Definition of OPERATE

operated; operating

intransitive verb

1: to perform a function: exert power or influence • factors operating against our success

2: to produce an appropriate effect • the drug operated quickly

3a: to perform an operation or a series of operations • The refinery is planning to begin operating as soon as possible. 
b: to perform surgery • The surgeon has been operating all morning. 
c: to carry on a military or naval action or mission • The army will operate in conjunction with the air force.

4: to follow a course of conduct that is often irregular • crooked gamblers operating in the club
People Are Reading

Trending: 'Veteran' Searches Up Ahead of Holiday

8 Words for Setting the Table

November 2017 Words of the Day Quiz

Examples of OPERATE in a Sentence

They hope to have the windmill operating again tomorrow.

The camera also operates underwater.
machine can operate at high speeds.

Instructions for operating the new microwave oven

a license to operate a motor vehicle

The café is owned and operated by a young couple.

The organization operates a recycling program.

It's the only casino operating in the state.

The company operates from Chicago.

a militant group operating against the government

Recent Examples of OPERATE from the Web

For many years, al-Shabab has operated among Somalia’s fragile political landscape, which has seen chaos since the central government collapsed 25 years ago.

— Isobel Thompson, vanityfair.com, "Will the Somalia Bombing Get a Rise out of Trump?," 16 Oct. 2017

Maples lead the fall color lineup in Kentucky this year Yew Dell currently has an annual operating budget of about $1.2 million and a full- and part-time staff of 18.


Before launching Jar with decorated chef Mark Peel in 2001, Tracht operated Asian-fusion pioneer Jozu on Melrose.

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Origin and Etymology of OPERATE

borrowed from Late Latin operātus, past participle of operāri "to work, be efficacious, effect, produce," going back to Latin, "to busy oneself, be at work," probably back-formation from operātus "busy, engaged, occupied with religious observances," from opera "activity, effort" + -ātus ³-ATE — more at OPERA

OPERATE Synonyms

Synonyms
handle, run, work

Related Words
use; maneuver, manipulate, ply, wield; command, control, direct, drive,

Phrases Related to OPERATE

Related Phrases
operating room
operating table
operating theatre

OPERATE Defined for English Language Learners
**operate**

*verb*

**Definition of OPERATE for English Language Learners**

: to function or behave in a proper or particular way

: to use and control (something)

: to have control of (something, such as a business, department, program, etc.)

**OPERATE Defined for Kids**

**operate**

*verb* | op·er·ate | ˈä-pə-ˌrāt*

**Definition of OPERATE for Students**

operated; operating

1 : to work or cause to work in a proper or particular way • The machine is operating smoothly. • He will learn to operate a car.

2 : MANAGE 1 • They operate a farm.

3 : to perform surgery : do an operation on • The doctors operated on the patient.
What made you want to look up operate? Please tell us where you read or heard it (including the quote, if possible).