

# feeling, n.

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**Pronunciation:** Brit. ▶ /'fi:lɪŋ/, U.S. ▶ /'fi:lɪŋ/

**Forms:** see [FEEL v.](#) and [-ING suffix¹](#); also *Irish English (Wexford)* 17 **feelen**, 18 **feeleen**.

**Frequency (in current use):** ●●●●●●●●

**Origin:** Formed within English, by derivation. **Etymons:** [FEEL v.](#), [-ING suffix¹](#).

**Etymology:** < [FEEL v.](#) + [-ING suffix¹](#).

## I. Senses relating to sensation or touch.

### 1.

**a.** The capacity to experience the sense of touch or other bodily sensations (as of heat, cold, pain, motion, etc.); physical sensation other than sight, hearing, taste, or smell.

[Thesaurus »](#)

- a1225 *MS Lamb* in R. Morris *Old Eng. Homilies* (1868) 1st Ser. 75 Hore blawing, hore smelling, heore feeling wes al iattret.
- c1225 ( ?c1200) *Hali Meidhad* (Bodl.) (1940) 169 Hire fif wittes, Sihõe & herunge, smechunge & smellunge, & euch limes felunge.
- a1398 J. TREVISA tr. Bartholomaeus Anglicus *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (BL Add. 27944) (1975) I. iii. ix. 98 Þe spirit of feelinge is ihilde and ischad into al þe body.
- ?a1450 J. ARDERNE in *17th Internat. Congr. Med.* (1914) xxiii. 111 (*MED*) There was a wommane that sodeynly loste the feelynge & movyng of bothe armys in the nyghte.
- c1460 ( a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Laud) l. 17018 Heryng, speche, sight, smellyng & felyng are wyttes v.
- 1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) 2 Kings iv. 31 There was nether voyce ner felynge.
- 1576 T. NEWTON tr. L. Lemnie *Touchstone of Complexions* i. viii. f. 61 Some do so astonne the lymmes of them, that touche them, that they haue no feelinge..a good whyle after.
- 1601 P. HOLLAND tr. Pliny *Hist. World* I. x. lxxi. 306 There is not a living creature..but hath the sence of feeling, although it have none else.
- 1669 A. BROWNE *Ars Pictoria* (1675) 65 Finally by the feeling, we touch cold and hot, moist and dry.
- Loading [MathJax]/extensions/MathZoom.js or No. 411. ¶1 The Sense of Feeling can indeed give us a Notion of..Shape.
- 1727 A. HAMILTON *New Acct. E. Indies* II. xli. 109 The Elephant would find out the Gold among the Lead, by the nice Feeling of his Proboscis.
- 1789 G. WHITE *Nat. Hist. Selborne* xi. 146 Anatomists say that rooks..have a more delicate feeling in their beaks than other round-billed birds.
- 1828 J. STARK *Elements Nat. Hist.* I. 30 A hoof..blunts the feeling, and renders the foot incapable of seizing.
- 1871 R. ELLIS tr. Catullus *Poems* lxiv. 189 Yet from grief-worn limbs shall feeling wholly depart not.
- 1919 *Science* 7 Mar. 238/1 He is devoid of powers of olfaction, though possessing a sense of feeling in certain regions of the nasal epithelium.
- 1943 T. KITCHING *Diary* 9 Apr. in *Life & Death in Changi* (1998) x. 219 Barron's circulation is all to blazes and he has no feeling in his feet.

This entry has been updated (OED Third Edition, September 2015).

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Previous version:  
[OED2 \(1989\)](#)

### In this entry:

- feeling attitude
- feeling state
- feeling tone
- have a feeling for, to
- have feelings for, to
- hurt a person's feelings, to
- hurt the feelings of, to
- in (the) feeling
- relieve one's feelings, to

### In other dictionaries:

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### Jump to:

Entry	Date
feel, n.	a1400
feel, v.	eOE
feelable, adj.	c1443
feelably, adv.	?a1475
feel-bad, adj.	1875
feeler, n.	1435
feeless, adj.	1604
feel-good, n. and adj.	1849
feelie, n.	1931
<b>feeling, n.</b>	<b>a1225</b>
feeling, adj.	a1400
feelingful, adj.	1848
feelingless, adj.	a1658
feelingly, adv.	a1382
feelingness, n.	1611
feelless, adj.	1684
feelsome, adj.	a1450
fealthy, adj.	1930
feeman, n.	1509
feer, n.1	?c1225

2014 *Daily Tel.* (Nexis) 16 May 29 His thigh was cold to the touch and appeared to have lost all feeling.

(Hide quotations)

**b.** A physical sensation or perception (as of touch, heat, cold, pain, motion, etc.) experienced through this capacity. Thesaurus »

- c1425 J. WYCLIF *Sel. Eng. Wks.* (1871) II. 10 (MED) And wip þis felyng of þis womman, God 3af hir witt to prophecie þus.
- 1528 T. PAYNELL tr. Arnaldus de Villa Nova in Joannes de Mediolano *Regimen Sanitatis Salerni* sig. a<sup>v</sup> The vertue of the henbane taketh away the felynge of the payne.
- 1587 SIR P. SIDNEY & A. GOLDING tr. P. de Mornay *Trewnesse Christian Relig.* i. 7 Sounds, Sents, Sauors and Feelings.
- 1614 W. RALEIGH *Hist. World* I. I. iii. §7. 45 The aire is so thinne..that it is not sufficient to beare vp the body of a bird, hauing therein no feeling of her wings.
- 1688 R. HOLME *Acad. Armory* II. 387/2 A Flamation, or Flamatiuous feeling; as the pain of burning and scalding.
- 1702 J. PURCELL *Treat. Vapours* iii. 68 The Crudities..irritate the Nerves of those Parts with such a Motion, as causes a feeling of Cold all the way they go up the Back.
- 1785 T. REID *Ess. Intellect. Powers* II. xiv. 214 A kind of feeling, or immediate perception of things present, and in contact with the percipient.
- 1805 *Med. & Physical Jrnl.* 14 242 It is often difficult..to describe on paper every feeling and appearance we notice.
- 1846 W. B. CARPENTER *Man. Physiol.* xiii. 540 A feeling of some of the corporeal changes taking place within themselves.
- 1884 B. BOSANQUET et al. tr. H. Lotze *Metaphysic* 524 That feeling which instructs us respecting the position, the movement, and the amount of exertion of our limbs.
- 1920 *Bedford (Pa.) Gaz.* 4 June 7/1 (advt.) That balloony feeling after meals will quickly disappear if you swallow a few Dill's Digesters.
- 1974 *Jrnl. Clin. Pharmacol.* 14 109/2 Subjects who had received the higher dose of triazolam had a greater feeling of drowsiness the following day.
- 2014 *Burton (Staffs.) Mail* (Nexis) 2 June A lack of potassium in your system can cause feelings of nausea.


(Hide quotations)

## 2.

**a.** The action of experiencing a sensation in response to a (physical or mental) stimulus; the action of touching or exploring something with the hands.

In figurative uses sometimes difficult to distinguish from uses at branch II.

- c1225 ( ?c1200) *Hali Meiðhad* (Bodl.) (1940) l. 222 Þe feorðe fulst to bismere, & to merren meiðhad, þet is unhende felunge..for 3ef 3e þenne hondlið ow in ei stude untuliche, þenne smit leccherie o þe mihte of meiðhad.
- ?c1225 ( ?a1200) *Ancrene Riwele* (Cleo. C.vi) (1972) 92 Handlung oðer ei felunge bi tweone mon & ancre is þing swa uncundelich.
- a1400 tr. Lanfranc *Sci. Chirurgie* (Ashm.) (1894) 140 In þis ben yuel signes..crampe, to schite wipoute felynge, & vnmouablete of alle þe membris.
- c1475 ( 1392) *Surg. Treat.* in *MS Wellcome* 564 f. 21<sup>v</sup> (MED) The brayn..official it is seid, ffor it haþ þe office of felynge and stiryng.
- ?1565 R. FILLS tr. T. de Bèze *Briefe Summe Christian Faith* (new ed.) vii. f. 145 Concerninge the contrition of the harte, wee know that the verye true amendment of a Christian, must beginne by the feelyng of his synnes.

- 1611 *Bible* (King James) Eph. iv. 19 Who being past feeling haue giuen themselves ouer vnto lasciuiousnesse. 
- 1674 N. FAIRFAX *Treat. Bulk & Selvedge* 48 The knowledge of heat that we have from the feeling of it, is far more off from the right knowledge of it, or such as may likeliest become God, than [etc.].
- 1742 *Philos. Trans.* (Royal Soc.) 42 264 The famous Statuary Ganibasius..could by Feeling make a Statue in Clay.
- 1791 J. BOSWELL *Life Johnson* anno 1752 I. 127 Love is not a subject of reasoning, but of feeling.
- 1805 *Med. & Physical Jrnl.* 14 14 From the first feeling of a febrile attack.
- 1833 *Regulations Instr. Cavalry* i. ii. 47 *Rein back*—A light feeling of both reins.
- 1875 *Jrnl. Anthropol. Inst.* 4 66 Man's sensation of colour, his hearing of sounds, his smelling of smells, his tasting of tastes, and his feeling of the shapes of things.
- 1906 S. S. LAURIE *Synthetica* I. 18 The feeling of an object by a subject-being or entity.
- 1956 H. MERRICK tr. H. Buhl *Nanga Parbat Pilgrimage* 36 No pulling or propping, no violent 'heave-ho!', but a cautious feeling of the way upwards, often made more difficult by vertical stratification.
- 2005 *Yorks. Post* (Nexis) 14 Mar. Behaviour which..would bring a swift feeling of the collar and an appearance before magistrates.

(Hide quotations)

**b.** With *out*. The action of testing or finding out by careful investigation or observation; the sounding out of a person's intentions, strength, etc. Cf. *to feel out at FEEL V*.

**Phrasal verbs.**


- 1923 *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 21 Nov. 167/1 It [sc. the completion of a pass] marked the end of the feeling-out process for Yale.
- 1926 H. J. LASKI *Let.* 2 May (1953) II. 838 The acute pleasure that the feeling-out of other minds gives one.
- 1964 E. L. BROWN *Newer Dimensions in Patient Care* III. viii. 148 The hospital is too busy a place to use the 'feeling out' process if it can be avoided.
- 1994 *Vanity Fair* Feb. 135/2 Redstone made a feeling-out phone call to Diller at the Waldorf.

(Hide quotations)


**II.** Senses relating to emotion, sentiment, or mental sensitivity or awareness.

**3.** Capacity or readiness to feel emotion, esp. sympathy or empathy; susceptibility to emotional or aesthetic influences; sensibility.

**Thesaurus »**

- ?c1400 ( c1380) G. CHAUCER tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* (BL Add. 10340) (1868) II. pr. iv. l. 1084 Euery weleful man haþ a wel delicat felyng. So þat but yif alle þinges fallen at hys owen wille..an-oone he is þrowe adoune.
- c1405 ( c1395) G. CHAUCER *Wife of Bath's Tale* (Ellesmere) (1872) l. 610 Ffor certes I am al Venerien In feelynge and myn herte is Marcien.
- ?1533 G. DU WES *Introductorie for to lerne Frenche* sig. Sii Grose folke of rude affection Dronkerdes, banysshed of trewe felyng.
- 1598 W. SHAKESPEARE *Love's Labour's Lost* IV. ii. 29 We thankful should be: which we taste, and feeling, are for those partes that doe fructifie in vs more then he. 
- 1600 E. BLOUNT tr. G. F. di Conestaggio *Hist. Uniting Portugall to Castill* 44 Who if he had any feeling of a man, should [etc.].
- 1622 F. BACON *Hist. Raigne Henry VII* 33 Their king..out of a Princely feeling, was sparing, and compassionate towards his Subjects.
- 1731 J. SWIFT *Let.* 10 Sept. in *Wks.* (1843) II. 659/2 She has..not one grain of

## feeling.


- 1741 D. HUME *Ess. Moral & Polit.* I. i. 3 The delicacy of his Feeling or Sentiments makes him be touched very sensibly by every Part of it.
- 1801 M. EDGEWORTH *Forester in Moral Tales* I. 175 He thinks I have no feeling.
- 1811 J. AUSTEN *Sense & Sensibility* I. xv. 190 Is he not a man of honour and feeling? 
- 1849 J. RUSKIN *Seven Lamps Archit.* ii. 49 A woman of feeling would not wear false jewels.
- 1918 M. F. PEIRCE *New York* I. viii. 61 If you had any feeling I should think you would *wish* her to be with me for the next few months.
- 1983 *Wilson Q.* 7 141 Romantics..portrayed Mozart as an otherworldly spirit, a creature of exquisite feeling.
- 2009 *Birmingham Evening Mail* (Nexis) 13 Mar. 70 They are devoid of feeling and humanity..and must be hunted down and severely punished.

(Hide quotations)

## 4.

**a.** The condition of being emotionally affected or committed; emotion, sentiment; an instance of this, an emotion (*of* hope, joy, sorrow, etc.).

Thesaurus »

- α1413 ( c1385) G. CHAUCER *Troilus & Criseyde* (Pierpont Morgan) (1882) III. l. 1090 The felyng of his sorwe or of his fere, Or of ought elles, fled was out of towne. And doun he fel al sodeynly a swowne.
- α1425 ( c1340) R. ROLLE *Psalter* (Laud) (1884) cxxx. 3 (MED) If i had not meke felyng..bot i heghid my soul in pride.
- α1450 ( 1369) G. CHAUCER *Bk. Duchess* (Tanner 346) (1871) l. 1172 Algatis songes thus I made Of my felynge myn herte to glade.
- 1532 ( c1385) *Usk's Test. Love* in W. W. Skeat *Chaucerian & Other Pieces* (1897) 9 All my passions and felinges weren lost.
- 1571 A. GOLDING tr. J. Calvin *Psalmes of David with Comm.* (xxxv. 12) They lawgh in their sleeve, which content themselves with the secret feeling of their owne joy.
- 1600 J. PORY tr. J. Leo Africanus *Geogr. Hist. Afr.* II. 392 The which with great feeling, and contentment having understood..he instituted a Synod.
- 1639 N. N. tr. J. Du Bosc *Compl. Woman* II. 13 Separation is so often made without any feeling.
- 1678 S. BUTLER *Hudibras: Third Pt.* III. ii. 191 Fear that keeps all feeling, out, As lesser pains are, by the Gout.
- 1764 J. YOUNG *Serm. Var. Pract. Subj.* I. x. 164 All the painful feelings of fear, anxiety, and despair.
- 1772 R. HURD in A. Cowley *Select Wks.* II. 176 The poet, as usual, expresses his own feeling.
- 1781 J. MOORE *View Society & Manners Italy* I. xiv. 157 Every compunctious feeling of the heart is sacrificed.
- 1814 W. SCOTT *Waverley* III. xiv. 189 Feelings more easily conceived than described. 
- 1839 T. BEALE *Nat. Hist. Sperm Whale* 281 From that moment a feeling of hopelessness ran through us.
- 1877 E. R. CONDER *Basis of Faith* i. 13 Religious feelings differ from other feelings by their nature and by their object.
- 1915 *Fortnightly* Apr. 866 Many..are apparently intended to create a feeling of shame in the minds of unrecruited young men.
- 1947 J. O. BAILEY *Pilgrims through Time & Space* 318 If art is only the impassioned expression of powerful feeling..it does not include scientific fiction.
- 1987 K. LETTE *Girls' Night Out* (1989) 109 'He's a bad egg,' she said with feeling.
- 2010 C. WOODING *Black Lung Captain* xx. 236 He'd forgotten the sad gray feeling that had settled on him lately.

(Hide quotations)

**b.** In *plural*. A person's emotions or sympathies considered collectively; the emotional susceptibilities or tendencies of a person's character. Cf. *to hurt a person's feelings* at Phrases 2.

Thesaurus »


- 1530 *Myroure Oure Ladye* (Fawkes) (1873) 155 For we haue oure wylle free. but not oure felynges..And therfore oure mercyfull lorde takyth vs not after oure felynges but after oure wylles.
- 1640 J. D. *Knave in Graine* iv. i. sig. K Here my grieffe so parches me, that it does paine me to relate my woes, and make my feelings knowne.
- 1693 A. MONRO *Serm. Several Occasions* 283 He rejoices in the midst of his sorrows, to sacrifice his feelings and infirmities to the Conduct and Wisdom of God.
- 1771 E. GRIFFITH tr. 'P. Viaud' *Shipwreck* 4 They need none of these heightenings to interest the feelings of my friend.
- 1791 A. RADCLIFFE *Romance of Forest* II. x. 79 She tried to command her feelings so as to avoid disturbing the family.
- 1828 J. W. CROKER *Croker Papers* (1884) I. xiii. 404 All my time being employed in assuaging what gentlemen call their feelings.
- 1852 H. B. STOWE *Uncle Tom's Cabin* I. vii. 88 Both saw the absolute necessity of putting a constraint on their feelings.
- 1903 R. BOLDREWOOD *Last Chance* (1905) xi. 272 We shall have to leave you at home next time if you cannot control your feelings.
- 2004 J. FELLOWES *Snobs* (2005) xviii. 264 He's not a great one for showing his feelings but he was in the most frightful state, I can tell you.

(Hide quotations)

## 5.

**a.** Consciousness, awareness; an emotional appreciation or sense (*of one's own condition, an external fact, etc.*).

Thesaurus »  
Categories »

- a1425 ( ?a1400) G. CHAUCER *Romaunt Rose* (Hunterian) (1891) l. 6447 Who so hath in his felyng The consequence of such shryuyng.
- c1450 ( c1380) G. CHAUCER *House of Fame* (Fairf. 16) (1878) l. 552 For so astonyed and a-sweued Was every vertu in my heued..And al my felynge gan to dede.
- ?1529 R. HYRDE tr. J. L. VIVES *Instr. Christen Woman* II. vii. sig. f.iiij If folkes departed out of this lyfe, haue any remembrance or felynge of wordly matters, [etc.].
- 1574 G. FENTON tr. J. Talpin *Forme Christian Pollicie* III. v. 135 Yet these miserable plaiers, haue no feeling of their wretchednes.
- 1608 W. SHAKESPEARE *King Lear* xx. 273 I..haue ingenious feeling Of my huge sorowes. 
- 1638 R. BAKER tr. J. L. G. de Balzac *New Epist.* II. 69 The feeling I have of the courtesies received from him.
- 1683 D. A. *Whole Art Converse* 56 You would easily be wrought into some feeling of your folly in this point.
- 1705 G. STANHOPE *Paraphr. Epist. & Gospels* II. 296 They have already sufficient feeling of their disease.
- 1775 T. LELAND *Christian's Duty to Offenders* 5 If the offender be awakened to a feeling of his danger.
- 1814 I. D'ISRAELI *Quarrels Auth.* II. 134 He was..too conscious of his superiority, to betray a feeling of injury.
- 1828 W. SCOTT *Fair Maid of Perth* ii, in *Chron. Canongate* 2nd Ser. I. 71 To encourage with a feeling of safety those whom [etc.].
- 1874 J. T. MICKLETHWAITE *Mod. Parish Churches* 30 The feeling of perfect equality inside the church.
- 1938 W. WATSON *Miss Pettigrew lives for Day* vii. 97 Miss Pettigrew sat

savouring to the full..a dashing feeling of being a little fast.

- 1968 *Dubois County Daily Herald* (Jasper, Indiana) 12 Feb. 6/2 Kids have no feeling of the importance of culture as a part of life.
- 2009 R. J. NORRELL *Up from Hist.* 48 Myths that nurtured a feeling of their unique historical experience.

(Hide quotations)

**b.** An idea, belief, or sense (especially a vague or irrational one) that a particular thing is true; an impression *that* something is about to happen or is the case; an intuition *about* something.

Thesaurus »

- 1811 *Naval Chron.* 26 203 When going into that machine [sc. a stage coach], I had a feeling..I should not get out of it without some mischief or another.
- 1885 S. K. HOCKING *Our Joe* vi. 41 Joe reluctantly obeyed, for he had a feeling that he was being led into a trap.
- 1922 J. STREET *Rita Coventry* xix. 191 I sometimes get the feeling that I don't know you so very well, after all.
- 1955 P. LARKIN *Let.* 23 Feb. in *Sel. Lett.* (1992) 236 I have a sort of feeling about Jonathan Price's poetry.
- 1967 J. B. KEANE in *Celebrated Lett.* (1996) 24 I have the feeling that I was watched the whole time.
- 1979 P. THEROUX *Old Patagonian Express* xix. 293 I don't want to be in a train crash. But I have a very bad feeling about this train.
- 1988 *Chicago Tribune* (Nexis) 16 Mar. 20 In Washington you get the feeling that if people..wear yellow shirts..the fashion police will rush right over to cover them with a Burberry.
- 2006 P. JOSYPH *Liberty St.* vi. 100 I have a funny feeling you'll be back.

(Hide quotations)

## 6.

**a.** That which a person feels in regard to something; attitude, esp. emotional attitude, sentiment; opinion or belief based on emotion or intuition and not solely on reason. †Formerly also : judgement, considered opinion (*obsolete*) (cf. [FEEL v.](#) 10).

Thesaurus »

- c1425 *Treat. Ten Commandments* in *Stud. Philol.* (1910) 6 9 (MED) For diuers causes þat been good & lawful to my felynge.
- c1456 R. PECOCK *Bk. Faith* (Trin. Cambr.) (1909) 191 (MED) Tho opiniouns were aʒens the felyng of the general chirche.
- a1500 tr. Thomas à Kempis *De Imitatione Christi* (Trin. Dublin) (1893) 10 Wherefore truste not to mucche in thin ovne felyng, but desire gladly to here oþir mennys felinges.
- 1531 W. TYNDALE *Answer Mores Dialoge* f. xc And finally I haue better reasons for my felynge that ye pope is antichrist then M. More hath for his endeuorynge him selfe & captiuinge his wittes y<sup>t</sup> he is ye true church.
- 1613 G. WITHER *Abuses Stript* II. ii. sig. P6<sup>v</sup> I by my owne experience speake, I haue a feeling that we men are weake.
- a1633 W. AMES *Substance Christian Reliq.* (1659) xlvi. 274 But what ever our own particular feelings be, in respect of charity, & the judgment & desire thereof towards others, we ought alwayes either expresly or impliedly, to call upon God.
- 1762 O. GOLDSMITH *Citizen of World* I. 160 If we survey a king not only opposing his own feelings, but reluctantly refusing those he regards.
- 1771 E. GRIFFITH tr. 'P. Viaud' *Shipwreck* 236 I communicated my thoughts and feelings to Mr. Wright.
- 1828 I. D'ISRAELI *Comm. Life Charles I* I. v. 120 The feelings of the Romanists

were sadly put to the test by a circumstance which now occurred.

- 1828 I. D'ISRAELI *Comm. Life Charles I* II. xi. 287 The feelings of two ages attest the greatness of Hampden's name.
- 1863 J. W. CARLYLE *Lett.* III. 186 You know my feelings about religious excitement-ecstasies.
- 1874 J. R. GREEN *Short Hist. Eng. People* viii. §10. 577 Cromwell bowed to the feeling of the nation.
- 1875 B. JOWETT in tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) V. 7 They have the feelings of old men about youth.
- 1922 T. S. ELIOT *Lett.* (1988) I. 554 I am sure you will understand my feelings about this matter.
- 1973 *Field & Stream* Feb. 187/1 Spell out your feeling on guns and gun control..and ask them to go on record with theirs.
- 2014 *Racing Post* (Nexis) 4 July 108 The general feeling was that he could have won if he had been freed from team orders.

(Hide quotations)

**b. Business.** The degree of readiness to buy prevailing amongst traders; market sentiment.

[Thesaurus »](#)  
[Categories »](#)

- 1823 *Augusta (Georgia) Chron.* 11 Oct. These opinions..have produced an unfavourable change in the tone of feeling in the market here.
- 1847 *Economist* 2 Oct. 1146/2 The arrivals have been large since the 23rd ult., and there is a better feeling at market.
- 1888 *Daily News* 11 July 2/7 An improved feeling is also perceptible in ropes.
- 1920 *Market Reporter* 4 Dec. 359/1 Prices alone do not indicate any material improvement in condensed milk markets, but there is a slightly better feeling than a month ago.
- 2007 *Platts Oilgram Price Rep.* (Nexis) 14 June 3 The sale was seen by most as somewhat surprising, given the overall weak feeling in the market.

(Hide quotations)

**c. The mode of expression considered most natural or instinctive in a language. Now rare.**

[Thesaurus »](#)  
[Categories »](#)

- 1875 B. JOWETT in tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) I. Pref. p. xv The feeling of the modern language is more opposed to tautology.
- 1891 *Amer. Jrn. Philol.* **12** 165 The distinction..has a certain aesthetic value in marking a limit which the feeling of the language imposed on the range of *metaphora*.
- 1909 *Amer. Jrn. Philol.* **30** 19 As soon as Stahl..says that the present indicative in conditional sentences is used when a general assumption is made..he runs counter to the feeling of the language.

(Hide quotations)

**7. The quality or condition which is felt to belong to anything; the general impression or effect produced on a person by an object, a place, another person, etc.**

[Thesaurus »](#)

- 1597 W. SHAKESPEARE *Richard II* I. iii. 264 The apprehension of the good, Giues but the greater feeling to the worse. 📖
- 1762 LD. KAMES *Elements Crit.* I. ii. 218 The base, which makes a part of the column, inspires a feeling of firmness and stability.
- 1830 *Fraser's Mag.* July 706/1 What added to the strange feeling of the moment during these devotions was, that the sea-fowl were whirling round and screaming near us.
- 1884 W. C. SMITH *Kildrostan* 45 He nigh lost his wits ere morning..So weird-like

was the feeling of the place.

- 1922 E. SITWELL in *New Age* 6 July 120/1 I liked..the warm, South-of-France feeling about her.
- 1959 F. ASTAIRE *Steps in Time* (1960) ii. 10 It had the flavor, the neighborliness, and that small-town feeling without actually being one.
- 2012 *Time Out N.Y.* 22 Mar. 11/2 This charming West Village spot evokes the feeling of a Parisian *bistro à vins*.

(Hide quotations)

**8. Philosophy and Psychology.** In various technical uses, as: (a) (in the writings of Thomas Brown, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, etc.) a fact or state of consciousness; (b) a generic term comprising sensation, desire, and emotion, but excluding perception and thought; (c) [after German *Gefühl* in the writings of Immanuel Kant] (more narrowly) the element of pleasure or pain in any mental state; (d) an intuitive cognition or belief neither requiring nor admitting of proof.

Thesaurus »  
Categories »

- 1734 G. BERKELEY *Treat. Princ. Human Knowl.* (new ed.) §89 We comprehend our own Existence by inward Feeling or Reflexion, and that of other Spirits by Reason.
- 1739 D. HUME *Treat. Human Nature* I. iv. 401 Tho' bodies are felt by means of their solidity, yet the feeling is a quite different thing from the solidity.
- 1820 T. BROWN *Lect. Philos. Human Mind* I. xxv. 581 The feelings of extension, resistance, joy, sorrow, fragrance, colour, hope, fear, heat, cold, admiration, resentment.
- 1820 T. BROWN *Lect. Philos. Human Mind* I. xi. 256 Consciousness..is only a general term for all our feelings, of whatever species these may be,—sensations, thoughts, desires;—in short, all those states or affections of mind in which the phenomena of mind consist.
- 1824 J. D. WHEELER *Rep. Criminal Law Cases* 2 36 Equally perceptible is the moral feeling that it is wrong to injure our fellow man.
- 1843 J. S. MILL *Syst. Logic* I. i. iii. §3. 66 Feeling, in the proper sense of the term, is a genus, of which Sensation, Emotion, and Thought, are subordinate species.
- 1846 W. HAMILTON in T. Reid *Wks.* 760 Feeling is a term preferable to Consciousness, in so far as the latter does not mark so well the simplicity, ultimacy, and incomprehensibility of our original apprehensions.
- 1855 A. BAIN *Senses & Intellect* Introd. i. 2 The quality variously called Feeling, Consciousness, or Emotion.
- 1856 W. HAMILTON *Lect. Metaphysics* (1859) I. xi. 186 This division of the phenomena of mind into the three great classes of the Cognitive faculties,—the Feelings, or capacities of Pleasure and Pain,—and the Exertive or Conative Powers..was first promulgated by Kant.
- 1856 W. HAMILTON *Lect. Metaphysics* (1859) II. xli. 492 The first grand distribution of our feelings will, therefore, be into the Sensations,—that is, the Sensitive or External Feelings; and into the Sentiments,—that is, the Mental or Internal Feelings.
- 1871 J. TYNDALL *Fragm. Sci.* (1879) II. xv. 375 Feeling appeared in the world before knowledge.
- 1875 B. JOWETT in tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) IV. 14 Feeling is not opposed to knowledge, and in all consciousness there is an element of both.
- 1892 J. SULLY *Human Mind* I. iv. 64 The term feeling..in a stricter sense is confined to those modes of consciousness which are in a peculiar sense affections of the subject, and which do not, in the same direct way as our thoughts and volitions, involve a clear reference to objects.
- 1892 J. SULLY *Human Mind* II. xiii. 1 We include under the head of feeling all psychical states or phenomena so far as they have the element or aspect of the agreeable and disagreeable.



- 1902 *Mind* **11** 283 Melancholia can be explained as due to the alteration of affective disposition by feelings.
- 1903 H. MANACORDA & J. MUIRHEAD tr. G. Villa *Contemp. Psychol.* v. 200 Feeling, in their opinion, is an autonomous mental function quite independent of cognition and of will.
- 1908 J. WATSON tr. I. Kant in *Philos. Kant Explained* 475 But it is not so in the case of the feeling of pleasure and pain, which tells us nothing of the object, but only how the subject himself feels, when he is affected by the idea.
- 1914 *Catholic Univ. Bull.* **20** 156 The objects excite, or awaken in us, certain states of feeling. What we term the properties of an object are the powers it exerts of producing sensations in our consciousness.
- 1992 *Jrnl. Consumer Res.* **18** 442/1 Feelings are temporary affective states that are subjectively perceived by an individual.
- 2009 *Human Stud.* **32** 19 Kant distinguished affects from passions and feeling.

(Hide quotations)

**9.** Usually in *plural*. Sympathy or fondness for, or emotional attachment to, a person or thing; (in later use *esp.*) romantic attraction. Frequently in *to have feelings for*. □

Thesaurus »

- 1750 *Fables & Tales for Ladies* 43 'Tis a Secret none can find, But those who..can have Feelings for a Brother, and think each Self's to serve another.
- 1829 *Western Luminary* 28 Oct. 1/5 Every one..knows what it is to have feelings for anxious sinners.
- 1852 *Lost Inheritance* I. xv. 285 Nothing will change our feelings for each other... There is such a moral power in true, earnest love, that nothing can successfully oppose it.
- 1910 E. M. FORSTER *Howards End* xv. 165 Paul has rather a feeling for the old place.
- 1929 *Amer. Mercury* Jan. 96/2 The visiting Yankee technicians..developed kindly feelings for employés.
- 1990 *Daily Herald* (Chicago) 8 Apr. v. 1/5 It hasn't affected my feelings for the game at all.
- 2014 *Sun* (Nexis) 19 Nov. I didn't expect to meet Leo and end up having feelings for him, but I did.

(Hide quotations)

**10.** In various artistic contexts, chiefly developing from senses 4 and 5.

**a.** *Music* and *Theatre*. Sympathetic interpretation of the emotional content or intention of a musical or dramatic composition, as manifested in the way it is played or performed.

Thesaurus »  
Categories »

- 1771 C. BURNEY *Present State Music France & Italy* 42 This lady..plays the most difficult pieces with great precision, taste, and feeling.
- 1784 *European Mag. & London Rev.* May 366/2 No modern has been heard to play an adagio with greater taste and feeling.
- 1824 LD. BYRON *Don Juan: Canto XVI* xli. 84 The circle..applauds..The tones, the feeling, and the execution.
- 1874 *Frank Leslie's Pleasant Hours* **16** 455/1 A girl..reciting, with wonderful feeling and expression, the glowing lines of the lovelorn Juliet.
- 1918 *Proc. Royal Soc. 1917-18 A.* **94** p. xxix He took up a violin, and played with masterly touch and exquisite feeling some Scotch airs.
- 1976 *Jet* 8 July 47/2 He played alto saxophone with such feeling that many of his recordings are classics today.
- 1993 *Grand Street* No. 47. 163 If you were performing *Marie-Jeanne ou la Femme du Peuple*, you would try to put some feeling into it.

(Hide quotations)

**b. Art.** The emotional content or purport of a work, or the sensibility of the artist, as manifested in the way a picture is painted, drawn, etc.; the general tone of a work, esp. as contrasted with the particular techniques employed in its creation.

Categories »

- 1824 *Philos. Trans.* (Royal Soc.) 114 247 The delicate touches by which the skill and feeling of an accomplished artist convey an expression of sense, and grace, and sensibility to the finished representation of the human form.
- 1854 F. W. FAIRHOLT *Dict. Terms Art* Feeling, that visible quality in a work of Art which forcibly depicts the mental emotion of the painter, or which exhibits his perfect mastery over the materials of Art.
- 1875 *Brit. Med. Jrnal.* 26 June 864/1 'A Surrey Farm-House'..delicate in execution, and beautiful in feeling and effect.
- 1906 *Fine Arts Jrnal.* 17 572 In the second panel, Mr. Blum has given us the harmony of contrast; not of color or drawing or technique, but of feeling.
- 1990 *Master Drawings* 28 275/1 Essentially, this sheet is entirely Italian in feeling and execution.
- 2001 S. P. SRIVASTAVA *Jahangir* i. 25 In all the jungle scenes, the landscape is shown with great feeling.

(Hide quotations)

**c. Architecture.** The general tone of a building or style of architecture; the impression produced by a building on a spectator.

Categories »

- 1859 J. M. JEPHSON & L. REEVE *Narr. Walking Tour Brittany* v. 52 A favourable example of Renaissance, retaining as it does much Gothic feeling.
- 1874 J. T. MICKLETHWAITE *Mod. Parish Churches* 10 If the whole feeling of a building leads up to one point.
- 1938 *Connecticut: Guide to Roads, Lore, & People* (Federal Writers' Project) II. 262 St James Episcopal Church..is a brownstone building of Gothic feeling, with a high spire and heavy buttresses.
- 2001 D. SHAND-TUCCI *Campus Guide: Harvard University* 260 The east end of Radcliffe Yard is governed by..a lighter, more attenuated neoclassical feeling.

(Hide quotations)

**11.** With modifying word: an emotion or attitude of the specified type that two or more people or groups feel with respect to each other. Frequently with *between*. Now sometimes in *plural*.

Cf. FELLOW-FEELING *n.*, *hard feeling n.* at *HARD adj.* and *n.* Compounds 4.

- 1806 *Newport (Rhode Island) Mercury* 11 Oct. There existed a thousand reasons..which made it desirable for him to promote a becoming feeling between Great-Britain and America.
- 1836 E. EVERETT *Orations* 378 There are recollections of former times, well calculated to form a bond of good feeling between our universities.
- 1863 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Federal Govt.* iv. 167 The events of the Peloponnesian War at once tended to beget a bitter feeling between Athens and the Beotians.
- 1895 *London Story Paper* 12 Jan. 4/5 Husband and wife ate on together in silence. There was manifestly an ill-feeling between them.
- 1952 S. KAUFFMANN *Philanderer* (1957) ix. 150 Nothing creates quite as good a feeling between people as one person's laughing overwhelmingly at the

other's humour.

2014 *Santa Fe New Mexican* (Nexis) 4 June The ads..intensified bad feelings between factions of the Democratic Party.

(Hide quotations)

**12.** *Psychology* and *Aesthetics*. With *in, into*. The process or fact of projecting one's personality into or mentally identifying oneself with an object of contemplation, and so fully understanding or appreciating it. Cf. *EINFÜHLUNG* *n.*, *EMPATHY* *n.* **2a**.

Thesaurus »  
Categories »

[After German *Einfühlung* *EINFÜHLUNG* *n.*; compare *to feel into* — at *FEEL* *v.* Phrasal verbs].

- 1909 W. M. URBAN *Valuation* viii. 238 The subject is said to *enliven* the object by projecting or *feeling* into it his own *feeling* content, for which process of 'feeling-in', or *inner imitation*, some aspect or expression of the object constitutes the stimulus.
- 1933 H. READ *Art Now* I. 49 No mere fellow-feeling, or *feeling with*, but rather a form of imaginative identification of the self with the object, a *feeling into*.
- 1949 A. KOESTLER *Insight & Outlook* xxvi. 359 This *feeling-in* process, or empathy, is..based on the projection of part of our own personality into the shell of the other.
- 1997 M. SAWICKI *Body, Text & Sci.* iii. 96 Empathy was construed as a 'feeling-into', with the projecting feeler and the targeted feeler ontologically distinct from each other and from a third thing, the felt content.

(Hide quotations)

### III. Senses relating to knowledge, skill, or aptitude.

†**13.** Knowledge, understanding, skill, esp. that gained through practical experience. *Obsolete*.

Thesaurus »

- c1405 ( c1390) G. CHAUCER *Nun's Priest's Tale* (Hengwrt) (2003) l. 473 Ther with ye han in Musyk moore *feelynge* Than hadde Boece or any þt kan synge.
- a1413 ( c1385) G. CHAUCER *Troilus & Criseyde* (Pierpont Morgan) (1881) III. l. 1333 I speke..vnder correccioun. Of yow þat *felyng* han in loues art.
- a1500 ( ?a1425) tr. *Secreta Secret.* (Lamb.) 49 (*MED*) God make þe fast in way of knowyng and *felynge* of þreuth & vertues.
- 1526 *Bible* (Tyndale) Rom. v. 4 Pacience bryngeth *felynge*, *felynge* bryngeth hope.
- 1526 W. BONDE *Pylgrimage of Perfection* Pref. sig. Aii<sup>v</sup> Some be exellently lerned, and yet haue but small *felyng* of these thynges.
- 1630 tr. G. Botero *Relations Famous Kingdomes World* (rev. ed.) 100 Spaine both knowes us, and hath of late had some *feeling* of us.

(Hide quotations)

**14.** A talent or aptitude; an affinity or intuitive understanding. Frequently in *to have a feeling for* and variants.

Thesaurus »

- 1808 *Belfast Monthly Mag.* 31 Dec. 381/1 The number of happy and truly poetical expressions with which he has supplied Virgil, prove that Ennius was possessed of the true spirit of poetry, and above all, with a *feeling for* imitative harmony.
- 1896 *Educ. Rev.* Oct. 275 I do not believe that the true way to get a *feeling for* Latin is *by any conscious process*—least of all by any conscious forcing process.
- 1952 R. ELLISON *Let.* 8 Jan. in R. Ellison & A. Murray *Trading Twelves* (2000) 24

She got into that Haitian groove. She really had the feeling for that stuff too, man—mostly in the shoulders though 'cause as she explained them Hate-ties don't fool around with bumps and grinds lessen it's death dance.

1994 *Time* 7 Mar. 64/3 She showed authority and what her coach calls *bing gan*, a feeling for skating.

2011 *Engin. Designer* (Nexis) July 4 He said they had a 'feeling' for how materials worked, a feeling for brittleness, strength and workability.

(Hide quotations)

## PHRASES

**P1. in (the) feeling:** used to describe the qualities of something as perceived by touching it; 'to the touch'. Cf. *to the feel* at *FEEL* n. 1. Now rare.

Thesaurus »  
Categories »

α1400 tr. Lanfranc *Sci. Chirurgie* (Ashm.) (1894) 305 Whanne it is not hoot in feeling [L. *calidum non est actu*].

1544 *Bk. Chyldren* in T. Phaer tr. J. Goeurot *Regiment of Lyffe* (new ed.) sig. h.iiiij It [sc. the fyre of Saynt Anthonye] is an inflammation of membres with exceedyng burnynge and rednesse, harde in the feelynge, [etc.].

1577 B. GOOGE tr. C. Heresbach *Foure Bks. Husbandry* III. f. 128 His hyde not hard, or stubborne in feeling [L. *corium attactu non asperum ac durum*].

1662 J. DAVIES tr. A. Olearius *Voy. & Trav. J. Albert de Mandelslo* 155 in *Voy. & Trav. Ambassadors* It is of a reddish colour, as smooth, and slippery in the feeling as soap.

1669 S. STURMY *Mariners Mag.* v. xii. 65 The harder the Corns of Powder are in feeling, by so much the better it is.

1725 R. BRADLEY *Chomel's Dictionnaire Œconomique* at *Goat* A dark Coat, and very soft in the feeling.

1818 *Edinb. Rev.* Feb. 301 Forging for them such chains as, soft in feeling as silk, but strong in proof as adamant, will bind them down [etc.].

1864 D. B. ST. J. ROOSA tr. A. F. von Tröltzsch *Dis. Ear* xviii. 168 Peculiar red bodies..which were quite hard in feeling, and were firmly attached to the mucous membrane.

1947 *Kew Bull.* 2 12 Stem 10 to 15 ins. in diam. Leaves rough in feeling.

(Hide quotations)

**P2. to hurt the feelings of, to hurt a person's feelings:** to offend or upset; to injure emotionally.

1766 J. FORDYCE *Serm. Young Women* II. viii. 65 How improving soever an acquaintance with life may be found on some accounts, there are instances, in which it will hurt the feelings of the heart.

1776 *Parl. Reg. 1775–80* V. 53 They avoided, as much as possible, any explanations that might hurt the feelings of the witness.

1804 LD. NELSON *Lett.* (1814) II. 57 Do not hurt my feelings by telling me that I neglect any opportunity.

1894 F. R. STOCKTON *Pomona's Trav.* 51 I wouldn't hurt his feelings on the subject of his religion.

1946 C. BUSH *Case Second Chance* iii. 52 I hated hurting his feelings... He took it rather well, though.

2004 *Weekly World News* 1 Nov. 4/1 Aides say that the constant jokes about his intellect hurt the president's feelings.

(Hide quotations)

**P3. to relieve one's feelings:** to release strong

emotions such as distress, grief, frustration, or anger by venting or expressing them in some manner (either verbally or physically).

- 1788 *Helena* xxvii. 69 Helena..hastened to her own room, to relieve her feelings by a free indulgence of them.
- 1850 J. H. NEWMAN *Lect. Diffic. Anglicans* i. ii. 50 They..relieve their feelings by gestures and cries, and startings to and fro.
- 1884 S. J. REID *Life Sydney Smith* xiii. 342 The muttered growl with which the eclipsed poet relieved his overcharged feelings.
- 1957 J. BRAINE *Room at Top* (1960) 121 I called her the worst names I could think of,..but it didn't relieve my feelings very much.
- 1992 L. GORDON *Shared Lives* viii. 174 Whereas the English take comfort in humour, New Yorkers relieve their feelings by uninhibited griping.
- 2009 P. C. WREDE *Thirteenth Child* (2010) xiv. 150 When the aunts caught us hanging over the banister listening, they relieved their feelings by scolding fiercely.

(Hide quotations)

**P4.** *era of good feeling*: see [ERA n. 4c](#).

**P5.** *the feeling is mutual*: see [MUTUAL adj. 1c](#).

## COMPOUNDS

### C1. General *attributive*.

- 1601 N. BRETON *Soules Heavenly Exercise* 46 In the feeling time of thy loue, death was sweete to his imagination.
- 1720 T. BRADBURY *Necessity Contending for Revealed Relig.* i. 15 That which is such a burden to your Acquaintance, sits light enough upon you: But there is a feeling-time coming.
- 1754 A. MURPHY *Gray's Inn Jrnl.* No. 66 These, in their Feeling-hours of Distress, are reported to have reproached themselves with their Folly.
- 1826 W. KIRBY & W. SPENCE *Introd. Entomol.* III. xxviii. 18 The palpi..executing the functions of antennæ, which probably induced Treviranus to call them *Fühlhörner* (Feeling-horns).
- 1867 *Harper's Mag.* Mar. 465/2 They remind one very forcibly of the blind man's feeling-stick.
- 1927 *Amer. Mercury* May 66/2 It..yielded the richest harvest of impressions, observations, and feeling-response, which are the stuff of the artist life.
- 1983 D. F. MORSE & P. A. MORSE *Archaeol. Central Mississippi Valley* ii. 19 One of the first recorded uses of the probe or feeling rod for discovering the presence of complete pots.
- 2007 *Sarasota (Florida) Herald-Tribune* (Nexis) 14 Nov. B1 During the feeling sessions, students give a word to describe their mood for the day.

(Hide quotations)

**C2.** *attributive. Military.* Designating an attack, shot, etc., used to draw out or discourage an enemy. Cf. [FEEL v. 15b](#).  
Now rare.

Categories »

- 1849 SIR R. WILSON *Life* (1862) I. ii. 67 So soon as the Austrian Hussars had fired

with their skirmishers a few feeling shot.

- 1876 E. H. WICKHAM tr. *Infl. Firearms upon Tactics* 47 Those 'feeling' attacks..that the assailant should make in order that he may have time to concentrate his forces.
- 1945 *Highway Traveler* Apr. 38/2 The Germans sensing that you're coming and sending out feeling fire to discourage you.
- 1975 J. JONES *WW II* 89/2 The excitement of having to repel a light, feeling attack of Japanese almost immediately after.

(Hide quotations)

### C3. attributive and appositive (in sense 8), as *feeling attitude, feeling state, feeling tone*, etc.

[In *feeling-tone* after German *Gefühlston* (1794 or earlier), as used by Wilhelm Wundt in *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (1874).]

- 1883 *Mind* 8 474 An 'affective' or 'emotive', aspect or property—the latter being also called the 'feeling-tone' (*Gefühlston* or *Betonung*) of the sensation.
- 1892 J. SULLY *Human Mind* I. iv. 8 The proposition that feeling as such has no quality (apart from the feeling-quality itself, agreeableness, disagreeableness) is held by most psychologists.
- 1893 *Proc. 2nd Internat. Congr. Exper. Psychol.* 1892 34 The feeling-tone of belief appeared..completely neutral, except so far as the subject-matter of belief caused it to have a pleasureable or painful quality.
- 1894 D. IRONS in *Mind* 3 93 Under feeling should be included on the one hand pleasure and pain, and on the other that feeling towards the object, which for the present we may call feeling attitude. The term is not unexceptionable, but is used for convenience instead of some such formula as 'feeling in relation to'.
- 1901 E. B. TITCHENER *Exper. Psychol.* I. i. ii. 54 Likeness may mean 'likeness of feeling-effect'.
- 1906 S. S. LAURIE *Synthetica* I. 136 This entitative feeling-potency does not contain the 'modes' of sense.
- 1909 W. M. URBAN *Valuation* ii. 37 Feeling or feeling-disposition is always presupposed by desire.
- 1919 M. K. BRADBY *Psycho-anal.* 58 Certain unconscious factors..give the complex its peculiar feeling-tone.
- 1919 M. K. BRADBY *Psycho-anal.* 150 A woman who heard the first maroon announcing the Armistice on November 11th, 1918, responded with an instantaneous feeling-thought.
- 1920 T. P. NUNN *Education* 125 Feeling-spread is almost wholly biological imitation.
- 1920 T. P. NUNN *Education* 134 Pugnacity is an example of the instincts in which the feeling-element is a definite emotion.
- 1920 A. S. PRINGLE-PATTISON *Idea of God* 120 The feeling-tone of the secondary qualities and their intimate connexion with the higher emotional life.
- 1937 *Discovery* July 216/2 The feeling-values of purple and violet are 'uncertain'.
- 1968 *Brit. Jnl. Psychiatry* 114 585/2 The type of symptom that is mentioned..may be based on much more transient feeling-states of the parent towards the child.
- 2004 *Psychol. Sport & Exercise* 5 120 In all three studies, acute exercise improved feeling states regardless of exercise duration.

(Hide quotations)

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