 O. GOLDSMITH *Traveller* (ed. 2) 20 Just experience tells..That those who think must govern those that toil.
- 1785 T. REID *Ess. Intellect. Powers* 627 Experience informs us only of what has been, but never of what must be.
- 1830 J. F. W. HERSCHEL *Prelim. Disc. Study Nat. Philos.* II. i. 76 The..only ultimate source of our knowledge of nature and its laws, experience; by which we mean..the accumulated experience of all mankind in all ages, registered in books or recorded by tradition.
- 1851 A. HELPS *Friends in Council* I. 19 By making men as gods, enabling them to understand without experience.
- 1862 J. F. STEPHEN *Ess. Barrister* 329 Daily experience informs us of the consequences.

4.

a. The fact of being consciously the subject of a state or condition, or of being consciously affected by an event. Also an instance of this; a state or condition viewed subjectively; an event by which one is affected.

- 1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) Gen. xxx. 27 Laban seide to him..thurȝ experyens Y haue lernyd for God hath blissid to me for thee.

- c1386 CHAUCER *Wife of Bath's Prol.* 1 Experiens..were ynough for me To speke of wo that is in mariage.
 14.. *Purific. Marie in Tundale's Vis.* 129 To have experiens Only of chyldyng.
 ?1533 G. DU WES *Introductory for to lerne Frenche* sig. Bbii v, Please god that ye vnderstande it by experiens.
 1615 J. STEPHENS *Ess. & Characters* (new ed.) 172 A complete man..knowes what experience can teach, but is not taught by experience.
 1693 C. MATHER *Wonders Invisible World* Churches, whose Communicants have been seriously examined about their Experience of Regeneration.
 1846 N. HAWTHORNE *Mosses from Old Manse* II. 32 A man of science..who..had made experience of a spiritual affinity, more attractive than any chemical one.
 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* II. 254 Both..had learned by experience how soon James forgot obligations.
 1874 D. M. MULOCK *My Mother & I* 8 Many another girl has gone thro' a similar experience.
 1878 J. D. HOOKER & J. BALL *Jrnl. Tour Marocco* 269 Another unlooked-for experience was in store for us.

b. In religious use: A state of mind or feeling forming part of the inner religious life; the mental history (of a person) with regard to religious emotion. Also *attrib.*, esp. in **experience-meeting**, a meeting (*e.g.* a Methodist class meeting or love-feast) held for the recital of religious experiences.

- 1674 J. OWEN *Disc. Holy Spirit* (1693) 49 Testified unto by the Experience of them that truly believe.
 1684 J. BUNYAN *Pilgrim's Progress 2nd Pt.* II. 47 (*margin*) A Repetition of Christiana's Experience .
 1746 J. EDWARDS *Treat. Relig. Affections* II. 45 Those Experiences which are agreeable to the Word of God, are right.
 1841–4 R. W. EMERSON *Ess.* 1st Ser. 256 The rapture of the Moravian and Quietist..the experiences of the Methodists, are varying forms [etc.].
 1854 H. MILLER *Foot-prints of Creator* (1874) xiii. 235 Ought the Christian controversialist to avail himself, in this question, of the experience argument?
 1857 S. G. GOODRICH *Recoll. Lifetime* I. 214 [At these meetings] there was praying, and exhorting, and telling experiences, and singing..sentimental religious hymns.

5. In senses 3, 4 often personified; esp. in various proverbial phrases.

- c1450 *Nun* 150 in *Early Eng. Poems & Lives Saints* (1862) 142 'What ys yowr name, dame empyrse?' Sche seyde 'my name ys experience.'
 1578 T. TYMME tr. J. Calvin *Comm. Genesis* 249 Experience..is the schoolmaistresse of fooles.
 1590 J. SMYTHE *Certain Disc. Weapons* sig. *2 b, Experience is the mother of Science.
 a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Cymbeline* (1623) IV. ii. 34 Experience, oh thou disproou'st Report.
 1646 BP. J. HALL *Balme of Gilead* 301 If experience be the mistresse of fools, I am sure it is the mother of wisdom.
 1667 R. ALLESTREE *Causes Decay Christian Piety* v. 104 Experience is the daughter of Time.
 1827 B. DISRAELI *Vivian Grey* III. v. i. 13 Experience is the child of Thought.

6. What has been experienced; the events that have taken place within the knowledge of an individual, a community, mankind at large, either during a

particular period or generally.

- 1607 J. NORDEN *Surueyors Dialogue* 31, I can finde nothing in mine experience to contradict your speech.
 1759 W. ROBERTSON *Hist. Scotl.* I. vi. 423 Her animosity against the queen of Scots was greatly augmented by recent experience.
 1861 J. S. MILL *Considerations Representative Govt.* xviii. 340 Profound study of Indian experience.

7.

a. Knowledge resulting from actual observation or from what one has undergone.

- 1553 R. EDEN in tr. S. Münster *Treat. Neue India* Pref. sig. aavij, It hardelye agreeth with the principles of Philosophie & common experience.
 1607 J. NORDEN *Surueyors Dialogue* 39, I have no further experience of you then the bare report of my Tenant.
 a1616 SHAKESPEARE *As you like It* (1623) IV. i. 24 *Jaq.* Yes, I haue gain'd my experience. *Ros.* And your experience makes you sad.
 1658 SIR T. BROWNE *Garden of Cyrus* Ep. Ded. to T. Le Gros, in *Hydriotaphia: Urne-buriall* sig. A2, Having no old experience of the duration of their Reliques.
 1791 G. MORRIS in J. Sparks *Life G. Morris* (1832) III. 20 Most men have the generosity to pay for their own experience.
 1860 J. TYNDALL *Glaciers of Alps* I. ii. 22, I had had but little experience of alpine phenomena.

†b. A piece of experimental knowledge; a fact, maxim, rule, or device drawn from or approved by experience; *concr.* something expertly fashioned. *Obs.*

- 1570 J. DEE in H. Billingsley tr. Euclid *Elements Geom.* Math. Præf. sig. biii^v, This Arte [sc. Astrology] is furnished with many other great Artes and experiences.
 1577 B. GOOGE tr. C. Heresbach *Foure Bks. Husbandry* IV. f. 170, Some haue an other experience for this purpose, and that is Potshards beaten small..and geuen vnto them [sc. Doves].
 1598 SHAKESPEARE *Love's Labour's Lost* III. i. 25 How hast thou purchased this experience ?
 1621 R. BOLTON *Statutes Ireland* 330 Sir Percy Sidney..hath..found amongst other experiences the great abuse of the clergie there.
 1657 T. BARKER *Barker's Delight* (1659) 51, I have found an experience [*i.e.* salmon roe as bait] of late which you may angle with, and take great store of this kind of fish.
 1669 S. STURMY *Mariners Mag.* I. ii. 14, I will add one old approved Experience for the Mariners use..that is, to cut Hair, the Moon in [Taurus, etc.].
 1670 S. WILSON *Lassels's Voy. Italy* (new ed.) II. 212 Here I saw the schooles..full of pretty curiosities and experiences..mechanical, mathematical, and hydraulical.

8. The state of having been occupied in any department of study or practice, in affairs generally, or in the intercourse of life; the extent to which, or the length of time during which, one has been so occupied; the aptitudes, skill, judgement, etc. thereby acquired.

- 1483 CAXTON tr. *Caton* A viij, He ought to haue the experience..to knowe what thyng right is.
- 1509 J. FISHER *Mornyng Remembraunce Countesse of Rychemonde* (de Worde) sig. Aiii v, The duke of suthfolke..was a man of grete experience.
- 1511–12 *Act 3 Hen. VIII* c. 11 To the perfecte knowlege wherof bee requisite bothe grete lernyng and ripe experience.
- a1513 R. FABYAN *New Cronycles Eng. & Fraunce* (1516) I. Prol. f. ii, To theym that..haue in Cronycles full experience.
- 1587 J. HOOKER tr. Giraldus Cambrensis *Vaticinall Hist. Conquest Ireland* II. xl, in *Holinshed's Chron.* (new ed.) II By reason of their continuall wars they are very valient, bold, and of great experiences.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1623) II. iv. 67 His yeares but yong, but his experience old.
- 1702 *Clarendon's Hist. Rebellion* I. i. 38 Observations, and Reflections; out of which, that, which is commonly call'd Experience, is constituted.
- 1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 98. ¶2 You are stricken in Years, and have had great Experience in the World.
- 1735 VISCT. BOLINGBROKE *Diss. upon Parties* (ed. 2) 2 There is need of..those Habits in Business, called Experience.
- 1770 E. BURKE *Corr.* (1844) I. 240 His experience in the world is but moderate.
- 1828 R. WHATELY *Elem. Rhetoric* II. §7 The authority derived from Experience.
- transf.*
- 1880 I. L. BIRD *Unbeaten Tracks Japan* I. 124 Making a difficult meal from a fowl of much experience.

COMPOUNDS

attrib.

experience philosophy *n.* experiential philosophy.

- 1859 J. S. MILL *Lett.* (1910) I. 225 The experience philosophy and the association psychology are getting up again.
- 1909 W. JAMES *Pluralistic Universe* 390 This is effectuation in the only shape in which, by a pure experience-philosophy, the whereabouts of it anywhere can be discussed.

experience school *n.* the school of empiricism.

- 1882 A. BAIN *James Mill* iii. 69 Mr. Ward has continued to uphold his peculiar tenets against the Experience-school.
- 1936 *Mind* 45 242 He holds (as some members of the 'experience-school' do) that feeling..is also a cognitive function.

experience table *n.* a table of mortality computed from the experience of one or more life-assurance companies.

- 1879 W. S. CHAMPNESS *Insur. Dict.* (1883) 106 The Experience Table is based on that of seventeen British Life Offices.

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