

[OE. *meti*, f. *metta* leisure + *-i*, -Y.

The vowel of the middle syllable was dropped already in OE. The initial *me*, being shortened, yielded as usual in ME. dialects the parallel forms *me* and *me*; hence the forms *amti* and *emti*; the former died out in 15th century; the latter (with the euphonic *p* normal between *m* and *t*) is represented by the mod. form.]

**A. adj.**

**†1.** Of persons: At leisure, not occupied or engaged. Also, unmarried. Only in OE.

**c897** K. ÆLFRED *Gregory's Past.* li. 401 *þæt hie ne wenen ðæt hie. ðemengan mææn wið ða æmteðan wifmen.* **c1000** ÆLFRIC *Hom.* (Th.) II. 441 *Martha swanc, and Maria sæt æmti.*

**2. a.** Of a material receptacle: Containing nothing; opposed to *full*. Also *fig.* of anything that may be said to be 'filled'.

**971** *Blickl. Hom.* 5 *Heo [the Virgin Mary] wæs 'ful' cweden næs 'æmetuðu'.* **c1300** *Beket* 2178 *The sculle al amti was: and no brayn therinne bilevede.* **c1386** CHAUCER *Reeve's Prolog.* 40 *Almost al empty is þe tonne.* **1514** BARCLAY *Cyt. & Uplondyshm.* (1847) 62 *With empty belly and simple poore aray.* **1599** SHAKES. *Hen. V.* IV. iv. 73 *The empty vessel makes the greatest sound.* **a1628** PRESTON *New Covt.* (1634) 62 *Nothing is said to be empty, but when you look for a fullnesse in it.* **1673** O. WALKER *Educ.* (1677) 103 *They bring forth yellow and emty eares, before the harvest.* **1732** POPE *Ep. Bathurst* 320 *Which of these is worse, Want with a full or with an empty purse?* **1732** ARBUTHNOT *Rules of Diet* 269 *They might be taken in an empty Stomach.* **1845** BUDD *Dis. Liver* 374 *The gall~bladder and ducts are found empty.* **1860** TYNDALL *Glac.* I. §11. 80, *I now filled our empty wine-bottle with snow.*

**b.** Void of certain specified contents; *fig.* devoid of certain specified qualities, etc. Const. *†from, †in, of.*

**1483** CAXTON *Cato* Gj, *Empty of alle goodes and fylled of alle euyll.* **1588** SHAKES. *L.L.L.* V. ii. 878 *And I shal find you emptie of that fault.* **1596** — *Merch.* V. IV. i. 5 *Empty From any dram of mercie.* **1600** — *A.Y.L.* II. vii. 93 *In ciuility thou seem'st so emptie.* **1633** BP. HALL *Hard Texts* 97 *We..are of ourselves emptie of all good.* **a1727** NEWTON (J.), *The heavens are much emptier of air than any vacuum we can make below.* **1860** TRENCH *Mirac.* xxxi. (1862) 444 *The Gentiles were empty of all fruits of righteousness.* **1865** MILL *Exam. Hamilton's Philos.* 87 *Metaphysical doctrines which..are empty of the smallest substance.*

**3. transf.** †**a.** Having one's purse, etc. empty; destitute of money. (Only contextual.) *Obs.*

**1581** J. BELL *Haddon's Answ. Osor.* 15 The Apostles..should wander through the whole world emtie of all worldly furniture. **1722** DE FOE *Plague* (1756) 173 Those that had Money..were able to subsist themselves; but those who were empty suffered..great Hardships. **1724** — *Mem. Cavalier* (1840) 151 The king [was] quite empty of money.

**b.** Having an empty stomach; hungry. Now only *colloq.*

**1593** SHAKES. *2 Hen. VI*, III. i. 248 Wer't not all one, an emptie Eagle were set, To guard the Chicken from a hungry Kyte. **1620** SHELTON *Don Quix.* III. xxx. 209 And where there is plenty the Guests are not empty. **1719** DE FOE *Crusoe* (1840) II. viii. 182 I found myself empty.

†**c.** Of the body: Wanting fullness, shrunken, emaciated. Also of the pulse: Weak, 'slender'.

**c1374** CHAUCER *Boeth.* II. i. 4 þe slak[e] skyn trembleþ vpon myn emty body. **1486** *Bk. St. Albans* Cja, Sum put hawkys in mew..when they be Empty and lene. **1533** ELYOT *Castel Helthe* II. (1541) 45b, Where the body is long empty by longe syknesse or abstinence, slepe comforteth nature. **1707** FLOYER *Physic. Pulse-Watch* 412 An empty Pulse shews small Strength.

**d.** Of a cow or other farm animal: not pregnant. Cf. FULL *a.* 1e.

**1900** in J. WRIGHT *Eng. Dial. Dict.* II. 252/1. **1950** *N.Z. Jrnl. Agric.* Feb. 100/1 Many cows thought to be empty have proved to be in calf when slaughtered at the works. **1960** *Farmer & Stockbreeder* 23 Feb. 80/3 Empty gilts shared in the general enthusiasm, averaging £41 15s 2d.

**4. a.** Of space, a person's place, etc.: Vacant, unoccupied. Of a house, etc.: Devoid of furniture or inmates. Also *fig. spec.* **Empty Quarter** [rendering Arab. *Ruba el-Khali*], the great southern desert of Arabia (formerly identified with the Dahna); also *fig.*

**971** *Blickl. Hom.* 37 þæt on us ne sy ðemeted næniþu stow æmetiþ gastlicra mæþena. **c1000** ÆLFRIC *Gen.* i. 2 Seo eorþe..wæs ydel ant æmtiþ. **c1200** *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 87 He..cumeþ þerto and fint hit emti and mid beseme clene swopen. **a1225** *Ancr. R.* 156 Non

empti stude i<sup>3</sup>e heorte to underuongen flesliche leih<sup>3</sup>tren. **1297** R. GLOUC. 17 Amty place he made a boutte, & folc fleu hym faste. **c1385** CHAUCER *L.G.W.*, 888 Tysbe..saw hire wympil & hise emty schede. **1514** BARCLAY *Cyt. & Uplondyshm.* (1847) 6 One maye clerely the emty nestes se. **1593** SHAKES. *2 Hen. VI*, v. ii. 4 And dead mens cries do fill the emptie aire. **1611** BIBLE *I Sam.* xx. 25 Dauids place was emptie. **1627** MAY *Lucan* XI. 503 With emty Standards reft of Companies. **1697** DRYDEN *Virg. Georg.* IV. 516 Two rising Heaps of liquid Crystal stand, And leave a Space betwixt, of emty Sand. **1709** STEELE *Tatler* No. 182 ¶1 The Town grows so very emty. **1864** SKEAT *Uhland's Poems* 273 Every room seemed emty now.

[**1875** *Encycl. Brit.* II. 240/1 This greater desert, the 'Roba El Khaliyeh' or 'Empty Space' of geographers—the 'Dahna' or 'Crimson' of modern Arabs.] **1910** *Encycl. Brit.* II. 260/1 The great desert known as the Dahna or the Rub'a el Khali ('the empty quarter'). **1913** T. HOUTSMA et al. *Encycl. Islam* I. 370/2 Central Arabia... The desert has several names..generally it is called al-Dahn<sup>3</sup>, 'the red country', after the colour of the sand. On the maps it is indicated al-Rub' al-<sup>3</sup>ḥamī, i.e. the empty quarter. **1929** T. E. LAWRENCE *Let.* 12 July (1938) 663 They can pass over the Ruba el Khali, the so-called 'Empty Quarter' of Arabia. **1932** B. THOMAS (*title*) Arabia felix, across the Empty Quarter of Arabia. **1959** *Listener* 19 Nov. 893/1 The Empty Quarter stretches for nine hundred miles across southern Arabia. **1963** *Guardian* 5 July 8/3 One hails him as the Hakluyt of that empty quarter where the parched intellect croaks for a swig of feeling.

**b.** quasi-*n.* A void (space).

**1535** COVERDALE *Job* xxvi. 7 He stretcheth out y<sup>e</sup> north ouer the emptie.

**5.** Without anything to carry. **a.** Of a carriage, ship, etc. (= sense 2). Hence *transf.* of a beast of burden: Without a load (*rare* in mod. use).

**c1330** *King of Tars* 201 And sadeles mony emptye. **1502** ARNOLDE *Chron.* (1811) 197 Item an emty horse only i. d'. **1586** MARLOWE *Ist Pt. Tamburl.* I. ii, Return our mules and emty camels back. **1607** TOPSELL *Four-f. Beasts* (1673) 244 When you have used him [the horse] to leap emty, likewise accustome him loaded. **1697** DRYDEN *Virg. Georg.* III. 271 Persuade 'em first to lead an emty wheel. **1714** *Fr. Bk. of Rates* 412 Vessels..emty, or loaded with Masts, Planks, and other Timber. **1796** *Log in Nicolas Disp. Nelson* VII. p. lxxv, A Ship and a Brig from Finale..proving..emty. **1884** SIR W. M<sup>c</sup>MURDO in *Pall Mall G.* 18 June 2/1 FitzGerald..started with the emty camels in a bee-line across the desert.

**b.** Of the hand: Not bringing or carrying any thing away. Hence of persons: = EMPTY-HANDED; chiefly as predicative complement, e.g. *to go, come away empty*.

**c1500** *New Notbr. Mayd in Anc. Poet. Tracts* 45 The poure may stande, With empty hande. **1535** COVERDALE *Ruth* iii. 17 Thou shalt not come emptye vnto thy mother in lawe. **1607** SHAKES. *Timon* III. vi. 40, I return'd you an empty Messenger. **1727** A. HAMILTON *New Acc. E. Ind.* I. xi. 119 The Custom, not to appear before great Men with an empty Hand.

fig. **1751** JORTIN *Serm.* (1771) VI. 198 The prayers of the Penitent return not empty. **1850** TENNYSON *In Mem.* III. iii, A hollow form with empty hands.

**c.** As a Biblical Hebraism, of a sword, *to return empty*.

**1611** BIBLE *2 Sam.* i. 22. **1677** HUBBARD *Narrative* 98 Whom [sixty of the enemy] they slew and took, so as their Sword returned not empty.

**6. a.** Of persons, their projects, etc.: Lacking knowledge and sense; frivolous, foolish.

**1611** BIBLE *Pref.* 8 This was iudged to be but a very poore and emptie shift. **1664** POWER *Exp. Philos.* *Pref.* 18 Our best Philosophers will but prove empty Conjecturalists. **a1674** CLARENDON *Hist. Reb.* (1704) III. XIII. 307 A very empty and unprepared design. **1696** TATE & BRADY *Ps.* cxliv. 4 His Thoughts but empty are and vain. **1707-8** *Let.* in *Hearne's Coll.* II. 91 A silly, empty pretender to Greek. **1711** STEELE *Spect.* No. 75 ¶6 The empty Coxcomb has no Regard to any thing..Sacred. **1727** DE FOE *Syst. Magic* I. iv. (1840) 98 The meanest, emptiest, and most inconsistent project.

**b.** Of things: Wanting solidity and substance; unsatisfactory, vain, meaningless.

**1340** *Ayenb.* 143 Zuo emti to þe zisþe of þo greate blisse. **1603** SHAKES. *Meas. for M.* II. iv. 2 Heauen hath my empty words. **1667** MILTON *P.L.* III. 454 Find Fit retribution, emptie as thir deeds. **1674** BREVINT *Saul at Endor* 230 It is but an emty Phantome. **1697** DRYDEN *Virg. Georg.* IV. 710 All his Hopes exhal'd in empty Smoke. **1711** STEELE *Spect.* No. 79 ¶9 All these Acts are but empty Shows. **1718** *Freethinker* No. 60. 34 It is not an empty Title..but a Right. **1728** POPE *Dunc.* I. 54 Weighs..solid pudding against empty praise. **a1764** LLOYD *Whim* *Poet. Wks.* 1774 II. 166 Wrangling wits..quarrel for

an empty name. **1813** SHELLEY *Q. Mab* iv, Words..Empty and vain as his own coreless heart. **1837** THIRLWALL *Greece* IV. xxxii. 229 Nor were these mere empty professions. **1884** *Sat. Rev.* 14 June 766/1 Frightened by the emptiest of bugbears.

**B. n. Comm.** An empty truck or wagon; an empty box, cask, etc. which has contained goods; an empty cab or taxi; an empty house or premises; an empty bottle, container, etc. *colloq.*

**1865** *Morn. Star* 1 Feb., I was ordered..to..send the empties off first. **1879** F. H. GRUNDY *Pictures of Past* vi. 166 'Well,' says Leigh Hunt, 'I found him [*sc.* a cabman] returning from Hammersmith, and he said as an empty he would take me for half-fare.' **1881** *Daily News* 22. Aug. 3/2 George Whitehead, a dealer in empties at Mile-end Newtown. **1884** *Harper's Mag.* May 874/2 They are..made into a long train in exchange for 'empties'. **1905** *Westm. Gaz.* 23 Aug. 8/2 Property owners throughout the various suburbs of London are making loud complaint of the steady increase in the proportion of 'empties'. **1914** *Evening Post* (Wellington, N.Z.) 24 Feb. 4 Get as many 'empties' [= bottles] as possible. **1924** *Ladies' Home Jrnl.* June 100 He delivers it by the case and calls for the empties. **1938** G. GREENE *Brighton Rock* VII. i. 277 A cupboard stood open full of empties. **1961** L. VAN DER POST *Heart of Hunter* I. v. 82 Some fuel-drums lay in a neat line..all empties.

**C. attrib. and Comb.** as (parasynthetic adjs.), *empty-basketed*, *-bellied*, *-fisted*, *-headed*, *-hearted*, *-pannelled* (in Falconry), *-pated*, *-skulled*, *-stomached*, *-vaulted*; also EMPTY-HANDED. **empty-cell** used *attrib.* (see esp. quot. 1946); **empty nester** chiefly *U.S.*, either member of a couple whose children have grown up and left home (freq. in *pl.*); hence **empty nest**, a household in which only the parents now remain; also applied *attrib.*, as *empty-nest syndrome*, to depression allegedly affecting women whose children have left home; **empty word** *Linguistics*, a word which has no meaning in itself but serves a grammatical function, e.g. *at*, *but*, *for*, etc.

**1883** *Harper's Mag.* Apr. 702/2 Fisher people..coming back \*empty-basketed.

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**1836-48** B. D. WALSH *Aristoph. Knights* I. iii, You've cut \*Empty-bellied to the Town~hall.

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**1917** A. J. WALLIS-TAYLER *Preservation of Wood* vii. 199 This process [*sc.* the Rueping or Rüping Process] is on what is known as the \*empty cell treatment. **1946** CARTWRIGHT & FINDLAY *Decay of Timber* xiii. 260 It is usual to treat poles and timber for building use by the empty cell process, by means of which the walls of cells of the wood are left

coated with a layer of preservative, but the cavities are empty. **1968** W. E. WILLIS *Timber* iv. 86 The two empty cell methods are known as the Rueping and Lawry processes.

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**1664** H. MORE *Myst. Iniq.* xv. 52 Fear of the Saints displeasure, if they approach \*empty-fisted.

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**1650** B. *Discollim.* 17 \*Empty-headed, Fiddle-brain'd Men. **1873** SYMONDS *Grk. Poets* iii. 86 Trample on the empty-headed rabble.

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**1605** SHAKES. *Lear* I. i. 155 Nor are those \*empty~hearted, whose low sounds Reuerbe no hollownesse. **1842** MANNING *Serm.* viii. (1848) I. 109 Empty-hearted followers of this vain-glorious world.

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**1962** *Economist* 15 Dec. 1131/2 Couples in the 45-65 age bracket—the so-called ‘\*empty nesters’, whose children have grown up and who have become bored with their large houses. **1972** *Ladies' Home Jrnl.* Feb. 124/4 Even the ‘empty nest’ syndrome hasn't seemed to hit her. She seems genuinely delighted by both of her daughters' marriages. **1973** *N.Y. Times* 21 Jan. X. 24/5 Not all empty-nest women have high-salaried husbands, but all feel less ‘squoze’ once their sons and daughters have addresses of their own. **1976** *Globe & Mail* (Toronto) 27 Aug. 12/4 Therapists who deal with parents during this stage of life have come to view the trivial-sounding ‘empty nest’ as a family crisis potentially as profound as divorce. **1980** *Sunday Times* 30 Mar. 50 Builders..have ignored an increasingly important category of housebuyer—the busy, well-off executive couple who either have no children or whose children have grown up and left. Americans call them ‘empty nesters’.

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**1575** TURBERV. *Falconrie* 313 Let hir stande \*emptiepannel'd upon the same untill night.

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**1820** SCOTT *Abbot* xxxiii, There are \*empty-pated coxcombs at each corner.

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**1863** MRS. C. CLARKE *Shaks. Char.* vi. 159 Quackery may, and does succeed for a season..with the \*empty-skulled.

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**1527** ANDREW *Brunswyke's Distyll. Waters* Aij, Them that be \*empty-stomaked thrughe overmoche hete of the stomake. **1861** P. B. DU CHAILLU *Equat. Afr.* vi. 58 The only empty-stomached individual of the company.

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**1634** MILTON *Comus* 249 They float..through the \*empty-vaulted night.

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**1892** H. SWEET *New Eng. Gram.* I. 22. §58 When a form-word is entirely devoid of meaning, we may call it an \*empty word, as opposed to full words such as *earth* and *round*. **1953** W. J. ENTWISTLE *Aspects of Lang.* x. 298 Chinese..makes considerable use of ‘empty words’, that is of auxiliaries in the broad sense of the term, which includes prepositions as well as subordinate members of the verbal complex. **1968** P. KRATOCHVÍL *Chinese Lang. Today* iv. 117 Traditional Chinese linguists considered practically all minimal forms, beside what would be called nouns, as ‘empty words’.

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ADDITIONS SERIES 1993

**empty**, *a.* and *n.*

Add: [A.] [2.] c. *Math.* Of a set: containing no elements; = [NULL](#) *a.* 4 c. Also applied *transf.* to other entities, esp. in *Computing*. Opp. \*[NON-EMPTY](#) *a.*

1937 *Jrnl. Symbolic Logic* II. 67 A set or class is said to be empty if there is no element of it. 1946 A. WEIL *Found. Algebraic Geom.* iv. 84 The bunch of varieties defined by an empty set of varieties will be called empty. 1966 [see [INJECTIVE](#) *a.*]. 1981 A. CHANDOR *Penguin Dict. Microprocessors* 130 *Null string*, a string with no characters. Also known as empty string.

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DRAFT ADDITIONS SEPTEMBER 2004

**empty**, *a.* and *n.*

► **empty suit** orig. and chiefly *U.S.*, a person, esp. a wealthy, professional, or powerful man, perceived to lack substance, personality, intelligence, ability, etc.

1950 *N.Y. Times* 31 Dec. 11/3 The opposite of the joiner is a species known as the big spender... He is a character completely devoid of personality... Two of the most colorless representatives of this group at present are known as 'The \*Empty Suit' and 'Harvey with Money'. 1999 *Washington Post* 3 Dec. A9/1 Bush is a nice guy but an empty suit with no philosophical underpinning.