

breathe

S3 W3

/bri:ð/

verb

1 | air AIR[intransitive and transitive] BREATHE to take air into your lungs and send it out again:

The room filled with smoke, and it was becoming difficult to breathe.

People are concerned about the quality of the air they breathe.

*Relax and **breathe deeply** (= take in a lot of air) .*

2 | blow BLOW[intransitive and transitive] BREATHE to blow air or smoke out of your mouth:

breathe on

Roy breathed on his hands and rubbed them together vigorously.

breathe something over somebody

The fat man opposite was breathing garlic all over me.

3 somebody can breathe easy/easily RELAXED

used when saying that someone can relax because a worrying or dangerous situation has ended:

With stocks going up, investors can breathe easily.

4 breathe a sigh of relief COMFORT/MAKE SOMEBODY FEEL BETTER

to stop being worried or frightened about something:

Once the deadline passed, everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

5 be breathing down somebody's neck (informal) ATTENTION

to pay very close attention to what someone is doing, in a way that makes them feel nervous or annoyed:

How can I concentrate with you breathing down my neck all the time?

6 not breathe a word SECRET

to not tell anyone anything at all about something, because it is a secret:

Don't breathe a word; it's supposed to be a surprise.

7 breathe life into something EXCITED

to change a situation so that people feel more excited or interested:

Critics are hoping the young director can breathe new life into the French film industry.

8 | skin [intransitive] if your skin can breathe, air can reach it

9 | clothes/fabric [intransitive] if cloth or clothing breathes, air can pass through it so that your body feels pleasantly cool and dry

10 | wine WINE [intransitive] if you let wine breathe, you open the bottle to let the air get to it before you drink it

11 | say something quietly SAY SOMETHING QUIETLY [transitive] (written) SAY/STATE to say something very quietly, almost in a whisper:

'Wait,' he breathed.

12 breathe your last (breath) (literary) DIE
to die

13 breathe fire ANGRY
to talk and behave in a very angry way

→ **live and breathe something** AT LIVE¹ (19)

COLLOCATIONSense 1

adverbs

breathe deeply (= take long slow breaths of air) *She breathed deeply in the cool night air.*

breathe heavily/hard (= breathe loudly especially after exercise) *He'd been running and he was breathing hard.*

breathe fast/rapidly (= breathe quickly because of illness, fear etc) *He closed his eyes, breathing fast under the fever.*

breathe slowly *Breathe slowly and try to relax.*

breathe steadily/evenly *The baby was fast asleep and breathing steadily.*

breathe easily *Make sure the injured person can breathe easily.*

nouns

breathe some air/the air *It was wonderful to be outside and breathe some fresh air.*

breathe fumes *These children are breathing traffic fumes all day long.*

phrases

can hardly breathe *It was so hot that I felt as though I could hardly breathe.*

have trouble/difficulty breathing *In high altitudes some people have trouble breathing.*

struggle to breathe *The crowd pressed in around me and I struggled to breathe.*

THESAURUS

breathe [intransitive and transitive] to take air into your lungs and send it out again: *Mary knew he was asleep because he was breathing deeply.* | *He breathed the clear spring air.*

sigh to breathe out slowly and make a noise that shows you are disappointed, tired, RELIEVED etc: *She just sighed and shook her head.* | *'Never mind,' he sighed. 'I'm sure there'll be other opportunities.'*

pant to breathe quickly and noisily through your mouth, because you have been using a lot of effort: *They were panting by the time they got to the finish line.*

gasp to breathe very quickly and deeply and with difficulty: *Her eyes were wide, and she was gasping for breath.* | *'Do you think you can walk?' 'I'll try to,' he gasped.*

snore to breathe noisily while you are sleeping: *I couldn't sleep because my husband was snoring.*

wheeze to breathe with difficulty, making a noise in your throat and chest, because you are ill: *His asthma was making him wheeze.*

be out of breath to be unable to breathe easily, especially because you have been running or doing other exercise: *I was out of breath by the time we reached the top of the hill.*

be short of breath to be unable to breathe easily, especially because you are unhealthy: *Because she was so overweight, she was often short of breath.*

breathe in

phrasal verb

BREATHE to take air into your lungs → **inhale:**

The doctor made me breathe in while he listened to my chest.

breathe something ↔ in

Wyatt breathed in the cool ocean air.

breathe out

phrasal verb

BREATHE to send air out from your lungs → **exhale:**

Jim breathed out deeply.

breathe something ↔ out

Lauren lit up a cigarette, then breathed out a puff of smoke.

Word origin

Date: 1200–1300

Origin: *breath*

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

© Pearson Education Limited 2009, 2011, 2015