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diffuse, v.

Text size: [A](#) [A](#)View as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#)Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#) Keywords: [On](#) | [Off](#)**Pronunciation:** Brit. [▶](#) /dɪ'fjuːz/, U.S. [▶](#) /dɪ'fjuːz/**Forms:** IME **dyffuse**, IME- **diffuse**, 15–16 **defuse**.**Frequency (in current use):** ●●●●●●●●**Origin:** Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from Latin. Partly formed within English, by conversion. **Etymons:** Latin *diffūs-*, *diffundere*; **DIFFUSE** *adj.***Etymology:** Partly < classical Latin *diffūs-*, past participial stem of *diffundere* **DIFFUND** *v.*,... [\(Show More\)](#)

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[Publication history](#)
[Entry profile](#)
[Previous version](#)

In this entry:

di'ffusing

In other dictionaries:

diffuse: view definition in Oxford Dictionaries (?)

My entries (1)

My searches (0)

Jump to:

Entry	Date
diffrangible, adj.	831
diffude, v.	? 475
diffugient, adj.	? 861
diffugous, adj.	727
diffund, v.	? 425
diffusable, adj.	762
diffusant, n.	867
diffusate, n.	850
diffuse, adj.	430
diffuse, v.	? 425
diffused, adj.	? 456
diffusedly, adv.	567
diffusedness, n.	611
diffusely, adv.	? 425
diffuseness, n.	14 4–5
diffuser, n.	645
diffusibility, n.	746
diffusible, adj.	743
diffusile, adj.	727

I. To send forth, disperse, and related senses.**1.**

a. trans. To send forth (an immaterial or abstract thing) [Thesaurus »](#) in many or all directions; to spread among a large number of people; to disseminate.

a1425 (a1400) *Northern Pauline Epist.* Rom. v. 5 (*MED*), Þe charitee of god is diffusid [L. *diffusa*] in oure hertis bi þe holy gost.

1482 CAXTON in tr. *Higden's Prolicionycion* Prohemye sig. a3, The vertu of historye dyffused & spredd by the vnyuersal worlde hath tyme..as conseruatryce and kepar of her werke.

1588 J. PENRY *Exhort. Wales* (new ed.) 41 Hauing heere and there diffused my reasons..which I perceiue are not so easily to be gathered.

1662 T. STANLEY *Hist. Chaldaick Philos.* i. 1 But the Philosophy of the Chaldæans exceeded the Bounds of their Country, and diffused it self into Persia.

1689 T. SHADWELL *Bury-Fair* ii. 20 His Fame is diffus'd throughout the Town.

1733 M. MASTERS *Poems Several Occasions* 162 One Night, unbounded, did the Tyrant reign. Spreading Disorder and diffusing Pain.

1784 W. COXE *Trav. Poland, Russia, Sweden, & Denmark* II. v. vi. 385 It is impossible, even for a monarch..to diffuse a love for the works of art among a people.

1839 G. P. R. JAMES *Louis XIV* III. 114 A general rumour began to diffuse itself through the court.

1852 D. MASSON *Ess.* (1856) i. 32 A heartless man does not diffuse geniality and kindness around him, as Goethe did.

1934 W. D. WEATHERFORD & C. S. JOHNSON *Race Relations* xxiii. 457 Education has diffused knowledge and skills.

1981 R. G. MYERS *Connecting Worlds* 53 One cannot rely on the printed word as a main vehicle for diffusing research results, even among researchers.

2004 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 3 Dec. 12/4 This takeover allowed the Church of England to avoid the embarrassment of defending American-style biblical literalism while still being able to diffuse a vague set of moral values.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

b. trans. To send forth (a material thing or physical phenomenon, as light, sound, etc.) in many or all [Thesaurus »](#)

directions from a particular point of origin; to spread widely over a surface, or through a place or area; to disperse, scatter. Hence also: to cause (light) to spread evenly, resulting in a reduction in intensity.

- ?a1475 (?a1425) tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (Harl. 2261) (1865) I. 57 The see callede Pontus, diffusede [L. *diffusus*] from þens towarde the northe, makethe the see callede Propontides.
- 1574 T. NEWTON tr. G. Gratarolo *Direct. Health Magistrates & Studentes* sig. H, Auicen permitteth large and great drincking, to washe and mundefie the stomacke and to make the meat the better to pearce and be diffused into the veines.
- 1590 SPENSER *Faerie Queene* II. II. sig. N8^v. The..veneme..Their blood..infected hath, Being diffused through the senceless tronck.
- 1654 T. WARREN *Vnbeleeuers* 95 The Head diffuseth nerves to the several members.
- 1669 T. GALE *Court of Gentiles: Pt. I* I. v. 27 The Phenicians..began to diffuse themselves throughout the whole of the Midland Sea.
- 1715 POPE *Temple of Fame* 28 From Pole to Pole the Winds diffuse the Sound.
- 1752 JOHNSON *Rambler* No. 190. 6 Diffuse thy riches among thy friends.
- 1829 *Chapters Physical Sci.* 317 The inexhaustible variety of shades which nature, as in sport, has diffused over the surface of different bodies.
- 1890 *Cent. Dict.* *Powder-gun*, an instrument for diffusing insect-powder.
- a1911 D. G. PHILLIPS *Susan Lenox* (1917) I. viii. 124 The coffee came—a suspicious-looking liquid diffusing an odor of staleness.
- 1970 L. DEIGHTON *Bomber* (1972) xxxiv. 460 The moonlight..was diffused by the thin cloud and dusted the bedroom with just a trace of blue gloom.
- 2012 *Herald-Times* (Bloomington, Indiana) 24 Mar. D2/2 Light bounces down the shaft and is diffused by a lens set into the ceiling like a lighting fixture.

(Hide quotations)

c. intr. Of a material or immaterial thing: to spread widely over an area; to be disseminated; to disperse.

Thesaurus »

- 1655 J. LIGHTFOOT *Harmony New-Test.* II. 141 From whence it might best diffuse in time to the whole circumference of their dispersion.
- 1700 S. PARKER *6 Philos. Ess.* 51 It [sc. the Chimist's Fire] does not merely sustain it self, but propagates too, and diffuses upon the ruins of its neighbours.
- 1785 R. GRAVES *Eugenius* II. xxxi. 192 In several other parts..the same benevolent spirit and moral improvement are diffusing.
- 1814 R. SOUTHEY *Roderick* XXI. 275 The silver cloud diffusing slowly past.
- 1859 *Hunt's Yachting Mag.* Jan. 10 People diffuse, and pass to their separate pleasure as they did in the morning to their various avocations.
- 1969 D. J. MULVANEY *Prehist. Austral.* 98 Although the technological expertise had not diffused, the *idea* had done so.
- 2008 K. T. EVERED in G. H. Herb & D. H. Kaplan *Nations & Nationalism* II. 773 Turkic peoples diffused in successive waves outward to Europe, the Middle East, east Asia, and even to the Americas.

(Hide quotations)

2. trans. To shower (a material or immaterial thing) over a person or thing; to release in, or as though in, a shower of drops; to pour down. Frequently with *on*, *over*, *upon*.

Thesaurus »

- 1541 R. WHITFORD *Dyuers Holy Instruycions & Teachynges* xv. f. 27, The godly, and gostly loue, is not so ingendred ne brede in man, but rather is diffused, shed and powred downe vpon vs.
- 1598 J. FLORIO *Worlde of Wordes* *Diffondere*, to defuse, to shed.