

HOW LONG IS A QUARANTINE?

A Word Roots Lesson on Quar/Quart (“4”)

Did you know that the word **quarantine** is related to the words **quart**, **quarter**, and **quartet**? The Latin base **quar, quart** means “four,” which includes the fraction $\frac{1}{4}$ and the multiple 40. A **quart** is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a gallon, 4 **quarters** make a dollar, and, did you know, a **quarantine** lasts 40 days!



During the Black Death in Italy in the 14th and 15th century, ship passengers and crew members were not allowed to disembark for 40 days. Everyone had to stay on board, in isolation from the mainland until “the 40th day.” It was believed that it took this long to prevent the disease from spreading.

When it comes to a **quarantine**, the number 40 was chosen because people thought it sounded like a very long time. Such sayings as “It rained for forty days and forty nights” and “He ruled for forty years” (said of kings for whom we had no precise dates) refer to an inexact but long period. In actuality, some **quarantines** can last only a week, while others can go on for months!

See if you can figure out the “four” connection in these words: *quartet, quarterly, third quarter of a football game.*



In football, the “fullback” was originally the furthest back behind the line of scrimmage. The “halfback” was halfway between the fullback and the line of scrimmage, and the “quarter-back” was a quarter of the way behind the line of scrimmage from the fullback. Hence, he was called the **“quarter-back.”**

Want to learn more about Word Roots approach to Building Vocabulary?
Building Vocabulary with Greek and Latin Roots. www.timrasinski.com > Products