

# Word for Word

***Impute or input?* There must be something missing**



*Impute* and *input* are similar words that are used in similar contexts in scientific writing. For example, you might see either word in a passage describing information being entered into a database. However, these two words are not interchangeable, and the difference in their meanings is important.

The verb *input* means the act of entering data into a computer, database, or data processing system.<sup>1</sup>

**Example:**

Demographic and treatment characteristics from the patients' medical records were input into our database. (Note: According to Merriam-Webster, *inputted* is also an acceptable past-tense form of *input*.<sup>2</sup>)

*Impute*, on the other hand, has a specific statistical meaning. To impute missing data is to assign values to the data on the basis of the patterns of the other variables in the analysis.<sup>3</sup> Multiple imputation is a statistical method that models missing data using the data that are present.

**Example:**

Missing values within the dataset were imputed using the multiple imputation method as described previously.

## References

1. "Input," Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/input>. Accessed March 17, 2022.
2. "Is 'Inputted' a Real Word?" Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriamwebster.com/words-at-play/is-inputted-a-word>. Accessed March 17, 2022.
3. AMA Manual of Style, 11th ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2020. Chapter 19.5. Accessed March 17, 2022. <https://www.amamanualofstyle.com>.

--Dawn Chalaire

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