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Etymology Adjective Middle English best, beste, going back to Old English betst, best, (as weak adjective) betsta, betesta, going back to Germanic *batista- superlative degree of the adjective seen in the comparative *batizōn better entry 1, whence also Old Frisian best, bêst "best," Old Saxon betst, best, Old High German bezzisto, Old Icelandic beztr, baztr, Gothic batista Adverb Middle English, going back to Old English betst, betest, derivative of betst, best best entry 1 Noun Middle English, going back to Old English betste, derivative of betst, best best entry 1 Verb derivative of best entry 1, after better entry 2 Auxiliary verb by ellipsis from had best First Known Use Adjective before the 12th century, in the meaning defined at sense 1 Adverb before the 12th century, in the meaning defined at sense 1 Noun before the 12th century, in the meaning defined at sense 2 Verb 1863, in the meaning defined above Auxiliary Verb 1897, in the meaning defined above Time Traveler The first known use of best was before the 12th century See more words from the same century of the highest quality, excellence, or standing.I do my best work after meditation.Singling out the student with the top GPA is not always the most effective way to find the best students.most advantageous, suitable, or desirable.We've investigated a number of methods, but this is the best way.most excellently or suitably; with most advantage or success.I think it will be an opera role that best suits her voice.in or to the highest degree; most fully (usually used in combination).Shakespeare's best-known poems are his sonnets, but he also wrote narrative poems.Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy remain two of the United States' best-loved First Ladies.Your security system company can advise you about the features best suited for your home.the best, something or someone that is the most excellent, most suitable, of the highest quality, or the highest degree (often used without).They always demand and get the best.The best of us can make mistakes.To the best of my knowledge, this was the first use of that word in print.a person's finest clothing.It's important that you wear your best.a person's most agreeable or desirable emotional state (often preceded by at).She's not at her best before her morning coffee, so you might want to wait a few minutes to talk to her.a person's highest degree of competence, inspiration, etc. (often preceded by at).He's at his best when he works in a team.the highest quality to be found in a given activity or category of things (often preceded by at).These gorgeous oak kitchen cabinets are an example of cabinetmaking at its best.the maximum effort that a person, group, or thing can make.Their best fell far short of excellence.a person's good wishes or kindest regards.Please give my best to your father to get the better of; defeat; beat.He easily bested his opponent in hand-to-hand combat.She bested me in the argument.the superlative of goodmost excellent of a particular group, category, etcmost suitable, advantageous, desirable, attractive, etcmost oft o do one's utmost to make progresso hurry"Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012the superlative of well in a manner surpassing all others; most excellently, advantageously, attractively, etc(in combination) in or to the greatest degree or extent; mostas effectively as possible within one's limitationswould be wise, sensible, etc, to"Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012the most outstanding or excellent person, thing, or group in a category(often preceded by at) the most excellent, pleasing, or skilled quality or conditionthe most effective effort of which a person or group is capableeven their best was inadequatea winning majorityAlso: all the best, best wishesa person's smartest outfit of clothingin the most favourable interpretationunder the most favourable conditionsfor an ultimately good outcomewith good intentionsto surpass, defeat, or outwit; betterto concede someone's superiorityto cope as well as possible in the unfavourable circumstances of (often in the phrases make the best of a bad job, make the best of it)informal six strokes with a cane on the buttocks or hand"Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012(tr) to gain the advantage over or defeat"Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012Charles Herbert . 1899-1978, Canadian physiologist. associated with Banting and Macleod in their discovery of insulin in 1922George . 1946-2005, Northern Ireland footballer"Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012American-born Canadian physiologist who assisted Frederick Banting in the discovery of the hormone insulin. In acknowledgment of his work, Banting shared his portion of the 1923 Nobel Prize with Best. In addition to further refining the use of insulin, Best later discovered the vitamin choline and the enzyme histaminase, which breaks down histamine.Origin of Best1First recorded before 900; Middle English beste, Old English betst, best; cognate with Dutch best, Old High German bezzist (German best), Old Norse beztr, Gothic batists; better 1, -est 1Origin of Best1Old English betst ; related to Gothic batista , Old High German bezzistIdiomthe best part of, most of.Repairing the window took the best part of a day.at best, under the most favorable circumstances.You may expect to be treated civilly, at best.all for the best, for the good as the final result, to an ultimate advantage: Also for the bestIt turned out to be all for the best, though at the time we didn't realize it.make the best of, to cope with in the best way possible.The rain makes it a lot harder to have a picnic, but we know how to make the best of a bad situation.as best one can, in the best way possible under the circumstances.We tried to smooth over the disagreement as best we could.get / have the best of, to gain the advantage over; to defeat; subdue.His allergies get the best of him from time to time.best of both worlds, the most excellent or desirable parts of two things combined, especially two things that might otherwise be difficult to reconcile.With a quiet rural atmosphere and a short commute time into the city, this suburb is ideal for office workers who want the best of both worlds.had best, would be wisest or most reasonable to; ought to.You had best phone your mother to tell her where you are going.with the best, on a par with the most capable.He can play bridge with the best.Examples have not been reviewed.Historically, it's been in the country's best economic interest to allow undocumented labor, experts say.Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has done his best to stay out of these debates to avoid influencing his colleagues, and yet his support for both policies is still pretty well known.While he's perhaps best known for his support for restoring the state and local tax deduction, Suozi now cautions against doing so without first hiking taxes on the rich.The best time to teach a child not to throw a chair in a classroom is not as it is being projected across the room.However Mr Altman said "at least so far" none of his "best people" had been persuaded to jump ship.Definitions and idiom definitions from Dictionary.com Unabridged, based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2023Idioms from The American Heritage® Idioms Dictionary copyright © 2002, 2001, 1995 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.Bessiebest-ballBrowse#aabcbccdeeffghhijjkkllmmnnnooppqrrssttuuvvwxxyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day!© 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC Contexts ▼▲ Excelling above all others Offering or producing the greatest advantage Outstanding in standard or quality (of a friend) Very close or intimate Better than some other option Being the authoritative or best source of, example of, or reference for Being of crucial significance or importance Having a period of great prosperity or rapid economic growth Modeled on, or aiming for, a state in which everything is perfect Most appropriately or usefully That which is the most excellent or outstanding The class or group of people considered elite or with a high social rank The supreme effort one can make, or has made The finest aspect of a person or thing Individuals representing the best of a class Best wishes given to someone One's smartest or most formal clothes The greatest or most extreme extent or amount The best condition, quality or degree The most active or successful period of a person's life or career The best or most favorable thing, condition or amount A person's best performance at a task to date Acronym for the greatest of all time The most extreme form of something or the final and most impactful development in a series of events — whether favorable or unfavorable The central or greater part of something To surpass in skill or achievement "Tom studied hard as he was determined to best his cousin in the upcoming exam." To beat in a contest "Rocky Balboa would best Ivan Drago in the boxing ring and inspire the crowd with a rousing victory speech." To be victorious, or to prove to be more powerful or superior To beat in a competition of wits To do (something), often with consequences otherwise Used as a polite closing to a letter to family, relatives, close friends or romantic partners