quality, n. and adj.

Pronunciation: ↑ Brit. /ˈkwɒlɪti/, U.S. /ˈkwɒlədi/, /ˈkwɑːlədi/

Forms:
a. Middle English qwalyte, Middle English–1500s quality, Middle English–1500s qualifye, Middle English–1600s qualify, Middle English–1600s qualitie, Middle English–1600s quality, 1500s–1600s qualit, 1500s–1600s quality, 1500s–1600s qualety, 1500s–1600s qualitey, 1500s–1600s qualetie, 1600s qualitye, 1600s qualetie, 1600s qualifye, 1600s qualify, 1600s qualetie, 1600s qualety, 1600s qualite, 1600s qualitie, 1600s qualetie, 1600s qualety, 1600s qualifye, 1600s qualify, 1700s–1700 qualitye, 1700s–1700 qualifye, 1700s–1700 qualetie, 1700s–1700 qualety, 1700s–1700 qualifye, 1700s–1700 qualify, 1700s–1700 qualetie, 1700s–1700 qualety, 1700s–1700 qualifye, 1700s–1700 qualify, 1700s–1700 qualetie, 1700s–1700 qualety, 1700s–1700 quality.

β. late Middle English qualifye (in a late copy), 1500s–1600s qualitie, 1500s–1600s quality; Scottish pre-1700 qualitate, pre-1700 quallatie, pre-1700 qualitye, pre-1700 quallitie, pre-1700 qualitye, pre-1700 qualifye, pre-1700 qualify, pre-1700 qualetie, pre-1700 qualety, pre-1700 qualifye, pre-1700 qualify, pre-1700 qualetie, pre-1700 qualety, pre-1700 quality.

Frequency (in current use):


Etymology: < Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French qualité (late 12th cent. as †qualiteit ; French qualité ) (of things) attribute, property (late 12th cent.), (in medical use) humour (13th cent. or earlier), nature, kind, character (13th cent.), excellence, superiority (1671, originally with reference to merchandise), particular class or grade of something (early 19th cent. or earlier), (of a person) character, disposition, nature (early 13th cent.), personal attribute, trait (early 13th cent.; late 15th cent. in positive sense ‘virtue’), rank or position in society (14th cent.), title, description, capacity (1548, earliest in en ceste qualité de in this quality of; 1549 in en qualité de ), nobility, high birth or rank, good social position (1559 in the passage translated in quot. 1579 at sense A. 5a), excellence of character, good nature (1633) and its etymon classical Latin quālitās distinguishing characteristic, essential character or nature, (in grammar) mood of a verb, in post-classical Latin also (in grammar) manner of action as denoted by an adverb (3rd cent. in adverbia qualitatis adverbs of quality), adjective (4th cent.), good quality (4th or 5th cent. in Jerome), rank (from 12th cent. in British sources), (in medicine) humour (first half of the 13th cent. or earlier) < quālis of what kind ( < the Indo-European base of who pron. + classical Latin -ālis -āl suffix) + -tās (see -TY suffix; compare -TTY suffix); originally formed by Cicero after ancient Greek ποιότης (see note). Compare Franco-Occitan qualitaz (beginning of the 12th cent.), Old Occitan qualitat (13th cent.; also calitat), Catalan qualitat (12th cent.), Spanish calidad (first half of the 12th cent.), also cualidad (first half of the 13th cent. as †qualidad ), Portuguese qualidade (14th cent.), Italian qualità (first half of the 13th cent. as †qualitate ), and also Dutch kwaliteit (1550 as †qualiteyt ), German Qualität (1519). Compare QUANTITY n., with which the word is frequently contrasted.

In sense A. 4b after Italian qualità (1531 in this sense, in the passage translated in quot. 1636).

In man of quality (see sense A. 5a) after Middle French, French homme de qualité (1559 in the passage translated in quot. 1579 at sense A. 5a).

Ancient Greek ποιότης was apparently formed by Plato; it first occurs in Theaetetus 182a, where Socrates apologizes for it as being a ‘strange word’ (ἀλλόκοτον όνομα ). It was subsequently used by Aristotle and other Greek philosophers, whence Cicero became acquainted with it (compare Cicero Academica 1. 25: qualitates..appellavi quas ποιότητας Graeci vocant , I have called ‘qualities’ what the Greeks call ‘qualities’).
Compare the following early use of the Latin word (in sense A. 9a) in an English context:

OE Ælfric Gram. (St. John's Oxf.) 228 Sume [adverb] synd qualitatis, da getacniað hwylcnyssse, hu hit gedon sy.

A. n.
I. With reference to a person (also occasionally an animal).
   1.

†a. Character, disposition, nature. Obsolete.

c1300 St. Michael (Laud) 433 in C. Horstmann Early S.-Eng. Legendary (1887) 312 (MED) Pe planetes...iuen him al-so qualite to don so and so.
   › a1393 J. Gower Confessio Amantis (Fairf.) Prol. 954 (MED) Thus of his propre qualite, The man..Is as a world.
c1450 († ?a1400) Wars Alexander (Ashm.) 1703 (MED) He..Askis þam of sir Alexander..Bathe of his statoure & his strenth..His qualite, his quantite he quirys all-to-gedire.
   1553 J. BRENDE tr. Q. Curtius Rufus Hist. III. f. 25 He vsed to eery nacion sondry exhortacions, as he thought mete for their disposicions and qualitie.
a1578 R. LINDSAY Hist. & Cron. Scotl. (1899) I. 10 Knowin[g] of wemen..That they are not constant in their qualitie.
   1616 W. LITHGOW Painefull Peregrination 116 A Dromidore, and Camell, differ much in quality;...the Dromidorie hath a hard-reaching trot... But the Camell..hath a most slow and lazy pace.
   1639 J. FORD Ladies Triall III. sig. F3 He deserves no wife Of worthy qualitie, who dares not trust Her vertue in..any danger.
   1753 E. HAYWOOD Hist. Jenny & Jenny Jessamy I. 295 She was going on with something, which it is likely would have let Jenny into the quality and character of the intended bride, but was interrupted.
   1847 R. W. EMERSON Poems 120 They her heralds be, Steeped in her quality.
   1873 R. BROWNING Red Cotton Night-cap Country IV. 268 Her quality was, caterpillar-like, To..select a leaf And..feed her fill.

b. Without article or possessive adjective: excellence of character; good nature, virtue.

1607 T. HEYWOOD Woman Kilde with Kindnesse sig. C Disparadge not your worth too much, you are ful of quality and faire desert.
1609 W. SHAKESPEARE Troilus & Cressida IV. iv. 76 The Grecian youths are full of quality, And swelling ore with arts and exercice.
1702 Clarendon's Hist. Rebellion I. i. 72 Persons of Honour, and great Quality..were every day cited into the High Commission Court.
1889 TYRWHITT in Universal Rev. 15 Feb. 251 One sharp temptation well resisted..shows real moral quality.
1894 Sir E. Wood in Daily News 1 Oct. 6/2 [Capt. Peel] had a singularly striking appearance, showing both in face and figure what is termed, in describing well-bred horses, as 'quality'.
1943 Times 2 July 1/2 (advt.) Roan Pony..shows quality: good bone.
2006 Irish Times (Nexis) 22 July 12 He sought to hide his light under a bushel... Those who knew him know what a man of true quality he was.
c. With article or possessive adjective: positive characteristics; general excellence.

1803  A. MAIMBURG tr. von Ehwald *Treat. Duties Light Troops* i. 5  Superiority over an enemy in the field is acquired rather by the quality than the number of men.

1869  *Times* 5 June 7/3  The numbers and the quality of candidates for Orders are notoriously deteriorating.

1978  *Globe & Mail* (Nexis) 11 Jan.  These things granted, is there any doubt of the quality of the man?


d. Capacity, ability, or skill, in some respect. Now rare.

Sometimes echoing Shakespeare (see quot. 1603), who probably intended the word in sense A. 6a.

[1603  W. SHAKESPEARE *Hamlet* II. ii. 434  Come, a taste of your Qualitie, a speech, a passionate speech.]

1856  E. K. KANE *Arctic Explor.* I. ii. 24  Hans had given me a touch of his quality by spearing a bird on the wing.

1863  J. DORAN *Their Majesties Serv.* 369  Thomas..gave the stranger a hearty welcome,..asked for a taste of his quality.

1871  R. BROWNING *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* 80  Can't you contrive to operate at once,..to show Your quality i' the world?

1903  *Times* 12 June 7/4  He had a namesake present that night (hear, hear)..and they would be glad of a little taste of his quality.

2.

a. A personal attribute, a trait, a feature of a person's character; (in later use esp.) an attribute considered desirable, a virtue. Formerly also: †a habit (obsolete).

1450  tr. Lanfranc *Sci. Cirurgie* (Ashm.) (1894) 8  Þe secunde chapitle..is of þe qualitees, maners, and kunynge of a surgian..A surgian muste haue handis weel schape..Be he no glotoun.


1690  W. TEMPLE *Ess. Heroick Virtue* iii. 66 in *Miscellanea: 2nd Pt.*  Particular qualities have been observed..in the same Families for several hundred years, as Goodness, Clemency [etc.].

1783  W. COWPER *Valediction* 31  In thee some virtuous qualities combine To fit thee for a nobler part.

1849  T. B. MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* II. vii. 163  Nature had largely endowed William with the qualities of a great ruler.

1854  J. H. NEUMANN *Lect. Hist. Turks* I. ii. 35  The subtlety and perfidy, which..were the qualities of his..countrymen.
1930  N. COWARD *Private Lives* i. 31  Hatred, possessiveness, petty jealousy. All those qualities came out in us.

1989  D. RADCLIFFE *Simply Barbara Bush* v. 91  How prescient her brother had been...to recognize in a girl so young the qualities he admired.

2001  *Financial Times* 27 Jan. 13/5  She has many of the qualities needed to map out a new strategy: a reputation as a tough but fair manager [etc.]

**b. An accomplishment or attainment.** Now *rare* except as merged with sense A. 2a.

1584  J. LYLY *Alexander, Campaspe, & Diogenes* v. i. sig. E3v  Diog. What can thy sonnes doe? *Sylvi*. You shall see their qualities: Daunce sirha.

a1616  W. SHAKESPEARE *Timon of Athens* (1623) l. i. 127  I haue bred her at my dearest cost In Qualities of the best.

a1674  EARL OF CLARENDON *Hist. Rebellion* (1703) II. viii. 392  He was...most accomplish’d in those Qualities of Horsemanship, Dancing, and Fencing, which accompany a good breeding.

1780  W. COWPER *Progress of Error* 423  A just deportment, manners graced with ease,...Are qualities that seem to comprehend [etc.].

1882  *Daily Tel.* 17 May  The fielding...justified the high reputation for this quality which the..colonial teams..have enjoyed.

**c. Law.** A special or characteristic feature. *Obsolete. rare.*

1804  W. CRUISE *Digest Laws Eng. Real Prop.* I. iv. 99  A tenant in tail..has eight qualities or privileges.

3.  

**a. Title, description, character, capacity; esp. in *in (the) quality of*.** Now *rare*.

a1400 (• a1325)  *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) 26682  Man agh to telle hir qualite, Sib or freind or quat sco be.

1600  P. HOLLAND tr. Livy *Rom. Hist.* XLVIII. 1236  There could not be found any one who...was willing to goe in quality of lieutenant.

a1626  F. BACON *Advice to G. Villiers* in *Wks.* (1861) XIII. 35  The attorney of the dutchy of Lancaster partakes of both qualities, partly of a judge...and partly of an attorney general.

1664  S. BUTLER *Hudibras: Second Pt.* II. iii. 157  He serv’d his Master, In quality of Poetaster.

1711  J. ADDISON *Spectator* No. 127. ¶1  Such Packets as I receive under the Quality of Spectator.

1736  tr. C. Rollin *Anc. Hist.* IX. 71  They had a regard to his quality of deputy.

1812  W. SCOTT *Kenilworth* III. v. 76  Leicester...rode on her Majesty’s right hand...in quality of her host.

1864  D. G. MITCHELL *Seven Stories* 82  To understand that I had come in the professed quality of Consul.

1900  *Times* 23 Nov. 3/3  In his quality as a Chief of State he had paid his respects to the Chief of the French State.

1964  *Eng. Stud.* 45 (Suppl.) 244  An arraignment of Walter Pater in his quality as homo aestheticus.

†b. A part or character acted. *Obsolete. rare.*
When the people was desirous to see me play qualities [L. lusus meos spectare], they caused the gates to be shutte, and such as entred in should pay.

4.

a. Rank or position in (a) society. Frequently with modifying adjective, as high, mean, etc. Now archaic.

b. Concrete. A body of people having a certain social position or rank. Obsolete. Rare.

5.

a. Nobility, high birth or rank, good social position; chiefly in phrase person (also man, woman, gentleman, lady, people, etc.) of quality. Now archaic.
b. **concrete** (sometimes with *the*). People of good social position. Now *archaic* and *regional*.

a. (a) Profession, occupation, business, esp. that of an actor; (b) fraternity; people of the same profession, esp. actors as a body. *Obsolete*.

1693 Humours & Conversat. Town 114 Walk Bare-headed to his Master's Daughter, in imitation of Quality.

1706 R. Estcourt *Fair Example* v. i Did not you tell me..that you was acquainted with all the Quality.

1712 P. Leigh *Life S. Wenefride* 171 His Son..received the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, at which the greatest Quality of that County were pleased to stand Patrines.

1753 S. Richardson *Hist. Sir Charles Grandison* III. ii. I have looked out among the quality for a future husband for her.

1769 Wesley in *Wks.* (1872) III. 370 A large company of Quality (as they called them) came.

1824 Ld. Byron *Don Juan: Canto XVI* lxiv. 96  She was country born and bred, And knew no better..Than to wax white—for blushes are for quality.

1894 'M. Twain' in *Cent. Mag.* Feb. 550 He wuz the highest quality in dis whole town—ole Virginny stock. Fust famblies, he wuz.

1904 'M. Corelli' *God's Good Man* (ed. 2) xxii. 415 The quality don't seem to care for no one 'cept theirselves.

1978 M. Kenyon *Deep Pocket* xiv. 184 A grouse-shoot, lad... It's a country sport for the quality.

1999 K. Hickman *Daughters of Britannia* (2000) ii. 33 At the dockside a great crowd of the town's ‘quality’ was waiting to honour them.

†6.

a1586 (*?a1513) W. Dunbar *Poems* (1998) I. 257 The rest of craftis grit ethis swair..Ilk ane into thar qualitie.

1593 H. Chettle *Kind-harts Dreame* To Rdrs. sig. A4 My selfe haue seene his demeanor no lesse ciuill than he exelent in the qualitie he professes.

1629 P. Massinger *Roman Actor* l. iii. sig. C In thee, as being the chiefe of thy profession, I doe accuse the qualitie of treason.

1640 J. Fletcher et al. *Faire Maide of Inne* v. ii, in F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher *Comedies & Trag.* (1647) sig. Ggggggg2/2 I am weary of this trade of fortune-telling...it is a very ticklish quality.


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6. As shown above, the term 'quality' has historical and cultural significance, often associated with social status, influence, and refinement. In some contexts, it could also denote a group with shared interests or backgrounds. The evolution of the term reflects changes in societal norms and definitions of social hierarchy.
Because you are not of our qualitie, But stand against vs like an enemie.

II. With reference to a thing.

7.

a. An attribute, property; a special feature or characteristic. In early use: † = HUMOUR n. 1a (obsolete).

primary quality, secondary quality: see the first element.

In quot. 1867 (in plural): a register for a ship, recording certain of its attributes.

1340 Ayenbite (1866) 153 (MED) To þe bodye of man comeþ alle eueles uor þe destempringe of þise uour qualites oper of þise uour humours.

c1450 Contin. Lydgate’s Secrees (Sloane 2464) 1675 (MED) Yif Superfluyte..Of qualitees gendre by in-proporcyoun In the hed, be signes..knowe thou shalt the indisposicioun be this doctryne.

c1484 (+ a1475) J. de Caritate tr. Secreta Secret. (Takamiya) (1977) 160 (MED) The natural cause comyth of repugnaunz and contradyccion of contraryus qualyteis, þat is to sey, qwan drynes hath lordchyp in þe bodi, þan must it nedys fayle.

1539 T. Elyot Castel of Helthe (new ed.) 33 a But nowe to the qualities of water.

1551 W. Turner New Herball sig. A iv The qualites of it answer nothing unto the qualyties of wormwode pontyke in Galene.

1604 E. Grimeston tr. J. de Acosta Nat. & Morall Hist. Indies vi. xiii. 459 According to the qualities and wealth of the Countrie.

1671 R. Bohun Disc. Wind 165 The judgment to be made concerning the Qualitys of Winds..is very various and fallible.

1725 I. Watts Logick i. iii. §4 Ideas, with Regard to their Qualities...are either clear and distinct, or obscure and confused.


1867 W. H. Smyth & E. Belcher Sailor's Word-bk. 552 Qualities, the register of the ship's trim, sailing, stowage, &c., all of which are necessary to her behaviour.

1920 Nature 29 July 692/1 [African teak] possesses none of the qualities of teak with the exception of a superficial resemblance in colour.

1964 C. Chaplin My Autobiogr. xiii. 207 Her art, although brilliant, had a quality pale and luminous, as delicate as a white rose-petal.

2006 Biloxi (Mississippi) Sun Herald (Nexis) 11 Oct. F3 When choosing mutual funds..expenses, risk...and tax-efficiency are qualities that can be judged before you buy.

†b. concrete. A substance having a particular attribute or property; a substance of a certain nature; an essence. Obsolete. rare.

1583 P. Barrough Methode of Phisicke i. iv. 5 By drynes is ment in this place a drie distempure of the qualitie alone, and by moisture, a moist distempure of the bare qualitie.

1704 J. Swift Full Acct. Battel between Bks. in Tale of Tub 268 An atramentous Quality, of most malignant Nature, was seen to distil from his Lips.
The wood..throws out its volatile qualities, aquæous and acidulous, into the respective tubes.


1600  W. SHAKESPEARE Merchant of Venice III. ii. 6  Hate counsailes not in such a quallity.
1651  in T. Fuller Abel Redevivus 560  The Parishioners..built, and adorned the Church in as good a quality as any round about it.

†d. A habit; a power or faculty. Obsolete. rare.

1647  T. FULLER Good Thoughts in Worse Times II. v. 62  Iordan had a quality in the first moneth to overflow all his bankes.
1664  B. GERBIER Counsel to Builders (new ed.) I. sig. a8  If it had a speaking quality, your Grace would hear its..Alembick sing the Gold its joy.

8.

a. Originally: the nature, kind, or character (of something). Later: the standard or nature of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence possessed by a thing.

quality of life: the standard of living, or degree of happiness, comfort, etc., enjoyed by an individual or group in any period or place; an instance of this. *in the quality of* (quot. 1794): in the manner of (obsolete).

?q*a*1425  Mandeville's Trav. (Egerton) (1889) 59 (MED)  A man may gyffe no couenable penaunce bot if he knawe þe qualitee and þe quantitee of þe synne.
c1475  tr. C. de Pisan Livre du Corps de Policie (Cambr.) (1977) 111  To geue you a clere vndirstonding of the qualitees of theis twoo passions.
1630  tr. G. Botero Relations Famous Kingdomes World (rev. ed.) 190  The English Gentleman..judiciously determineth his manner of satisfaction, according to the quality of the offence.
1650  R. BAXTER Saints Everlasting Rest (1662) I. iv. 22  It is so little I know of mine own soul, either its quiddity or quality.
1734  Treaty Eng. & Russ. in N. Magens Ess. Insurances (1755) II. 592  The Brackers shall be answerable for the Quality of the Goods.
1751  Let. 4 Dec. in Beekman Mercantile Papers (1956) II. 553  Our Flower was all heavy and of an extraordinary good quality.
1794  J. HUTTON Diss. Philos. Light 272  This principle of fire moves, in the quality of light, with the most amazing velocity.
1841  R. W. EMERSON Ess. 1st Ser. (Boston ed.) vii. 188  There is more difference in the quality of our pleasures than in the amount.
1879  G. C. Harlan *Eyesight* viii. 114  It is on account of the quality, rather than the size, of English print, that it is usually so much pleasanter to read than American.

1915  W. S. Maugham *Of Human Bondage* xciv. 494  The landlady called it French cooking, by which she meant that the poor quality of the materials was disguised by ill-made sauces.

1943  J. B. Priestley *Daylight on Sat.* xxxi. 253  The plans...that would give all our citizens more security, better opportunities, and a nobler quality of life.

1958  A. L. Simon *Dict. Wines* 110/1  Most of the *Mercury* wines are red, and they are also of better quality than the few white wines of that district.

1977  M. Edelman *Polit. Lang.* viii. 151  The consequence is a decline in the quality of life, springing from a lowering of real income.


†b. Nature, with reference to origin; (hence) cause, occasion. *Obsolete*. *Rare*.

1609  W. Shakespeare *Troilus & Cressida* iv. i. 45  Giue him note of our approch, With the whole quality wherefore: I feare we shall be much vnwelcome.

a1616  W. Shakespeare *Timon of Athens* (1623) iii. vii. 106  Know you the quality of Lord Timons fury?


1665  T. Herbert *Some Years Trav.* (new ed.) 400  Date..a Tree which both for quality, duration, and fruit is usually attributed to Heroes and Conquerors.


1867  R. St. J. Tyrwhitt *Our Sketching Club* 255  Quality of colour means purity or truth of hue.


1891  *Speaker* 2 May 533/1  The book..has..more quality and distinction than four-fifths of the novels which come under our notice.

1937  *Amer. Home* Apr. 116/1 (advt.)  There is no substitute for quality and there is no substitute for Columbia Residential Venetian Blinds.

1967  *Canad. Med. Assoc. Jrnl.* 97 1035/1  Quality in medicine is not definable in computer terms; it is a product of parental teaching, of schooling.

1991  *German Hist.* 9 330  The..policy of promoting ‘quality’ in the German workplace.

d. A particular class, kind, or grade of something, as determined by its character, esp. its excellence.

1765  *Museum Rusticum* 4 cvi. 458  He is able to assort each size and quality of the flax.

1835  A. Ure *Philos. Manuf.* 324  2s. 5d. for spinning the same quality.

1866  G. MacDonald *Ann. Quiet Neighb.* (1878) xiii. 253  A quality of dialogue which indicated thought.
1901 *Times* 4 June 11/3  To quote for such a quality of material as no English railway requires.
1985 *Times* 4 Oct. 22/5  Industrial concerns need a quality of water from which all minerals are removed.

**e. Short for quality newspaper n. at Compounds 1c(b). Usually in plural.**

1970 *Guardian Weekly* 25 July 11  The ‘qualities’...need to earn a greater percentage of their income from advertising than the ‘populars.’
1995 *Snooker Scene* May 3/2  The tabloids...virtually ignore the game; the qualities cover it more systematically.
2006 *Times* 14 Aug. 6  This practice is quite widespread on tabloid newspapers... It may not even be unknown on...the so-called qualities.

**III. Technical and specialist uses (chiefly in senses A. 7 and A. 8).**

**9. Grammar.**

**a. Without article: manner of action, as denoted by an adverb. Chiefly in adverb of quality. Cf. adverb of manner n. at MANNER n. 9d.**

1530 J. Palsgrave *Lesclarcissement* Introd. 144  Some [adverbs] betoken qualite, and serve to declare..howe a dede is done.
1637 B. Jonson *Eng. Gram.* i. xxi, in *Wks.* (1640) III  Adverbs of qualitie..being formed from Nounes, for the most part, by adding ly.
1713 T. Dyche *Eng. Particles Latiniz'd* xl. 64  How is *how* made, before an Adjective or Adverb of Quality.
1845 J. Stoddart *Gram.* in *Encycl. Metrop.* (1847) I. 122/1  There is no difference in grammatical use between..an adverb of quantity, and an adverb of quality.
1948 U. Holmes et al. *Hist. French Lang.* ii. 18  Any demonstrative..or adverb of quality can have an i-prefix.
1965 *Amer. Speech* 40 44  When compared or modified by intensives..ordinarily met before an..adverb of quality, for example *more*.
2001 D. B. Redford *Oxf. Encycl. Anc. Egypt* at Demotic  [In Demotic] nouns and pronouns..were used much as in other stages of Egyptian. Adverbs of quality, place, and time are attested.

**b. A word, esp. an adjective, which denotes or describes a quality. Obsolete.**

1710 *Gram. Eng. Tongue* vi. 88  Names..express the Things themselves, Qualities are the Manners of those Things, as good, bad, round, square &c.
1769 J. Bell *Encycl. Gram.* III. ii. 200  Qualities or adjectives are those words which express the manners, qualities, or nature of substantives.
1790 T. Cooke *New & Compl. Universal Letter-writer* 19  The generality of Qualities are compared, by adding to the positive degree *er* for the comparative, and *est* for the superlative.

**10. Philosophy.**
a. Chiefly Metaphysics. Without article: the aspect of a thing which relates to its nature, condition, or properties.

Quality is the third of the Aristotelian categories.

1537 T. Elyot Castell of Helthe II. ii. f. 17 Qualitie is in the complexion, that is to saye, in what state it is, Hotte or colde, moyste or drye.
1656 T. Stanley Hist. Philos. II. v. 70 If quality be void of matter, it must likewise be void of corporeity.
1728 E. Chambers Cyc. The antient School Philosophers distinguish Quality in the general into Essential and Accidental.
1829 J. Mill Anal. Human Mind II. xiv. 57 Quality is finally used as an absolute term, the generical name of every thing in objects, for which a separate notation is required.
1884 B. Bosanquet et al. tr. H. Lotze Metaphysic 45 The question is renewed as to the actual essence which lies behind this surface of Quality.
1943 Jnl. Philos. 40 337 Quality has been explained away by being reduced to some other category as quantity.

b. Logic. The characteristic by which affirmative or negative propositions (or occasionally positive and negative terms) are distinguished; the property or fact of being affirmative or negative.

Kant's classification of judgements includes a third hybrid form of quality for cases where the proposition affirms a negative predicate (see quot. 1928).

1552 T. Wilson Logike f. 54 I call that in the proposicion a qualitie, when it doth affirme or deny.
1599 T. Blundeville Art of Logike III. i How is a simple proposition divided according to qualitie? Into an affirmative and negative proposition.
1697 tr. F. Burgersdijck Monitio Logica I. xxx. 117 In Regard of Quality, it is that an Enunciation is divided into Affirming and Denying.
1725 I. Watts Logick ii. ii. 250 If two Universals differ in Quality they are Contraries.
1843 J. S. Mill Syst. Logic I. ii. §1. 227 What are called the quantity and quality of the propositions.
1864 F. C. Bowen Treat. Logic v. 120 We thus ascertain the Quality of the Judgment, or whether it is affirmative or negative.
1928 J. N. Keynes Stud. & Exercises Formal Logic (ed. 4) II. ii. 106 In respect of quality, Kant gave a threefold division, recognising a class of infinite (or limitative) judgments... Thus, S is P being affirmative, and S is not P negative, S is not-P is spoken of as infinite or limitative.
1934 M. R. Cohen & E. Nagel Introd. Logic ii. 36 The negative particle, the sign of quality, must be understood to characterize the copula, not the subject or the predicate.
1982 F. Sommers Logic Natural Lang. App. B 353 A term or proposition is positive or negative in quality. Thus 'wise' and 'a creature was stirring' are positive in quality; 'unwise' and 'not a creature was stirring' are negative in quality.
1991 P. J. Hurley Conc. Introd. Logic (ed. 4) iv. 186 'All S are P' and 'Some S are P' have affirmative quality, and 'No S are P' and 'Some S are not P' have negative quality.
11. Law. The manner in which an estate is to be held, as jointly, conditionally, etc. Chiefly in **quality of (the) estate**. Now rare. Cf. *quantity of estate* at *quantity n. 8a.*

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1804 W. Cruise *Digest Laws Eng. Real Prop.* II. vi. 364 The alteration in the particular estate which would destroy a contingent remainder, must amount to an alteration in its quantity, and not in its quality.

1841 *Penny Cycl.* XIX. 46/1. The manner in which the enjoyment is to be exercised...is often expressed by the term Quality of Estate.

1930 *Univ. Pennsylvania Law Rev.* 78 658 The quality of the estate is determined at its inception and...[the] grant...was held by tenancy in common.

1977 J. Burke Jowitt’s * Dict. Eng. Law* (ed. 2) I. 723/2 With reference to their qualities, estates were either absolute, determinable, or conditional.

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12. Chiefly Music. That which distinguishes sounds from other sounds sharing the same pitch and other quantitative features; timbre.

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1807 T. Young *Course Lect. Nat. Philos.* I. xxxii. 388 We readily distinguish not only the frequency of the vibrations of a sound, whether constant or variable, and its loudness or softness, but also the quality.

1865 *Q. Jrnl. Sc.* 592 Though [certain sounds are] the same for musical purposes, in all other respects the quality is different.

1881 J. Broadhouse *Student’s Helmholtz* 77 The most uncultivated ear would perceive a difference of quality.

1984 A. Copland & V. Perlis *Copland: 1900–42* ix. 184 My purpose was not to recreate orchestral sounds reminiscent of the quality of the piano.

2000 *Jrnl. Res. Music Educ.* 48 223 Pairs of tones that changed to ‘brighter’ or ‘darker’ tone quality while the fundamental frequency remained unchanged.

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13. Engineering. The proportion by weight of a vapour, esp. steam, that is in a gas phase rather than droplets of the liquid.

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1898 H. A. Golding *Theta-Phi Diagram* iv. 52 (in figure) Dryness fraction or quality curve.

1937 T. Croft & R. P. Purdy *Steam Boilers* (ed. 2) iii. 24 The quality of steam in average practice is...from about 97 to 99 per cent.

2000 P. Chattopadhyay *Boiler Operation Engin.* (ed. 2) xx. 499/1 How does the steam quality vary with the change of the operating parameters of the boiler drum?

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1928 B. J. Leggett *Theory & Pract. Radiol.* II. vi. 162 The more or less exact measurement of the quality of X-radiation is of importance in all branches of radiotherapy.

1972 P. Barnes & D. Rees *Conc. Textbk. Radiotherapy* vii. 154 The choice of the radiation quality is determined by the site and the size of the lesion.
2004 S. Jayaraman & L. H. Lanzl *Clin. Radiotherapy Physics* (ed. 2) xiii. 191 For X-ray beams modified by filters, a measured half-value thickness (HVT) can be used for specifying the quality.

15. The degree to which a reproduced sound, picture, etc., resembles the original; fidelity.

1913 G. F. Rowell *Hints about Gramophone* 9 He revels in the loudest records he can buy, and so long as the noise is satisfactory the musical quality does not trouble him in the least.

1938 A. E. Greenlees *Amplification & Distribution of Sound* xvi. 230 The sales literature of manufacturers will provide much useful information as to what may be expected in the way of quality of reproduction.

1961 G. Millerson *Technique Television Production* 46 A contrast range of 30:1 is generally accepted as providing good picture quality photographically.

1993 *Camcorder User* Mar. 14/3 Bear in mind that picture and sound quality rapidly deteriorate in second—and third—generation copies.

2004 T3 Apr. 41/1 My Freeview box reports reception quality as 10/10, yet the picture's not as good as a reasonable UHF transmission.

†IV. A qualification, a proviso.

16. **Scottish.** = **QUALIFICATION** n. 1a. **Obsolete.**

1622 *Burgh Rec. Aberdeen* (Spalding Club) II. 375 Mr. James Ross...acceptit of the said stipend with the qualitie and conditioun aboue mentioned.

1671 in M. P. Brown *Suppl. Dict. Decisions Court of Session* (1826) II. 507 The said discharge...is clogged and burdened with qualities and protestations.

1714 W. Forbes *Jrnl. Session 1705–13* Pref. 7 Advocates admitted with a quality that they should not take in hand to plead in any...difficult cause without...assistance.

1774 J. Erskine *Institute* IV. ii. §11 Where the quality adjected to the oath relates precisely to the point which is truly referred to oath, it ought to be accounted intrinsic.

B. adj.

Of high quality; excellent (originally with reference to newspapers).

1960 *Stand* 46 His plan was to raise the paper's price and tip it decisively into the quality camp.

1972 *Britain 1972* (Central Office of Information) xviii. 429 The national newspapers...fall into two categories: popular and quality.

1994 *M.E.A.T.* Sept. 28/3 The musicianship is quality and tight, and the vocals sound solid and steady.

2006 *Decanter* June (Argentina 2006 Suppl.) 1/2 An ambition to deliver quality wines at the premium end of the market.
**COMPOUNDS**

**C1. General attributive.**

**a.** With sense ‘of high social standing, of good breeding, noble’, as *quality acquaintance*, *quality air*, *quality blood*, *quality end*, *quality friend*, *quality gentleman*, *quality horse*, *quality lady*, *quality living*, *quality pride*, *quality white*, etc.; *quality-mad* adj.

Common in the 18th and early 19th centuries; now archaic.

1701 G. Farquhar *Sir Harry Wildair* II. i. 12 Something was the matter, I wanted of Quality-Air.

1706 R. Estcourt *Fair Example* I. i. 10 Your Quality Lady, when she speaks, 'tis thus.

1748 S. Richardson *Clarissa* III. xxxv. 183 His relations do not despise the fugitive, as persons of their rank and quality-pride might be supposed to do.

1751 T. Smollett *Peregrine Pickle* III. xc. 257 Peregrine found some ladies of his quality-acquaintance.

1751 T. Smollett *Peregrine Pickle* II. lxxiii. 281 The influence of Peregrine’s new quality-friends.

1768 *Woman of Honor* I. 134 She is so stark quality-mad.

1784 R. Bage *Barham Downs* I. 233 My Lady's passion for quality living.

1786 A. Mackenzie *Gamesters* I. 139 To every coffee-house at this quality-end of the town.

1810 S. Green *Romance Readers & Romance Writers* I. v. 87 She knew but little of fashionable life, and thought every thing that was practised by her quality friend must be right.

1819 *Metropolis* (ed. 2) III. 149 The quality-end of the town.

1835 W. Irving * Beauties* 221 Mrs. Lamb, when she had no engagements with her quality acquaintance, would give tea junkettings.

1837 T. Carlyle *French Revol.* II. ii. 104 Young men, with quality-blood in them, poisoned with quality-pride.

1864 *Atlantic Monthly* Feb. 174/1 She was a sweet-spoken young thing,—not like Miss Hammond, with her proud, quality airs.

1868 *Atlantic Monthly* Jan. 104/1 Quality ladies took their bitters regular.

1891 *Field* 7 Mar. 334/2 Quite a quality horse is Gratian.

1908 J. M. Sullivan *Criminal Slang* 1 A quality gentleman, a gentleman by birth and education.

1966 K. L. Morgan in A. Dundes *Mother Wit* (1973) 603/1 I never questioned the implication that...my white ancestors were ‘quality’ whites.

2004 S. Olson *Children of God go Bowling* vi. 84 They would all nod and agree that he was ‘quality’ or ‘a quality person’. This puzzled me... We never discussed who was ‘quality’.

**b. (In sense A. 8a.)**

*quality mark*  

*n.*

1891 *Atlantic Monthly* July 125/1 A pussonable red cyarpit sack, what shows quality marks.

1904 H. Massé *Pewter Plate* xiv. 190 The touch-marks usually were the initials of the maker of the pewter, and...the Company's quality mark.
quality tested *adj.*

1913 *Oakland (Calif.) Tribune* 4 Nov. 3/7 The most refined patterns in quality tested materials enter into the making of these suits.

1974 *Times* 15 Aug. (India Suppl.) p. viii/3 (advt.) India's cottons..are quality tested.

1995 *Common Ground Mag.* Autumn (back cover) (advt.) This purifying tea blend..contains eight quality tested herbs.

c. (In sense A. 8c.)

(a)

quality audience *n.*

1935 *Ann. Amer. Acad. Polit. & Social Sci.* 177 74/1 American radio stations are beginning to distinguish between the quality audience and the quantity audience.

1938 *Time* 10 Oct. 43/1 It has a fairly large and very vociferous ‘quality’ audience.

2004 *Campaigns & Elections* (Nexis) Feb. 38 The Web reaches a large, quality audience when no other medium reaches them.

quality food *n.*

1922 *Lady Gregory* *Image* I. 19 If there was quality food I didn’t see it.

1961 *Wine & Food* Winter 240 Shoppers should..be well aware of the quality food that comes from their own farmers.

1993 *R. Lowe & W. Shaw* *Travellers* 40 You have to eat a lot of fresh fruit over a week, two weeks... You need to eat quality food.

quality note *n.*

1961 *Punch* 11 Jan. 88/2 The advertising strikes a ‘quality’ note.

2006 *Africa News* (Nexis) 10 July The First Bank ladies..opened their campaign on a quality note..with a 104–28 massacre.

quality producer *n.*

1910 *Marion (Ohio) Daily Star* 1 Apr. 5/2 (advt.) Hart Schaffner & Marx are correct style makers as well as all-wool quality producers.

1936 *Economist* 8 Feb. 314/1 Lower wage scales than those paid by the ‘quality’ producers in the leading centres.

2006 *Canberra Times* (Nexis) 17 Oct. The event aims to bring quality producers and providores together to showcase their goods.
(b) spec. of a high cultural standard (used esp. with reference to newspapers).

**quality magazine n.**

1910  *Coshocton (Ohio) Daily Tribune* 23 Dec. 2/4 (headline)  American is the quality magazine.
1941  *Times* 22 May (advt.)  The National Magazine Company..publish such quality magazines as 'Good Housekeeping.'
1992  *Canad. Fiction Mag.* No. 79. 5  An entire strata of cartoons on TV..in the papers and quality magazines.

**quality newspaper n.**

1917  *Washington Post* 21 Feb. 3/7 (advt.)  The Post is a quality newspaper.
1956  *English* Summer 48  Quality newspapers decline alarmingly, serious journals go bankrupt.
1999  *Independent* 16 Nov. 13/2  All the quality newspapers of those days..felt a real responsibility for not rocking the ship of state.

**quality paper n.**

1930  F. Lawson in D. Hart-Davis *House Berrys Built* (1990) iii. 60  While selling at the popular price, we shall remain a 'quality' paper.
1962  *Listener* 11 Oct. 569/2  You can see such reporting even in the so-called quality papers.

**quality press n.**

1949  *Times* 30 June 2/3  In the quality Press important questions..are handled seriously.
1960  *Guardian* 9 Dec. 12/6  The union would like to see..‘quality’ programmes analogous to the ‘quality’ press.
1998  A. Forna *Mother of All Myths* (1999) viii. 237  She published a disclaimer in the quality press shortly after the programme was aired.

**quality programme n.**

1960  *Guardian* 9 Dec. 12/6  The union would like to see..‘quality’ programmes analogous to the ‘quality’ press.
2006  *Sunday Times* (Nexis) 15 Oct. (Business section) 23  Television is now run by accountants more interested in..increasing dividends than producing quality programmes.

**quality publisher n.**
1957  *Syracuse (N.Y.) Herald-Jrnl.* 1 May 25/7 (advt.)  Children's famous name book sale. 5 quality publishers participate.

1961  *Guardian* 20 Oct. 11/4  The struggle between the commercial and the quality publisher is fierce.

2001  *Herald (Glasgow)* (Nexis) 1 Dec. 5  The quality publishers are producing mainstream books with a healthy girl-girl content.

**quality Sunday** *n.*

[1961  *Punch* 11 Jan. 86/3  When may a young man be said to have arrived?... Having his name used as a pun in a quality Sunday paper's erudite crossword puzzle.]

1974  *Times* 22 May 20/6  The quality dailies have done rather better than the popular journals... Quality Sundays are up 23 per cent.

2006  *Independent on Sunday* (Nexis) 14 May 20  Then came the fat Saturdays, and the doom brigade said it would seriously damage the quality Sundays.

**C2.**

**quality assurance** *n.*  the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or a manufactured product, esp. by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or manufacture; abbreviated QA; cf. **quality control** *n.*

1940  *Jrnl. Amer. Statist. Assoc.* 35 (Centenary Membership Directory) 24/1  Dodge, Harold F., Quality Results Engineer, Quality Assurance Department, Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc.

1960  H. C. THOMSON & L. A. MAYO  *Ordnance Dept.: Procurem. & Supply* xiv. 329  One of the first steps taken...was to enlist the services of George D. Edwards, director of quality assurance of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, as consultant to the Ordnance Department.

1976  *Amer. Jrrnl. Psychiatry* Jan. 48/2  An approach to quality assurance based on 'laundry lists' of services matched to problems has been criticized as being relevant only to improving the process of care and possibly irrelevant to improving the outcome of care.

1990  T. G. WREGHTT & P. MORGAN-CAPNER  *ELISA in Clin. Microbiol. Lab.* iii. 37  Quality assurance can be considered as the broad plan, within which the essential processes of quality control function to ensure that the plan is being adequately implemented.

1998  *Educ. Rev.* 12 II. 39/1  Schools need a variety of user-friendly, reliable and valid data on the progress and development of all their pupils to guide self-evaluation and quality assurance efforts.

**quality binding** *n.*  binding of high quality, esp. a kind of worsted tape for binding carpets; also *figurative.*

1733  T. JOHNSON  *MS Let.* 3 Aug. (MS BL Add. 32688) f. 222  The Scrub Mobb..burnt a Wooden Image they got at Sam\(^1\) Clarks and dres't it up lik a Man bought blue Quality binding to put on him in Imitation of a Garter and call'd him Sir R. W.

1770  G. COLMAN  *Man & Wife* II. 24  That flimsy piece of quality-binding..is always running after a title.
quality circle

*n.* [probably after Japanese *kyū-shii sākuru* (c1965; < English QC (see QC *n.* at Q n. Initialisms 2)) + *sākuru* (1907; < English *circle* : see CIRCLE *n.*)] (originally with reference to Japanese industry) a group of employees who meet to consider ways of resolving problems and improving production in their organization.

quality control

*n.* the maintenance of the desired quality in a manufactured product, esp. by comparison of a sample of the output with the specification; an instance of this; (in extended use) any process for maintaining a desired quality of product or output; frequently *attributive*.

quality controller

*n.* a person responsible for quality control.
**quality factor** *n.* [originally after German *Qualitätszahl (1898 in the passage translated in quot. 1899)] a number indicative of the quality of something; (*Electronics* and *Physics*) = Q *n.* 11.

1899  G. C. Henning tr. A. Martens *Handbk. Testing Materials* I. 345  It has been attempted to establish values..which..furnish standards of utility of the material, and are called quality factors [Ger. *Qualitätszahlen*], or factors of utility.

1947  *Electronic Circuits & Tubes* i. 17  The ratio of the series reactance to the series resistance of a reactor is defined as Q, its quality factor.

1971  *Nature* 24 Dec. 461/1  Recent measurements of the quality factor, Q, for mechanical vibrations generated by dropping parts of the Apollo lunar module and by moonquakes indicate that the Q of the Moon for these vibrations is of the order of 3,000.

1997  R. A. Dentler & A. L. Hafner *Hosting Newcomers* ii. 29  The Quality of Education scale was developed because of the necessity of including a general educational quality factor that incorporates a broader sense of high standards.

**quality management** *n.* *Business* (a style of) management focusing on the principle of quality, esp. in the development and implementation of working practices; cf. total quality management at **TOTAL adj. and n. Additions.**


1994  R. J. Taylor & S. B. Taylor *AUPHA Man. Health Services Managem.* xv. 278/2  An organization’s information resources must be organized in such a way that the data needed for quality management are gathered and disseminated.

2005  W. E. Lewis et al. *Software Testing & Continuous Quality Improvem.* i. 6  Quality management decreases production costs because the sooner a defect is located and corrected, the less costly it will be in the long run.

**quality management system** *n.* *Business* a system of standards and practices established within a company or industry to ensure consistent quality of products or services.

1977  B. W. Marguglio *Quality Syst. in Nucl. Industry* I. ii. 33  The attainment of coherency is extremely important because many elements of a quality management system exist outside of the..control of the Quality organization.

2004  J. J. DePillo et al. *Shifting Gears* i. 1  Formal quality management systems like ISO 9000 are a basic requirement for doing business with the automotive industry.

**quality time** *n.* originally *U.S.* time spent in a worthwhile or dedicated manner; esp. time in which one’s child, partner, etc., receives one’s undivided attention.

1972  *Los Angeles Times* 25 Aug. iv. 3  She is a firm believer in ‘quality time for each child’. Thus while in Europe..she might take a sidetrip to London museums with Liz Beth or a day sight-seeing alone with Phillip.
The time they spend with their children is 'quality time, not quantity time', say the mothers, echoing the claim of many executive fathers, and the children's home life is frequently more stimulating.

Busy spouses make appointments to spend quality time or even to have sex.

She reached inside her bag for her compact, intending to spend some quality time with her cosmetics.

So here they were, a protesting silence filling the car: against Mozart, against outings generally, against having to take a taxi, against the hour's drive from Wellington into Boston, against the very concept of quality time.

**DERIVATIVES**

′**qualityless adj.**

1852 *U.S. Democratic Rev.* Mar. 261/1 Color, form, &c., all but that qualityless, nondescript substance of Locke.

1859 J. B. Mozley *Indian Conversion* in *Ess.* (1878) II. 313 Brahm is a motionless, characterless, qualityless, colourless essence.

1920 A. S. Pringle-Pattison *Idea of God* 385 I am loath to believe that it is M. Bergson's..intention..to identify reality with the qualityless abstraction of change.

1980 N. Georgescu-Roegen in J. Rifkin *Entropy* vi. 262 All in nature consists of simple qualityless motion.

′**qualitylike adj. rare.**

1594 R. Carew tr. J. Huarte *Exam. Mens Wits* vi. 77 Neither the vnderstanding, nor any other accident, can be qualiti-like.

1985 B. P. Helm *Time & Reality in Amer. Philos.* i. 23 Firsts are..these qualitylike elements of novelty and uniqueness, features that are simply there.

†**qualityship n. Obsolete** social position.

Apparently an isolated use.

He dressed with regard to his qualityship.

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