

Merriam-Webster

<

nebula

×

Q

☰

-

Hello,
Username
[Log In](#) [Sign Up](#)

- [Username](#)
 - [My Words](#)
 - [Recents](#)
 - [Settings](#)
 - [Log Out](#)
- [Games & Quizzes](#)
- [Thesaurus](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Word of the Day](#)
- [Shop](#)

- Join MWU
- More
 - Shop M-W Books ↗
 - Join MWU ↗
 - Log In
 - Username
 - My Words
 - Recents
 - Account
 - Log Out
- Settings
- My Words
- Recents
- Account
- Log Out

Est. 1828

Dictionary

- Definition
- Definition
- Did you know?
- Example Sentences
- Word History
- Phrases Containing
- Podcast
- Entries Near
- Cite this EntryCitation
- Share
- Kids DefinitionKids
- Medical DefinitionMedical
- More from M-W
- Show more
- Show more
 - Citation
 - Share
 - Kids
 - Medical
 - More from M-W
- Save Word
 - To save this word, you'll need to log in.
 - Log In



nebula

noun

neb·u·la 'ne-byə-lə plural nebulae 'ne-byə-lē - lī also nebulas

1

: any of numerous clouds of gas or dust in interstellar space

2

: galaxy sense 1b
especially : a galaxy other than the Milky Way galaxy

→

—not used technically

nebular

'ne-byə-lər

adjective



Did you know?

Nebula comes to us from Latin, where it means "mist" or "cloud." In its earliest English uses in the 1600s, *nebula* was chiefly a medical term that could refer either to a cloudy formation in urine or to a cloudy speck or film on the eye that caused vision problems. It was first applied to great interstellar clouds of gas and dust in the early 1700s. The adjective [nebulous](#) comes from the same Latin root as *nebula*, and it is considerably older, being first used as a synonym of [cloudy](#) or [foggy](#) as early as the 1300s. Like *nebula*, however, this adjective was not used in an astronomical sense until the mid-1600s.



Example Sentences

Recent Examples on the Web There are several episodes, for instance, where Picard, Riker, and Seven are on a starship being chased through a *nebula* by a relentless foe, one of several ideas borrowed from Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan. —Alan Sepinwall, *Rolling Stone*, 15 Feb. 2023 Published in the American Astronomical Society’s journal Research Notes, the team’s results are fascinating, even as clues to the *nebula*’s origins remain maddeningly vague. —Phil Plait, *Scientific American*, 12 Jan. 2023 Since then, the Webb telescope has sent back plenty of images, including of stars, planets and *nebula* and even galaxies millions of miles away. —Bymary Kekatos, *ABC News*, 24 Jan. 2023 [See More](#)

These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'nebula.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback](#).



Word History

Etymology

New Latin, from Latin, mist, cloud; akin to Old High German *nebul* fog, Greek *nephelē*, *nephos* cloud

First Known Use

1718, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Time Traveler

The first known use of *nebula* was in 1718

[See more words from the same year](#)



Phrases Containing *nebula*

- [planetary nebula](#)
- [planetary nebula](#)



Podcast

Theme music by Joshua Stamper ©2006 [New Jerusalem Music/ASCAP](#)

Get Word of the Day delivered to your inbox!

Sign Up 

Dictionary Entries Near *nebula*

[Nebuchadrezzar II](#)

nebula

[nebular hypothesis](#)

[See More Nearby Entries](#) >

Cite this Entry

Style


MLA 

“Nebula.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nebula>. Accessed 25 Feb. 2023.

 [Copy Citation](#)

Share

[Post the Definition of nebula to Facebook](#)  [Facebook](#)


[Share the Definition of nebula on Twitter](#)  [Twitter](#)

Kids Definition

nebula

noun

neb·u·la [ˈneb-yə-lə](#) 

plural nebulas or nebulae [-lə](#) 

-, lī

1

: any of many huge clouds of gas or dust in deep space

2

: [galaxy sense 2](#)

nebular




[-lə](#) 

adjective

Medical Definition

nebula

noun

neb·u·la ['neb-yə-lə](#) 
plural nebulas or nebulae [-lə](#)  - [-lī](#) 
: a slight cloudy opacity of the cornea

More from Merriam-Webster on *nebula*

Nglish: [Translation of *nebula* for Spanish Speakers](#)

Britannica.com: [Encyclopedia article about *nebula*](#)

Last Updated: 18 Feb 2023 - Updated example sentences

Love words? Need even more definitions?

Subscribe to America's largest dictionary and get thousands more definitions and advanced search—ad free!

MERRIAM-WEBSTER UNABRIDGED



Can you solve 4 words at once?

[Play](#) [Play](#)

Can you solve 4 words at once?

[Play](#) [Play](#)



WORD OF THE DAY

nurture 

[See Definitions and Examples »](#)

Get Word of the Day daily email!

Your email address

SUBSCRIBE

WORDS AT PLAY

'Apricity' and Other Rare Wintry Words

'Hiemal,' 'brumation,' & other rare wintry words

-

'Complement' vs. 'Compliment'

The distinction between the two is clear (now).

-

8 Words for Introverts

Don't be surprised if none of them want the spotl...

-

When Were Words First Used?

Look up any year to find out

-

ASK THE EDITORS

Weird Plurals

One goose, two geese. One moose,
two... moose. Wh...

-

Irregardless

It is in fact a real word (but that
doesn't mean ...

-

Bring vs. Take

Both words imply motion, but the
difference may b...

-

Defenestration

The fascinating story behind many
people's favori...

-

WORD GAMES

Name That Animal: Volume 3

Who's who of the zoo crew

-

TAKE THE QUIZ

Love It or Hate It

Prove you've got a passion for
words.

-

TAKE THE QUIZ

Name That Thing

You know what it looks like... but
what is it cal...

-

TAKE THE QUIZ

Spelling Bee Quiz

Can you outdo past winners of the
National Spelli...

-

TAKE THE QUIZ

OTHER MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARIES

- [MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY](#)
- [SCRABBLE® WORD FINDER](#)
- [MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY API](#)
- [ENGLISH - SPANISH-ENGLISH TRANSLATION](#)
- [BRITANNICA ENGLISH - ARABIC TRANSLATION](#)

FOLLOW US

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)

Browse the Dictionary: [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#) [0-9](#) [BIO](#) [GEO](#)

[Home](#) | [Help](#) | [About Us](#) | [Shop](#) | [Advertising Info](#) | [Dictionary API](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Join MWU](#) | [Videos](#) | [Word of the Year](#) | [Kid's Dictionary](#) | [Law Dictionary](#) | [Medical Dictionary](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

[Browse the Thesaurus](#) | [Browse the Medical Dictionary](#) | [Browse the Legal Dictionary](#) | [Browse the Kid's Dictionary](#)