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Also found in: Thesaurus, Medical, Legal, Acronyms, Idioms, Encyclopedia, Wikipedia. disparity; unlikeness; distinction: made a differenceNot to be confused with:deference – courteous respect for another’s opinion, wishes, or judgment: treated with deferenceAbused, Confused, & Misused Words by Mary Embree Copyright © 2007, 2013 by Mary Embree (dĭf′ər-əns, dĭf′rəns)n.1. The quality or condition of being unlike or dissimilar.2. a. An instance of disparity or unlikeness: There is a big difference in sound between a clarinet and an oboe.b. A degree or amount by which things differ: a difference in height of three inches.3. A noticeable change or effect: Exercise has made a difference in her health.4. A disagreement or controversy: Let's settle our differences.5. Discrimination in taste or choice; distinction: In this case, the law should make no difference between young and old.6. Mathematics a. The amount by which one quantity is greater or less than another.b. The amount that remains after one quantity is subtracted from another.tr.v. dif·fer·enced, dif·fer·enc·ing, dif·fer·enc·es To distinguish or differentiate.Synonyms: difference, dissimilarity, unlikeness, divergence, variation, distinction, discrepancy These nouns refer to a lack of correspondence or agreement. Difference is the most general: differences in color and size; a difference of degree but not of kind. Dissimilarity and unlikeness often suggest a wide or fundamental difference: the dissimilarity between human and computer language; attracted to each other by their very unlikeness. However, dissimilarity is also used to emphasize the points of difference between things that are otherwise alike or comparable: an analysis of the dissimilarities between the two sets of data. Divergence can denote a difference resulting from a branching or separation; alternatively, it can indicate a range of difference within a category: the growing divergence between British and American English; a large group with a divergence of opinions on the subject. Variation occurs between things of the same class or species; often it refers to a modification of something original, prescribed, or typical: variations in temperature; a variation of a familiar technique. Distinction often means a difference in detail determinable only by close inspection: the distinction between "good" and "excellent." A discrepancy is a difference between things that should correspond or match: a discrepancy between his words and his actions.American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. ('dɪfərəns; 'dɪfrəns) n1. the state or quality of being unlike2. a specific instance of being unlike3. a distinguishing mark or feature4. a significant change in a situation: the difference in her is amazing. 5. a disagreement or argument: he had a difference with his wife. 6. a degree of distinctness, as between two people or things7. (Mathematics) a. the result of the subtraction of one number, quantity, etc, from anotherb. the single number that when added to the subtrahend gives the minuend; remainder8. (Logic) logic another name for differentia9. (Mathematics) maths (of two sets)a. the set of members of the first that are not members of the second. Symbol: A – B b. symmetric difference the set of members of one but not both of the given sets. Often symbolized: A + B 10. (Heraldry) heraldry an addition to the arms of a family to represent a younger branch11. make a difference 12. split the difference a. to settle a dispute by a compromiseb. to divide a remainder equally13. with a difference with some peculiarly distinguishing quality, good or badvb (tr) 15. (Heraldry) heraldry to add a charge to (arms) to differentiate a branch of a familyCollins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014 ('dɪf ər əns, 'dɪf rəns) n., v. -enced, -enc•ing. n. 1. the state or relation of being different; dissimilarity. 2. an instance or point of unlikeness or dissimilarity: the differences in their behavior. 3. a significant change in or effect on a situation: It made no difference what I said; nothing could persuade him. 4. a distinguishing characteristic; distinctive quality, feature, etc. 5. the degree to which one person or thing differs from another. 6. the act of distinguishing; discrimination; distinction. 7. a disagreement in opinion. 9. Math. a. the amount by which one quantity is greater or less than another. b. (of a function f) an expression of the form f(x + h) −f(x). v.t. 11. to cause or constitute a difference in or between; make different. 12. to perceive the difference in or between; discriminate. [1300–50; Middle English (< Anglo-French) < Latin] Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, © 2010 K Dictionaries Ltd. Copyright 2005, 1997, 1991 by Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. (dĭf′ər-əns)1. The amount by which one number or quantity is greater or less than another. The difference between 10 and 15, for example, is 5.2. The amount remaining after one number or quantity is subtracted from another. In the equation 15 - 10 = 5, 5 is the difference.The American Heritage® Student Science Dictionary, Second Edition. Copyright © 2014 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. – distinction1. 'difference'The difference between things is the way or ways in which they are not the same.Is there much difference between British and European law?There are many differences between computers and humans.If something makes a difference to a situation, it affects it, usually in a positive way. If something makes no difference to a situation, it doesn't affect it.The training certainly made a difference to staff performance.The story about her past made no difference to his feelings for her.2. 'distinction'If someone points out that two things are different, don't say that they 'make a difference' between the things. You say that they make a distinction or draw a distinction between them.It is important to make a distinction between claimants who are over retirement age and those who are not.He draws a distinction between art and culture.Collins COBUILD English Usage © HarperCollins Publishers 1992, 2004, 2011, 2012Past participle: differencedGerund: differencingImperativePresentPreteritePresent ContinuousPresent PerfectPast ContinuousPast PerfectFutureFuture PerfectFuture ContinuousPresent Perfect ContinuousFuture Perfect ContinuousPast Perfect ContinuousConditionalPast ConditionalImperativedifferencedifferenceCollins English Verb Tables © HarperCollins Publishers 2011 Noun1.difference - the quality of being unlike or dissimilar; "there are many differences between jazz and rock"quality - an essential and distinguishing attribute of something or someone; "the quality of mercy is not strained"--Shakespearedifferential - a quality that differentiates between similar thingsdifferentia - distinguishing characteristics (especially in different species of a genus)distinction - a distinguishing difference; "he learned the distinction between gold and lead"dissimilarity, unsimilarity - the quality of being dissimilarvariety, change - a difference that is usually pleasant; "he goes to France for variety"; "it is a refreshing change to meet a woman mechanic"inequality - lack of equality; "the growing inequality between rich and poor"sameness - the quality of being alike; "sameness of purpose kept them together"2.difference - a variation that deviates from the standard or norm; "the deviation from the mean"deviation, divergence, departurevariance, variant, discrepancy - an event that departs from expectationsdriftage - the deviation (by a vessel or aircraft) from its intended course due to driftingflection, flexion, inflection - deviation from a straight or normal course3.difference - a disagreement or argument about something important; "he had a dispute with his wife"; "there were irreconcilable differences"; "the familiar conflict between Republicans and Democrats"difference of opinion, dispute, conflictdisagreement - the speech act of disagreeing or arguing or disputingcollision - a conflict of opposed ideas or attitudes or goals; "a collision of interests"gap - a difference (especially an unfortunate difference) between two opinions or two views or two situations4.difference - a significant change; "the difference in her is amazing"; "his support made a real difference"change - a relational difference between states; especially between states before and after some event; "he attributed the change to their marriage"5.difference - the number that remains after subtraction; the number that when added to the subtrahend gives the minuendbalance - the difference between the totals of the credit and debit sides of an accountnumber - a concept of quantity involving zero and units; "every number has a unique position in the sequence"Based on WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection. © 2003-2012 Princeton University, Farlex Inc.noun1. dissimilarity, contrast, variation, change, variety, exception, distinction, diversity, alteration, discrepancy, disparity, deviation, differentiation, peculiarity, divergence, singularity, particularity, distinctness, unlikeness the vast difference in size dissimilarity similarity, resemblance, affinity, relation, conformity, likeness, sameness, congruence, comparability, similitude3. disagreement, conflict, argument, row, clash, dispute, set-to (informal), controversy, contention, quarrel, strife, wrangle, tiff, contretemps, discordance, contrariety They are leaning how to resolve their differences. disagreement agreement, concordance, harmonyCollins Thesaurus of the English Language – Complete and Unabridged 2nd Edition. 2002 © HarperCollins Publishers 1995, 2002noun3. The condition or fact of varying:4. A state of disagreement and disharmony:clash, conflict, confrontation, contention, difficulty, disaccord, discord, discordance, dissension, dissent, dissentience, dissidence, dissonance, faction, friction, inharmony, schism, strife, variance, war, warfare. The American Heritage® Roget's Thesaurus. Copyright © 2013, 2014 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. (dĭf′ər-əns)1. The amount by which one number or quantity is greater or less than another. The difference between 10 and 15, for example, is 5.2. The amount remaining after one number or quantity is subtracted from another. In the equation 15 - 10 = 5, 5 is the difference.The American Heritage® Student Science Dictionary, Second Edition. Copyright © 2014 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. – distinction1. 'difference'The difference between things is the way or ways in which they are not the same.Is there much difference between British and European law?There are many differences between computers and humans.If something makes a difference to a situation, it affects it, usually in a positive way. If something makes no difference to a situation, it doesn't affect it.The training certainly made a difference to staff performance.The story about her past made no difference to his feelings for her.2. 'distinction'If someone points out that two things are different, don't say that they 'make a difference' between the things. You say that they make a distinction or draw a distinction between them.It is important to make a distinction between claimants who are over retirement age and those who are not.He draws a