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scatter, v.

Text size: [A](#) [A](#)View as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#)Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#) Keywords: [On](#) | [Off](#)**Pronunciation:** Brit. [▶](#) /ˈskætə/, U.S. [▶](#) /ˈskædər/**Forms:** ME *scatere*, ME–15 *scater*, *skater*, ME *schatre*, *scatir(e)*, ME *scatre*, ME *skatre*, (... [\(Show More\)](#))**Frequency (in current use):** ●●●●●●●●●●**Etymology:** ... [\(Show More\)](#)**1. trans.** To dissipate, squander (goods or possessions).[Thesaurus »](#)[Categories »](#)*Obs. or arch.*1154 *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* ann. 1137 He hadde get his tresor ac he to deld it & scatered sotlice.c1380 *Eng. Wycliffite Sermon in Sel. Wks.* II. 78 For ȝif þes ordres geten nevere so myche good, þei seien þat al is þer ordris, and it were a deedli synne to scatire þes goodis in þe world.c1522 T. MORE *Treat. Quatuor Nouissimis in Wks.* (1557) I. 94 They would..neuer be so mad, gredily to gather together that other men shal merely sone after scatter abroad.1645 J. HOWELL *Epistolæ Ho-elianæ* VI. xvii. 31, I leave the rest of all my goods to my first-born Edward, to be consum'd or scatter'd (for I never hoped better).a1716 R. SOUTH *Sermon. Several Occasions* (1744) VIII. 326 And was it not worth the..seeing his substance scattered, his children struck dead, [etc.].*absol.*1879 G. CAMPBELL *White & Black in U.S.* 243 Mr. J— says the Germans are the only men who are saving; all the rest scatter.[\(Hide quotations\)](#)**This entry has not yet been fully updated (first published 1910).**[Publication history](#)[Entry profile](#)[Previous version](#)**In this entry:**scatteraway
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2.**a.** To separate and drive in various directions (a body of men or animals, a collection of things); to disperse, dissipate (a quantity of matter); to dispel (clouds, mists).[Thesaurus »](#)[Categories »](#)a1300 *E.E. Psalter* xvii. 16 [xviii. 14] And he sent his arwes, and skatered þa.1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) Matt. xxvi. 31, I shal smyte the sheperde, and the sheep of the flocc shulen be scatered.1582 R. STANYHURST tr. Virgil *First Foure Bookes Æneis* i. 3 Duck downe their fleete wyth a tempest, Or ships wyde scatter.1596 J. DALRYMPLE tr. J. Leslie *Hist. Scotl.* (1895) II. 453 Lyk a certane sone, new risen to skail and skattir the Cloudis of al tumulte.1597 SHAKESPEARE *Richard III* iv. iv. 442 Buckingham's armie is disperst and scattered. 1600 SHAKESPEARE *Merchant of Venice* i. i. 33 Dangerous rocks, which touching but my gentle vessels side would scatter all her spices on the streame.

- 1657 W. COLES *Adam in Eden* xxiii. 49 The Leaves of wild Clary..put into Pottage..scatter congealed blood.
- 1788 R. BURNS *Poems & Songs* (1968) I. 426 Some spumy, fiery, ignisfatuus matter, Such as the slightest breath of air might scatter.
- 1860 J. TYNDALL *Glaciers of Alps* I. iii. 30 A breeze..keen and hostile, scattering the snow.
- 1871 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Norman Conquest* IV. xviii. 117 The terrible name of Odo scattered them in all directions.
- 1879 M. E. BRADDON *Cloven Foot* xxviii. 'What has become of all the photographs?'.. 'Given to Tom, Dick and Harry—scattered to the four winds. I have not kept one of them.'

absol.

- 1594 T. BOWES tr. P. de la Primaudaye *French Acad.* II. 283 It is the nature of this enemy of mankind [*sc. the Devil*] to scatter, to disioyne and separat.


fig.

- 1613 S. PURCHAS *Pilgrimage* 45 So doth God scatter the counsells of his enemies. [Cf. Vulg. Ps. xxxii[i]. 10 *Dominus dissipet consilia gentium.*]
- 1822 SHELLEY tr. P. Calderon *Magico Prodigioso* iii. 145 So that Heaven May scatter thy delusions.
- 1869 W. E. H. LECKY *Hist. European Morals* I. iii. 430 No one did more to scatter the ancient superstitions than did Cicero.

(Hide quotations)

b. intr. for *refl.* To separate and disperse; to go dispersedly or stragglingly. †Also of a hawk: To go to a distance.

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- c1430 *Syr Gener.* (Roxb.) 158 And kepe we vs to-gedre trew That we skater not a-sondre.
- 1486 *Bk. St. Albans* b ij b, When thay [a Couy of partrichys] be putt upp, and begynne to scatre, ye most haue markeris to marke some of thaym.
- ?c1600 (c1515) *Sc. Field* (Lyme) 353 in I. F. Baird *Poems Stanley Family* (D.Phil. thesis, Univ. of Birm.) (1990) 245 When the Scottes and the ketericks seen our men sketer, They..came downwarde.
- 1610 J. GUILLIM *Display of Heraldrie* II. iv. 47 The Fillet is shaped long and narrow for the more commodious vse of women in..restraining of their haire from scattering about their brows.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Henry VI, Pt. 2* (1623) III. ii. 126 The Commons like an angry Hiue of Bees That want their Leader, scatter vp and downe. 
- 1626 BACON *Sylua Syluarum* §138 Sound diffuseth it selfe in round.; But if the Sound, which would scatter in Open Aire, be made to goe all into a Canale; It must needs giue greater force to the Sound.
- 1771 *Encycl. Brit.* II. 541/2 She [the falcon] must also have two good bells, that she may be found when she scattereth.
- 1796 R. SOUTHEY *Joan of Arc* VI. 309 Aright, aleft, The affrighted foemen scatter from his spear.
- 1796 W. WITHERING *Arrangem. Brit. Plants* (ed. 3) II. 74 The stems generally decline and scatter from each other, instead of being upright and close together.
- 1817 SHELLEY *Laon & Cythna* VI. xix. 137 When on my foes a sudden terror came, And they fled, scattering.
- 1909 *Blackwood's Mag.* Aug. 230/2 The fugitives scattered for miles, bearing appalling tales of massacre.

(Hide quotations)

c. refl. Now rare or *Obs.*

Thesaurus »
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- 1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) 1 Chron. xv. B, The Philistynes came, and scatered them

selues beneth in y^e valley of Rephaim [thē (them) in text].

- 1579 L. TOMSON tr. J. Calvin *Serm. Epist. S. Paule to Timothie & Titus* 128/2 They be enimies to the Churche, and scatter themselues farre from vs.
- 1631 B. JONSON *Staple of Newes* iv. ii. 175 in *Wks.* II *Shu.* He'll let you ha' your liberty— *Alm.* Goe forth, Whither you please, and to what company— *Mad.* Scatter your selfe amongst vs.

(Hide quotations)

†**d.** *trans.* To separate, drive apart (one or more individuals *from* the main body). *Obs.*

Thesaurus »

- 1588 EARL OF LEICESTER in *State Papers Defeat Spanish Armada* (1894) II. 35 Two of the greatest carracks that the King of Spain had in his fleet, being scattered from the rest.
- a1661 T. FULLER *Worthies* (1662) *Derb.* 234 Their ships with the violence of the Wind were much shattered, and the Bonaventure, scattered from the other two ships.

(Hide quotations)

†**e.** *fig.* To dissipate, distract (the mind, etc.).

Thesaurus »

- 1530 *Myroure Oure Ladye* (Fawkes) (1873) ii. 122 A warnynge to take hede, that yf the mynde were eny thyng scattered before, then to gather yt ageyne to gyther.
- 1631 B. JONSON *Staple of Newes* iv. ii. 131 in *Wks.* II Look, look, how all their eyes Dance i' their heads (obserue) scatter'd with lust!
- 1715 tr. Thomas à Kempis *Christian's Exercise* III. xv. 138 If thou art hereby scattered in thy Mind.

(Hide quotations)

3.

a. *trans.* To throw about in disorder in various places.

Thesaurus »

- c1330 *Arth. & Merl.* (Kölbing) 553 Ac þo þai come þider eft, Her werk was al vp aleft & yschatred here & þere.
- c1386 CHAUCER *Canon's Yeoman's Prol. & Tale* 361 The pot to~breketh..And somme [of the metals] are scatered al the floor aboute.
- 1860 J. TYNDALL *Glaciers of Alps* I. xx. 142 The fragments of rock scattered about were..polar.

(Hide quotations)

†**b.** To throw down (a thing) negligently; to drop. *Obs.* *rare*⁻¹.

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- a1640 *Wizard* (MS.) It is directed to you; some love-letter, on my life, that Luce hath scattered.

(Hide quotations)

4.

a. To distribute to various positions; to place here and there at irregular intervals. Chiefly in *pa. pple.*

Thesaurus »

- c1380 WYCLIF *Sel. Wks.* III. 445 Mykel more if newe religious be skaterud in Cristendome.
- 1549 E. ALLEN tr. L. Juda *Paraphr. Reuelacion S. John* f. 8, in Coverdale et al. tr.