

## danger, *n.* and *adj.*

**Pronunciation:** <sup>?</sup> Brit. /'deɪn(d)ʒə/, U.S. /'deɪndʒər/

**Forms:** Middle English–1500s **daunger**, Middle English **daungere**, **dawnger(e)**, **dangere**, Middle English **daungeur**, **dangeour**, Middle English–1500s **daungeour(e)**, 1500s **daungier**, **daungioure**, **daengier**, *Scottish* **dangeir**, **dangier**, **dangeare**, **denger**, Middle English– **danger**.

**Frequency (in current use):**

**Origin:** A borrowing from French. **Etymon:** French *dangier*.

**Etymology:** < Old French *dangier*, *danger* < late Latin \**dominiārium*, derivative of *dominium* lordship, sovereignty, < *dominus* lord, master. The sense-development took place in Old French: see Godefroy. For the *a* compare DAN *n.*<sup>1</sup>

### A. *n.*

#### 1.

†**a.** Power of a lord or master, jurisdiction, dominion; power to dispose of, or to hurt or harm; *esp.* in **in (a person's) danger**, within his power or at his mercy; sometimes meaning *spec.* in his debt, or under obligation to him. *Obsolete* or *archaic*.

?c1225 (▶ ?a1200) *Ancrene Riwe* (Cleo. C.vi) (1972) 263 & þolieð ofte danger. of swich oðerhwile þe muchte beon ower þral.

1297 *R. Gloucester's Chron.* (Rolls) 1751 Ðat he wolde hom al out bringe of þe daunger of rome.

c1405 (▶ c1387–95) G. CHAUCER *Canterbury Tales Prol.* (Hengwrt) (2003) l. 663 In daunger hadde he att his owene gyse The yonge gerles of the diocise.

1440 J. SHIRLEY *Cron. Dethe James Stewarde* (1818) 19 Thou hadest nevyr mercy of lordes..ne of non other gentilman, that came yn thy dawnger.

1461 W. LOMNOR in *Paston Lett. & Papers* (2004) II. 241 I am gretly yn your danger and dette for my pension.

1556 *Ridley's Wks.* (1843) 101 They put themselves in the danger of King Ahab, saying, 'Behold we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are pitiful and merciful'.

1600 W. SHAKESPEARE *Merchant of Venice* IV. i. 177 You stand within his danger, doe you not.

1603 R. KNOLLES *Gen. Hist. Turkes* 408 He..hauing got him within his danger, cruelly put him to death.

?1637 T. HOBBS tr. Aristotle *Briefe Art Rhetorique* I. xiii. 50 Persons obnoxious to Injury are..Such as are in our danger.

1825 W. SCOTT *Betrothed* xiv, in *Tales Crusaders* II. 293 If the Constable were once within his danger.

†**b.** Power (of a person, weapon, or missile) to inflict physical injury; reach or range. Also *figurative*.

1489 (▶ a1380) J. BARBOUR *Bruce* (Adv.) III. 43 To withdraw ws..Till we cum owt off yar daunger.

1523 LD. BERNERS tr. J. Froissart *Cronycles* I. clxii. 199 The archers shotte so holly togyder, that none durst come in their dangers.

- 1576 T. NEWTON tr. L. Lemnie *Touchstone of Complexions* i. iii. f. 25 Wythin the leuell and daunger of this vice, are al they [etc.].
- 1603 R. KNOLLES *Gen. Hist. Turkes* 679 If he should shew himself by troupes within the danger of the shot.
- 1604 W. SHAKESPEARE *Hamlet* I. iii. 35 Keepe you in the reare of your affection Out of the shot and danger of desire.
- 1618 S. LATHAM *New & 2nd Bk. Falconrie* xii. 42 Your Spaniels will hunt..so neere you and your Hawke, as they shall neuer spring any thing out of her danger.
- 1676 *Doctr. of Devils* 200 This draws the Birds into their Dangers.

†c. Power of another as it affects one under it; a state of subjection, bondage, or captivity. *Obsolete.*

- a1375 (▷ c1350) *William of Palerne* (1867) l. 4227 Boute daunger or duresse or any despit elles.
- c1420 *Anturs of Arth.* xxv Thyneke one þe dawngere and the dole þat I in duelle [in hell].
- 1526 W. BONDE *Pylgrimage of Perfection* I. sig. Bii<sup>v</sup> Fre from all captiuite & daunger.
- 1535 *Bible (Coverdale)* Isa. lviii. B Till..thou lowse him out of bondage, that is in thy daunger.
- c1540 (▷ ?a1400) *Destr. Troy* 6584 Troilus was..turnyt furth louse, And don out of daunger for the due tyme.

†d. Liability (to loss, punishment, etc.). **in danger to or of**: liable to. *Obsolete.*

- 1377 W. LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* B. XII. 206 For he þat is ones a thef is euermore in daungere, And as lawe lyketh to lyue or to deye.
- 1465 J. RISING in *Paston Lett. & Papers* (2004) II. 309 Thei say that I am sufficient to bere the hole daunger.
- 1526 W. TYNDALE *Pathway Holy Script.* in *Wks.* (1848) I. 9 The wretched man (that knoweth himself to be..in danger to death and hell).
- 1611 *Bible (King James)* Matt. v. 22 In danger of the iudgment.
- 1689 A. WOOD *Life* Aug. 31 (Oxf. Hist. Soc.) A Gent. threatned to bring him into danger.

e. The phrase **out of debt out of danger** perhaps originally belonged here; but is now taken in sense A. 4.

- 1736 N. BAILEY et al. *Dictionarium Britannicum* (ed. 2) at *Debt* Out of Debt out of Danger.
- 1804 M. EDGEWORTH *Pop. Tales* I. 311 (*title*) Out of debt out of danger.

†2.

a. Difficulty (made or raised); hesitation, reluctance, chariness, stint, grudging; coyness. **to make danger** [ < Old French *faire dangier (de)* ] : to make a difficulty (about doing anything). *Obsolete.*

- c1290 *S. Eng. Leg.* I. 397/155 Sein eustas made gret daunger & natheles ate nende to þe emperour..he gan wende.
- c1386 G. CHAUCER *Wife of Bath's Prol.* 521 With danger uttren we all our chaffare.
- c1400 *Rom. Rose* 1147 Gold and silver for to dispend Withouten lacking or daungere.

c1440 W. HYLTON *Scala Perfectionis* (1494) II. x And our lorde made fyrste daungeour by cause she was an alyene.

1487 ( ▶ a1380) J. BARBOUR *Bruce* (St. John's Cambr.) v. 283 He but danger till him gais.

c1500 *Melusine* (1895) 219 They of Coloyne made grete daunger to lete passe the oost thurgh the Cite at brydge.

1526 A. DALABER in J. FOXE *Actes & Monuments* (1570) 1368/2 I made daunger of it a while at first, but afterward beyng persuaded by them..I promised to do as they would haue me.

### **b. Untowardness; ungracious, uncompliant, or fractious conduct.**

*Obsolete.*

c1374 G. CHAUCER *Anelida & Arcite* 186 Hir daunger made him boope bowe and beende And as hir lyste made him tourne and wende.

a1400 ( ▶ a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 6299 Wit þair danger, sir moyses [*Trin. Cambr.* wiþ her grucchyng on moyses], Oft þai did him haue malees.

### **†3. A place where one is at the mercy of an enemy; a narrow pass; a strait.**

*Obsolete.*

1393 J. GOWER *Confessio Amantis* III. 208 In the daunger of a pas, Through which this tiraunt shulde pas She shope his power to compas.

c1440 *Promptorium Parvulorum* 114 Daunger, or grete [ Pynson streyte] passage, *arta via*.

## **4.**

### **a. Liability or exposure to harm or injury; the condition of being exposed to the chance of evil; risk, peril. (Directly from sense A. 1; see esp. A. 1d.**

Now the main sense.)

1490 W. CAXTON tr. *Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1885) xiv. 352 There is dangeour by cause of the nyghte.

c1515 LD. BERNERS tr. *Bk. Duke Huon of Burdeux* (1882–7) lxxxii. 253 Esclaramonde saw Huon her housebonde in that daunger.

1549 *Bk. Common Prayer* (STC 16267) Svpper of the Lorde f. cxxiii So is the daunger great, if wee receyue the same vnworthely.

1620 T. SHELTON tr. M. de Cervantes *Don Quixote* III. xli. 280 'Tis ordinarily said that Delay breeds Danger.

1789 A. DUNCAN *Mariner's Chron.* (1805) IV. 44 The sea running immensely high, it brought them again into great danger.

1822 W. HAZLITT *Table-talk* I. ix. 187 Danger is a good teacher, and makes apt scholars.

1874 J. T. MICKLETHWAITE *Mod. Parish Churches* 186 It is also a source of danger to the building.

### **b. Const. (a) of that which is exposed to peril. (Now rare or archaic except with *life*.) (b) of the evil that threatens or impends. (Now the ordinary const.) †(c) to with *infinitive*. *Obsolete.***

1490 W. CAXTON tr. *Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1885) xxii. 479 Elles they ben in daungeur of their lives.

1555 R. EDEN in tr. Peter Martyr of Angleria *Decades of Newe Worlde* Pref. sig. aiiij The Moores..possessed a greate parte of Spayne to no smaule daungiore of the hole Christian Empire.

- c1676 LADY CHAWORTH in *12th Rep. Royal Comm. Hist. MSS* (1890) App. v. 32 Lord Mohun..was four days in danger of lyfe but now is upon recovery.
- 1726 G. LEONI tr. L. B. Alberti *Architecture* II. 105 b In gravel..there is no danger of finding water.
- 1894 *N.E.D.* at *Danger* *Mod.* He goes in danger of his life.
- 1490 W. CAXTON tr. *Eneydos* vi. 29 In dangeour of myserable deth.
- 1690 J. LOCKE *Two Treat. Govt.* II. xiv. §168 This..wise Princes never need come in the Danger of.
- 1715 J. RICHARDSON *Ess. Theory of Painting* 128 There was no danger of that in Rafaëlle.
- 1849 T. B. MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* I. 373 They lost their way..and were in danger of having to pass the night on the plain.
- 1579 T. NORTH tr. Plutarch *Liues* 18 In daunger to dye.
- 1611 M. SMITH in *Bible (King James)* Transl. Pref. 1 Sure to be misconstrued, and in danger to be condemned.
- 1695 S. PATRICK *Comm. Genesis* 293 It might have been in danger to have been neglected.

**c. spec. on Railways.** Risk in a train's proceeding owing to an obstruction, etc. on the line; the position of a signal indicating this.

- 1841 *Rep. Sel. Comm. Prevention Accidents Railways* 34 in *Parl. Papers* VIII. 1 You think it would be desirable that on all railways red should indicate danger?
- 1874 *Proc. Inst. Civil Engineers* **38** 149 A signal is said to be 'on', when it is at danger.

**5.**

**a. (with a and plural)** An instance or cause of danger; *plural* perils, risks.

- a1538 T. STARKEY *Dial. Pole & Lupset* (1989) 29 Ful of manyfold peryllys & daungerys.
- 1569 R. GRAFTON *Chron.* II. 25 To commit themselues vnto the daungers of the sea.
- 1859 A. HELPS *Friends in Council* New Ser. I. Addr. to Rdr. 3 Blind to the dangers of their country.
- 1884 *Times* (Weekly ed.) 5 Sept. 3/2 Two territorial questions..unsettled..each of which was a positive danger to the peace of Europe.

**b. Nautical.** A submerged rock, or the like, causing danger to vessels.

- 1699 W. HACKE *Coll. Orig. Voy.* iii. 59 At three quarters Ebb, you may see all the Dangers going in..But I would not advise any Man to go in till he has viewed the Harbour at low Water.
- 1858 *Mercantile Marine Mag.* **5** 347 It appeared to him to be a detached danger, 6 or 9 feet under the surface.
- 1874 F. G. D. BEDFORD *Sailor's Pocket Bk.* v. 109 Buoys painted red and black are placed on detached dangers.

**†6. Mischief, harm, damage. Obsolete.**

- 1530 J. PALSGRAVE *Lesclarcissement* 212/1 Daunger on the see, *naufraige*.
- c1540 (▷ ?a1400) *Destr. Troy* 146 And he no daunger nor deire for þat dede haue.
- 1569 R. GRAFTON *Chron.* II. 277 Then the king of his mere pity..suffered them to passe through his hoste without daunger.

1600 W. SHAKESPEARE *Merchant of Venice* IV. i. 37 If you deny it, let the danger light vpon your charter.

a1616 W. SHAKESPEARE *Julius Caesar* (1623) II. i. 17 We put a Sting in him, That at his will he may doe danger with.

†7. The lordship over a forest; the rent paid in acknowledgement of this (so Old French *dangier*). ‘In the Forest-Law, a duty paid by the Tenants to the Lord for leave to plough and sow in the time of Pannage, or Mast-feeding’ (Phillips 1706). *Obsolete*.

1693 *Philos. Trans.* (Royal Soc.) 17 691 He ends this Treatise with an Enumeration of the Quit-rents formerly paid out of the Weald, as *Gavel-swine*, *Scot-ale*, *Corredy*, and *Danger*.

†8. **to make danger**: in 17th cent. used in sense of Latin *periculum facere*, to make trial or experiment; to venture, ‘risk it’. *Obsolete*.

Perhaps the phrase in sense A. 2 taken in a new sense.

a1625 J. FLETCHER *Loyal Subj.* III. iv, in F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher *Comedies & Trag.* (1647) sig. Eee3<sup>v</sup> Make danger, Trie what they are, trie.

a1625 J. FLETCHER *Wild-goose Chase* (1652) I. ii. 6 I shall make danger.

a1625 J. FLETCHER *Humorous Lieut.* IV. ii, in F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher *Comedies & Trag.* (1647) 138/2 *Leon*. Art thou so valiant? *Lieu*. Not absolutely so neither..Yet I’le make danger, Collonel.

†B. *adj.*

Dangerous, perilous. *Obsolete. rare*.

1488 (▷ c1478) HARY *Actis & Deidis Schir William Wallace* (Adv.) (1968–9) VIII. l. 202 We are our ner sic purpos for to tak; A danger chace thai mycht vpon ws mak.

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## COMPOUNDS

C1. General *attributive* (cf. sense A. 4.)

a.

**danger-area** *n.*

1929 *Star* 21 Aug. 12/4 The gas leak..which made a portion of New Bridge-street a ‘danger area’.

1939 *News Rev.* 30 Nov. 10 Sandringham is a ‘danger area’ inasmuch as the East coast..might well be the route taken by German bombers on their way to London.

1955 A. L. ROWSE *Expansion of Elizabethan Eng.* i. 12 We get flashes of light upon the lurid scene from the comparative security of the towns..which swept like a sickle around the danger-area.

**danger-board** *n.*

1891 *Cycling* 21 Feb. 86 The local centre is about to erect a danger-board on Maur Tor Hill.

**danger-chuckle** *n.* (see 1859.)

1859 C. DARWIN *Origin of Species* vii. 216 If the hen gives the danger-chuckle, they all run.

**danger-flag** *n.*

1862 *Athenæum* 31 May 717 The danger-flag held out to warn their children off the road.

**danger-level** *n.*

1935 *Discovery* Dec. 360/2 A simple timing device will indicate whether this approaches the danger-level.

1967 *Oxf. Computer Explained* 31 *Danger level*, a predetermined level of stock, which when broken requires that any outstanding delivery previously requested be hastened.

**danger-point** *n.*

1835 J. A. ROEBUCK *Short Rev. Long Session* 11/1 When this excitement reaches danger-point the Lords will yield.

1897 *Daily News* 22 Apr. 6/3 The Macedonian difficulty, which is the real danger-point.

1910 *Westm. Gaz.* 6 Apr. 2/3 The axle is the danger-point in all heavy vehicles which are run at high speeds.

1933 *Archit. Rev.* 73 p. lviii Such nosings..are apt to wear smooth..and furnish a danger-point at a critical part of the tread.

**danger-spot** *n.*

1905 *Westm. Gaz.* 4 Oct. 3/2 The danger-spot in our new Treaty with Japan..is the provision for 'insuring the independence and integrity of the Chinese Empire'.

1939 L. MACNEICE *Autumn Jrnl.* xii. 49 Education..Trains us to keep the roads nor reconnoitre..the beauty-spots or danger-spots.

**danger-whistle** *n.*

1872 J. RUSKIN *Eagle's Nest* 61 The danger-whistle of the engines on the bridge.

**danger-zone** *n.*

1907 *Westm. Gaz.* 5 Feb. 7/3 An alarming fire broke out in the City danger-zone soon after six o'clock last night.

1925 J. G. BRUCE in E. F. Norton et al. *Fight for Everest: 1924* 58 Anywhere beyond the Base Camp may be considered as the 'danger zone'.

1927 *Observer* 5 June 19/2 The chief new feature [of contract bridge] introduced in America has been what is known as the 'Vulnerable' or 'Danger Zone'.

1928 V. WOLF in *Times Lit. Suppl.* 19 Jan. 34/1 Let us, as we approach the danger-zone of Hardy's philosophy, be on our guard.

- 1954 A. J. P. TAYLOR *Struggle for Mastery* xvii. 373 He and his advisers recognized that there was a 'danger-zone', an imaginary period when the British might suspect German designs and destroy her navy before it could hold its own.
- 1969 *New Yorker* 14 June 44/1 Ashe and Clark Graebner have long since entered the danger zone where any major mistake can mean the loss of the set.

**b.**

**danger-free** *adj.*

- 1640 J. SHIRLEY *St. Patrick* v. sig. I2<sup>v</sup> And make thy person danger-free.

**danger-teaching** *n.*

- 1616 J. LANE *Contin. Squire's Tale* 120/47 Fames highe daunger-teachinge schoole.

**C2.**

**danger angle** *n.* (a) *Nautical* the angle enclosed by lines drawn from two known points to a point marking the limit of safe approach to a danger to navigation, so that a ship by steering a course keeping the two known points at a larger or smaller angle will avoid the danger; (b) *Gunnery* (see quot. 1918).

- 1892 *Notes on Navigation H.M. Ships* (ed. 3) 13 The use of a danger angle in passing outlying rocks with land behind should also not be forgotten.
- 1902 *Encycl. Brit.* XXXI. 109/2 To avoid an unnecessarily wide détour in rounding points and shoals, extensive use is now made of both horizontal and vertical danger angles.
- 1902 *Encycl. Brit.* XXXI. 109/2 The vertical danger angle enables similar results to be attained by measuring the vertical angle subtended by a known height.
- 1918 E. S. FARROW *Dict. Mil. Terms* *Danger angle*, the angle which the tangent to the trajectory at the point of splash makes with the plane containing the point of splash and parallel to the horizontal plane through the muzzle of the piece in the firing position.

**danger building** *n.* *British* (now *historical*) (at Woolwich Arsenal) a building in which are carried on the most dangerous operations in making ammunitions.

- 1899 *Daily News* 8 June 3/4 The Danger Buildings, East Laboratory, Woolwich Arsenal.
- 1903 *Westm. Gaz.* 22 June 7/3 Timekeeper in the danger building.

**danger line** *n.* a line, real or imaginary, representing the division between safety and danger.

- 1890 *Congress. Rec.* 5 June 5654/2 I believe the good sense of our law-makers will still hold us inside the danger line of peril.
- 1892 *Notes on Navigation H.M. Ships* (ed. 3) 8 The five-fathom line on most Admiralty charts is to be considered as a caution or danger line.

- 1902 *Monthly Weather Rev. (U.S.)* 30 3/1 The December floods of the Tennessee..continued considerably above the danger lines for the first few days.
- 1953 L. P. HARTLEY *Go-between* xiv. 167 Again I was lucky with the Psalms; the Sunday before there had been forty-four verses; this Sunday there were forty-three, seven below the danger line.

**danger man** *n.* a player or competitor in a sports contest regarded as posing a serious threat to the opposition; one capable of winning or turning a game.

- 1976 *Sunday Mail (Glasgow)* 28 Nov. 44/7 Musselburgh went in at half-time two goals up after Aird had scored from a penalty and danger man Blackie added another.
- 1980 *Guardian Weekly* 5 Oct. 24 He had to wait nearly an hour before he knew that his total of 269 would be good enough... Bernhard Langer of Germany, Severiano Ballesteros, Brian Waites and Lee Trevino all loomed as danger men.

**danger money** *n.* a payment made beyond basic wages for dangerous work; also *figurative*.

- 1942 W. H. BEVERIDGE *Social Insurance* 39 If an occupation is specially hazardous it should carry remuneration—'danger money'. But to give danger money only in the form of higher wages, that is to say, only so long as no accident has occurred, is of little value.
- 1953 B. BOLAND *Return in Plays of Year IX.* 341 There is nothing on this earth so dangerous as putting out a finger to touch another human being's life... We should get danger-money.
- 1958 *Economist* 15 Nov. 573/2 It means..adding a new regiment of Naafi volunteers, with their 'danger money', to the British men and women who will have to be protected.
- 1966 *Punch* 19 Jan. 90/1 It may be that the rage for allowances was originally inspired by the dockers, with their claims for danger money, dirty money,..and all the rest.

**danger-signal** *n.* a signal indicating danger; *spec. on Railways*, a signal (usually the extended arm of a signal-post painted red, or a red light) indicating an obstruction, etc. ahead.

- 1848 *Rep. Railway Commissioners* App. 84 The pointsman had not then turned the danger signal.
- 1856 *Times* 25 Feb. 6/6 Apparently heedless of..the danger signal turned on at the semaphore against the platform of the passenger station, the driver shot past with his train.
- 1888 'J. SHALLOW' *Templars Trials* 71 A danger-signal to Christendom.

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## PHRASES

Colloquial phr. **(to be) on the danger list:** (to be) dangerously ill (as of a patient in hospital).

- 1938 S. PUDEK (*title*) On the danger list. A case history.
- 1950 C. MACINNES *To Victors the Spoils* III. 346 I asked them what they thought of the men on the danger list.

- 1960 E. H. CLEMENTS *Honey for Marshal* xi. 184 The fellow wasn't on the danger list any more... He could have come up by ambulance.
- 1970 *Times* 16 Feb. 3/8 Five patients on the danger list were slightly better, the hospital said.

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**DRAFT ADDITIONS JUNE 2022**

**danger sign** *n.* a sign indicating a potential danger or hazard, *esp.* any of a category of public signage with vividly coloured pictograms depicting the nature of the hazard (see quot. 2007); (often *figurative*) an indication that a bad or dangerous situation or event is likely to develop or occur; cf. *warning sign n.*

- 1860 *Morning Post* 22 Nov. 2/4 I thought it was strange that I did not hear it [*sc.* the whistle of a train approaching a station], because the danger sign of the main signal was on.
- 1886 *Galveston (Texas) Daily News* 7 Nov. 7/4 His nomination and vote are danger signs of which the conservative and constitution-loving people of the Union should take notice.
- 1918 *Pop. Sci. Monthly* Nov. 48/1 It has been suggested that a universal danger sign be adopted—one that will be recognized immediately by any person of any nationality.
- 1996 T. BARNES *Dealing with Depression* Introd. 15 [The book] will help you to recognise the..symptoms of despairing behaviour... You may then find yourself in a position to see the danger signs approaching and to take evasive or self-protective action.
- 2007 *Global Broadcast Database* (Nexis) 8 Jan. A danger sign near the top of the cliff warns of unstable and slippery surfaces.

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This entry has not yet been fully updated (first published 1894; most recently modified version published online December 2022).