

hamper, *v.*1

Pronunciation: [?] Brit. /'hampə/, U.S. /'hæmpər/

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: Occurs first c1350, in northern writers; actual origin uncertain; possibly from a radical *ham-* (? *hamm-*), found in Icelandic *həmja*, past tense *hamdi* to restrain, hold back from roving, German *hemmen*, Middle High German *hēmnen*, Middle German *hamen* to restrain, clog, hamper: see Kluge. The ending is that of a frequentative or diminutive; but the phonology is obscure.

1.

a. transitive. To obstruct the free movement of (a person or animal), by fastening something on, or by material obstacles or entanglements; to fasten, bind, fetter, shackle, clog; to entangle, catch (*in* something).

- a1375 (†c1350) *William of Palerne* (1867) l. 1115 Hampres him so harde, to sum cost þat he drawe.
1480 W. CAXTON *Chron. Eng.* ccxxiii. 220 We be now y lodged bytwene our enemyes and yf they mowe vs hampre ther is no bote but deth.
?1562 *Thersytes* sig. A.iv I will hamper some of the knaves in a brydle.
1600 J. PORY tr. J. Leo Africanus *Geogr. Hist. Afr.* II. 418 They passe the nights in prisons..hampered and yoaked together like brute beasts.
1642 J. MILTON *Apol. Smectymnuus* 13 Not contented to be caught in every other gin, but he must be such a novice, as to be still hamper'd in his owne hempe.
1725 D. DEFOE *New Voy. round World* II. 184 He caused them to be hamper'd with Ropes and tied together.
1749 *Acct. Voy. for Discov. North-west Passage* II. 231 At five we engaged with Ice..and were hampered in it until eleven.
1873 G. C. DAVIES *Mountain, Meadow & Mere* ii. 11 The Carp were hampered in the rushes.

†**b.** To restrain by confinement.

- c1440 *Bone Flor.* 1175 Syt Emere..hamperde hym in hys holde.
1488 (†c1478) HARY *Actis & Deidis Schir William Wallace* (Adv.) (1968–9) VII. l. 446 Mad folk with fyr hampryt in mony hauld.
1582 R. STANYHURST tr. Virgil *First Foure Bookes Æneis* I. 2 Where blusterus huzing Of wynds in Prison thee great king Æolus hampreth.

c. To derange (a lock or other mechanism) so as to impede its working.

- 1804 S. LEE *Life of a Lover* VI. 264 I hampered the lock of the library door, so that I might be secure of interrupting those who should resort thither.
1860 W. COLLINS *Woman in White* III. x. 405 He has hampered the lock.

2. figurative and gen. To impede or obstruct in action: †(*a*) to restrain, fetter (*obsolete*); (*b*) to entangle, encumber, or embarrass, with obstacles or difficulties (now the common use).

- ?a1366 *Romaunt Rose* 1493 That proude hertid Narcisus..Myght on a day ben hampred so For love.
a1375 (•c1350) *William of Palerne* (1867) l. 668 So loue now me hampris.
a1375 (•c1350) *William of Palerne* (1867) l. 441 Pat barne, For wham myn hert is so hampered.
c1485 *Digby Myst.* (1882) III. 722 I am hampord with hate!
1548 N. UDALL et al. tr. Erasmus *Paraphr. Neue Test.* I. Luke xxiv. (R.) To snibbe and hamper the hardenese of herte that reigned in the people.
1612 W. SYMONDS *Proc. Eng. Colonie Virginia* iv. 24 in J. Smith *Map of Virginia* He so hampered their insolencies that they brought the 2. prisoners.
1654 J. TRAPP *Comm. Psalms* xxxiv. 13 The Tongue is an unruly member, and can hardly be hampered.
1794 R. B. SHERIDAN *Duenna* (new ed.) I. 28 If I could hamper him with this girl.
1812 DUKE OF WELLINGTON *Let. to Earl of Liverpool* 27 Mar. in *Dispatches* (1838) IX. 14 I believe no officer at the head of an army was ever so hampered.
1843 J. RUSKIN *Mod. Painters* I. 50 I do not mean..to hamper myself with any fine-spun theory.
1878 R. B. SMITH *Carthage* 296 The duty of protecting her had often seriously hampered his movements.
1891 E. A. FREEMAN *Sketches Fr. Trav.* 117 The builder was hampered by the existence of aisles.

3. To tie up together, pack up; to put together into one bundle or parcel.
(Cf. also HAMPER *v.*³ 2.)

- c1400 (•?c1380) *Cleanness* l. 1284 Þe golde of þe gazafylace..Wyth alle þe vrnmentes of þat hous, he hamppred togeder.
1890 'R. BOLDREWOOD' *Colonial Reformer* (1891) 198 The unconsidered trifles counted, priced, or hampered up together.

†**4. figurative (with up)** To fasten up, make fast. *Obsolete.*

- a1592 R. GREENE *Frier Bacon* (1594) sig. D2 To auoid insuing iarres, Ile hamper vp the match, Ile..wed you heere.

DERIVATIVES

'hampering *n.* and *adj.*

- 1812 L. HUNT in *Examiner* 21 Sept. 595/1 Fresh hamperings..with a new ally.
1861 G. WILSON & A. GEIKIE *Mem. E. Forbes* ii. 40 No hampering pecuniary restrictions were laid upon him in his early days.

'hamperer *n.* one who or that which hampers.

- a1837 in J. G. Lockhart *Mem. Life Scott* (1839) V. xli. 352 (*note*) Tis a sad hamperer of genius.

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hamper, *v.*2

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: Derivation obscure.

Previous versions of the OED give the stress as: 'hamper.

Obsolete exc. dialect.

To strike, beat. (*transitive and intransitive.*)

*a*1529 J. SKELTON *Ware the Hauke* (1843) 325 Masyd, wytles, merry smyth, Hampar with your hammer, upon thy styth.

*a*1592 R. GREENE *Frier Bacon* (1594) sig. D4 Out with your blades, and hamper these iades.

1828 W. CARR *Dial. Craven* (ed. 2) Hamper, to beat.

1847–78 J. O. HALLIWELL *Dict. Archaic & Provinc. Words* Hamper, to beat. *North*.

hamper, *v.* 3

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < HAMPER *n.*¹: compare the following passage in which there is a wordplay on the noun:...

1. transitive. To load with hampers; to present with a hamper (*humorous*).

- 1725 N. BAILEY tr. Erasmus *All Familiar Colloquies* 459 One Ass will carry at least three thousand such Books; and I am persuaded you would be able to carry as many your self, if you were well hampered.
- 1838 E. P. BRENTON *Life Earl of St. Vincent* II. ix. 155 It was a common expression with the receiving clerks in the dock yards, to say that 'they had not been hampered', as a reason for refusing to receive inferior articles into store..The 'hampering' meant a bribe in the shape of a hamper of wine [etc].
- 1894 *Westm. Gaz.* 13 Dec. 3/3 There is something particularly charming in being 'hampered' at Christmas-time.

2. To pack in a hamper. (Cf. also HAMPER *v.*¹ 3.)

- 1775 J. ASH *New Dict. Eng. Lang.* *Hamper*..to put up in a hamper.
- 1846 in J. E. Worcester *Universal Dict. Eng. Lang.*