

Oxford English Dictionary | The definitive record of the English language

try, v.

Pronunciation: Brit. /trʌɪ/, U.S. /traɪ/

Forms: ME–15 **tri**, ME–16 **trie**, **trye**, (ME **treye**, **trei**), ME– **try**. Pa. tense and pple. **tried** /trɪəd/; also ME (*pa. tense*) **triȝed**, (*pa. pple.*) **triȝede**, **i-triȝed**, **-et**, **ytried**, **ytryed**, ME **y-tryid**; ME **treid**, **tryyd**, ME–15 **tryede**, ME–16 **tryde**, ME–18 **tryed**, ME (**tryude**), **triet**, **tryet** (also 15 *Sc.*), ME–15 **tryid**, 15–16 **tride**, **tryd**, *Sc.* **tryit**, 16 **tri'd**, 16–17 **try'd**.

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < Old French *trie-r* (12th cent., Benoit *Ducs de Norm.* II. 11518 Le tort del dreit Trier e conoistre e sevrer (to sift and know and sever the wrong from the right) = Provençal *triar*, Catalan *triar*, also medieval Latin *triāre* (from Provençal or French) to sift or pick out. The legal use appears to have been developed in Anglo-Norman, where it is known c1280; there is no trace of this use in continental French. The origin of the French and Provençal word is unknown.

The conjecture of Frisch, mentioned by Diez and by Skeat, that it represents a late Latin **tritāre* to grind out, thresh out, frequentative of *terĕre*, is incompatible with the Provençal form. Another conjecture is that it was a transposed form of *tirer* 'to draw, extract', in a specific sense; but evidence is wanting.

1.

a. trans. To separate (one thing) from another or others; to set apart; to distinguish. Often with *out*. *Obs.* or *arch.*

c1330 R. MANNYNG *Chron. Wace* (Rolls) 13260 Þey turnde ageyn, And tryde þe Bretons fro ilk Romeyn.

1413 *26 Pol. Poems* xii. 69 Til trouþe be fro treson tryed, Shal neuere be pes in regyon.

?1518 *Cocke Lorelles Bote* sig. C.ij With this man was a lusty company For all raskyllers fro them they dyde trye.

1548 *Hall's Vnion: Henry VII* f. liiii^v He [sc. Henry VII] espyed and tried oute suche as he knewe..to beare no good wyll..towarde his person.

1592 W. WARNER *Albions Eng.* (rev. ed.) VII. xxxvii. 163 For what is it but reason that humaine from brutishe tries?

[1847 H. BUSHNELL *Views Christian Nurture* 7 Human children still, living a mixed life, trying out the good and evil of the world.]

†**b.** To pick out, choose, select; *pa. pple.* (quot. 1340-70), selected, choice (cf. **TRIED** *adj.* 2).

[1292 *Britton* II. xxvii. §5 Face le viscounte trier xii. prodeshommes.]

1340-70 *Alisaunder* 1233 For too keepe in that kith cumlich & riche All his tresour ytryed.

c1440 *Pallad. on Husb.* IV. 727 The kiyn also this tyme hit is to trie; Do chese hem that be chested

huge & hie.

c1440 *Promptorium Parvulorum* 502/2 *Tryin* [*v.r.* tryyn], *eligo*, *preeligo*.

a1525 (†1481) *Coventry Leet Bk.* (1908) II. 484 See that the seid persones so be [= by] you to be *tried* oute & chosen.

†2.

a. To separate the good part of a thing from the rest, esp. by sifting or straining; hence, to sift or strain. Usually with *out*. *Obs.*

1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) Exod. xvi. 31 The taast of it as of *tryed* floure with hony.

c1420 LYDGATE *Assembly of Gods* 2071 *Try* out the corne clene from the chaff.

c1430 *Two Cookery-bks.* 11 Take 3olkys of eyroun y-*tryid* fro þe whyte.

?a1475 *Noble Bk. Cookry* 90 Put it to gedur with a crust of bred and *try* it through a strener.

1548 N. UDALL et al. tr. Erasmus *Paraphr. Neue Test.* I. Pref. 10 The boultur *tryeth* out the branne.

1581 W. STAFFORD *Compend. Exam. Complaints* (1876) ii. 51 What neede they..to *trie* out the sandes of the ryuers of Tagus in Spaine, Pactolus in Asia, and Ganges in India, to get..small sparkes of gold.

1657 C. BECK *Universal Char.* sig. L8 To *trye*, or fine from the dreggs.

1790 W. MARSHALL *Agric. Provincialisms in Rural Econ. Midland Counties* II. 444 *Try*, to skreen.

b. *gen.* To take or get *out*, to extract; also, in extended sense, To put *into*, insert. *Obs. rare.*

c1440 *Pallad. on Husb.* II. 165 Impedymētis, rootis out thou *trie*.

c1440 *Pallad. on Husb.* II. 263 Aysell and wyne eke oute of hem men *trie*, As oute of peres.

c1440 *Pallad. on Husb.* III. 639 Wild asperages rootes many *trie* Into erthe ytilde.

c1440 *Pallad. on Husb.* XII. 94 The boones..in askes moolde Thay mynge, and it thai into skeppes *trie*.

†3. *spec.* To separate (metal) from the ore or dross by melting; to refine, purify by fire; also, to remove (the dross or impurity) from metal by fire. Usually with *out*. Also *fig.* *Obs.*

13.. *K. Alis.* (Bodl.) 828 Riche rede *Itried* golde.

13.. *Coer de L.* 6342 *Tryyd* sylvyr and tresore fyn.

1524 in *Acts Parl. Scotl.* (1875) XII. 41/1 Þe gold gais furth of þe sammyn [realm] in greit quantite becaus it is *tryit* to ane hieare price and valoure in vþir realmis.

1535 *Bible* (Coverdale) Zech. xiii. 9 I..will clense them, as the syluer is clensed: Yee and *trye* them, like as golde is tryed.

1539 *Bible* (Great) Psalms xxvi. 2 Examen me, o Lord, & proue me: *trie* out my reynes and my hert.

1545 *Bibliotheca Eliotæ* *Chalcites*, a stone..wherof brasse is *tried*.

1555 in W. Page *Inventories Church Goods York, Durham & Northumberland* (1897) 152 So moche refuse and baggaige *tried* out, by meane of the melting of the said plate.

- 1572 *Pat. Roll 14 Eliz.* XII. m. 22 (P.R.O.) Thomas Smyth..hath..founde out and put in vse a newe and certene arte to trye out and make of yron verye true perfytt and good copper.
- 1600 SHAKESPEARE *Merchant of Venice* II. ix. 62 The fier seauen times tried this, Seauen times tried that iud[g]ement is, That did neuer choose amis.
- 1686 W. HARRIS tr. N. Lémery *Course Chym.* (ed. 2) 36 Coppels are porous vessels made in form of a cup, to be used for the trying and purifying of Gold and Silver.

4.

a. To extract (oil) from blubber or fat by heat; to melt down (blubber, etc.), to obtain the oil; to render; also, to extract (wax) from a honey-comb. Usually with *out*.

- 1582 in W. H. Turner *Select. Rec. Oxf.* (1880) 423 No chaundeler shall..trie or melt any tallowe wth in the walles.
- 1583 P. BARROUGH *Methode of Phisicke* III. lxii. 157 Oyle tried out of woll in sheepes flanks or necks.
- 1634 J. LEVETT *Ordering of Bees* 51 After what manner doe you deale with your Combes to try out the waxe.
- 1852 G. C. MUNDY *Our Antipodes* I. xii. 386 A dead whale was..'tried out' by some speculating fisherman.
- 1867 W. H. SMYTH & E. BELCHER *Sailor's Word-bk.* To try down, to boil out the oil from blubber at sea in whalers.
- 1883 A. SHEA *Newfoundland Fisheries* 10 The fat is then cut up,..and tried out by steam.

b. *intr.* for *pass.* *U.S.*

- 1891 *Cent. Dict.* (at cited word) Grease tries out of a ham in cooking;..the perspiration is trying out of him.

5.

†**a.** *trans.* To ascertain, find out (something doubtful, obscure, or secret) by search or examination; to sift out. Usually **to try out**. *Obs.*

[Cf. c1300–25 N. BOZON *Contes Moralisés* (1889) 9 La cause [of the attraction of the loadstone] ne peut estre triée.]

- c1325 *Metr. Hom.* 56 Yef we wil the sothe treye, Gon we til dom of our Leuedye.
- 1430–40 LYDGATE tr. Bochas *Fall of Princes* (Bodl. 263) I. viii. lf. 36/1 But folke that list off daunger hem discharge..Til the trouthe be tried out in deed.
- 1567 in J. Cranstoun *Satirical Poems Reformation* (1891) I. iii. 92 Tresoun to try sho was that tyme maist stout But sho is slak to try this tresoun out.
- 1584 T. COGAN *Hauen of Health* i. 8 By this meanes doeth Galen trie out the time most fit for exercise.
- 1675 tr. W. Camden *Hist. Princess Elizabeth* (rev. ed.) I. 129 They all agreed on this, that Lidington..should first try the Queen's mind.

a1761 W. LAW *Comfort Weary Pilgrim* (1809) 52 This therefore may serve as a touch~stone wherby every one may try the truth of his state.

†**b.** With material object. *Obs. rare*⁻¹.

1539 R. POLLARD et al. in *State Papers Henry VIII* (1830) I. 619 We have dayly fownde and tryede oute bothe money and plate, hyde and muryde up in walls, vaulttis and other secrette placis.

c. To ascertain the truth or right of (a matter, a quarrel, etc.) by test or endeavour; with *out*, to thrash or fight out; to determine. Now *rare*.

1542 N. UDALL tr. Erasmus *Apophthegmes* f. 163^v To trye y^e mater w^t dynte of swearde.

1545 *Bibliotheca Eliotæ* *Disceptare armis*, to trye by battayle.

1654 R. CODRINGTON tr. Justinus *Hist.* XI. 298 He was enforced by them to try it out in battel with them.

1712 POPE tr. Statius *First Bk. Thebais* in *Misc. Poems* 34 The rushing Winds..With equal Rage their airy Quarrel try, And win by turns the Kingdoms of the Sky.

1857 TROLLOPE *Barchester Towers* xxiii Mr. Arabin said that he would try the question out with Mrs Bold.

d. to try out: to test the advantages, possibilities, or qualities of (a material or immaterial thing); also, to test (a person). orig. *U.S.*

1888 *Judge* (N.Y.) 29 Dec. 190/1 Tried Out By Fire.

1899 *N.Y. Jrnl.* 30 July 34/6 Britain will try out heavy motor wagons.

1906 *N.Y. Evening Post* 26 Oct. 1 The new rules have been but partially tried out.

1974 A. PRICE *Other Paths to Glory* III. 254 He was being tried out on someone else's problem.

6. Law. To examine and determine (a cause or question) judicially; to determine the guilt or otherwise of (an accused person) by consideration of the evidence; to sit in judgement on; to judge. Also *fig.* †Also *intr.* with *of* (quot. c1330 at sense 6a). (Probably the earliest sense recorded in English.)

a. To try a cause or question.

[1292 *Britton* I. v. §8 Et si n'i eynt mie asez, si soint les chalengs triez. Et si les chalengs soint trevez verrays [etc..]

c1330 R. MANNYNG *Chron.* (1810) 313 The wisest of þe clergie, with erles & barouns Togider went to trie of þer peticions.

a1400 (†a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 9686 Al þat þai striue a-mang þam thre, Thoru pes it agh at tried be.

1467 in J. T. Smith & L. T. Smith *Eng. Gilds* (1870) 401 To trye it by xij. men aftur the lawe in suche case provided.

- 1562 in J. Stuart *Sel. Rec. Kirk Aberdeen* (1846) 4 To trye, discusse, and examyn all faltis and offencis..off the haill inhabitantis off the burgh.
- a1631 J. DONNE *Poems* (1650) 103 This will be tryed to morrow.
- 1756 W. DUNCAN tr. Cicero *Sel. Orations* x. 307 He..may desire to know what crime it is that is trying.
- 1770 C. JENNER *Placid Man* VI. iv Whilst the..cause had been trying at Mrs. Stapleton's fire-side [etc..].
- 1815 SCOTT *Guy Mannering* II. 201 It was tried in the inner-house afore the fifteen.
- 1892 SIR A. KEKEWICH in *Law Times Rep.* 67 139/1 I have to try the case before me according to those cases.
- 1895 *Daily News* 4 Nov. 4/6 Mr. Justice Mathew, who tried the action,..had granted the injunction.

b. To try a person.

- 1538 T. ELYOT *Dict. Interrogari legibus*, to be tried by examination, that they had offended against the lawis.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Measure for Measure* (1623) II. i. 21 The Iury..May in the sworne-twelve haue a thiefe, or two Guiltier then him they try .
- 1674 in F. P. Verney & M. M. Verney *Mem. Verney Family 17th Cent.* (1907) II. 317 Judg Torner's son, who was tryed for his life last November for killing a man.
- 1797 A. RADCLIFFE *Italian* II. v. 171 You must be tried before you are condemned.
- 1849 G. CUPPLES *Green Hand* ix A gang o' Spanish pirates I saw tried for their lives.
- 1875 B. JOWETT tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) V. 450 Let him who dares to smite an elder be tried for assault.

c. To submit (a case) for the judgment of a court of law. *U.S.*

- 1905 S. W. MITCHELL *Constance Trescot* 166 'Do you still feel that all chance of settlement is out of the question?' 'Yes; I am instructed to try the case.'
- 1931 *N. Amer. Rev.* Jan. 22 This is one of his jokes; he knows I can't afford to try criminal cases. It's been fifteen years since I've been in a criminal court.

7.

a. To test the strength, goodness, value, truth, or other quality of; to put to the proof, test, prove.

- 1362 LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* A. i. 183 Whan alle tresouris arn trizede [83 I-trized] treuþ e is þe beste.
- c1400 (þ?c1380) *Pearl* l. 311 To leue no tale be true to tryþe, Bot þat hys one skyl may dem.
- a1500 (þ?1422) J. YONGE tr. *Secreta Secret.* (Rawl.) (1898) 188 No word Sholde out-Passe, but yf hit were triet wyth reyson.
- ?1533 TYNDALE *Expos. Mathew* vi. f. lxxvi Except a man be proued and tryed, it cannot be knowen..that he is rightwisse.
- 1603 SHAKESPEARE *Hamlet* I. iii. 62 Those friends thou hast, and their adoptions tried, Graple them to

thee with a hoope of steele.

- 1825 T. HOOK *Sayings & Doings* 2nd Ser. I. 279 Jumping and bumping himself about in Colonel Arden's new carriage in order to try the springs.
- 1881 J. A. FROUDE *Short Stud.* (1883) IV. II. v. 230 He..had determined to try every fact..by the strict rules of inductive science.

b. To examine (a person) for the purpose of testing his qualifications:

cf. TRIAL *n.*¹ 6, TRIER *n.* 5. *Obs.* or *Hist.*

- 1636 in J. Bulloch *Pynours* (1887) 70 In cais any persone..desyr to be admittit a laborar at the Shoir..they must first be tryit be the watter Baillie.
- 1654 in C. H. Firth *Clarke Papers* (1899) III. 15 Those that sitte at Whitehall to try Ministers.

†**c. to try out:** to reject after trial; in quot. 1542-3, to dismiss (a challenged juryman): cf. TRIER *n.* 2.

- 1542-3 *Act 34 & 35 Hen. VIII* c. 26 §46 If..the residue of the saide Iurye make defaulte or be tryed out.

d. to try a door, window, etc., to ascertain by attempting to open it whether it is fastened or locked.

- 1845 DICKENS *Chimes* I. 2 The night-wind..trying, with its unseen hand, the windows and the doors; and seeking out some crevices by which to enter.
- 1889 A. C. GUNTER *That Frenchman!* iv. 37 Maurice..closes the door behind him, trying it to be sure the spring lock has worked.

e. To put (a person) to the test to ascertain the truth of what is asserted or believed of him or her. Frequently in imp. **try me.**

- 1970 V. CANNING *Great Affair* xi. 193 'You'll not like it.' 'Try me.'
- 1971 *Scope* (S. Afr.) 19 Mar. 124/2 'Miss Blandish..ahem..I take it that you can keep a secret?' 'Try me, Mr Stone.' Her voice was like a soft caress. Her suggestion to 'try her' scared J. B.
- 1984 A. PRICE *Sion Crossing* vi. 106 'I think maybe you won't like it, Oliver.'.. 'Try me.'

8. Joinery. To bring (a piece of timber) to a perfectly flat surface by repeatedly testing it and planing off the projecting parts; to plane with the trying-plane; also **to try up**; also, to test the straightness of (a planed surface) or the correspondence of (adjoining surfaces); *intr.* (of a surface) to prove accurate or straight when tested.

- 1593 T. FALE *Horologiographia* f. 2 Prepare a piece of very good wood, try it perfectly on both sides to an equall thickness.
- 1678 J. MOXON *Mech. Exercises* I. IV. 60 To lay Boards..flat against, whiles they are Trying or Plaining.
- 1678 J. MOXON *Mech. Exercises* I. v. 78 Try it again, as before, and if you find it Try all the way, you may..go over it again.
- 1679 J. MOXON *Mech. Exercises* I. IX. 156 Try one side flat,..and both the edges straight.
- 1683 J. MOXON *Mech. Exercises* II. 42 All its Sides are tryed square to one another.
- 1776 G. SEMPLE *Treat. Building in Water* 85 After your Work is tried up or even put together.
- 1828 H. ADCOCK *Builders' Pocket-bk.* 52 Swedish deals.., if tried up square at night they will be crooked in the morning.

9. try on: to test the fit or style of (a garment) by putting it on. Also *absol.*

- 1693 W. CONGREVE *Old Batchelour* IV. iii. 35 The Daughters only tore two Pair of Kid-Gloves, with trying 'em on.
- 1804 M. EDGEWORTH *Will* iv, in *Pop. Tales* I. 173 Miss Barton was trying on her dress.
- 1847 THACKERAY *Vanity Fair* (1848) xiii. 109 He..tried a new coat in Pall Mall.
- 1883 *Harper's Mag.* Feb. 446/1 She must go at once and 'try on!' It is a special order.

10. To subject to a severe test or strain; to strain the endurance or patience of, put to straits, afflict.

- 1539 *Bible* (Great) Heb. xi. 36 Other were tried w^t mockynges & scourgynges, moreouer, w^t bondes & presonment. [Cf. 3.]
- 1545 R. ASCHAM *Toxophilus* II. f. 37 A syde wynde tryeth an archer and good gere verye muche.
- 1702 R. NELSON in *Pepys' Diary, etc.* (1879) VI. 257 If the Providence of God thinks fit to try you with the want of both.
- 1824 BYRON *Don Juan: Canto XVI* l. 89 Her temper had been tried So much.
- 1825 BARONESS BUNSEN in A. J. C. Hare *Life & Lett. Baroness Bunsen* (1879) I. vii. 248 She has been tried in life more hardly than anybody whose..history I ever yet heard.
- 1859 MACAULAY in G. O. Trevelyan *Life & Lett. Macaulay* (1876) II. xv. 470 This malady tries me severely.
- 1905 E. GLYN *Vicissitudes Evangeline* 142 You look very pale, child—the journey has tried you probably.

11.

a. To test the effect or operation of; to use, apply, or practise tentatively or by way of experiment; to experiment with. **try an experiment:** to make an experiment; to do something in order to see

what will come of it, or whether it produces the expected result.

to try conclusions, try a fall, try masteries: see the ns.

- 1545 *Primer Kynges Maiestie* (STC 16034) sig. DD.iv^v Trye not the lawe with thy seruaunt.
- 1573 T. TUSSEY *Fiue Hundreth Points Good Husbandry* (new ed.) f. 10^v He that of wilfulnes trieth the lawe: shal striue for a coxcombe, & thriue as a dawe.
- 1625 BACON *Ess.* (new ed.) 141 It is good also, not to try Experiments in States.
- 1676 LADY CHAWORTH in *12th Rep. Royal Comm. Hist. MSS* (1890) App. v. 29 Lady Portsmouth continues sicke, and some say she will try the French ayre, others the Bath watters.
- 1701 in H. Ellis *Orig. Lett. Eminent Literary Men* (1843) (Camden) 302 I wish you would try Smith and Walford for Cowper's Anatomy, and the Philosophical Transactions.
- 1702 *Eng. Theophrastus* 170 Those that will be trying masteries with their superiors.
- 1863 W. C. BALDWIN *Afr. Hunting* vii. 246 I have tried fishing to-day, as I dare not fire a shot for fear of frightening the elephants.
- 1875 W. S. JEVONS *Money* (1878) 246 The United States government tried a similar experiment.

b. To experiment upon (*with* something); to test the effect of something upon.

- 1784 COWPER in *Gentleman's Mag.* 54 I. 413/1 By..trying him with a variety of herbs [I] restored him to perfect health.

c. *absol.* or *intr.* To make experiment; †in quot. 1573 ? to practise.

- 1573 T. TUSSEY *Fiue Hundreth Points Good Husbandry* (new ed.) f. 24^v Dank linge forgot will quickly rot... Here learne & trie to turne it and drye.

d. to try (one's) hand, to attempt to do something for the first time; to test one's ability or aptitude *at* something.

- 1710 LD. SHAFTESBURY *Soliloquy* 4 Who will willingly be the first to try our Hand.
- 1768 A. TUCKER *Light of Nature* (1834) I. 384 Why should I be debarred the liberty of trying my hand as well as another?
- 1848 W. IRVING *Hist. N.Y.* (rev. ed.) v. iii. 269 He determined to try his hand at negotiation.
- 1896 *N. York Weekly Witness* 30 Dec. 13/1 He prayed to be permitted to try his hand at spellbinding.

e. To test the effect of (a thing) *on* (a person, thing, etc.). **to try it on the (or a) dog:** to test the effectiveness of something on someone regarded as being of lesser consequence than those for whom it is ultimately intended; *Theatr.*, to test the possibilities of a play, etc., by performing it as a *matinée* or before a provincial audience. *colloq.* (orig.

U.S.).

- 1890 A. BARRÈRE & C. G. LELAND *Dict. Slang* II. 377/1 'Bootle's Baby' will on the 7th of May be produced somewhere in the provinces. This is what the Americans call trying it on a dog.
- 1897 *Daily Tel.* 4 Feb. 9/1 If any enterprising person desires to make money from a play or a composition of music he does not boldly attempt the experiment upon the public. His shrewd suspicion that they would avenge the torture induces him to adopt the preliminary precaution of 'trying it on the dog'—a creature of delicate susceptibilities, and very amenable to the influences of Teutonic bands and street-corner cornet solos.
- 1903 [see sense 15b].
- 1922 H. CRANE *Let.* 29 Sept. (1965) 101 I want to try Dial [a literary review] on 'F and H', before it goes anywhere else.
- 1941 G. HEYER *Envious Casca* xiv. 261 Mathilda had never felt less inclined to listen to a dissertation on the benefits of experience to an actress, and she very rudely told Paula to try it on the dog.

f. to try in (Dentistry): to place (a denture or prosthesis) in the patient's mouth to test the fit. [< the prepositional use illustrated in quot. 1896.]

- [1896 C. J. ESSIG *Amer. Text-bk. Prosthetic Dentistry* xi. 408 After the teeth of a full upper denture have been tried in the mouth and found to be correct, a protective rim is to be made.]
- 1921 D. GABELL *Prosthetic Dentistry* viii. 199 The dentures should be placed in tepid water with some pleasant antiseptic,..and then each separately tried in.
- 1968 NEILL & NAIRN *Compl. Denture Prosthetics* 101/2 When trying in the waxed-up dentures initially the opportunity is taken to..check the jaw relationships.

g. try anything once: a cliché indicating (often somewhat unexpected) willingness on the part of a speaker to attempt or experience something new.

- 1921 *Ladies' Home Jrnl.* July 20/1 This slogan runs, 'Try anything once'.
- 1959 N. MAILER *Advts. for Myself* (1961) 160 'I am sort of curious about the film. I've never seen one [sc. a pornographic film], you know.' 'Try anything once, is that it?'

h. try-your-strength, try-your-weight: used *attrib.* to designate an apparatus at a fair or the like which tests or measures a person's strength or weight.

- 1929 J. B. PRIESTLEY *Good Compan.* I. iv. 135 One o' these try-your-strength things..—down with the 'ammer and up she goes and rings the bell.
- 1930 R. LEHMANN *Note in Music* v. 214 A try-your-strength machine that gave him his money back.
- 1932 *Radio Times* 29 July 241/1 Everything to make them feel at home..try-your-weight machines,

'diddlers', peeps-at-Paris.

- 1963 P. G. WODEHOUSE *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* iii. 24 There was plenty and to spare of the Rev. H. P. Pinker. Even as a boy..he must have burst seams and broken try-your-weight machines.
- 1977 'E. CRISPIN' *Glimpses of Moon* vi. 97 I want to try the Try-Your-Strength machine.

12. To endeavour to ascertain by experiment or effort; to attempt to find out; sometimes nearly = sense 11.

a. with simple obj. (usually *fortune, luck*, or the like).

- 1573 J. BARET *Aluearie* F 955 I will aduenture, or trie and seeke my fortune.
- 1601 R. JOHNSON tr. G. Botero *Trauellers Breuiat* 51 If he had but thirtie thousand good footemen..he could haue found in his hart to trie his fortune with this enimie.
- 1741 S. SPEED in *Bucclench MSS* (Hist. MSS Comm.) (1899) I. 398 We shall go to Jamaica,..and try our luck once more.
- 1838 A. DE MORGAN *Ess. Probabilities* i. 21 They think they are trying their luck, as the phrase is.
- 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* II. vii. 202 He tried the effects of frowns and menaces.
- 1885 'MRS. ALEXANDER' *At Bay* x. 155 I have not yet been accepted. I have not even tried my chance.
- 1902 A. E. W. MASON *Four Feathers* viii If he tried his luck with Miss Eustace.

b. with indirect interrogative clause (*how, if, what, whether*, etc.).

- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Taming of Shrew* (1623) I. ii. 17 Ile trie how you can Sol, Fa, and sing it.
- a1648 LD. HERBERT *Life* (1976) 9 Many shippes scattering themselues to try whether they could obtayne a prize.
- 1680 J. MOXON *Mech. Exercises* I. XII. 208 Try how the Centers are pitcht, by Treading the Treddle lightly down.
- a1700 in *Publ. Catholic Rec. Soc.* (1911) 9 341 To trie what effects her Maiestys example might have on others.
- 1819 in *Shelley Mem.* (1859) 126 Let you and I try if we cannot be as punctual and businesslike as the best of them.

13. To show or find to be so by test or experience; to prove, demonstrate. (With simple obj., obj. cl., inf., or obj. and compl.) Now *rare* or *Obs.*

- c1412 T. HOCCLEVE *De Regimine Principum* 2097 Deth hath but smal consideracioun Vnto þe vertuous,..No more..Than to a vicious maistir losel tried.
- c1500 in I. S. Leadam *Select Cases Star Chamber* (1903) I. 101 He wold not take oon peny of him Except his right were tryed good.
- a1556 N. UDALL *Ralph Roister Doister* (?1566) v. i. sig. H.ij She may hir selfe discharge and trie hir honestie.
- ?1589 *Whip for an Ape* sig. A2 Sometimes his choppes doo walke in poynts too hie, Wherein the Ape

himselſe a Woodcocke tries.

- 1599 SHAKESPEARE *Romeo & Juliet* IV. iii. 28 He hath still bene tried a holy man.
 1642 *Declar. Lords & Comm.* 2 Sept. 5 Fasting and Prayer having bin often tried to be very effectuell.
 1892 J. KENT *Racing Life Ld. G. C. Bentinck* 47 Lord George Cavendish tried Godolphin to be a good horse.

†14. To have experience of; to undergo, go through. *Obs.*

- 1578 J. LYLY *Euphues* f. 26 Y^e quiet life which I haue tried being a maiden.
 1625 A. GIL *Sacred Philos.* Pref. That treatise tried the common fortune of all bookes; some slighted..others condemned it.
 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* IX. 860 Never more Mean I to trie, what rash untri'd I sought, The paine of absence from thy sight.
 a1771 T. GRAY *Imit. Propertius* in *Wks.* (1814) II. 88 Or if, alas! it be my fate to try Another Love.

15.

a. To test one's ability to deal with (something); to attempt to do, perform, or accomplish (an action); to venture upon, to essay. **to try over**, to go through (a performance, etc.) experimentally.

- c1315 SHOREHAM i. 1290 Nou ich habbe of þe ferste yteld, þat oþer wyl ich trye.
 †?a1513 W. DUNBAR *Poems* (1998) I. 152 Nixt that a turnament wes tryid, That lang befor in hell wes cryid.
 1607 T. WALKINGTON *Optick Glasse* 83 b This little barke.., which neuer tried the foming maine before.
 1638 F. JUNIUS *Painting of Ancients* 12 All kind of worke seemeth to be hard before we doe try it.
 1812 J. WILSON *Isle of Palms* II. 489 The boat hath left the lonesome rock And tries the wave again.
 1870 J. R. LOWELL *Among my Bks.* 1st Ser. 176 Fancy a parody of Shakespeare... You might as well try it with the Venus of Melos.
 1915 *N.E.D.* at *Try Mod.* I should like to try it over first.

b. try it on (with play on sense 9): to attempt an imposition; to endeavour to outwit or get the better of some one (usually const. *with*); *spec.* in *Thieves' Cant*, to live by thieving. *slang.*

- 1811 *Lexicon Balatronicum* *Try on*, to endeavour. To live by thieving. Coves who try it on; professed thieves.
 1812 *Sporting Mag.* 39 284 Witness agreed to try it on again although he considered himself in danger.
 1847 THACKERAY *Vanity Fair* (1848) xxxiv. 305 No jokes, old boy; no trying it on on me.
 1903 J. S. FARMER & W. E. HENLEY *Slang* VII. II. 217/2 *To try it on*, to seek to outwit, get the better of, fleece, cheat... *To try it on a dog* = to experiment at another's expense or risk.

1912 *Oxf. & Cambr. Rev.* Nov. 14 If he tries it on, the audience..is ready to convince him of his mistake.

16.

a. intr. To make an effort, endeavour, attempt. (With *inf.*, or *absol.*)

1638 [implied in: T. HERBERT *Some Yeares Trav.* (rev. ed.) 72 Ecbar is poysoned;..after foureteene dayes violent torment and trialls to expell the poyson, yeelds up his ghost. (at TRIAL n.¹ 8)].

1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* III, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 107 To repair his Strength he tries: Hardning his Limbs with painful Exercise.

a1771 T. GRAY *Imit. Propertius* in *Wks.* (1884) I. 154 While to retain the envious Lawn she tries.

1847 F. MARRYAT *Children of New Forest* I. iv. 57 You will have to try and try again.

1895 *Pall Mall Gaz.* 7 Oct. 1/3 England..has tried her best to head him off the path down which he seems determined to rush.

18.. *Pop. Melody* If at first you don't succeed, Try, try, try again.

b. Followed by *and* and a coordinate verb (instead of *to* with *inf.*) expressing the action attempted. *colloq.* Cf. AND *conj.*¹ 10.

1686 J. S. *Hist. Monastical Convent.* 9 They try and express their love to God by their thankfulness to him.

1802 H. MARTIN *Helen of Glenross* II. 143 Frances retired, to try and procure a little rest.

1819 MOORE in *Notes & Queries* (1854) 1st Ser. 9 76/1 Went to the theatre to try and get a dress.

1855 in Coleridge *Mem. Keble* (1869) II. 425 I have something to write to you on that matter, which I shall try and put on another piece of paper.

1878 W. S. JEVONS *Polit. Econ.* 42 If every trade were thus to try and keep all other people away.

1883 L. OLIPHANT *Altiora Peto* I. 251 He had good reason to think that Sark was likely to try and back out.

c. Const. with preposition. ***try for***, to attempt to obtain or find (an object), or to reach (a place). ***try at***, to make an attempt upon, endeavour to get at; to attempt to do or accomplish.

1534 in I. S. Leadam *Select Cases Court of Requests* (1898) 43 Your sayd humble subgett is a very powre man and nott able to trye for his sayd libertie..by the ordre of the comen lawe.

1653 *Caldwell Papers* (Maitland Club) I. 108 Quhen he went to search and try for the lard's hors y^t was stollen.

1763 J. WESLEY *Jrnl.* 20 Aug. (1827) III. 138 We concluded to try for Larn, though we knew not the way.

1794 C. SMITH *Wanderings of Warwick* 195 Xaviera..seemed, by an effort of resolution, to try at conquering her confusion.

1816 J. K. TUCKEY *Narr. Exped. River Zaire* (1818) i. 10 The sea being much discoloured, we tried for

soundings, but did not get bottom with 120 fathoms of line.

1913 *Illustr. London News* 16 Aug. 266/2 On three occasions he made some show of trying for a degree, and between times attended as few lectures as he could.

d. intr. and trans. To search a place in order to find something, esp. game, or its scent. *colloq.*

1810 *Sporting Mag.* **36** 233 He bid the other defendants try across the Six Acres.

1821 J. CLARE *Village Minstrel* I. 125 Bees in every peep did try.

1827 G. A. MCCALL *Lett. from Frontiers* (1868) 178 The Colonel had directed Maximo to bring..all..appliances for hunting the green turtle; and the latter..was thus early in motion to 'try' after turtle.

1909 *Toilers of Deep* Oct. 246/1 Frequently they 'try a piece', as fishing parlance has it.

e. intr. try back: to go back (*lit.* or *fig.*) so as to cover ground afresh where something has previously been missed; to 'hark back'.

1816 A. KNOX & J. JEBB *Corr.* II. 273 At college, I was obliged to try back in mathematics. Through daily life, I am obliged to try back in minor morals.

1857 T. HUGHES *Tom Brown's School Days* I. vii. 167 They tried back slowly and sorrowfully, and found the lane.

1863 G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE *Gladiators* 233 Like a hound..now trying back with untiring perseverance.

1874 R. ST. J. TYRWHITT *Our Sketching Club* 3 To get people to see when their work won't do, and to try back and attempt simpler things.

f. trans. To attempt or solicit (a woman); to endeavour to seduce; also of a stallion, to attempt to cover (a mare).

1713 LADY M. W. MONTAGU *Lady's Resolve* In part she is to blame that has been try'd; He comes too near, that comes to be deny'd.

1811 *Sporting Mag.* **38** 212 The horse took as much pains to try the mare as any stallion.

†**17. Naut. intr.** Of a vessel: To lie to. (See quot. 1867.) Also, **to try a-hull.** *Obs.*

The meaning in first quot. is doubtful.

[1533 J. HEYWOOD *Play of Wether* sig. C The see..where shyppes by meane of wynd try from port to port.]

a1584 S. BOROUGH in R. Hakluyt *Princ. Navigations* (1589) II. 315 When the barke had way, we cut the hawser, and so gat the sea to our friend, and tryed out all that day with our maine corse.

a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Tempest* (1623) I. i. 34 Downe with the top-Mast: yare, lower, lower, bring her to

Try with Maine-course.

- 1726 H. DE SAUMAREZ in *Philos. Trans.* 1725 (Royal Soc.) **33** 427 We had hard Gales..and a distracted Sea, insomuch that we try'd under a double reef'd Mainsail, great Part of the Time.
- 1773 *Life N. Frowde* 122 We were obliged..to ly too, and let the Ship drive with the Tempest, and at length, to try a Hull.
- 1867 W. H. SMYTH & E. BELCHER *Sailor's Word-bk.* Try, or Lie-to in a Gale, is by a judicious balance of canvas, to keep a ship's bow to the sea, and..prevent her rolling to windward in the trough of a sea.
-

Oxford University Press

Copyright © 2017 Oxford University Press . All rights reserved.

Your access is brought to you by:



HARVARD
LIBRARY