

**illuminate** Video pronunciation English: illuminate American: illuminate illuminate Example sentence ▸

**Definition of 'illuminate'**

**illuminate**  
Collins COBUILD

Word Frequency ●●●●●

(ɪˈluːmɪneɪt) (I)

**Word forms:** 3rd person singular present tense **illuminates** (V), present participle **illuminating** (V), past tense, past participle **illuminated** (V)

**1. VERB**

To **illuminate** something means to shine light on it and to make it brighter and more visible.

[*formal*]

No streetlights **illuminated** the street. [VERB noun] (V)

The black sky was **illuminated** by forked lightning. [VERB noun] (V)

**Synonyms:** light up, light, brighten, irradiate [More Synonyms of illuminate](#)

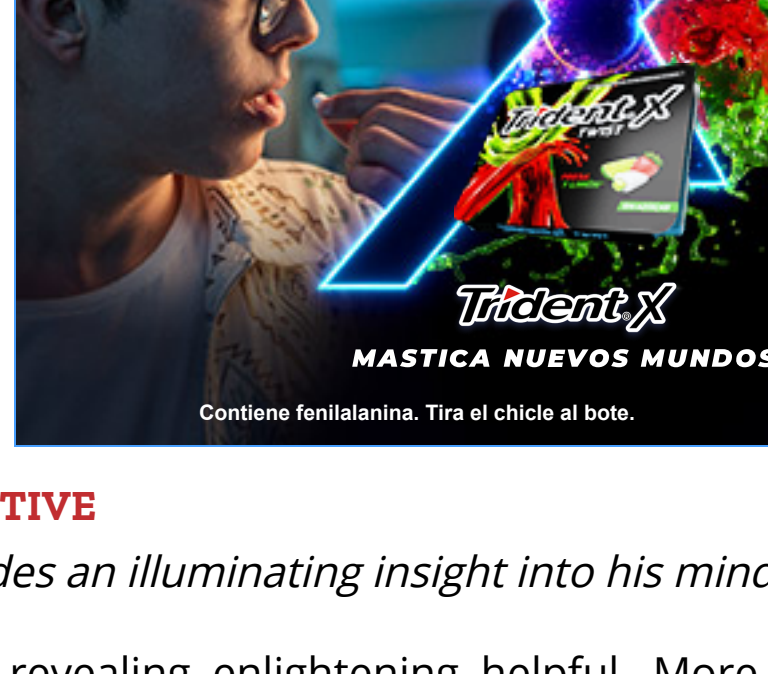
**2. VERB**

If you **illuminate** something that is unclear or difficult to understand, you make it clearer by explaining it carefully or giving information about it.

[*formal*]

They use games and drawings to **illuminate** their subject. [VERB noun] (V)

**Synonyms:** explain, interpret, make clear, clarify [More Synonyms of illuminate](#)



**illuminating** (ADJECTIVE)

His autobiography provides an **illuminating** insight into his mind. (A)

**Synonyms:** informative, revealing, enlightening, helpful [More Synonyms of illuminate](#)

More Synonyms of **illuminate**

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**Wordle Helper**

Stuck at Wordle? Try our helper to maintain your current streak!

**Quick Word Challenge**

Question: 1 - Score: 0 / 5

**hour or our?**

Drag the correct answer into the box.

our hour

I only slept for an [ ] that night.

NEXT



**Video: pronunciation of illuminate**

**You may also like**

ngisn Quiz synonyms or

**illuminate** Word Frequency ●●●●●

**in British English**

**VERB**

(ɪˈluːmɪˌneɪt) (I)

- (transitive) to throw light in or into; light up  
to illuminate a room
- (transitive) to make easily understood; clarify
- to adorn, decorate, or be decorated with lights
- (transitive) to decorate (a letter, page, etc) by the application of colours, gold, or silver
- (intransitive) to become lighted up

**ADJECTIVE**

(ɪˈluːmɪnt) (I), (-neɪt) (I)

- archaic made clear or bright with light; illuminated

**NOUN**

(ɪˈluːmɪnt) (I), (-neɪt) (I)

- a person who has or claims to have special enlightenment

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**Derived forms**

**illuminative** (ɪˈlʊmɪnətɪv) **ADJECTIVE**

**illuminator** (ɪˈlʊmɪˌneɪtər) **NOUN**

**Word origin**

C16: from Latin *illuminare* to light up, from *lumen* light

**illuminate** Word Frequency ●●●●●

**in American English**

(ɪˈluːmɪˌneɪt) (I)

**VERB TRANSITIVE**

**Word forms:** **illuminated** or **illuminating**

- to give light to; light up
  - to brighten; animate
- to make clear; explain; elucidate
  - to inform; instruct; enlighten
  - to make illustrious, glorious, or famous
  - to decorate with lights
- to decorate (an initial letter or word) with designs, tracings, etc. of gold, silver, or bright colors
  - to decorate (a manuscript, page border, etc.) with such initial letters, miniature pictures, etc.

**ADJECTIVE**

- make bright with light
- enlightened in mind or spirit

**NOUN**

- archaic a person who has or claims to have special knowledge

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**Derived forms**

**illuminable** (ɪˈlʊmɪnəbəl) **ADJECTIVE**

**Word origin**

< L *illuminatus*, pp. of *illuminare*, to light up < *in-*, in + *luminare*, to light < *lumen* (gen. *luminis*), a light < IE \**leuksmen* < base \**leuk-*: see *illustrate*

**illuminate** Word Frequency ●●●●●

**in American English**

(verb) ɪˈluːməˌneɪt, adjective & noun ɪˈluːməˌneɪt, (-neɪt) (verb -nated, -nating)

**TRANSITIVE VERB**

- to supply or brighten with light; light up
- to make lucid or clear; throw light on (a subject)
- to decorate with lights, as in celebration
- to enlighten, as with knowledge
- to make resplendent or illustrious  
*A smile illuminated her face*
- to decorate (a manuscript, book, etc.) with colors and gold or silver, as was often done in the Middle Ages

**INTRANSITIVE VERB**

- to display lights, as in celebration
- to become illuminated

**ADJECTIVE**

- archaic illuminated
- obsolete enlightened

**NOUN**

- archaic a person who is or affects to be specially enlightened

**SYNONYMS**

- clarify, explain, elucidate.

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**Derived forms**

**illuminatingly** **ADVERB**

**Word origin**

[1400–50; late ME < L *illuminatus* (ptp. of *illuminare* to light up, brighten). See *illumine*, *-ate*¹]

**Examples of 'illuminate' in a sentence**

**illuminate**

▲ These examples have been automatically selected and may contain sensitive content that does not reflect the opinions or policies of Collins, or its parent company HarperCollins. We welcome feedback: report an example sentence to the Collins team. Read more...

There was just enough dawn light to illuminate the retreating skin of water that shadowed each dead wave.  
**TRENHALLE, JOHN A MEANS TO EVIL** (20...)

He struck a match, and held it at arm's length flickering and guttering, trying to illuminate the space he was in.  
**HARVEY, JOHN THE LEGEND OF CAPITAL**...

Then he picked up the Grail, holding the torch to illuminate it, looking at it properly now.  
**AMANDA HEMINGWAY THE GREENSTONE**...

He could see the faint glow of white as the moon gathered its energy to rise and illuminate the night.  
**JAMES W. HUSTON FLASH POINT** (2004)

**COBUILD Collocations**

**illuminate**

illuminate a path  
illuminate the sky  
light illuminates  
sun illuminates

**Trends of illuminate**

View usage for: [All Years] (I)

**In other languages**

**illuminate**

British English: illuminate (V) verb /ɪˈluːmɪneɪt/  
To *illuminate* something means to shine light on it and to make it brighter and more visible.  
*No streetlights illuminated the street.*

American English: illuminate (V) /ɪˈlʊmɪneɪt/  
Brazilian Portuguese: iluminar (V)  
Chinese: 照亮  
European Spanish: iluminar (V)  
French: éclairer (V)  
German: beleuchten (V)

Italian: illuminare (V)  
Japanese: 照らす光る  
Korean: 조명하다  
European Portuguese: iluminar (V)  
Latin American Spanish: iluminar (V)  
Thai: โต้ความสว่าง

Translate your text for free

**Browse alphabetically**

**illuminate**

illuminable  
illuminate  
illuminate  
illuminate  
illuminate  
illuminate a face  
illuminate a path  
illuminate the darkness

**Related terms of illuminate**

illuminate a face  
illuminate a path  
illuminate the sky  
illuminate the darkness

All ENGLISH words that begin with 'I'

Source

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**Quick Word Challenge**

Question: 1 - Score: 0 / 5

**pair or pear?**

Drag the correct answer into the box.

pair pear

Throw me over a [ ] of socks.

NEXT

May 20, 2022

**Word of the day**

**walking**

Walking is the activity of taking walks for exercise or pleasure, especially in the country.

SEE FULL DEFINITION  
SEE PREVIOUS WORDS