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vulnerable

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vul·ner·a·ble | \ ˈvəl-n(ə-)rə-bəl [How to pronounce vulnerable (audio)](#) , ˈvəl-nər-bəl \

Definition of *vulnerable*

1 **:** capable of being physically or emotionally wounded
2 **:** open to attack or damage **:** [assailable](#) vulnerable to criticism
3 **:** liable to increased penalties but entitled to increased bonuses after winning a game in contract bridge

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vulnerably \ ˈvəl-n(ə-)rə-blē How to pronounce vulnerable (audio) , ˈvəl-nər-blē \ adverb

Synonyms & Antonyms for *vulnerable*

Synonyms

- endangered,
- exposed,
- liable,
- open,
- sensitive,
- subject (to),
- susceptible

Antonyms

- insusceptible,
- invulnerable,
- unexposed,
- unsusceptible

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The History of Vulnerable

Vulnerable is ultimately derived from the Latin noun *vulnus* ("wound"). "Vulnus" led to the Latin verb *vulnerare,* meaning "to wound," and then to the Late Latin adjective *vulnerabilis,* which became "vulnerable" in English in the early 1600s. "Vulnerable" originally meant "capable of being physically wounded" or "having the power to wound" (the latter is now obsolete), but since the late 1600s, it has also been used figuratively to suggest a defenselessness against non-physical attacks. In other words, someone (or something) can be vulnerable to criticism or failure as well as to literal wounding. When it is used figuratively, "vulnerable" is often followed by the preposition "to."

Examples of *vulnerable* in a Sentence

He was very *vulnerable* after his divorce. The troops were in a *vulnerable* position.
See More
Recent Examples on the Web Even more troublingly, the company has been accused of removing counterspeech against terrorist groups—speech that comes from some of the most local and *vulnerable* communities. — Jillian C. York, *CNN,*

19 Aug. 2021 But Penyak lives with her grandparents, who are in their 70s and more medically *vulnerable*. — Zaz Hollander, *Anchorage Daily News*, 19 Aug. 2021

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First Known Use of *vulnerable*

circa 1616, in the meaning defined at sense 1

History and Etymology for *vulnerable*

Late Latin *vulnerabilis*, from Latin *vulnerare* to wound, from *vulner-, vulnus* wound; probably akin to Latin *vellere* to pluck, Greek *oulē* wound

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Time Traveler

The first known use of *vulnerable* was circa 1616

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Merriam-Webster's Word of the Day
vulnerable

Merriam-Webster's Word of the Day for April 16, 2018 is:

vulnerable \VUL-nuh-ruh-bul\ adjective

1 : capable of being physically or emotionally wounded

2 : open to attack or damage : assailable

Examples:

The article reminds readers to install the latest antivirus software on their computers so that they will not be vulnerable to malware and viruses.

"Updated flood maps would give property owners an accurate picture of how vulnerable their property is to flooding and would help them take the appropriate measures to prepare for future storms." — Steve Ellis, Asbury Park (New Jersey) Press, 15 Mar. 2018

Did you know?

Vulnerable is ultimately derived from the Latin noun vulnus ("wound"). Vulnus led to the Latin verb vulnerare, meaning "to wound," and then to the Late Latin adjective vulnerabilis, which became vulnerable in English in the early 1600s. Vulnerable originally meant "capable of being physically wounded" or "having the power to wound" (the latter is now obsolete), but since the late 1600s, it has also been used figuratively to suggest a defenselessness against non-physical attacks. In other words, someone (or something) can be vulnerable to criticism or failure as well as to literal wounding. When it is used figuratively, vulnerable is often followed by the preposition to.

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More Definitions for *vulnerable*

vulnerable

adjective
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English Language Learners Definition of *vulnerable*

: easily hurt or harmed physically, mentally, or emotionally

: open to attack, harm, or damage

See the full definition for *vulnerable* in the English Language Learners Dictionary

vulnerable

adjective
vul·ner·a·ble | \ ˈvəl-nə-rə-bəl How to pronounce vulnerable (audio) \

Kids Definition of *vulnerable*

1 **:** capable of being easily hurt or injured The patient is *vulnerable* to infection.
2 **:** open to attack or damage The troops were in a *vulnerable* position.

vulnerable

adjective
vul·ner·a·ble | \ ˈvəln-(ə-)rə-bəl, ˈvəl-nər-bəl How to pronounce vulnerable (audio) \

Medical Definition of *vulnerable*

: capable of being hurt **:** susceptible to injury or disease the liver is itself vulnerable to nutritional impairment — *Journal of the American Medical Association*

Other Words from *vulnerable*

vulnerability \ ˌvəln-(ə-)rə-ˈbil-ət-ē How to pronounce vulnerable (audio) \ noun, plural vulnerabilities

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