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## release, *v.*<sup>1</sup>

**Pronunciation:** Brit. /rɪˈliːs/, U.S. /rəˈlis/

### Forms:

α. eME **relesi** (*south-west midl.*), ME **reales**, ME **releece**, ME **relees**, ME **relesse**, ME **releteþ** (3rd singular present indicative, transmission error), ME–15 **relese**, ME–16 **relece**, ME–16 **reles**, ME–16 **relese**, ME–16 **relesse**, 15 **relese**; Sc. pre-17 **releis**, pre-17 **releisce**, pre-17 **relesse**, pre-17 **relese**, pre-17 **releuis**.

β. ME **releische**, ME **relenxe** (perhaps transmission error), ME **relesch**, ME **relesche**, ME **releshe** (in a late copy), ME **relesshe**, ME **releysche**, 15 **reyleysche**; Sc. pre-17 **ralesche**, pre-17 **relech**, pre-17 **releisch**, pre-17 **relesch**, pre-17 **relesche**.

γ. lME–15 **releace**, lME–16 **releas**, lME– **releace**, 15 **releause**, 15–16 **realease**, 15–16 **releasse**; Sc. pre-17 **relais**, pre-17 **relase**, pre-17 **releace**, pre-17 17– **releace**.

### Frequency (in current use):

**Origin:** A borrowing from French. **Etymons:** French *releaser*, *relesser*.

**Etymology:** < Anglo-Norman *releaser*, *releser*, *relescer*, *releiser*, *releisser*, *releissier*, etc., Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French *relesser*, *relaisser*, etc. (French *relaisser* : see below) to leave, quit, abandon (c1160 in Old French as *relaissier*), to pass over (second half of the 12th cent. or earlier in Anglo-Norman), to neglect, to overlook, to forgive in one's turn (all early 13th cent. or earlier in Anglo-Norman), to dispense (from) (c1224), to remit (c1230), to relax (mid 13th cent. or earlier in Anglo-Norman), to set free (1267), to revoke, cancel (a sentence, punishment, condition, etc.), to forgive, to cease (all late 13th cent. or earlier in Anglo-Norman), to take off, deduct, to renounce, relinquish, to transfer to another, to waive (all early 14th cent. or earlier in Anglo-Norman), to dismiss from office (1350), to release, hand back (to) (a1377 or earlier in Anglo-Norman) < *re-* RE- *prefix* + *laisser*, *laissier*, etc. LEASE *v.*<sup>3</sup> Compare post-classical Latin *relessare* (c1228 in a British source), Old Occitan *relaisar*. Compare also classical Latin *relaxāre* RELAX *v.*

French *relaisser* is now only attested in reflexive use as a hunting term in sense '(of a pursued and exhausted animal) to stop, to hide in the undergrowth' (1559 in Middle French in this sense).

**I.** To withdraw, recall, remit. Now chiefly *Law*.

**1.** *trans.*

**a.** To accept or grant discharge of (a debt, tax, etc.); to treat as settled.

Now chiefly *Law*.

Formerly also: to grant (such a settlement) *to* a person.

a1325 *Statutes of Realm* (2011) xlii. 110 Ant for þat to more del of þe communaute of þe londe velez hoem harde igreuede for þe maletoute of wolle, þat is to wite, of eueri sak xl sillinges, ant habbez bisouȝt vs, þat we hit wolden releessen, we þoru hoere biddinge plenerliche hit habbez releessed.

► c1384 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(2)) (1850) 1 Macc. xiii. 37 We..ben redy for to make with ȝou grete pees, and for to..relese [*v.r.* relesen; a1425 *L.V.* releesse; *L. remittere*] to ȝou what thingus we forȝauen.

► a1387 *J. TREVISA* tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (St. John's Cambr.) (1872) IV. 107 He..relesede [*v.rr.* relesched, relecede; ?a1475 anon. tr. ȝafe to hym a releische of; *L. relaxavit*] half þe tribute þat was

woned to be payde.

- 1426 in E. F. Jacob & H. C. Johnson *Reg. Henry Chichele* (1937) II. 340 (MED) I relese to the parysshenes of Stanwell vij li. whiche they owe me..for the grete belle in the chirche.
- ▶ a1439 LYDGATE *Fall of Princes* (Bodl. 263) II. 692 (MED) Thei..Off ther tributis for to be releued, Besouhte he wolde relece hem in ther neede.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. cccxxvij<sup>v</sup> The daye before he died, he released the customes which he had imposed vpon Saltpits.
- 1581 *Compendious Exam. Certayne Ordinary Complaints* ii. f. 18 If..you should release your rent..to the olde rate.
- 1603 R. JOHNSON tr. G. Botero *Hist. Descr. Worlde* 115 A tribute which Leo the 9. did release to the church of Bamburgh.
- 1647 N. BACON *Hist. Disc. Govt.* 189 He not onely never charged the people with any tax, but released that of Dane-guelt.
- 1726 *Cases High Court Chancery* I. 22 If a Copyholder pays a Rent to the Lord, and the Lord grants or releases this Rent to his Tenant, this shall Merge in the Copyhold.
- 1791 S. KYD *Treat. Law of Awards* iv. 87 If..one of the parties should release a debt due to the partnership, that would be a breach of the award.
- 1809 R. LANGFORD *Intrad. Trade* 108 I, A. B...having remitted, released, and for ever quit claim to C. D...of all..dues [and] duties.
- 1885 *Law Rep.: Queen's Bench Div.* 14 191 [One] who was competent to do so might have released the debt.
- 1912 *Times* 31 Jan. 3 It was argued that..the appointment of Mr. Moore as executor released the debt at law.
- 2006 *Consumer Bankruptcy News* (Nexis) 26 Oct. The debtors owed a first and second mortgage to the same lender. When they paid off the second mortgage, the lender accidentally released the first mortgage.

## b. To grant remission or discharge of (a vow, task, or similar obligation).

Now chiefly *hist.*

- c1350 (▶ a1333) WILLIAM OF SHOREHAM *Poems* (1902) 63 3ef man of religion..Ouer tyme of professioun [perh. read probacioun] Heldeþ hym þrynne style, Relessed Schel hym nauȝt be religioun, Þaȝ he be nauȝt professed.
- c1405 (▶ c1395) CHAUCER *Clerk's Tale* (Hengwrt) l. 153 But ther as ye han profred me..To chese me a wyf I yow relese That choys and pray yow of that profre cesse.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. cccxliii<sup>v</sup> He may impose such satisfaction as behoueth, and may release all voves, except chastity and Religion.
- 1686 J. GOTHER *Papist Mis-represented* (new ed.) xix. 104 Let him shew then, how the Pope comes to have a Power to release a Vow made to God.
- 1771 E. GRIFFITH *Hist. Lady Barton* III. lxvi. 186 I passed my word to her not to attempt my life, and I have..waited till..sorrow..shall release my promise, and lay me gently in the silent grave.
- 1828 *Deb. Congr. U.S.* 30 Jan. IV. 209 It cannot be pretended that the acceptance..would have operated to release the obligation imposed upon the Government by the resolution of 1780.
- 1972 Z. W. FALK *Intrad. Jewish Law* I. 23 A person who swore off anything would generally ask a scholar to release the vow.

1994 R. HORROX *Black Death* 80 Those [landowners] whose tenants held by the year, by the performance of labour services,..found that they had to release and remit such works.

†c. To remit (a sin, injury); to undo (a wrong); to treat as forgiven. Also occasionally *intr. Obs.*

- c1405 ( ▶ c1390) CHAUCER *Parson's Tale* (Ellesmere) (1877) §582 Thilke synne is so greet that vnnethe may it been releessed [c1415 *Lansd.* relest].
- a1425 ( ▶ c1395) *Bible* (Wycliffite, L.V.) (Royal) (1850) Ecclus. xxviii. 2 Forȝyue thou to thi neiȝbore..thanne synnes schulen be releesid [L. *solventur*] to thee preiynge.
- c1450 *Speculum Christiani* (Harl. 6580) 214 Synnes be releced [1425 *Lansd.* laxantur] or wyth-draw seuen maner wyse.
- c1475 *Wisdom* (Folg.) 967 All þe preyer þat seyde be kan, Wythowt sorowe of hert relesyt nought.
- 1548 N. UDALL et al. tr. Erasmus *Paraphr. Newe Test.* I. Mark iv. f. 32 Nowe sinnes are not released, but to suche as beleue that sins are freely released.
- 1574 A. GOLDING tr. A. Marlorat *Catholike Expos. Reuelation* 11 Who can release sinnes but onely God?
- 1699 T. EDWARDS *Paraselene dismantled of her Cloud* 74/1 God upon our Faith and Obedience..doth release and pardon all our Sins of Omission and Commission.
- 1704 C. DARBY *Psalms* xxv. 37 O save me from distress; My troubles still increase: Behold my sorrow and my pain. And all my sins release.
- a1788 T. RUSSELL *Sonnets & Misc. Poems* (1789) xix. 19 I meekly vow, to expiate the past; Praying, if prayer may sins like mine release.
- 1799 W. SCOTT in J. Haggard *Rep. Cases Consistory Court London* (1829) I. 793 Condonation is forgiveness legally releasing the injury.
- 1848 H. BUSHNELL *Disc. on Atonement in God in Christ* (1850) 180 Zaleucus loved public justice too little..to let the law have its course; and yet..[he had] too many scruples to release the sin.

†2. *trans.* To revoke, cancel (a sentence, punishment, condition, etc.).  
*Obs. (arch. in later use).*

- c1325 ( ▶ c1300) *Chron. Robert of Gloucester* (Calig.) 10297 (*MED*) Þou hast nou..þe pope bisout þat he relesi þe entredit.
- ▶ a1387 J. TREVISA tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (St. John's Cambr.) (1874) V. 371 (*MED*) The kyng hadde releesed [*v.r.* relesched] and wipcleped [L. *relaxasset*] a wel hard avow þat he hadde i-made.
- ?a1475 ( ▶ ?a1425) tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (Harl. 2261) (1882) VIII. 233 (*MED*) If that he made eny sentence, the legate..scholde have releisched [a1387 J. Trevisa tr. wolde undo] hit.
- c1530 *Court of Love* 1014 The sixteenth statut doth me grete grevaunce, But ye must that relesse or modifie.
- 1569 R. GRAFTON *Chron.* II. 931 The lyfe was geuen, & the punishment of death released.
- 1645 MILTON *On Christ's Nativity: Hymn* i, in *Poems* 1 For so the holy sages once did sing, That he our deadly forfeit should release.
- 1671 R. MONTAGU in *Buccleuch MSS* (Hist. MSS Comm.) (1899) I. 501 Getting the King here to release that Article of the Treaty.
- 1711 B. HOADLY *Several Disc.* VII. 147 To hope that God will depart from his settled Rules, on purpose to

release their punishment.

1838 *Church of Eng. Mag.* 19 May 316 With your leave, I will go to the bishop, and pray him to release the sentence.

### 3.

**a. trans.** To give up, resign, relinquish (a right or claim). Now chiefly: to surrender (a claim or right of legal action).

1379 in J. Slater *Early Scots Texts* (Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Edinb.) (1952) No. 2 Wete yhe me..haue releissit quytclymit & for euer mare remittyt till..Mergarete [etc.]..all my rycht clayme persuit chalenge or askyng..to [certain land].

▶ a1393 GOWER *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) II. 2904 (MED) In what wise he may relese Hise hihe astat, that wot he noght.

▶ a1470 MALORY *Morte Darthur* (Winch. Coll.) 623 I fully release my clayme for ever.

c1540 ( ▶ ?a1400) *Gest Historiale Destr. Troy* (2002) f. 195 I relese þe my ryght with a rank will And graunt þe þe goueranse of þis grete yle.

1548 *Hall's Vnion: Henry VIII* f. clxxij Whiche of you..would concent that the kyng shoulde release his Seignioritie or superioritie of Wales, Irelande, or Cornewall?

1596 SPENSER *Second Pt. Faerie Queene* IV. II. sig. B5<sup>v</sup> Bidding them fight for honour of their loue, And rather die then Ladies cause release .

1665 T. MANLEY tr. H. Grotius *De Rebus Belgicis* 907 As if the Emperor Frederick had released to Philip Duke of Burgundy, all Right of Empire.

1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* III, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 106 Nor will the vanquish'd Bull his Claim release .

1775 JOHNSON *Taxation No Tyranny* 83 That we should at once release our claims.

1841 *Penny Cycl.* XIX. 376/1 An expectant heir cannot release the right which he may have to his ancestor's estate.

1914 *Times* 17 Dec. 3 Mr. Tindale Davis, for the bankrupt, said that his client wished to join the Army,..and his wife would agree to release her claim of £1,200.

1940 *Times* 9 Feb. 4 Whether the intending appellant was by his conduct estopped from appealing, or had..in law released his right of appeal.

2008 *Mass. Lawyers Weekly* (Nexis) 6 Oct. Whether Bendaoud has released his claims against ADI, is not appropriate for resolution at this time.

**b. trans.** To make over or transfer (land, property, etc.) to another. Cf. earlier RELEASE *n.* 1.

a1425 ( ▶ ?a1400) CHAUCER *Romaunt Rose* (Hunterian) (1891) l. 6999 I quethe hym quyte and hym relese Of egipt all the wildirnesse.

c1475 ( ▶ ?c1451) *Bk. Noblesse* (Royal) (1860) 22 (MED) The said Lowes relesid the seide dukedom to the said Richarde.

1579 T. NORTH tr. Plutarch *Liues* 918 Soueraine power and authoritie..to sell, and release all the landes belonging to the state of Rome.

1594 SHAKESPEARE *Henry VI, Pt. 2* I. i. 50 It is further agreed..that the Duches of Anioy..shall be released

and deliuered ouer to the King her father.

- 1605 E. ANDERSON *Rep.* (1664) I. §83 I release all my Lands, &c. to A. and to his heirs.
- 1766 W. BLACKSTONE *Comm. Laws Eng.* II. App. 4 The said Abraham Barker and Cecilia his Wife, Have..sold, released, and confirmed..unto the said David Edwards..all that capital messuage called Dale Hall.
- 1781 E. PENDLETON *Let.* 10 Feb. in *Lett. & Papers* (1967) I. 333 In 1744..some Indians..Released all the lands they held to the Westward of the Mountains in Virginia.
- 1809 W. BAWDWEN tr. *Domesday Bk.* 620 Colsuan did not release the land of Ingemund and his brother to Earl Alan.
- 1866 'G. ELIOT' *Felix Holt* I. i. 34 I trusted to your getting the estate some time, and releasing it; and I determined to keep it worth releasing.
- 1948 *Law Rep. Trials War Criminals* (U.N. War Crimes Commission) (1997) 85 Upon the German commander's advice Rothschild assigned his stock to Colap, whereupon the property was released to Colap on the 19th October, 1940.
- 2002 J. HELFAND *Reinventing the Wheel* 42 Chief Seattle, the first Native American leader to sign the Treaty of Point Elliott, releasing all Indian land..to the U.S. government in 1855.

†**c.** *intr.* with object implied. To make over land or property *to* someone.

*Obs.*

- ?1462 J. PASTON in *Paston Lett. & Papers* (2004) I. 104 Pat þe seid maner sholde by solde by..his executours, to whom þe seid Ser John haþ relesed as his dute was to do.
- 1528–30 tr. T. Littleton *Tenures* (new ed.) f. xlvi<sup>v</sup> That yf tenaunt in the taylor in this case release to the dysseysour & byndeth hym & his heyres to warantyse, &c.
- 1648 J. MARCH *Reports* 176 A. and B. were bound joyntly and severally in a Bond to C. who released to A. afterwards.
- 1696 S. CARTER *Lex Custumaria* xvii. 154 One Joynt-Copy-holder released to his Companion.
- 1766 W. BLACKSTONE *Comm. Laws Eng.* II. 325 If there be two joint disseisors, and the disseisee releases to one of them [etc.].
- 1818 R. PRESTON *Ess. Abstr. of Title* II. 66 If one of two joint-tenants in fee, grant a rent in fee, and afterwards re-lease to his companion, the re-leasee will of consequence be in under the estate of the original grantor.

**d.** *trans.* To transfer (a reversion: see REVERSION *n.*<sup>1</sup> 1) *to* a person, especially one already holding the estate. Now *hist.*

- 1718 tr. E. Lutwyche *Rep. Resol. Court* 1 125 All the estate which they had in the Reversion was but a Reversion in Fee; and therefore it's all one in Effect, to release the Reversion.
- 1798 J. WENTWORTH *Compl. Syst. Pleading* X. 75 J. D. bargained and sold the manor..and granted or released the reversion thereof to the said J. W.
- 1875 K. E. DIGBY *Introd. Hist. Law Real Prop.* v. 187 When a reversioner desires, not to grant his reversion to a third person, but to convey it to the person who already has the particular estate, he is said to *release* the reversion.
- 1915 E. H. WARREN *Sel. Cases Law Prop.* (1923) v. viii. 527 (*note*) [Formerly, to convey freehold lands] if

A wished to convey to C, he could make C a tenant for years..and could then,..by a common-law release, release the reversion to C.

- 1966 T. F. BERGIN & P. G. HASKELL *Pref. Estates in Land & Future Interests* iv. 108 After execution of the bargain and sale, O had merely to *release* his legal reversion to A. The doctrine of merger did the rest.

†4. *trans.* To relieve, alleviate, or remove (labour, pain, etc.). *Obs.*

- ▶ a1393 GOWER *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) II. l. 3427 (*MED*) Ther mai no peine be relested, Ther mai no joie ben enressed.
- c1405 (▶ c1390) CHAUCER *Man of Law's Tale* (Hengwrt) (2003) l. 971 I pray yow al my labour to relese [v.r. relees].
- c1450 in *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc. Amer.* (1911) 26 156 I yow require, as her that I loue best, Relese my payn and set myn hert in rest.
- a1500 (▶ c1340) R. ROLLE *Psalter* (Univ. Oxf. 64) (1884) cxviii. 54 Thai ware delitabil til me..relesand my trauayls and my noy in this wrechid life.
- 1526 W. BONDE *Pylgrimage of Perfection* III. sig. GGii<sup>v</sup> He begged but one droppe of water, to release his tourmentes.
- 1551 W. TURNER *New Herball* sig. B vij<sup>v</sup> The iuice that is pressed out, is better & releseth the paine soner.
- 1675 J. DANCER tr. P. Quinault *Agrippa* v. ii. 53 No, Sir, this to my quiet do's suffice. T' asswage my passion, and release my pain [Fr. *Que vous rendez, Seigneur, un doux calme à mon ame, Pour fuir l'affreux désordre en mon cœur excité*].
- 1685 T. D'URFEY *New Poems* (1690) 104 Who Acts all other deadly Sins, With his own blood clears each offence. His Punishment does pain release.

†5. *trans.*

a. *Med.* To soften or relax (a sinew, swelling, etc.). *Obs.*

- ▶ a1398 J. TREVISA tr. Bartholomaeus Anglicus *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (BL Add. 27944) (1975) II. XVII. ix. 909 *Anetum* ysode wiþ oyle relesseþ schrynyng and stoneynge of senewes.
- ?a1450 tr. Macer *Herbal* (Stockh.) (1949) 105 (*MED*) Anyse flour..wole relece þe bolnynges of þe veynes.
- c1475 (▶ 1392) *Surg. Treat.* in *MS Wellcome 564 f. 41<sup>v</sup>* (*MED*) Sche is bounden to þe rigge wiþ slak ligamentis for þei schulden be relesid & slackid in tyme of childyng.

b. To relax, moderate, mitigate. *Obs.*

- a1425 (▶ ?a1400) CHAUCER *Romaunt Rose* (Hunterian) (1891) l. 3440 But all his wratthe yit at laste He hath relesed.
- c1460 *Tree & 12 Frutes* (McClellan) (1960) 131 (*MED*) As sone as we swage and relese þe reynes..of contynens..anone þe snare of liking..is a boute..forto deceyve vs.
- a1500 (▶ 1422) J. YONGE tr. *Secreta Secret.* (Rawl.) (1898) 128 (*MED*) So he mayntenyd his lawe and relessit the duresse of the laue.
- ?1567 *Def. Priestes Mariages* (new ed.) 355 The fathers of Rome Church..by their prudence thought it meet to release the rigour of canons and rules of the church.
- 1606 G. W. tr. Justinus *Hist.* XXXVII. 116 The Massilians intreat the Romaines to release their displeasure

against the Phocenses.

- 1677 tr. A.-N. Amelot de La Houssaie *Hist. Govt. Venice* 207 They released the severity of that Law.
- 1726 tr. St. Francis de Sales *Introd. to Devout Life* III. xxxi. 278 Wonder not then..if I sometimes release the Rigour and Attention of my Spirit, to take a little Recreation.
- 1788 J. SEALLY *Lady's Encycl.* III. 151 God reutes this imperfect obedience for perfect, having released the rigour of the law upon the account of Christ's satisfaction.
- 1839 V. E. HOWARD *Rep. High Court Mississippi* 1 172 Courts of Justice are disposed to release the rigor of the ancient forms, when no injury can possibly result to the liabilities or rights of the accused.

## II. To make or set free. Now the usual sense.

### 6.

**a. trans.** To make or set free; to free from restraint, confinement, or captivity; (also) to liberate from pain, an obligation, etc.

- ▶ c1384 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(2)) (1850) 1 Macc. x. 43 Who euer shuln flee to the temple that is in Jerusalem..gylty to the kyng, in eche cause be dismittid, or relesid [L. *dimittantur*].
- ▶ a1393 GOWER *Confessio Amantis* (Fairf.) VII. 3005 (MED) Athenis, which was bounde, Nevere after scholde be relesed.
- a1425 (▶ c1300) *Assumption of Virgin* (BL Add.) 125 In what peyne so he be..I schal hem reles sone anon.
- a1500 (▶ ?a1400) *Stanzaic Life of Christ* (Harl. 3909) (1926) 4176 (MED) The fyfty 3ere..of iubile..al men bounden in daunger weren releschet and maad fre.
- c1500 (▶ ?a1475) *Assembly of Gods* (1896) 237 (MED) Apollo, though Diana hym release, Yet shall he su to me to haue hys pese.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. clxxvj<sup>v</sup> By the kynges authoritie not longe after he was cleane released.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Tempest* (1623) v. i. 30 Goe, release them Ariell, My Charmes Ile breake, their sences Ile restore.
- a1631 J. DONNE *Poems* (1633) 137 Release your strings Musicians, and dancers take some truce.
- 1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* III, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 99 Six Seasons use; but then release the Cow.
- a1732 F. ATTERBURY *Serm. Several Occas.* (1734) I. 121 Pilate..then proposes him as the Man he was by Custom to release at the Passover.
- a1771 T. GRAY *Imit. Propertius* in *Wks.* (1814) II. 89 The hand that can my captive heart release.
- 1819 SHELLEY *Rosalind & Helen* 48 His foes released him thence.
- 1824 COUNTESS GRANVILLE *Lett.* (1894) I. 255 The French Government released the little traitoresses.
- 1860 J. TYNDALL *Glaciers of Alps* I. xxvii. 198 I recommended him to release the horses and leave the carriage to its fate.
- 1942 P. G. WODEHOUSE *Let. 11 May in Yours, Plum* (1990) iii. 90 When I was in Loos Prison the first week, a dozen of us were released because they were sixty.
- 1988 D. GLOVER in M. Atwood *Best Amer. Short Stories 1989* (1989) 178 I race to the hatchback to release the dogs.
- 2004 S. HALL *Electric Michelangelo* 77 Then Riley released him, stood back, untucked and pulled up his..shirt.

**b. trans.** To free *of* some pain, bond, task, or obligation. Now somewhat *arch.*

- c1390 ( ▶ c1350) *Proprium Sanctorum* in *Archiv f. das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* (1888) 81 300 (MED) Of mony synnes heo was releset.
- c1425 LYDGATE *Troyyes Bk.* (Augustus A.iv) II. 4428 (MED) Pus relessid somewhat of his peyne Is Menelaus þoru3 comfort of his broþer.
- c1485 ( ▶ 1456) G. HAY *Bk. Law of Armyes* (2005) 213 He is presumyt ay tobe seruand, quhill he be releschit of his seruice.
- 1509 S. HAWES *Pastime of Pleasure* (1928) xxix. 137 Ye shall release Me fyrst of wo and of my great dystres.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. ccv He shall..release the people of theyre othe.
- 1615 G. SANDYS *Relation of Journey* 14 They are in a manner releast of their thraldome, in that vnsensible of it.
- 1661 W. CATON tr. Eusebius *Abridgem. Eccl. Hist.* I. 66 His body was released of the paine,..and the members were restored to their former use.
- 1767 B. THORNTON tr. Plautus *Shipwreck* v. iv, in B. Thornton et al. tr. Plautus *Comedies* II. 385 You must release him of his oath.
- a1770 T. CHATTERTON *Compl. Wks.* (1971) I. 584 O! quickly may the friendly ruin fall, Release me of my love, and strike me dead.
- 1870 TENNYSON *Pelleas & Ettarre* 290 Let who will release him of his bonds.
- 1974 *Petroleum Rev.* 28 675/3 To release the diver of this chore, remote-controlled systems are being developed.
- 2008 *Record* (Bergen County, New Jersey) (Nexis) 6 Nov. A13 [At Jubilee] any Jew who had fallen into indentured servitude because of debt was released of his obligations.

**c. trans.** To free *from* (also †*fro*) a place of captivity, or from some restraint, obligation, difficulty, etc.

- c1405 ( ▶ c1390) CHAUCER *Parson's Tale* (Ellesmere) (1877) §809 Ihesu crist..relesed [c1430 *Cambr. Gg.4.27* releseth] vs fro the peynes of helle.
- c1460 in A. Clark *Eng. Reg. Oseney Abbey* (1913) 45 I haue relesed..þem for euer..fro þe sute of my courte.
- ?a1475 ( ▶ ?a1425) tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (Harl. 2261) (1871) III. 247 (MED) He scholde releysche [a1387 *St. John's Cambr.* descharge] the ministres of the temple from every tribute.
- ?1550 J. BALE *Apol. agaynste Papyt* f. clii<sup>v</sup> Women whych were released from the yoke of marryage by libels of diuorcement.
- 1590 SPENSER *Faerie Queene* III. VII. sig. Hh8<sup>v</sup> Long after she from perill was releast.
- 1646 E. FISHER *Marrow Mod. Divin.* (ed. 2) 22 The parties that were bound, are freed and released from their ingagements.
- 1666 A. MARVELL *Let.* 29 Dec. in *Poems & Lett.* (1971) II. 49 I suppose you know that the Duke of Buckingham and Marquesse of Dorchester are again releast from the Tow'r.
- 1738 J. WESLEY *Coll. Psalms & Hymns* (new ed.) LI. xv Thou only canst release My Soul from all Iniquity.
- 1781 H. WALPOLE *Let. to W. Mason* 14 Apr. (1851) II. 106 We have now..to fear robbery: 300 desperate

villains were released from Newgate.

- 1817 SHELLEY *Prince Athanase* II. ii. 66 From death and dark forgetfulness released.
- 1875 B. JOWETT in tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) I. 407 The wicked is not released from his evil by death.
- 1882 W. B. WEEDEN *Social Law Labor* 257 The slave, the serf, the grubbing laborer..have been released from..fetters.
- 1930 'H. Z. SMITH' *Not so Quiet* i. 16 A wee fair head and a wee dark head, lately released from the tortures of curl-papers.
- 1963 D. ATHILL *Instead of Let.* x. 125 I received a formal note..asking me to release him from our engagement.
- 2003 *Daily Tel.* 28 July 1/1 [He] was released from prison on Friday after serving a third of an 18-month sentence.

**d. intr.** with object implied. To remove restraints or bonds; to set someone or something free. Now *rare*.

- 1556 J. HEYWOOD *Spider & Flie* lxxviii. sig. Hhii The flie with him in prison, not to release: But to take an end at his hands.
- 1621 R. BURTON *Anat. Melancholy* II. II. III. 330 Some take his [sc. God's] office out of his hand, and will bind and lose in heauen, release, pardon, forgiue, and be quarter master with him.
- 1798 tr. Emperor Akber in F. Gladwin *Oriental Misc.* 17 Full and unlimited power, to contract and annul, to bind and release, in all affairs of government.
- 1834 J. SHIPP *Private Soldier* 174 The commanding officer has the power to release, as well as order the infliction of..solitary confinement, extra drills, &c.
- 1906 S. D. GORDON *Quiet Talks about Jesus* III. v. 253 Pilate hotly says..'Knowest Thou not I have the power to release or to crucify?'

**e. trans. U.S. (euphem.).** To make (an employee) redundant; to 'let go'.

- 1918 *Los Angeles Times* 18 Mar. II. 1/7 The factory of the Wright-Martin Airplane Corporation..has been closed down, and 550 employees have been released.
- 1948 *Los Angeles Times* 6 Nov. I. 1/6 The State Department of Employment today notified 453 employees they will be discharged... The employees to be released are scattered throughout the State.
- 1977 *Time* 12 Dec. 54/2 He closed 1,700 stores, released 10,000 employees, borrowed heavily to revamp and enlarge the remaining 1,932 supermarkets.
- 2007 C. K. LEE *Against Law* 74 [An unemployment figure] widely considered a gross underestimation..because it did not capture the numerous workers who were released involuntarily and informally.

7.

**a. trans.** To remove or loosen (a physical restraint) so as to allow something to move, act, or flow freely.

- 1779 J. RAMSDEN *Descr. Engine for dividing Straight Lines* 11 Then releasing the treadle, the spiral spring turns back the cylinder.

- 1825 'J. NICHOLSON' *Operative Mechanic* 320 Then, unturning the finger-screw...,I released the screw from the wheel.
- 1852 C. BARTER *Dorp & Veld* viii. 116 As soon as he has seized the bait..., he tightens the string, releases the trigger, and...receives the bullet in his head.
- 1865 G. W. GESNER A. *Gesner's Pract. Treat. Coal* (ed. 2) ii. 28 The downward stroke of the walking-beam releases the Auger Stem and Bit for an instant as the Jars slide together.
- 1907 *Westm. Gaz.* 21 Nov. 4/2 The adjustment of which is easily affected by releasing a lock-nut.
- 1946 H. REED *Map of Verona* 22 This is the safety-catch, which is always released With an easy flick of the thumb.
- 1972 *Pussycat* 33 LIX. 10/2 She released the catch on her bra and slipped it off.
- 2000 *Sunday Times* 23 July (Funday Times section) 8/1 Oops! I think I just released the brake! suffering sardines! I'm moving!

**b. trans.** To allow (one's grip or hold on something) to cease or loosen.

Also *fig.*

- 1799 W. GODWIN *St. Leon* III. xi. 264 I released my hold; the child rushed to her father, and he caught her in his arms.
- 1826 J. F. COOPER *Last of Mohicans* II. viii. 140 When the formidable Huron was completely pinioned, the scout released his hold.
- 1877 W. W. FOWLER *Woman on Amer. Frontier* v. 107 White, unobserved by the girl, had released his grip on the throat of the squaw, whose corpse floated slowly down stream.
- 1920 F. S. FITZGERALD in *Smart Set* July 29/1 The bouncer..released his hold on Peter, who..rushed immediately around to the other table.
- 1973 A. C. CLARKE *Rendezvous with Rama* (1974) 51 He released his grip, and let Rama's still feeble pseudo-gravity take over.
- 1997 *Christian Sci. Monitor* (Nexis) 19 Sept. 1 The party has hesitated to release its grip over the state sector.
- 2002 J. MCGAHERN *That they may face Rising Sun* (2003) 2 Not until she cried, 'Easy there, Jamesie' did he release his gently tightening grip with a low crow of triumph.

**c. trans.** To free (something) from physical restraint or confinement, to allow to move freely, drop, or escape.

- 1807 WORDSWORTH *Poems* I. 86 'Twas twisted betwixt nave and spoke;..Together we released the Cloak.
- 1842 TENNYSON *Two Voices* in *Poems* (new ed.) II. 143 And I arose, and I released The casement.
- 1930 D. VERRILL *Aircraft Bk. for Boys* xi. 189 Pulling the rip-cord and releasing the parachute.
- 1950 J. O. HIRSCHFELDER et al. *Effects of Atomic Weapons* i. 14 To release the energy equivalent to twenty kilotons of TNT.
- 1955 *Dispensatory U.S.A.* (ed. 25) 89/1 Tiny pellets..having varying disintegration times so as to release the drug uniformly over a period of 8 to 10 hours.
- 1969 W. GASS *Icicles* i. 122 Fender's fork poked through the crust of his pie, releasing steam.
- 1988 J. G. BALLARD *Running Wild* 36 Payne leaned over the bath-taps and released the water from the tub.

2001 S. ROAF et al. *Ecohouse* (2002) vi. 135 Do not burn strip it as this releases fumes.

**d. intr.** To remove a physical restraint on something; (of a thing) to become free to move after the removal of a physical restraint.

1945 *Tee Emm* (Air Ministry) 5 35 When the tug started its take off run the glider decided it was best to release.

1978 *Amateur Photographer* 29 Nov. 88/4 If the dark slide is left in the camera body the shutter won't release until it's removed.

2007 *Union Leader* (Manchester, New Hampsh.) (Nexis) 14 Oct. F10 As I was lowering it, the trap's hair trigger released on my thumb.

## 8. trans.

**a.** To remove restrictions from (something or someone); (hence) to free (a resource) for some purpose; to make available for use.

In early use the notion of remission from some other obligation suggests an association with senses in branch I.

1848 *Daily News* 19 Feb. The operation of railway companies, by freeing an enormous amount of capital, formerly locked up in..the counting-houses of our traders, has done more..to release capital in this country than anything else.

1864 *Aberdeen Jnl.* 24 Feb. A measure that will enable them to increase their circulation, thus releasing money..for the purposes of commerce.

1892 *Times* 10 Oct. 6 Expressing his willingness to have the Paris funds released for the benefit of the evicted tenants.

1917 *Times* 20 Dec. 7 The large staff of stablemen could be well utilized..in taking the places of better men and releasing them for more useful military work.

1927 *Daily Tel.* 13 Sept. 10/3 Using the mechanised transport thus released for embussing the headquarters.

1959 A. H. MCLINTOCK *Descr. Atlas N.Z.* 45 Once provisional State forest was logged over for timber it was then released for agricultural development.

1971 P. GRESSWELL *Environment* 267 There is no guarantee that land zoned for housing will be released by the landowners.

2000 *Monitor* (Kampala) 26 Apr. 23/5 Africa's development partners should cancel in full the debts of..heavily indebted countries in order to release funds for an anti-malaria drive.

**b.** To free (appropriated or requisitioned property); to return (something) to its rightful owner, or to civilian or general use.

1902 *Times* 2 Apr. 6 [During the American Civil War] if a mistake was made by these Treasury agents in taking possession of property wrongfully, the Secretary of the Treasury, upon appeal, released the property.

1945 *Daily Tel.* 27 July 3/3 The Admiralty and Air Ministry are to do all they can to alleviate the housing situation by releasing property.

- 1955 *Times* 14 Oct. 9 Ministerial exhortations to clear the slums, release requisitioned property and..rehouse those..on the waiting lists.
- 2006 *South China Morning Post* (Nexis) 1 June 4 Guangzhou's controversial university town on Xiaoguwei Island is starting to release land requisitioned from farmers.

**9. trans.**

**a.** To make (an official statement, information, etc.) public, usually through the media.

- 1896 *Salt Lake Daily Tribune* 26 Apr. 6/3 The company is not yet ready to release the details.
- 1904 *N.Y. Times* 25 July 5 Chairman Cannon's speech and President Roosevelt's response are completed. The latter is in the hands of the press associations, and will be released Wednesday afternoon.
- 1941 *Times* 7 July 2/2 Details have now been released by the Ministry of Supply of a new British tank, officially designated as the Mark III.
- 1973 T. CROUSE *Boys on Bus* III. xiv. 310 The important thing was that Rather was making a balls-out effort to deal with a White House staff which refused to release any meaningful information.
- 1994 *Face* Jan. 48/2 The KLF [sc. a pop group] released a statement announcing their retirement from music.

**b. orig. U.S.** To make (a film, recording, etc.) available to the public.

- 1909 *Moving Picture World* 27 Mar. 357 (adv.) Released March 29, 1909... The Medicine Bottle. This is a thriller with a new twist.
- 1912 *Motion Picture Ann.* 42 List of Licensed Pictures. Regularly released during the year 1912.
- 1937 A. THIRKELL *Summer Half* xi. 298 If a film gets to Barchester it means it's been released for simply months.
- 1962 *Sunday Times* 10 June (Colour Suppl.) 7 American records..which are only released because companies have to take them to get some really lucrative artist.
- 1980 *Time Out* 21-7 Nov. 49/3 Films considered by their multinational distributors as too 'difficult' to release conventionally.
- 2008 *New Yorker* 21 Apr. 138 The band had such confidence in it that a DVD was also released.

**10. trans. orig. Psychol.** To ease or relieve (a tension); (also) to give rein to (an emotional or instinctual drive); to reveal or express (one's emotions).

- 1906 J. JASTROW *Subconscious* I. iii. 18 Alcohol will release the tension of self-restraint and induce the freer flow of sentiment and speech.
- 1933 W. S. TAYLOR *Critique of Sublimation in Males* ix. 89 This young man's total tension of balked dispositions will be eased considerably if in his new environment he can find..situations which can release those response patterns that he had ready.
- 1946 P. M. SYMONDS *Dynamics of Human Adjustment* v. 126 The mother whose own love life is not satisfied and whose sexual needs are not met may release her tensions by sharp, frequent scoldings and punishment of her children.

- 1961 C. RUSSELL & W. M. S. RUSSELL *Human Behaviour* vi. 283 Appetitive behaviour for situations which will release the masturbatory mechanisms.
- 1987 P. AUSTER *Country of Last Things* (1988) 116 I enjoyed throwing those books into the flames. Perhaps it released some secret anger in me.
- 2005 *Independent* 29 Nov. 35/2 The emotion released by Best's death..has of course been genuine.

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## COMPOUNDS

Used *attrib.* to denote a button, switch, etc., which activates or relates to a releasing function on a piece of equipment, esp. in **release lever**, **release button**. Cf. RELEASE *n.* 7e.

- 1858 *Jrnl. Franklin Inst.* July 33 The retaining of release levers while the lock remains locked upon fixed or adjustable rests, which shall receive all pressure necessary to insure the action of the levers when released by the time lock.
- 1891 *Amer. Amateur Photographer* June 233 The operator looks into this slit when the exposed film is reeled off, watching the puncture in its edge, automatically made when the release button is pressed.
- 1940 *Jrnl. Criminal Law & Criminol.* **30** 937 To operate this camera..it is only necessary to locate the finger-print in the front aperture of the camera and press the release lever.
- 1986 *Masterminds in Metrol.* (Trimos-Sylvac Metrology Ltd.) (ed. 3) 30/1 Quick-action pneumatic locking of taper-type tooling, spindle locking and release knobs provided.
- 1992 I. BANKS *Crow Road* xvi. 418 I reached over and hit the little red release button on Ashley's seat belt, then I slammed the brakes on.
- 2004 *Tool & Machinery Catal.* 2005 (Axminster Power Tool Centre Ltd.) II. 35/3 A good quality low cost no volt release switch that can replace old switch-gear on machinery.

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