

ta·boo also ta·bu (tə-bōō', tǎ-)

n. pl. ta·boos also ta·bus

1. A ban or an inhibition resulting from social custom or emotional aversion.

2.

a. A prohibition, especially in Polynesia and other South Pacific islands, excluding something from use, approach, or mention because of its sacred and inviolable nature.

b. An object, a word, or an act protected by such a prohibition.

adj.

Excluded or forbidden from use, approach, or mention: *a taboo subject.*

tr.v. ta·booed also ta·bued, ta·boo·ing also ta·bu·ing, ta·boos also ta·bus

To exclude from use, approach, or mention; place under taboo.

[Tongan *tabu*, *under prohibition.*]

Word History: Among the many discoveries of Captain James Cook was a linguistic one, the term *taboo*. In a journal entry from 1777, Cook says this word "*has a very comprehensive meaning; but, in general, signifies that a thing is forbidden.... When any thing is forbidden to be eat, or made use of, they say, that it is taboo.*" Cook was in the Friendly Islands (now Tonga) at the time, so even though similar words occur in other Polynesian languages, the form *taboo* from Tongan *tabu* is the one we have borrowed. The Tongans used *tabu* as an adjective. Cook, besides borrowing the word into English, also made it into a noun referring to the prohibition itself and a verb meaning "to make someone or something taboo." From its origins in Polynesia the word *taboo* has traveled as widely as Cook himself and is now used throughout the English-speaking world.

taboo also **tabu**

noun

A refusal to allow:

- ban, disallowance, forbiddance, inhibition, interdiction, prohibition, proscription.
- See allow.

adjective

Not allowed:

- forbidden, impermissible, verboten.
- See allow.

verb

To refuse to allow:

- ban, debar, disallow, enjoin, forbid, inhibit, interdict, outlaw, prohibit, proscribe.
- See allow.

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Thesaurus

censor
verb

1. To examine (material) and remove parts considered harmful or improper for publication or transmission:
 - bowdlerize, expurgate, screen.
 - *See* include, show.
2. To keep from being published or transmitted:
 - ban, black out, hush (up), stifle, suppress.
 - **Idiom:**
keep (*or* put) a lid on.
 - *See* show.

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