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Why are grandmothers called nanny?

Etymonline describes this word as originating as a child's word for "female adult other than mother". This is why nanny is used as the word for a caretaker of children (since the 18th century) as well as a grandmother (since the early 20th century). Etymonline also notes that nanna is also a Greek word for aunt.

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What does Nannie mean?

Nannie(n.) a caretaker for a child; a child's nurse; a nursemaid. ... Grandmother; -- a child's word, used especially as a form of address. See also nana.

Is Nanny a grandma?

In short, unless the context makes it clear, you can never be sure whether nanny means grandmother or a paid minder. However, nan and nanna will almost always mean grandmother.

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