

distal adjective

dis·tal ('di-stəl )

- 1 **anatomy** : situated away from the point of attachment or origin or a central point especially of the body

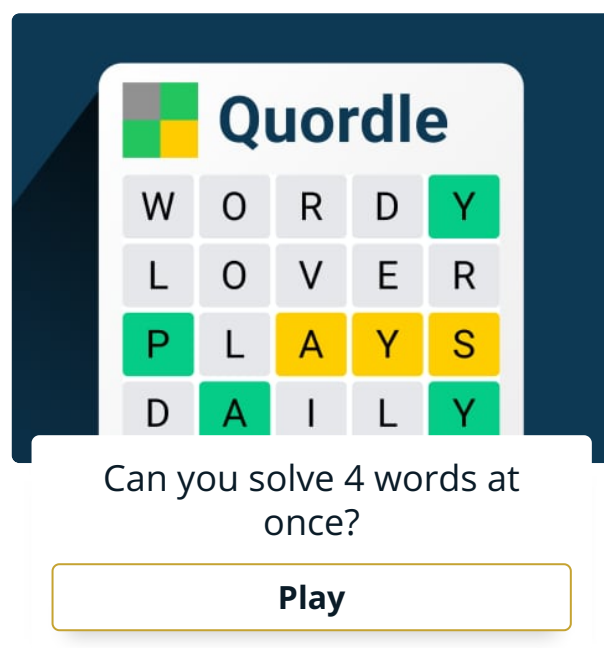
→ compare [PROXIMAL](#)

the *distal* ends of the tibia and fibula


- 2 **dentistry** : of, relating to, or being the surface of a tooth that is next to the tooth behind it or that is farthest from the middle of the front of the jaw

→ compare [MESIAL sense 2](#)

('di-stəl-ē ) **adverb**



Recent Examples on the Web

 Examples are automatically compiled from online sources to show current usage. [Read More](#)

Examining the skeletons in the pit, Valenzuela found that most of the thrush bones were skulls, breastbones and ***distal*** bones of wings and legs.

House are the proximate cause, the **distal** cause of the present circumstance is an erosion of public trust in higher education.

– Mark Robison, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 7 May 2025

The prostate cancer stops responding to hormone therapy and has spread via the bloodstream or lymph nodes to **distal** parts of the body, like the bones, liver, lungs, or brain.

– Matthew Wosnitzer, *Verywell Health*, 12 May 2025

The Celtics listed Tatum as doubtful for Game 2 of their first-round playoff series against the Magic with a right **distal** radius bone bruise in his wrist.

– Zack Cox, *Boston Herald*, 22 Apr. 2025

[See All Example Sentences for *distal*](#)

WORD OF THE DAY

contentious 

[See Definitions and Examples »](#)

Get Word of the Day daily email!

Your email add [SUBSCRIBE](#)

Etymology

distant + *-al*

First Known Use

1803, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Time Traveler

distal convoluted
tubule

pistil pistol

polycrystal

See All Rhymes for *distal*

distain **distal**
distal convoluted tubule

See All Nearby Words

ssed 5 Aug. 2025.

 Copy Citation



distal adjective

dis·tal 'dis-təl 

- 1** : situated away from the point of attachment or origin or a central point:
as
- a** : located away from the center of the body
the *distal* end of a bone
→ compare [PROXIMAL sense 1a](#)
- b** : located away from the mesial plane of the body
→ compare [MESIAL sense 2](#)
- c** : of, relating to, or being the surface of a tooth that is next to the following tooth counting from the middle of the front of the upper or lower jaw or that faces the back of the mouth in the case of the last

2 : physical or social rather than sensory
→ compare [PROXIMAL sense 2](#)

-ē  **adverb**

Last Updated: 28 Jul 2025 - 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

[See More](#)

How to Use Em Dashes (—), En Dashes (–), and Hyphens (-)

'Affect' vs. 'Effect'

Using Bullet Points (•)

The Difference Between 'i.e.' and 'e.g.'

Democracy or Republic: What's the difference?

**Our Best
Historical
Slang Terms**

**12 Lovely
and Unusual
Words for
the Natural
World**

**Better Ways
to Say 'This
Sucks'**

**8 Words with
Fascinating
Histories**

**'Za' and 9
Other Words
to Help You
Win at
SCRABBLE**

[See All](#)

Quordle

Can you solve 4
words at once?

Play

Blossom

Pick the best
words!

Play

Missing Letter

A daily
crossword with
a twist

Play

Quiz: Abbreviation Station

TFW you have to
figure out what
15 abbreviations

...

**Take the
quiz**

**Learn a new word every day.
Delivered to your inbox!**

Your email address

SUBSCRIBE



Dictionary

Thesaurus

© 2025 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated