

# ac·ci·dent

S2 W2

/ˈæksɪd nt/

noun

## 1 by accident CHANCE/BY CHANCE

in a way that is not planned or intended

OPP

*I met her **quite by accident** (= completely by accident) .*

*The discovery was made almost by accident.*

*The pilot, **whether by accident or design** (= whether it was planned or not planned) , made the plane do a sharp turn.*

## 2 ACCIDENT[Countable] an event in which a car, train, plane etc is damaged and often someone is hurt:

*Over 70,000 people are seriously injured every year in road accidents.*

*The accident happened at the junction of Forest Road and Pine Walk.*

*a train accident*

## 3 ACCIDENT[Countable] a situation in which someone is injured or something is damaged without anyone intending them to be:

*Ken **had an accident** at work and had to go to hospital.*

*I'm sorry about breaking the vase – **it was an accident** (= I did not intend to do it) .*

**a climbing/skiing/hunting etc accident**

*He died in a climbing accident in the Himalayas.*

*She was injured in a **freak accident** (= an unusual accident) when a wall suddenly collapsed.*

*I had a **slight accident** with your coffee.*

*They lost their lives in a **tragic accident**.*

- 4** CHANCE/BY CHANCE[uncountable and countable] something that happens without anyone planning or intending it:

*My third baby was an accident.*

***It is no accident that** men fill most of the top jobs in nursing, while women remain on the lower grades.*

**an accident of birth/geography/history etc** (= an event or situation caused by chance)

- 5 accidents (will) happen** (spoken)

used to tell someone who has broken something that they should not worry that it has happened

- 6 an accident waiting to happen**

used about a situation in which an accident is likely to happen because no one is trying to prevent it:

*The boats are being left to drift; it's an accident waiting to happen.*

## COLLOCATIONS – Meaning 2 adjectives

a bad/serious accident *There's been a bad accident on the freeway.* |

*The road is closed following a serious accident.*

a major accident *News is coming in of a major rail accident.*

a horrible/nasty/horrific accident *We narrowly avoided a nasty accident.* |

*'This was an absolutely horrific accident,' said an ambulance spokesman.*

a fatal accident (= in which someone is killed) *a fatal accident involving a bus and a cyclist*

a minor accident (= one that is not serious) *The ice and poor visibility caused minor accidents all over the country.*

a road/traffic accident *The number of traffic accidents has gone down.* |

*Portugal has one of Western Europe's worst road accident rates.*

a car accident (also an automobile accident (AmE) (formal) ) *He was badly injured in a car accident.*

a plane accident/ an airplane accident (also a flying accident) *Holly died in a plane accident.*

a rail accident/ a train accident *It was the country's worst ever rail accident.*

a hit-and-run accident (= when someone is hit by a driver who does not stop) *A woman is fighting for her life after a hit-and-run accident.*

## verbs

have an accident *I had an accident on my way to work.*

be involved in an accident (formal:) *Your son has been involved in a car accident.*

prevent an accident *Steps have been taken to prevent a similar accident happening again.*

an accident happens (also an accident occurs (formal) ) *No one saw the accident happen.* |

*Most road accidents occur in urban areas.*

## accident + NOUN

an accident victim *One of the accident victims is still trapped in his vehicle.*

accident rates/ statistics *There is a relation between accident rates and the numbers of drivers on the road.* |  
*a survey of the latest airline accident statistics*

an accident investigation/ inquiry *The two deaths are the subject of an accident inquiry.* |  
*Accident investigations often take months.*

an accident investigator *Accident investigators have been there all morning.*

## phrases

the scene of an accident (= the place where it happened) *Police were at the scene of the accident within minutes.*

## COMMON ERRORS

⚠ Do not say 'a small accident'. Say *a minor accident*.

## THESAURUS

**accident** an event in which a vehicle is damaged and often someone is hurt: *Her father died in a car accident. | Hugh had an accident on his way to work.*

**crash** a serious accident in which a vehicle hits something else: *Rees-Jones was the only person to survive the crash. | a car/ plane/train crash | He was killed in a plane crash.*

**collision** an accident in which two or more cars, trains etc hit each other: *His car was involved in a collision with a train. |*

**a head-on collision** (= between vehicles that are driving towards each other): *The actor was killed in a head-on collision while driving his new sports car.*

**disaster** a serious accident involving a train, plane, or boat, in which a lot of people are killed or injured: *It was Britain's worst air disaster.*

**wreck** (*AmE*) an accident in which a car or train is badly damaged: *Ben nearly died in a car wreck.*

**pile-up** an accident that involves several cars or trucks: *The pile-up happened in thick fog. | There was a 12-car pile-up on the motorway.*

**fender-bender** (*AmE*) (informal) , **prang** (*BrE*) (informal)  
a car accident in which little damage is done: *Atkinson was involved in a fender-bender in the hotel parking lot. | At 15, he borrowed his parents' car and had a prang.*

## Word origin

**Date:** 1300–1400

**Language:** French

**Origin:** Latin *accidens* ‘additional quality, chance’, from *accidere* ‘to happen’, from *ad-* ‘to’ + *cadere* ‘to fall’

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*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

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