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DICTIONARY

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# tenuous

*adjective* | ten·u·ous | \ˈten-yə-wəs, -yü-əs\

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## Definition of TENUOUS

1 a : having little **substance** or strength : **FLIMSY**, **WEAK** ▬ *tenuous* influences  
b : **SHAKY** 2a ▬ *tenuous* reasons

2 : not thick : **SLENDER** ▬ a *tenuous* rope

3 : not **dense** : **RARE** ▬ a *tenuous* fluid

—*tenuously* *adverb*

—*tenuousness* *noun*

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## Examples of TENUOUS in a Sentence

What is also true is that they, and I, were lucky, through genes or fate, to surge through the maelstrom of dashed hope and denied opportunity to grasp a *tenuous* piece of the American Dream. —Anthony Walton, *Lure and Loathing*, 1993

After the end of the crusading period, however relations between East and West had grown *tenuous* ... —Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, 1991

The authors follow researchers as they use the slimmest leads and the most *tenuous* connections to track the genes for Huntington's disease, muscular dystrophy, schizophrenia and a host of other physical and mental miseries. —Natalie Angier, *New York Times Book Review*, 12 Aug. 1990

He has a *tenuous* grasp on reality.

The local theater has had a *tenuous* existence in recent years.

He could demonstrate only a *tenuous* claim to ownership.

## Recent Examples of TENUOUS from the Web

The death inflamed a *tenuous* relationship between minorities in the community and IMPD.

— Ryan Martin, *Indianapolis Star*, "Aaron Bailey shooting: What to know as merit board decides on firing IMPD officers," 3 May 2018

Xerox chose to settle with the activists after a judge last week temporarily blocked the Fujifilm transaction, siding with Mr. Deason in a lawsuit and saying the talks were conflicted by Mr. Jacobson's *tenuous* position.

— David Benoit, *WSJ*, "Xerox CEO Exits in Settlement With Activists; Fujifilm Deal at Risk," 2 May 2018

Would even a moment of *tenuous* hope, as survivors create a thriving community, be a satisfying conclusion after watching so many hopeful settlements crumble?

— Laura Bradley, *HWD*, "Fear the Walking Dead: What's Next After This Devastating Death?," 29 Apr. 2018

*These example sentences are selected automatically from various online news sources to reflect current usage of the word 'tenuous.' Views expressed in the examples do not represent the opinion of Merriam-Webster or its editors. [Send us feedback](#).*

## What is the Definition of TENUOUS?

Something tenuous has been stretched thin and might break at any time. A person with a tenuous hold on his sanity should be watched carefully. If a business is only *tenuously* surviving, it will probably go bankrupt in the next recession. If there seems to be only a tenuous connection between two crimes, it means the investigators have more work to do.

## Origin and Etymology of TENUOUS

Latin *tenuis* thin, slight, tenuous — more at **THIN**

## Synonym Discussion of TENUOUS

**THIN**, **SLENDER**, **SLIM**, **SLIGHT**, **TENUOUS** mean not thick, broad, abundant, or dense. **THIN** implies comparatively little extension between surfaces or in diameter, or it may imply lack of substance, richness, or abundance. □ *thin wire* □ *a thin soup* □ **SLENDER** implies leanness or spareness often with grace and good proportion. □ *the slender legs of a Sheraton chair* □ **SLIM** applies to slenderness that suggests fragility or scantiness. □ *a slim volume of poetry* □ *a slim chance* □ **SLIGHT** implies smallness as well as thinness. □ *a slight build* □ **TENUOUS** implies extreme thinness, sheerness, or lack of substance and firmness. □ *a tenuous thread* □

## TENUOUS Defined for English Language Learners

tenuous 

*adjective*

### Definition of TENUOUS for English Language Learners

: not certain, definite, or strong : flimsy, weak, or uncertain

: very thin

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one who is not a member of the clergy

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1 embolization

'the process by which a blood vessel

**2 oleaginous**

'marked by an offensively ingratiating

**3 pansexual**

'sexual desire or attraction...not limited to

**4 symbiote**

'an organism living in symbiosis'

**5 charlatan**

'faker or fraud'

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tenuity

tenulin

**tenuous**

tenure

tenure by free alms



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state of difficulty

stable

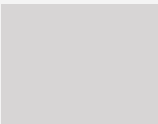
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mud pit



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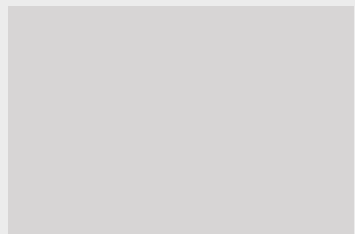
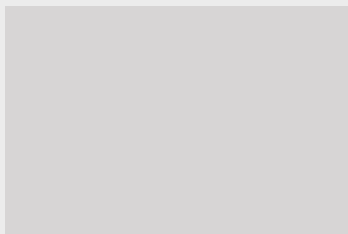
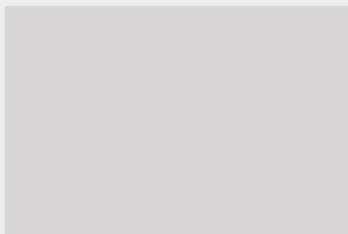
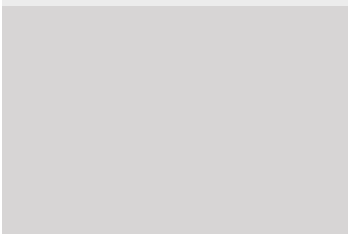
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