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VOCABULARY BOOSTER

for the

CAT

A Winning Approach by an IIM Alumnus

Sidharth Balakrishna

VOCABULARY BOOSTER FOR THE CAT

**A Winning Approach
From an IIM Alumnus**

Sidharth Balakrishna

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**To
My Wife Surabhi
and to Jayshree Athai**

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Preface

The phenomenal success of my previous books with Pearson, *An Introduction to CAT: Tips from an IIM Alumnus*, *Reading Comprehension for the CAT: A Winning Approach by an IIM Alumnus* and *Case Studies in Marketing*, provided me the inspiration for this book, my fourth overall.

In addition, I was also inspired by my students who often asked me to recommend a good book for vocabulary. While other books covering this topic do exist, there are few that are targeted specifically for vocabulary as it appears in the entrance exams of the various Business Schools, such as the CAT, XAT, FMS, NMAT, MAT etc.

This book thus aims to cover all aspects of vocabulary for such entrance examinations and is broad in its coverage. Not only does it provide tips to enhance your vocabulary, but it also outlines the approach of knowing the roots of words and stories behind their origins. The chapters covering these aspects aim to make vocabulary interesting, since they narrate interesting stories from mythology and humorous anecdotes pertaining to the usage of certain words.

This book also covers idioms and phrases used in the language and words derived from foreign languages but commonly used in English that also appear in the various B-School entrance examinations.

I would like to appreciate my wife, Surabhi, for all her love and patience over the years that we have been married. I also hope that I might finally teach my sister Aditi something after so many years of trying! In addition, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Jayshree Athai and my cousin Sneha for the wonderful stay that Surabhi and I had in Australia; so much so that it gave me the time to conceive this book in my mind while on vacation!

Gratitude is also due to the team at Rediff.com, MBAUniverse, shiksha.com etc., for whom I have written several articles in the past.

I would also like to acknowledge the team at Pearson Education: Mr Asad Shabir, Mr Showick Thorpe and Mr Raza Khan who helped make this book a reality.

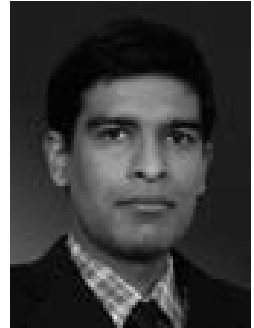
SIDHARTH BALAKRISHNA

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About the Author

Sidharth Balakrishna is an alumnus of IIM Calcutta and has been employed with the world's top marketing management consultancy and energy firms. Besides his regular corporate job, he has written a number of books and articles for various reputed publications and has taken several guest lectures and seminars across the country.

His books include the following, all published by Pearson Education: *An Introduction to CAT: Tips from an IIM Alumnus*, *Reading Comprehension for the CAT: A Winning Approach by an IIM Alumnus*, *Case Studies in Marketing* (part of the Pearson Casebook series)



Sidharth is a Faculty associated with some of the top Management Institutes in the country. He is also a Career Counselling Expert with the *Hindustan Times* and Rediff.com and has been a member of the interview panel to select MBA students at various top business schools. He has also taught at MBA preparation institutes such as MBAGuru, T.I.M.E., Career Launcher, IMS etc., for several years.

Sidharth has written for *The Hindu Business Line*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India*, Rediff.com, Pagalguy.com, *MBA Universe*, *Just Careers*, *Management Compass*, *Indian Management* (the journal of the All India Management Association), Shiksha.com etc.

Some of his papers and articles, on oil and gas have been presented to top government officials and have helped shape the industry structure in India.

Sidharth has been extensively interviewed and featured in the press, including in *The Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India*, *Outlook*, *India Today* besides others.

Travelling and reading about nature and history are his passions. Sidharth has also been a National-level Table Tennis player, and has been ranked as the No. 1 player in his age-group in Delhi. He can be contacted at bsiddharth_2001@yahoo.co.in.

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Is Vocabulary Important?

Introduction

This chapter introduces the candidate to this book about how to improve your Vocabulary so as to be able to do well in the CAT and other B-school entrance examinations. It also briefs the candidate on whether Vocabulary is important and which kinds of questions are asked in B-school entrance examinations.

Is Vocabulary Important?

Students often ask me questions as to whether vocabulary is indeed important for the CAT and other B-school entrance examinations. I tell them that although direct vocabulary-based questions may not make an appearance in CAT (though it definitely does in other entrance examinations such as IIFT, MAT, etc., as discussed later) in the sense that you are usually not asked to choose the correct meaning of a difficult or less-known word or its antonym or synonym from among the options, a good vocabulary is still quite crucial for doing well in the English section.

It is important to note that CAT does test your vocabulary indirectly. Questions have often appeared in which you need to choose the correct usage of simple, relatively common words. Quite often, these common words have multiple meanings, depending on the context of their use, and the CAT has tested whether you understand or not, all possible uses a common word can be put to. An example will serve to illustrate my point.

Example: Consider a word such as ‘book’. The most common use of the word perhaps is that we use it in the sense of referring to a textbook or story book (fiction or non-fiction). But the word ‘book’ does have other usages. For example, we can say that ‘He booked a ticket’. Similarly, you can say that a show was ‘fully booked’. Another usage is when we say ‘The policeman booked the errant driver for over-speeding’.

In addition to being prepared for such kind of questions, a decent vocabulary will be important to do well in the Reading Comprehension section. Your failure to understand or misinterpretation of a particular word could result in your having greater difficulty in understanding the passage as a whole and answering the questions based on it.

This is especially true for idioms, phrases or aphorisms that the writer may use. Very often, these short idioms or phrases convey a lot in a few words, something which would have otherwise taken several sentences to explain. For example, if the author of a particular passage states that “the chickens have come home to roost”, what does he mean? Similarly, he may state that a particular situation was a ‘Catch-22’ situation. Rather than explaining in long sentences what the situation entailed, the usage of the single phrase ‘a Catch-22 situation’, conveys a lot to a reader who knows the meaning of the phrase. Incidentally, this phrase was the title of a famous novel by Joseph Heller.

Hence the student must go beyond mere words and their meanings while trying to improve their vocabulary. Students must also know common phrases used in the English language, when they may be used and what their meaning is. One such phrase was mentioned above-‘a Catch-22 situation’. Some others are the following:

- ‘A blue-eyed boy’
- ‘Cynosure of all eyes’
- ‘Apple of one’s eye’

The meaning of such idioms and phrases are mentioned in the relevant chapter of this book.

Students are advised to look up and understand the meaning of relatively common phrases that are used in the English language.

In addition, the answer options for questions in the Reading Comprehension question may contain some words which test your vocabulary to some extent. This is particularly true when you are asked to choose the ‘tone of the passage’¹. And you shall be in a real soup if you do not know the meaning of words in the answer option!

Here is one example: one question I have come across in the Reading Comprehension was “What is the starkest example of mirror images in the given passage”. Now, the candidate is clearly expected to understand what the word ‘starkest’ means.

Another question asked, ‘What qualities would you associate with the writer?’ One of the options was ‘valour and altruism’. Again, you are expected to know the meaning of such words.

Non-CAT Examinations

As mentioned before, the type of questions that you are given in the MAT, NMIMS, IIFT etc., entrance tests are a little different from those in the CAT. These entrance tests do contain direct vocabulary questions. The earlier FMS entrance exam, in particular, is known to bowl students over with some really esoteric words, which are not even used all that often in daily conversation! (do not worry, there will be only a few such words, if any).

Consider the following questions from the FMS exam in 2004:

Directions: In each of the following questions, there is a related pair of words or phrases in capital letters. Four pairs of words or phrases follow each capitalised pair. Select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair.

(answers are provided in the chapter ‘Practice Exercises-based on Vocabulary Questions from MBA entrance examinations’)

1. LUGUBRIOUS: SORROWFUL

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Euphoric: Cheerful | (b) Credible: Incredible |
| (c) Frenzied: Excited | (d) Lustrous: Luscious |

¹ Students may refer to another book by the same author, *Reading Comprehension for the CAT: A Winning Approach by an IIM Alumnus* for a comprehensive discussion on the ‘Tone of the Passage’, a very important question that appears in the CAT exam, and the various kinds of tones, such as ‘prescriptive’, ‘eulogizing’, ‘candid’, ‘lucid’ etc

2. PRIMEVAL: MEDIEVAL

- (a) Snow: Ice
- (b) Evolution: Revelation
- (c) Dinosaur: Dragon
- (d) Thorn: Rose

3. REMORSE: ABSOLUTION

- (a) Disdain: Corruption
- (b) Banter: Passion
- (c) Serious: Humour
- (d) Evasion: Suspicion

4. ZEPHYR: GALE

- (a) Death: Sickness
- (b) Trickle: Torrent
- (c) Imprint: Emboss
- (d) Fossil: Aged

5. IMPLICATE: INCRIMINATION

- (a) Perjury: Fraud
- (b) Exonerate: Acquittal
- (c) Sleaze: Malpractice
- (d) Embezzlement: Charged

Look at some of the words mentioned in these questions: words such as ‘zephyr’, ‘euphoric’ etc., to answer such questions, a good vocabulary is necessary.

Summary

This chapter points out that vocabulary is indeed a subject that you will need to work on during your preparation for the CAT and other B-school entrance examinations. Doing well in Reading Comprehension does call for a decent vocabulary.

In addition, many of the entrance examinations, do test your vocabulary directly by asking you the meaning of a particular word, its synonym or antonym etc.

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Vocabulary: How You Can Prepare?

Introduction

This chapter introduces the student to the crucial aspect of how he/she could build his/her vocabulary. Remember that improving vocabulary is extremely useful and should not be looked at merely for the purpose of doing well in a particular examination.

People of all ages and educational background benefit from an enhanced vocabulary; since an improved vocabulary enhances spoken and written communication.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Read as much as possible and on a variety of different subjects.
- Supplement fiction with non-fiction while reading.
- Make it a habit of listening to radio/TV programmes, especially the daily news in English.
- Read the newspaper in English everyday, especially the editorial columns.
- Use the approach of knowing the 'roots' of words to improve vocabulary.
- Try and understand the contextual use of words, not just its meaning.
- Know the synonyms and antonyms of a particular word.
- Try and use new words in sentences.
- Use flashcards while working on your vocabulary.
- Try and group together words with a common theme.
- Play games and activities while trying to improve your vocabulary.

Don'ts

- Do not try to just mug up words and their meanings.
- Do not look at learning words just for the purpose of doing well in a particular examination.
- Do not use words without understanding their contextual usage.
- Do not make random lists of words, rather try and group them together in terms of words with a common theme.

How to Improve your Vocabulary?

No substitute to Reading: Remember that there is no substitute for reading to become better with the English language. The more you read, the more familiar you shall become with different words, their usage and their subtle nuances.

In fact, this is what the CAT exam tests—the contextual usage of words, not merely their meaning. Most studies have proved that reading is clearly linked with a better vocabulary, especially if you read on a variety of topics.

Be sure to supplement your reading of fiction with some amount of non-fiction. As you read, I suggest that you note down unfamiliar words, look them up in a dictionary and write down their meanings.

Familiarity with the English language: Apart from reading, for those who are not too familiar with the English language or do not use it in daily conversation, I suggest that you make a habit of listening to radio/TV programmes, especially the daily news in English.

Similarly, read the newspaper in English, including the editorial columns regularly. Since these columns encompass a variety of topics, your vocabulary and familiarity with different topics/issues will also increase.

In my opinion, in order to be truly good in vocabulary (and also, not forget the meaning of a word just a few hours after you have learnt it), you cannot just mug up the meaning of words—after all, how many word-meanings can you just learn by rote? So what then is a better way? This brings us to the next point.

Try and understand the ‘roots’ or the origin of certain words: Words are derived from certain ‘roots’ i.e., they have a certain origin. From what ‘main root’ has a particular word been derived? If you approach vocabulary is a systematic manner, you can rapidly improve on it.

Let’s understand this ‘root-based’ approach. Consider a word such as ‘demographics’. What does it mean? If you plan to mug up the meaning, it isn’t a good idea! Instead, look at its root, the root is ‘dem’ in this case. What does ‘dem’ mean?

This root, from Greek, means ‘people’. We all know that India is a democracy. So it should be easy to remember the root ‘dem’ and people (democracy means ‘a Government of and for the people’).

Now ‘demographics’ refers to a population study, or the study of the various characteristics of the people that comprise the population.

- A related word is ‘Demographer’, it refers to a person who studies demography.
- Let’s take another word with the root ‘dem’: ‘demagogue’. You may have heard it a few times—what does it mean? It has the same root, so it must refer to people. You can check it out in any dictionary.
- Similarly, consider the word ‘demogenics’. It means ‘relating to a society based on citizenship’.
- Have a look at these two words—‘Demophile’ and ‘Demophobe’. While the former means ‘A friend of the people’, the latter refers to a person who has an aversion to people (the root ‘philo’ means to have an affinity for/to love, while the root ‘phobe’ has the opposite meaning).

Hence you can see that knowing the meaning of the root of a particular word helps a lot—not only in understanding the meaning of that particular word, but also the meaning of words with the same root. If you now come across any word with the root ‘dem’, you shall know it has something to do with people.

So using the ‘Roots’ of the word to remember its meaning is a good approach. We shall build on this approach in subsequent chapters.

Using Flashcards: I suggest you make flashcards (simple pieces of paper with the words/roots and their meaning written on them) with certain common roots written on them. The best aspect of Flashcards is that you can use them for practice anywhere!

Carry these flashcards with you while travelling. You can refer to them easily while using public transport (don't use them while you are driving yourself though!).

Similarly, you can use post-it as a note as the flashcard and put these up on your cupboard door at home or even on a mirror. I know of a person who improved his vocabulary by putting up post-it notes on his bathroom mirror and referring to them every morning while he brushed his teeth! He rapidly improved his vocabulary and also ensured that his mind became alert early in the morning itself!

Technique of Making Flashcards—Grouping words with the same theme: While you are making efforts to learn the meanings of new words, I strongly suggest that you don't just make random and unconnected lists of new words. That will make it difficult for you to recall the meaning of the words written on the flashcards.

Instead, try to group together words that have a common theme, those that have something in common. This will certainly help you memorize new words faster, since you are more likely to recall the theme and the related words than word meanings individually.

Let me give you an example to illustrate this. Take the theme to 'speak a lot'. There are quite a few words which are related to this theme.

Some such words are:

1. Garrulous
2. Loquacious
3. Verbose—which means to use too many words
4. Talkative

Then we can also look at the opposite/antonyms of this theme. Think of words that convey the usage of few words or to be sparing with speech.

Such words are:

1. Taciturn
2. Laconic
3. Pithy
4. Terse
5. Brevity (to be brief; to the point)
6. Concise
7. Curt
8. Succinct

Hence, if you recall the theme i.e., to speak a lot or to speak little, it will be easier to recall the meaning of such words related to the same theme.

Hence, while making a flashcard, I suggest you choose a theme (as above) and then write all the words relating to that theme on one side of the card and their meanings on the other. You will find it much easier to remember the meanings of the various words.

Vocabulary can be Fun!

Improving your vocabulary can be done for fun as well. For example, playing certain games such as 'Scrabble' and 'Boggle' will encourage you to play with words and letters, as well as learning new ones. Some people advise playing scrabble with an open dictionary in front of them, so as to encourage the players to try out new words that they may be unfamiliar with.

Another way of improving your vocabulary is to do word puzzles. These include the familiar crosswords that are found in most newspapers, simple puzzles dealing with cryptology, and word-jumbles. Try to make it a habit to complete all of the word puzzles every day and once again, note down and look up unfamiliar words.

You can make the process more interesting by doing such puzzles in a group with friends, and even giving a prize at the end of the day or week to the best puzzle solver.

Finally, try to practice words in a variety of situations so that you really understand the meaning of a word and its contextual use. Use the words in sentences so that you can grow accustomed to use them correctly.

Given the nature of questions that appear in examinations such as the entrance test of the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS)-Delhi University, the Management Aptitude Test (MAT), NMIMS (the entrance test of the Narsee Monjee Institute in Mumbai) etc., besides knowing the meaning of a particular word, it will also be useful for you to know some of the synonyms and antonyms of a particular word.

Let us have a look at the set of questions mentioned earlier that appeared in FMS 2004. Look at the directions as mentioned below. You are asked to *Select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair*". This means that you have to first identify the relationship between the pair of words given in the question and then locate words with a similar relationship among the options.

Directions (Q 1-5): *In each of the following questions, there is a related pair of words or phrases in capital letters. Four pairs of words or phrases follow each capitalized pair. Select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair.*

(answers are provided in the chapter 'Practice Exercises-based on Vocabulary Questions from MBA Entrance Examinations', besides the explanations below for certain questions)

1. LUGUBRIOUS: SORROWFUL

(a) Euphoric: Cheerful	(b) Credible: Incredible
(c) Frenzied: Excited	(d) Lustrous: Luscious
2. PRIMEVAL: MEDIEVAL

(a) Snow: Ice	(b) Evolution: Revelation
(c) Dinosaur: Dragon	(d) Thorn: Rose
3. REMORSE: ABSOLUTION

(a) Disdain: Corruption	(b) Banter: Passion
(c) Serious: Humour	(d) Evasion: Suspicion
4. ZEPHYR: GALE

(a) Death: Sickness	(b) Trickle: Torrent
(c) Imprint: Emboss	(d) Fossil: Aged
5. IMPLICATE: INCRIMINATION

(a) Perjury: Fraud	(b) Exonerate: Acquittal
(c) Sleaze: Malpractice	(d) Embezzlement: Charged

Now, what is the relationship between the words in Question No. 1? The two words are more or less synonyms. So you have to identify two synonyms from among the options.

The best answer is (c). Why? Because the two words convey a similar meaning.

On the other hand, option (b) contains words that are antonyms.

There is no particular relationship between the two words in option (d). Lustrous means 'shiny', while 'luscious' means 'very juicy'.

As far as option (a) is concerned, although the two words are related, to be 'euphoric' is a much stronger term than being merely 'cheerful'. The degree of happiness is different.

Now look at Question No.4. The two words are antonyms or opposites since a 'zephyr' is a gentle breeze, while a 'gale' is an extremely strong wind. So which among the options have two words with a similar nature. The answer is (b). A 'trickle' refers to the slow flow of water, while a 'torrent' is a rapid, gushing flow of water.

Also, watch out for homophones—words that sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings. I have often found that students get confused with these and make mistakes. A common such example are the words ‘compliment’ and ‘complement’.

The former means ‘to praise’

The latter means ‘to accompany’ or ‘to go with’

Checklist

- Have you tried to read as much as possible and on a variety of different subjects?
- Have you supplement fiction reading with non-fiction?
- Have you made it a habit of listening to radio/TV programmes, especially the daily news in English?
- Have you made sure that you read the newspaper in English everyday, especially the editorial columns?
- Have you tried the approach of knowing the ‘roots’ of words to improve your vocabulary?
- Have you tried to understand the contextual useage of words?
- Do you know the synonyms and antonyms of particular words?
- Have you tried to use new words in sentences?
- Have you used flashcards while working on your vocabulary?
- Have you tried to group together words with a common theme?
- Have you tried to play games and activities while trying to improve your vocabulary?

Summary

There are several ways in which you can try and improve your vocabulary. You should read as much as possible, make use of flashcards etc. But don’t merely try and run the meaning of words by rote—adopt a smarter strategy.

It is much easier to become better at vocabulary by knowing the ‘roots’ of words or knowing interesting stories associated with them. While making flashcards, try and group together words with similar meanings.

In addition, try and add fun to vocabulary improvement exercises—playing games such as scrabble and boggle or playing word puzzles may help.

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Types of Questions in MBA Entrance Examinations

Introduction

This chapter shall discuss some of the common vocabulary based questions that have appeared in the CAT and other entrance examinations.

It is important to know this for you, so that you can then prepare accordingly. For example, you are often required to know the antonyms or the synonyms of a given word, hence while preparing you should make sure that you know these besides just the given word's meaning.

The questions that usually appear can be classified into:

- Questions pertaining to the contextual usage of the common words.
- Questions asking you the direct meaning of a particular word.
- Questions asking for the Antonyms/Synonyms of a particular word.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Do make sure you know the types of vocabulary based questions that have appeared in the CAT and other entrance examinations.
- Do tailor your preparation according to the types of questions that actually appear.

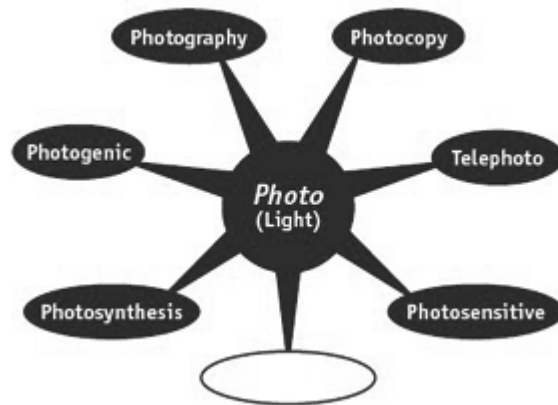
Don'ts

- Do not waste precious time by preparing for types of questions that rarely appear, if at all.

I. Questions pertaining to the contextual usage of common words

In the CAT exam, students have often been asked to choose the correct contextual usage of a word.

One such example is given in the diagram below:



from Texas Education Agency (2002)

The word is 'photo' and the diagram illustrates the different possible uses of such a word. While the root of the word 'photo' means 'light', it can be used in different contexts.

Another example is the one mentioned before: the word 'book'. This simple word can be used in several contexts, such as (as explained in a previous chapter as well):

- The most common use of the word perhaps is when we use it in the sense of referring to a textbook or story book (fiction or non-fiction).
- 'To book a ticket'—a ticket/seat was reserved.
- A show is 'fully booked'—this means that all the tickets were sold out.
- "The policeman booked the errant driver for over-speeding"—to fine someone.

Now look at these questions from the CAT 2001 paper. You were given a word, its dictionary definition (you were therefore not asked for the meaning of the word, but actually given its meaning from the dictionary!) and its usages. You had to choose the option which had all the dictionary definitions and the usages correctly matched as follows:

Directions (Q 1-5): For the word given at the top, match the dictionary definitions (A, B, C, D) with their corresponding usage given (E, F, G, H). Out of the four possibilities given below select the one that has all the definitions and their usages correctly matched.

1. Exceed

Dictionary Definition

- A. To extend outside of or enlarge beyond used chiefly in strictly physical relations.
- B. To be greater than or superior to.
- C. Be beyond the comprehension of.
- D. To go beyond a limit set by (as an authority or privilege).

Usage

- E. The mercy of God exceeds our finite minds.
- F. Their accomplishments exceeded our expectation.
- G. He exceed his authority when he paid his brother's gambling debts with money from the trust.
- H. If this rain keeps up, the river will exceed its banks by morning.

(a) A—H B—F C—E D—G

(b) A—H B—E C—F D—G

(c) A—G B—F C—E D—H

(d) A—F B—G C—H D—E

2. Infer

Dictionary Definition

- A. To derive by reasoning or implication
- B. To surmise
- C. To point out
- D. To hint

Usage

- E. We see smoke and infer fire.
- F. Given some utterance, a listener may infer from it, things which the utterer never implied.
- G. I waited all day to meet him, from this you can infer my zeal to see him.
- H. She did not take part in the debate except to ask a question inferring that she was not interested in the debate.

- (a) A—G B—H C—E D—F
- (b) A—F B—H C—E D—G
- (c) A—H B—G C—F D—E
- (d) A—E B—F C—G D—H

3. Mellow

Dictionary Definition

- A. Adequately and properly ages so as to be free of harshness
- B. Freed from the rashness of youth
- C. Of soft and loamy consistency
- D. Rich and full but free from stridency

Usage

- E. He has mellowed with age.
- F. The tones of the old violin were mellow.
- G. Some wines are mellow.
- H. Mellow soil is found in the Gangetic plains.

- (a) A—E B—G C—F D—H
- (b) A—E B—F C—G D—H
- (c) A—G B—E C—H D—F
- (d) A—H B—G C—F D—E

4. Relief

Dictionary Definition

- A. Removal or lightening of something distressing
- B. Aid in the form of necessities for the indigent
- C. Diversion
- D. Release from the performance of duty

Usage

- E. A ceremony follows the relief of a sentry after the morning shift.
- F. It was a relief to take off the tight shoes.
- G. The only relief I get is by playing cards.
- H. Disaster relief was offered to the victims.

- (a) A—F B—H C—E D—G
- (b) A—F B—H C—G D—E
- (c) A—H B—F C—G D—E
- (d) A—G B—E C—H D—F

5. Purge

Dictionary Definition

- A. Remove a stigma from the name of
- B. Make clean by removing whatever is superfluous, foreign
- C. Get rid of
- D. To cause evacuation of

Usage

- E. The opposition was purged after the coup.
 F. The committee heard his attempt to purge himself of a charge of heresy.
 G. Drugs that purge the bowels are often bad for the brain.
 H. It is recommended to purge water by distillation.
- (a) A—E B—G C—F D—H (b) A—F B—E C—H D—G
 (c) A—H B—F C—G D—E (d) A—F B—H C—E D—G

Another manner in which questions based on the contextual usage of words is covered below, from the FMS 2004 paper.

This asks you to fill in the blanks with the most appropriate word or words:

Directions (Q 1-6): Each question consists of a sentence which has one or two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Below each sentence are four sets of words, labelled (A) through (D). Choose the word or set of words that when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

(answers are provided in the chapter ‘Practice Exercises-based on Vocabulary Questions from MBA Entrance Examinations’)

- Her desire for soon became apparent when she adamantly refused to answer questions about her identity or mission.
 (a) assistance (b) recognition
 (c) success (d) anonymity
- After a period of protracted disuse, a muscle will atrophy, both its strength and the ability to perform its former function.
 (a) regaining (b) sustaining
 (c) losing (d) insuring
- The report issued by the committee was completely extolling in great detail the plan’s strengths but failing to mention its
 (a) one-sided ... shortcomings (b) unbiased ... weaknesses
 (c) comprehensive ... approval (d) printed ... good points
- There are many dialects of English with radically different pronunciations of the same word, but the spelling of these words is
 (a) inconsistent (b) abbreviated
 (c) shortened (d) uniform
- The plot of the movie was extremely complicated and included many minor characters to the central events.
 (a) momentous (b) tangential
 (c) contemporary (d) impervious
- In order to the deadline for submitting the research paper, the student tried to additional time from the professor.
 (a) extend ... wheedle (b) accelerate ... obtain
 (c) postpone ... forego (d) conceal ... procure

Now look at the following questions:

Directions (Q 1 to 5): Each of the words below, a contextual usage is provided. Pick the word from the alternatives given that is most inappropriate in the given context.

(answers are provided in the chapter ‘Practice Exercises-based on Vocabulary Questions from MBA Entrance Examinations’)

1. Disuse: Some words fall into disuse as technology makes objects obsolete.
(a) Unused (b) Outdated
(c) Misuse (d) Obsolescence
2. Facetious: When I suggested that war is a method of controlling population, my father remarked that I was being facetious.
(a) Jovian (b) Jovial
(c) Jocular (d) Joking
3. Specious: A specious argument is not simply a false one but one that has the ring of truth.
(a) Deceitful (b) Fallacious
(c) Credible (d) Deceptive
4. Parsimonious: The evidence was constructed from very parsimonious scraps of information.
(a) Frugal (b) Penurious
(c) Thrifty (d) Altruistic
5. Obviate: The new mass transit system may obviate the need for the use of personal cars.
(a) Prevent (b) Forestall
(c) Preclude (d)

II. Questions asking you the direct meaning of a particular word

Candidates may be directly tested on their knowledge of vocabulary i.e., the meaning of certain words. While such questions are rare in the CAT exam these days, they certainly make an appearance in other entrance examinations, including those for FMS, Narsee Monjee (NMIMS) etc.

Hence the student should aim to increase his knowledge of less commonly used words. Even if not directly asked for the meaning, not knowing the meanings of such words could affect the candidate's performance in the Reading Comprehension section as being unaware of word meanings could affect comprehension levels.

For example, here are some examples of questions that directly ask you the meaning of a word:

Directions for Questions: Select the correct meaning of the following words from the given choices:

1. DOWDY
(a) obese (b) rakish
(c) elegant (d) unstylish
2. LISSOME
(a) flexible (b) supple
(c) thin (d) lethargic
3. IMMURE
(a) Ripen (b) shut in
(c) exempt (d) betray

III. Questions asking for the Antonyms/Synonyms of a particular word

As mentioned earlier, several entrance tests (particularly those of the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS)-Delhi University, the Management Aptitude Test (MAT), NMIMS (the entrance test of the Narsee Monjee Institute in Mumbai) ask you questions based on the synonyms and antonyms of a particular word.

Take another look at the set of questions mentioned earlier that appeared in FMS 2004. Look at the directions as mentioned below. You are asked to “Select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair”. This means that you have to first identify the relationship between the pair of words given in the question and then locate words with a similar relationship among the options.

Directions (Q 1-5): In each of the following questions, there is a related pair of words or phrases in capital letters. Four pairs of words or phrases follow each capitalized pair. Select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair.

(answers are provided in the chapter ‘Practice Exercises-based on Vocabulary Questions from MBA Entrance Examinations’)

1. LUGUBRIOUS: SORROWFUL
 - (a) Euphoric: Cheerful
 - (b) Credible: Incredible
 - (c) Frenzied: Excited
 - (d) Lustrous: Luscious
2. PRIMEVAL: MEDIEVAL
 - (a) Snow: Ice
 - (b) Evolution: Revelation
 - (c) Dinosaur: Dragon
 - (d) Thorn: Rose
3. REMORSE: ABSOLUTION
 - (a) Disdain: Corruption
 - (b) Banter: Passion
 - (c) Serious: Humour
 - (d) Evasion: Suspicion
4. ZEPHYR: GALE
 - (a) Death: Sickness
 - (b) Trickle: Torrent
 - (c) Imprint: Emboss
 - (d) Fossil: Aged
5. IMPLICATE: INCRIMINATION
 - (a) Perjury: Fraud
 - (b) Exonerate: Acquittal
 - (c) Sleaze: Malpractice
 - (d) Embezzlement: Charged

Now, what is the relationship between the words in Question No. 1? The two words are more or less synonyms. So you have to identify two synonyms from among the options.

Checklist

- Have you made sure you know the types of vocabulary based questions that have appeared in the CAT and other entrance examinations?
- Have you tailored your preparation according to the types of questions that actually appear?

Summary

This chapter discussed the various kinds of questions that appear in B-school entrance examinations. The questions that usually appear can be classified into the following categories:

- Questions pertaining to the contextual usage of common words.
- Questions asking you the direct meaning of a particular word.
- Questions asking for the Antonyms/Synonyms of a particular word.

Vocabulary Through Roots-I

Introduction

In a previous chapter of this book on vocabulary, I introduced the concept of the 'root' of the word and how it helps in building your vocabulary. In this chapter, we shall discuss some more common roots and how knowing these roots can help you improve your vocabulary substantially in a relatively short period of time.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Do use the approach of knowing and understanding the 'roots' of words to improve your vocabulary.
- Do try making flashcards using this approach. You may write the root and the words derived from this root on a flashcard and carry it along with you.

Don'ts

- Do not just try and mug up words and their meanings in a random manner.

Using the 'root' of a word to Improve Vocabulary

In a previous chapter, we discussed the root 'dem', meaning 'people'. Let us begin by reiterating what was discussed about the root word 'dem' and its many derivative words:

This root, from Greek, means 'people'.

Now 'demographics' refers to a population study, or the study of the various characteristics of the people that comprise the population.

- A related word is 'Demographer': it refers to a person who studies demography
- Consider the word 'demographics'. It means 'relating to a society based on citizenship'
- Have a look at these two words: 'Demophile' and 'Demophobe'. While the former means 'A friend of the people', the latter refers to a person who has an aversion to people (the root 'philo' means to have an affinity for/to love, while the root 'phobe' has the opposite meaning).

Now, let us discuss some other important roots and their meanings. You shall see that several words, both in common usage and some that are not so commonly used, are derived from these roots.

Let's start with the root word **'loq'** and (related roots such as 'loqui', 'loqu' and 'loc'). These similar roots all mean 'To speak' and are derived from the language of Latin.

Here are some of the many words derived from these roots and their meaning:

- **Loquacious:** Means extremely talkative (a synonym for this is garrulous, verbose etc., while antonyms would be taciturn, laconic, pithy, terse etc.)
- **Circumlocution:** Another root that you should know is 'circum', meaning 'around'. Circumlocution therefore, means an indirect or roundabout way of expressing oneself, not coming to the point, 'to beat around the bush' etc.
- **Elocution:** Is a word that we are all familiar with, meaning a public speech. Remember the elocution contest you may have participated in or watched in school?
- **Eloquent:** A similar word. It means to be fluent, expressive/clear in communicating while speaking.
- **Soliloquy:** Another word using two roots—'loq' and 'solo' (meaning one/single). A 'soliloquy' therefore, means a speech or talk to oneself/a monologue
- **Interlocutor:** Again a word with two roots—'loc' and 'inter' (which means 'between' or 'among'). The word 'interlocutor' therefore, means one who takes part in a conversation/speech.

There is one caveat here. Do not confuse this root with the other 'loc' which also comes from Latin and means 'place'. The most common word with this root is perhaps 'location'.

Other words using this root, referring to place, are: 'Locomotion' (also 'Locomotive')—the act of moving from place to place; 'Locate'—to specify a place to or to find the place of etc

Now let us consider another important root: the root **'peri'** means 'around'.

- **Pericarp:** Refers to the skin or shell of a fruit or vegetable (it is something that goes 'around' the fruit or vegetable)
- **Pericentric:** As the word clearly suggests, means to be 'around' the centre of something
- **Periphery:** refers to the boundary 'around' something
- **Perimeter:** Every Maths student knows this word only too well! It means the measurement 'around' a closed figure
- **Peripatetic:** Means to be walking or wandering 'around' from place to place, having no fixed place (like a nomad)

Here are some more roots—which all mean the same thing—'power': **'poten', 'potes', 'poss'**.

These roots are derived from Latin.

- **Potent/Potency:** A commonly used word. To be 'potent' means to be powerful or capable of doing something
- **Potentate:** A 'potentate' is a ruler, a king, a monarch ('mono' means 'one', so 'monarch' refers to a single or one ruler)
- **Potentiate or potentize:** Means to imbibe with potential or to make something powerful
- **Omnipotent:** Means to be all powerful ('omni' is also a root, meaning 'all')
- **Potential:** A very common word, meaning having the power to develop further in the future
- **Posse:** A posse is an armed group, or a group with legal power
- **Possess:** Another common word derived from the same root and meaning to have in power

Besides the words I have mentioned which pertain to the various roots, I suggest you take it as a home assignment to find some other words which use these roots.

Let us move on to another important root: **'Ver'/'Veri':** this root means 'true' or 'genuine'. These are again derived from Latin.

- **Verify:** Means to check the accuracy or truth of something—could be a statement, some data, fact or figure etc.

- Verifiable: Something that can be checked—the accuracy can be ascertained etc.
- Veracity/Veracious: These words mean something that is correct, truthful, genuine or accurate
- Verisimilar: Something that appears to be true
- Verily: Something that is true or certain, correct or accurate
- Veridity: Something that is genuine and true
- Veritable: Again, this means something that is true

Now let us look at another root: '**Chron**'. Whenever you see the root, 'chron', you should immediately think of 'time' for that is what the root means. Here are some words that use this root:

- Chronology: this means "of, relating to, or arranged in or according to the order of time"
- Chronicle: a record of events in a chronological sequence (in order of time when they occurred)
- Chronic: means occurring at frequent intervals of time
- Chronometer: a device used to measure/keep time. A clock is therefore a chronometer
- Anachronism: something that is out of place in time/chronologically out of place. For example, if you see someone wearing a dress that was usually worn only in the medieval period, you could call that an 'anachronism'

Next, consider the root '**ante**'. This root means the same as the well-known prefix, pre means i.e., it means 'before'. Some words that use this root:

- Ante-room: a room that leads to a bigger room (literally, a small room *before* a bigger one)
- Antediluvian: literally, of or belonging to the period before the great Biblical flood, generally used to refer to someone or something who is old-fashioned, out of date or antiquated
- Antebellum: the root 'bell' means aggressive (think of the words 'bellicose', 'belligerent' etc). 'Antebellum' therefore, literally means 'before the war' (here the reference is generally to the American Civil War)
- Antedate: to be of an older date than something else, thus precede in time
- Antecedent: refers to a preceding circumstance or event; thus a precursor or fore-runner

By now you would have understood the importance of improving your vocabulary by using the roots of the word. I have listed some of the more commonly used roots below and suggest that as a home exercise, you look up some words using these roots and make notes.

The list below is not comprehensive, so after you complete these, you could always look for more roots to improve your vocabulary even further! You shall soon find that your vocabulary has improved considerably if you know some of the major roots.

It is a good idea to try making flashcards using this approach. You may write the root and the words derived from this root on a flashcard and carry it along with you. This will help 'fix' the meaning of the root and the words derived from it in your mind, as you keep referring to the flashcard.

Checklist

- Have you used the approach of knowing and understanding the 'roots' of words to improve your vocabulary?
- Have you made flashcards using this approach? You may write the root and the words derived from this root on a flashcard and carry it along with you

Summary

This chapter explained how using the approach of knowing the 'roots' of words is a much better approach to improve vocabulary than merely learning the meanings of words by rote/mugging up the meanings.

Rather than try and mug up the meanings of several hundreds of words, it is better to know and use just 40-50 common roots used in the English language.

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Vocabulary Through Roots-II

Introduction

This chapter continues the theme of using the ‘roots’ of words to learn its meaning. You will find that knowing a few roots is much better than mugging up the meaning of several hundred or even a couple of thousand words that may be necessary.

More ‘Roots’

By now, our tree is growing and we are learning more roots! Let us consider the root ‘Eu’. This root means ‘good’ or ‘pleasant’.

There are several words that use this ‘root’, but arguably the most famous one is the word ‘eureka’. There is an interesting story behind it, and it concerns the famous scientist, Archimedes, from whom we get the famous principle of buoyancy that is named after him.

Archimedes accidentally realized the principle while pondering over how to determine the purity of the gold in the king’s crown. He is said to have been in his bath-tub then, and realized that amount of water displaced by the crown when immersed in water would give an approximate idea of its purity, just as his body displaced water when he stepped into his bath-tub. He is said to have immediately rushed out of his bath, shouting ‘Eureka!’ or ‘I have found it’. To this day, the word is almost always used with an exclamation mark.

Some other words using the same root, meaning ‘pleasant’ or ‘good’ are:

- Eulogy: Words of praise
- Euphemism: The use of a mild word instead of one that may be biting or offensive
- Euphemistically: Using an euphemism
- Eugeny: consists of two roots ‘eu’ as well as ‘gen’ (birth). Hence ‘eugeny’ means ‘of noble birth’
- Eugenics: related to the previous word, ‘eugenics’ refers to breeding for improvement of the race
- Euphoria: A feeling of happiness, ecstasy and general well-being
- Euphony: A pleasant sound

Given the last word ‘euphony’ above, we can consider another root: ‘phon’ or ‘phone’ or ‘phono’. These roots related to the word ‘sound’. Here are some words with this root:

- Euphony: as mentioned above, the word ‘euphony’ refers to a pleasant sound
- Cacophony: refers to a harsh, unpleasant sound, the opposite of ‘euphony’. Think of the character ‘Cacophonix’ in the famous Asterix comics!
- Homophone: A ‘homophone’ is a word that has the same sound but a different meaning as another word
- Gramophone: this is a device used to play the sounds of records (of music)
- A megaphone: again a word with two roots; ‘phone’ and ‘mega’ (large) Thus a megaphone is a funnel-shaped device used to enhance sound
- Microphone: similarly, a microphone is a device used to make small voices sound larger
- Phonology: the study of speech sounds in language

Next, we shall consider the root ‘**magna/magni**’. This is a simple root, and it means to ‘make large’ or ‘great’. Think of a magnifying glass. It makes small objects appear larger. Other words are:

- Magnanimously: to do something in a generous or great manner
- Magnanimity: Similar to the previous word, ‘magnanimity’ means ‘to demonstrate generosity and kindness’
- Magnate: A man of great wealth or power, a tycoon
- Magnific: to make great or magnificent
- Magnification: To enlarge or make bigger
- Magnificence: great, wonderful, splendourous
- Magnitude: Physical greatness, largeness
- Magniloquent: Bombastic talk; a similar word is ‘grandiloquent’ (hope you remember the root ‘loq’ from the previous chapter!)

Now that you know several roots and their meanings, it will be appropriate to end this chapter with the root ‘**gnos**’ or ‘**cog**’ which both mean ‘to know’. Here are some words that use these roots:

- Cognition: The act of knowing
- Cognizable: That which can be known
- Cognizance: To be aware of, to notice or understand
- Cognosce: To inquire into, to determine
- Cognoscente: Refers to an expert or scholar or learned person, a connoisseur; one who is ‘in the know’
- Recognize: literally, ‘to know again’
- Incognito: one whose identity is not known
- Prognosis: A forecast; to know before an event
- Prognosticable: that which can be foretold or known before
- Prognostication: act of making a prognosis or prediction

Checklist

- Have you used the approach of knowing and understanding the ‘roots’ of words to improve your vocabulary?
- Have you made flashcards using this approach? You may write the root and the words derived from this root on a flashcard and carry it along with you

Summary

This chapter continued the approach of using roots of words to remember their meaning, it is a much better approach to improve vocabulary than merely learning the meanings of words by rote/mugging up the meanings.

List of Roots for Words

Introduction

This chapter provides a list of roots that are the source of many words. Knowing these roots will be far better than trying to mug up the meaning of thousands of words individually, as there are several words derived from these roots.

List of Roots

A list of roots that are the source of several words in the English language is provided below:

- Anthrop: the Greek word 'anthropos' means man
- Gyn: pertaining to women
- Micro: small
- Macro: large
- Uni: one
- Mono: single
- Macro: large
- Magna/Magni: great, large
- Poly: many
- Duo: two
- Tri: three
- Greg: referring to a group
- Grav, Gravi: from Latin, meaning heavy
- Ova: egg
- Phon: pertaining to sound
- Eu: Pleasant, good
- Chrom: from the Greek chroma meaning colour
- Chron: from the Greek word chromos, meaning time
- Bon/Ben: Good, well (from Latin and French)
- Mal: bad
- Gen: Race or type/kind/category of
- Sol: pertaining to the Sun

- Lun: pertaining to the Moon
- Philo/Phile-from Greek. The Greek word ‘philos’ means ‘loving’.
- Phobe: to have a reversion for, to fear or dislike
- Hydro/Aqua: relating to water
- Duc/Duce/Duct: To lead. From Latin
- Dic/Dict: to state, to say, to declare
- Bio: pertaining to life
- Anti: against
- Pro: in favour of
- Pre: before
- Post: after
- Natal: pertaining to birth
- Trans: beyond, across, through
- Super/Supra: from Latin, meaning above, beyond of
- Graph: to write
- Luc/Lum: pertaining to light
- Feder/Fid: from Latin ‘fidere’ which means to trust/to have faith
- Viv/Vivi/Vita: pertaining to life
- Stru/Struct: To build

Suggested websites

<http://www.english-for-students.com/Etymology.html>

http://www.fun-with-words.com/etym_example.html

<http://www.espindle.org/roots.html>

Summary

This chapter provided a list of roots that are the source of many words. As mentioned before, knowing these roots will be far better than trying to mug up the meaning of thousands of words individually, as there are several words derived from these roots.

Improving Vocabulary Through Knowing the Stories Behind Words-I

Introduction

In this chapter, we shall discuss some interesting word origins. Knowing the story or the origin of a particular word shall also help in remembering its meaning. Very often, you may find that you remember the story more than the meaning and that it is the story that helps you recall the meaning of the word!

The background/origin of some words are quite interesting. Certain words are named after people, often mythological. Others are named after places, mostly actual places.

Let us look at some such words.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Do use the approach of knowing the stories/origins of a particular word to improve your vocabulary. Some words have very interesting origins!
- Do try making flashcards using this approach. You may write the word and a few lines mentioning its origin on a flashcard and carry it along with you.

Don'ts

- Do not just try and mug up words and their meanings in a random manner.

Let's Start With an Appropriate Word: 'Promethean'

This word comes from the Greek hero 'Prometheus'. Prometheus was a great hero of mankind and known for his cleverness. He was given the task of becoming a virtual creator of mankind, by moulding

people out of clay. As may be imagined, his attempts angered the Gods, especially Zeus. This anger was further reinforced when Prometheus tricked the Gods—during a sacrificial feast, he managed to get the best portions for man and the Gods were left with hardly anything.

He is also supposed to have stolen fire from the Gods and brought it for mankind's use. Fire was clearly of vital importance to ancient man.

Hence the word 'Promethean' means 'life-giving', creative, original.

The famous story of Prometheus can be found in the Greek tragedy called 'Prometheus Bound'. In this drama, Prometheus' theft of fire and his punishment by Zeus are described. Zeus is supposed to have punished Prometheus having him bound to a rock while a great eagle ate his liver every day; it would then grow back, only to be eaten again the next day. And so the cycle continued till the great hero Hercules is said to have finally released Prometheus from his ordeal.

The Next Word is 'Spartan'.

This also comes from Greece; Sparta was a Greek city-state in ancient times. It was often at war especially during the Peloponnesian War with Athens, another city-state (and today's capital of Greece), where the famous Parthenon is situated.

As a result, the inhabitants of Sparta had to always be prepared for war and evolved to be extremely battle-ready, disciplined, tough and austere in their lifestyle. In fact, Sparta is said to have been unique for its social system and constitution, which focused on military training and excellence.

The word 'Spartan' thus means 'austere', plain, frugal.

Another word derived from the name of a place is the word '**Laconic**', which comes from the area of 'Laconia'. The inhabitants of this place were known to speak very little.

The word 'Laconic' therefore, refers to someone who uses few words, is concise and brief while speaking—a "man of a few words". Synonyms are taciturn, pithy, terse; antonyms are garrulous, verbose, loquacious etc.

There is a famous example of the usage of this word. Philip of Macedon was supposed to have once written to the Spartans "If I enter Laconia, I will level Lacedaemon to the ground". The Spartans, true to their style, chose to reply with a single word: "If".

There is also a very interesting story about the former American President, Calvin Coolidge, who was the President of the US in the 1920s. Coolidge was known to be extremely frugal with words, which is best illustrated through this story. It is said that on a particular occasion, a young woman was sitting next to Coolidge at a dinner party. She told him that she had placed a bet that she could get at least three words of conversation out of him. Without looking at her, Coolidge quietly retorted, "You lose."

Only two words, and thus the lady had lost her bet!

The next word that we shall discuss is '**Stentorian**'. It comes from the name of a person. In Greek mythology, stentor was a herald of the Greek armies. Being a herald, stentor had an extremely loud voice. Hence the meaning of the word:

'Stentorian' means loud, booming etc.

So you can see that many words have an interesting origin, and are associated with mythology. As I said, knowing the origin/story behind a word often helps in remembering its meaning.

This is a better approach than trying to simply mug up the meaning of a word. Here are some more words which have an interesting origin:

Consider the term 'southpaw'

How does this come about? Finley Peter Dunne, a sportswriter, is credited with having coined the phrase—he used it to mean a left-handed baseball pitcher. The home plate in the Chicago baseball field

was then to the west, meaning that a left-handed baseball pitcher released the ball from his ‘paw’, or hand, from the south direction.

The word today refers to any left-hander.

Heard of the word ‘Tantalizing’?

This has a really interesting story!

Tantalus was the son of the Greek God Zeus, who was punished by the Gods for stealing ambrosia and nectar for his people and also for revealing the secrets of the Gods. He is also supposed to have offered human sacrifices.

Angered by his actions, the Gods thought of suitable punishment. Tantalus was put neck deep in water under some fruit trees with low branches, but could not drink any water or eat any fruit.

Whenever he bent down to drink, the water receded. Similarly, whenever he tried to reach the fruit which grew on the branches above him, the fruit slowly moved out of reach, raised up by the branches.

Thus the meaning of the word ‘Tantalizing’ as used today: it means “enticing, but out of reach” or “arousing interest or desire for something that remains unattainable”.

A word with a classical story behind it is ‘Halcyon’

The story goes like this: Alcyone (or Halcyone), the daughter of Aeolus—the God of the winds, married a king named Ceyx, who unfortunately drowned in a sea. Such was Alcyone’s love for her husband that she committed suicide herself in the sea.

Moved by this, the Gods transformed Alcyone and Ceyx into birds, and Aeolus, being the God of the winds, kept the sea calm for a week before and a week after the winter solstice, enabling the birds to build nests on the water and lay their eggs.

The Greek term ‘halcyon’ came to refer both to today’s kingfisher (an actual bird) and to the mythical bird that nested on the sea and calmed the winds.

The word today means calm, peaceful, happy, tranquil.

Let us end with an appropriate, but simple word: ‘Salary’

A big one is what we all hoping for, and while we surely know what the word means, how did it originate?

You may be surprised to know that the word originally meant “an allowance given to a Roman soldier for purchasing salt” (this shows that salt was important not only during the time of the Dandi March, but even in those times, as an essential ingredient in meals).

The allowance came to be referred to as ‘salarium’, a derivative of ‘sal’, ‘salt.’ From that, the word morphed over time into today’s ‘salary’.

There are several such interesting words in the English Language with even more interesting origins! I urge you to try and find out more—you shall not have to worry about forgetting the meaning of the word after understanding its origin or hearing the story about it.

Checklist

- Have you used the approach of knowing the stories/origins of a particular word to improve your Vocabulary?
- Have you made flashcards using this approach? You could write the word and a few lines mentioning its origin on a flashcard and carry it along with you.

Summary

This chapter explains how knowing the story behind the origin of certain words is a much better approach to improve vocabulary than merely learning the meanings of words by rote/mugging up the meanings.

Many words have interesting origins and students are far more likely to remember its meaning by recalling the story behind its origin as compared to mugging up its meaning.

Improving Vocabulary Through Knowing the Stories Behind Words–II

Introduction

This chapter continues with the theme of the stories behind certain words and their origins. The aim is to make vocabulary interesting for you, rather than a drudgery in which you have to mug up word meanings. Simultaneously, if it makes you interested in history and mythology, you could read more about the people, characters and places from the past and who knows? You may choose this as a career!

More Interesting word origins

So let us continue with some more interesting words and their origins.

Machiavellian

As we have discussed, there are some words that owe their origins to the names of various characters in history or mythology. ‘Stentorian’, ‘Promethean’ etc., were some of them. Another word named after a person is Machiavellian.

This comes from a character from history called Machiavelli. Indians can draw a parallel between this person and the character of Chanakya or Kautilya, the famous Minister in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Chanakya is supposed to have penned the ‘Arthashastra’ which speaks about how to use guile and cunning to achieve your purpose.

The word Machiavellian has a similar connotation—it refers to the use of devious techniques to fulfil your purpose.

Herculean

The word ‘herculean’ comes from the famous character of Hercules, said to be the son of Zeus and

one of the greatest heroes of the ancient world, who is often depicted wearing the skin of a lion and brandishing a stout club. Hercules was given twelve extremely difficult tasks to do, which he successfully performed—these are known as the ‘twelve labours of Hercules’.

This is the story—Driven insane by Hera, Hercules is said to have killed his own six sons. But Hercules soon recovered and deeply regretted his actions. After being purified by the King Thespius, Hercules decided to seek the advice of the Oracle of Delphi as to how he could atone for his actions.

The oracle told him to stay at a place called Tyrins and serve the King Eurystheus for 12 years, agreeing to do whatever tasks might be set to him. In return, he would be rewarded with immortality. However, Hercules did not at first like this, not wanting to serve someone whom he felt was inferior to him. But he did not wish to displease his father Zeus and finally agreed.

The King Eurystheus is said to have ordered Hercules to perform ten ‘labours’ or tasks. These were successfully accomplished, but the King refused to accept two: the cleansing of the Augean stables (because Hercules was ready to accept pay for this) and the killing of the Lernaean Hydra (as Hercules was aided by his nephew in the task). Eurystheus set two more tasks, both of which were also performed successfully—so all in all, there were twelve tasks accomplished at the end.

As a reward for finishing all the tasks that had been set, Hercules was given the gift of immortality after his death by Zeus, while Hera forgave him and gave him her daughter Hebe for his bride.

The stories of how each of the tasks were successfully completed are themselves interesting and worth reading. Candidates may do so in their spare time. The tasks were:

- Slay the Nemean Lion.
- Slay the nine-headed Lernaean Hydra.
- Capture the Golden Hind of Artemis.
- Capture the Erymanthian Boar.
- Clean the Augean stables in just one single day.
- Slay the Stymphalian Birds.
- Capture the Cretan Bull.
- Steal the Mares of Diomedes.
- Obtain the girdle of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons.
- Obtain the cattle Geryon.
- Steal the apples of the Hesperides.
- Capture and bring back Cerberus.

Today, to describe someone as ‘herculean’ is to compare him to Hercules in strength and stature. An action or task being described as ‘herculean’ means that it requires tremendous effort or strength to accomplish.

Chronology/Chronometer

You may have heard of the word ‘chronology’ or a ‘chronometer’. Both these words signify something related to time.

‘Chronology’ refers to the sequence of events or actions arranged according to the time when they occurred, while a ‘chronometer’ is nothing but a device that measures time. The simple clock is also a chronometer.

But why does the root ‘chrono’ signify time? The answer is straightforward—‘Chronos’ was the Greek God of time—hence the connection. He is said to have turned the wheel of the heavenly constellations and is sometimes equated with Cronus, the father of Zeus.

Chimera/Chimerical/Chimeric

The word ‘chimera’/‘chimerical’ comes not from a person but from a mythical creature. This creature

is said to have had the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a serpent, while it breathed fire through its nostrils. It is supposed to have been finally slain by the Corinthian hero Bellerophon on one of his journeys.

The word today refers to something imaginary or delusional, a figment of the imagination. It may also refer to a hybrid organism, usually a plant.

Mnemonics

Let us end with an appropriate word. What I have attempted to do in this chapter is to use ‘mnemonics’, in a way, to help you remember words and their meanings. Mnemonics are nothing but an aid to memory—an image, word or system that helps you remember something.

The word ‘mnemonics’ itself comes from Mnemosyne, the Goddess of memory—hence the word is related to memory. Mnemosyne is said to have represented the rote memorization required before the introduction of writing, to preserve ancient stories and myths.

Checklist

- Have you used the approach of knowing the stories/origins of a particular word to improve your vocabulary?
- Have you made flashcards using this approach? You could write the word and a few lines mentioning its origin on a flashcard and carry it along with you.

Summary

This chapter continued on the theme of the importance of knowing the story behind the origin of certain words as a much better approach to improve vocabulary than merely learning the meanings of words by rote/mugging up the meanings.

As mentioned before, many words have interesting origins and students are far more likely to remember its meaning by recalling the story behind its origin as compared to mugging up its meaning.

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Improving Your Vocabulary Through the Knowledge of Idioms and Phrases: Stories Behind the Use of Some Idioms and Phrases

Introduction

Merely knowing the meanings of words will not suffice in improving vocabulary. This is because all languages, including English, employ the use of certain idioms and phrases. By their very definition, the meaning of such idioms is not literal and just knowing the meaning of each individual word will not mean that you know what the idiom means.

Idioms and phrases are a fairly regular component of CAT and other B-school entrance examinations and hence important in terms of your preparation. Even if there are no direct questions, such idioms and phrases are often a part of the passages in Reading Comprehension and not knowing what they mean could result in your struggling to grasp what the author is trying to say in the passage.

This chapter aims to introduce you to some idioms and phrases that are used in the English language. It briefs you about the origin or stories behind some of these, serving to increase your interest in these components of English.

What is an Idiom?

What exactly is an idiom? It is an expression, or word or phrase that has a figurative meaning that is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words of which it is made. Thus a literal translation cannot be made to understand the meaning of the phrase or idiom. According to some estimates, there are thousands of idiomatic expressions in the English language.

Stories Behind the Use of Some Idioms and Phrases

Achilles' Heel

A word, or rather phrase, with an interesting story behind it is the term '**Achilles' Heel**'. This word also comes to us through mythology, and is related to the famous Trojan War, and the city of Troy (the discovery of the ancient city of Troy by the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann is itself fascinating and students are encouraged to read about it).

The Trojan War and city of Troy have given us several words and expressions used in the English language, including the following:

- A Trojan Horse (which we shall discuss subsequently)
- The face that launched a thousand ships, referring to the supposedly extremely beautiful Helen of Troy, whose beauty was supposed to be one of the causes that the Trojan War actually took.

Achilles was one of the heroes of the Trojan War. Similar to the story of the Kaurav king Duryodhana in the Mahabharata, Achilles was supposed to have only one weak point in his body—his heel. He was otherwise invincible. Pointing to the fact that myths and legends associated with one place and country often draw from those of other places and countries, Achilles was supposed to have been dipped into a river, which gave his whole body protection—except his heel, since he was held by the heel during the process of dipping.

After fighting many battles and emerging victorious, Achilles was finally killed when an arrow pierced his heel.

Thus comes the phrase, 'Achilles' Heel'. It refers to the one weakness or vulnerability that a person may have.

A similar such phrase is also 'soft underbelly'. This expression comes from the fact that however, tough the hide (outer skin) of an animal may be, its underbelly is generally quite soft and hence vulnerable. Hence 'soft underbelly' refers to the point of vulnerability.

'A Trojan Horse'

Now let us speak about the 'Trojan Horse', of which we have spoken earlier. What does this mean and what does a Trojan Horse refer to?

This again comes from the Trojan War and the city of Troy. During the Trojan War, even after many days of attacking the city of Troy, the attackers were not able to make any headway and breach the city's walls. One fine day, they suddenly left; but only after leaving a very large wooden horse behind.

The soldiers of Troy, in their arrogance, felt that that the attackers had left it behind as a mark of supplication or as a gift for their Gods. Despite voices of dissent, the king ordered the horse to be brought into the city.

This proved to be a massive error, for the wooden horse was no ordinary statue. It was filled with soldiers from the attacking army, who were concealed within the wooden horse. No sooner had the horse been taken into the city gates, than the attackers poured out and were finally successful in plundering the city.

Cunning and deceit had done what conventional warfare could not. 'A Trojan Horse' therefore, refers to something designed to fulfil a particular objective through deceit and cunning i.e., in a 'Machiavellian' fashion (we had discussed the meaning of the word 'Machiavellian' previously).

'A Catch-22' situation

Another interesting phrase is the term 'A Catch-22' situation. This comes from the eponymous book

‘Catch-22’ by Joseph Heller. The term refers to a situation in which you have two (or possibly more) alternatives, but all of them are equally bad i.e., in some ways, you have no alternative at all.

Similar phrases/expressions include:

- *Between the devil and the deep blue sea*
- *Caught between a rock and a hard place*
- *‘Damned if you do, damned if you don’t’*

‘A bird in hand is worth two in the bush’

This is an oft-quoted phrase. Its meaning can be easily guessed. What it means is simple—what you actually have in your possession is worth more than something else that may be more attractive and better but which you do not actually possess.

Hence rather than worry about what seems attractive but is not attainable, you should concentrate on what resources you actually have.

‘The Carrot and stick approach’

This idiom ‘the Carrot and stick approach’ refers to a policy of offering a combination of rewards and punishment to encourage certain behaviour.

The image often used along with this expression is that of a carrot on a stick, with a cart driver who has tied a carrot on a string to a long stick and is dangling it in front of a donkey, just out of its reach.

As the donkey moves forward to reach the carrot, the cart which he is drawing also gets pulled forward—a favourable arrangement for the driver since his cart moves ahead, but not for the donkey, for whom the carrot would always remain out of reach.

Carrot and stick (also “carrot or stick”) is an idiom that refers to a policy of offering a combination of rewards and punishment to induce behaviour. Some claim that this usage of phrase is erroneous, and that in fact comes from the figure of a carrot on a stick. In this case, the driver would tie a carrot on a string to a long stick and dangle it in front of the donkey, just out of its reach. As the donkey moved forward to get the carrot, it pulled the cart and the driver so that the carrot would always remain out of reach.

‘A blue-blooded person’

This refers to a person who has something to do with royalty or is exalted in some way. The expression is said to be derived from the Tsars of Russia (the ruling family) who were said to have a deficiency of red-blood cells in their blood.

Hence the link between being ‘blue-blooded’ and royalty.

‘The proof of the pudding is the eating’

There are a number of words/phrases which come from Miguel de Cervantes’ famous novel ‘Don Quixote’. One such phrase is ‘the proof of the pudding is the eating’.

The phrase means that one needs to find out the real thing or the truth for oneself. Pudding is a sweet dish; and one cannot know how it tastes based on just looking at it or through hearsay, one has to actually taste it to know its quality or how it tastes.

The expression thus means that one has to probe deeper or actually sample a specimen to know how good or bad it is.

'To tilt at windmills'

As mentioned before, there are a number of words/phrases which come from Miguel de Cervantes' famous novel 'Don Quixote'. We discussed one such phrase is 'the proof of the pudding is the eating' above and now we shall look at the phrase 'to tilt at windmills'.

In the book Don Quixote, the eponymous protagonist attacks the blades of windmills thinking that they represent the arms of a giant. These are the relevant words from the book:

Just then they came in sight of thirty or forty windmills that rise from that plain. And no sooner did Don Quixote see them that he said to his squire, "Fortune is guiding our affairs better than we ourselves could have wished. Do you see over yonder, friend Sancho, thirty or forty hulking giants? I intend to do battle with them and slay them. With their spoils we shall begin to be rich for this is a righteous war and the removal of so foul a brood from off the face of the earth is a service God will bless."

"What giants?" asked Sancho Panza.

"Those you see over there," replied his master, "with their long arms. Some of them have arms well nigh two leagues in length."

"Take care, sir," cried Sancho. "Those over there are not giants but windmills. Those things that seem to be their arms are sails which, when they are whirled around by the wind, turn the millstone."

Needless to say, Don Quixote doesn't make much headway and only succeeds in injuring himself.

The phrase 'tilting at windmills' therefore, refers to the act of attacking imaginary enemies, or fighting futile battles. In some cases, it refers to courses of action that are based on misinterpreted or misapplied heroic, romantic, or idealistic reasons

The character of Don Quixote has itself given rise to the word 'quixotic'.

What does this mean?

If someone is described as being 'quixotic' it means that he idealistic, fanciful, unrealistic, impractical, dreamy etc.

A somewhat similar expression to the previous one is **'to build castles in the air'**.

It also means to daydream/try and do something that has no basis in reality. Castles need a solid foundation and cannot be built in the sky. If someone says that you are doing this, it means that he is indicating that you are letting your imagination run riot.

Similar to the word quixotic, we have the word **'quixotism'**.

This refers to an impractical pursuit of ideals and behaviour that is extravagantly chivalrous action. Quixotism may be termed as "over-idealistic", meaning an idealism that doesn't care for the consequence or seeming absurdity of the action.

"It's raining cats and dogs²."

This expression means that it is raining very heavily. But how did the expression come about? Some say that in the medieval period in Europe, most houses had thatched roofs, made of straw. There was hardly any wood or straw underneath this.

The thick straw provided a comfortable and warm bed for animals to rest or sleep in, especially for dogs and cats. Hence the straw would often have an animal or two! But when it rained, the straw became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the phrase.

² The author cannot vouchsafe for the authenticity of the origins of these phrases, since they derive in part from popular folklore/myth

‘To bring home the bacon’³

Once again, the expression comes from medieval Europe. Ordinary people were generally poor and did not have anything special to eat. But occasionally, they would obtain pork.

Since this was rare, they would make attempts to show it off by hanging the bacon up outside their houses as a sign of wealth. Hence the phrase arose “to bring home the bacon.” This meant that the man of the house was earning enough to be able to afford bacon.

The ‘upper crust’⁴

The upper crust refers to the higher levels of society, the preferred or high-class. How did the expression originate?

Once again, we must visit medieval Europe to understand this. At that time, even a relatively common object was divided according to status. Bread was baked in large ovens and the common, low class workers got the almost burnt bottom of the loaf, while the somewhat better-off people got the middle, and the high-class received the top part, or the “upper crust.”

To strike while the iron is hot

This phrase means to ‘act decisively and seize opportunities as and when they arise’.

The origin of the phrase can be traced to the image of a blacksmith, a person who works with metals. The blacksmith, while working with metals, must heat them and shape them while they are hot. If the metal cools, it shall harden and cannot be shaped easily.

Hence the opportunity must be taken while the iron is still hot.

Summary

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, just knowing the meanings of words will not suffice in improving vocabulary. This is because all languages, including English, employ the use of certain idioms and phrases.

Knowing some common idioms and phrases will help you answer direct questions based on these in B-school entrance examinations. In addition, it will help you do better in Reading Comprehension, as the writer often employs these to make a point. Hence knowledge of such idioms and phrases will help the candidate understand the nuances of the writer’s point better.

³ The author cannot vouchsafe for the authenticity of the origins of these phrases, since they derive in part from popular folklore/myth

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List of Common Idioms and Phrases

Introduction

This chapter provides a list of some commonly used idioms and phrases that are commonly used in the English language. Knowing these will help you understand the nuances of the language better.

List of Idioms and Phrases

A list of idioms and phrases is provided below:

A bed of roses

Meaning: A comfortable situation

A cock and bull story

Meaning: An imaginary and unbelievable tale

A leopard cannot change its spots

Meaning: someone cannot change their innate nature

Back to square one

Meaning: the need to start all over again

Baker's dozen

Meaning: not twelve, but thirteen in number

(To hit) Below the belt

Meaning: using an unfair strategy or tactic

Between a rock and a hard place

Meaning: Caught between two equally unfavourable alternatives

Cut to the chase

Meaning: To get to the point, to not 'beat around the bush'

Get off on the wrong foot

Meaning: To make a bad beginning

Get your feet wet

Meaning: To get your first experience of something

Have an axe to grind

Meaning: Have some motive to do something

Head over heels

Meaning: Very excited

Hold your horses

Meaning: To be patient and not jump to conclusions

Hanky-panky

Meaning: where some trickery is involved

In a Nutshell

Meaning: Briefly, in very few words

In the limelight

Meaning: At the focus or centre of attention

Keep your nose to the grindstone

Meaning: To apply one's self in a very diligent manner to work

Knee jerk reaction

Meaning: To respond without adequate thought

Know the ropes

Meaning: To understand how things are done

Know which way the wind blows

Meaning: To understand the given circumstances

Labour of love

Meaning: Work undertaken out of a passion for it and not only for monetary reward

Learn the ropes

Meaning: To learn how something works

Level playing field

Meaning: A fair competition, where no advantage is shown to either side

Let the cat out of the bag

Meaning: To reveal something that was earlier hidden

Make hay while the sun shines

Meaning: Be take advantage of a favorable situation

Make a mountain out of a molehill

Meaning: To exaggerate something

Make waves

Meaning: To create a big impact

Mind one's Ps and Qs

Meaning: To be careful of details

Never never land

Meaning: Refers to an imaginary place which doesn't really exist

New kid on the block

Meaning: A new arrival in an area

Not worth the candle

Meaning: without any worth

No-brainer

Meaning: Something that is very clear and which doesn't require any intelligence to understand

Off the hook

Meaning: Escaping punishment or criticism

Off-the-mark

Meaning: Inaccurate or incorrect

On cloud nine

Meaning: To be ecstatic or extremely happy

Paddle your own canoe

Meaning: To act on one's own and independently of others

Paper tiger

Meaning: Appearing to have power but only on paper i.e., not having power in reality

Pass the buck

Meaning: Pass responsibility on to someone else

Play it by the ear

Meaning: Handle something in a spontaneous manner, without any guidelines

Put your best foot forward

Meaning: To make a good effort and show enthusiasm

Queer the pitch

Meaning: To negatively affect a previously decided course of action

(To make a) Quick buck

Meaning: To make money quickly

Rags-to-riches

Meaning: Refers to someone who has risen up to a high position from very modest means

Red-tapsim

Meaning: Refers to bureaucratic rules and procedures that may hamper the growth or development of something

Rule of thumb

Meaning: An estimate, using a practical approach, but not one based on a scientific method

Run out of steam

Meaning: To lose energy

Sacred cow

Meaning: Highly respected and sensitive; something of which criticism is not encouraged

Scot free

Meaning: To escape punishment

Shot in the arm

Meaning: A push; something that has a salutary impact

Shot in the dark

Meaning: A wild guess or attempt

Smoke and mirrors

Meaning: Use of trickery or deception

Strike a deal

Meaning: To reach an agreement

Strike while the iron is hot

Meaning: To make use of opportunities and act decisively when needed

Take a back seat

Meaning: To be in the background and not play an active part

Take with a pinch of salt

Meaning: To accept only partially

The early bird catches the worm

Meaning: If you want success, you need to make an effort (like the bird that gets up early so as to be able to catch its food)

The Ball is in someone else's court

Meaning: The next move depends on the other person

The Full Monty

Meaning: The whole thing

Time and tide wait for no man

Meaning: Things happen/go on without waiting for someone, however important he may be, to respond

Tie the knot

Meaning: To marry

Top notch

Meaning: The highest level

To call a spade a spade

Meaning: To speak frankly and openly, not in a 'politically correct' manner

Two cents worth

Meaning: To offer an opinion

Turn the tables

Meaning: Reverse the position of something or on someone; refers to when the hitherto weaker side suddenly becomes dominant

Water under the bridge

Meaning: A past event that is no longer relevant now

What goes around comes around

Meaning: When something done in the past returns to impact a person/thing in the present.

A similar expression is 'the chickens will come home to roost' and 'as you sow, so shall you reap'

What's good for the goose is good for the gander

Meaning: Everyone should be treated equally and without any discrimination

While in Rome, do as the Romans do

Meaning: You should try to adjust or blend in to the local customs and traditions

Words from Foreign Languages Used in English

Introduction

English is a language that has heavily borrowed words from other languages. In fact, not only has it borrowed words in the past, but it continues to do so. More and more words of foreign languages are often used in English.

This chapter briefs the candidate on some of the words used in English that are derived from foreign languages. Direct questions based on these have appeared in certain B-school entrance examinations, while other tests have employed these words in Reading Comprehension questions or those based on Critical Reasoning. Hence, doing well in such questions requires the candidate to know the meanings of these words.

Words used in English Derived from Foreign Languages

Lexicographer and etymologist (find out the meaning of these two words from a dictionary!) John Ayto is said to have once said that English is “an inveterate borrower from other languages.” Some say that as many as two-thirds of English vocabulary can be traced back to foreign words.

One language that has often loaned its words to English is French. Perhaps this is because England and France are located geographically close to each other, separated only by the relatively narrow English Channel. In some ways, one may say that the channel seems to have been the conduit for the two languages to have influenced each other.

However, English has also borrowed several words and phrases from Italian, Latin, Greek, Spanish, German, Russian, Dutch, Japanese etc. There are even some Hindi words that are used in English!

The CAT exam and other entrance tests do occasionally use such words. You should be ready for them.

These could either appear in the types of questions detailed in the chapter ‘Vocabulary: Types of Questions in MBA Entrance Examinations’ of this book or in words or phrases used in Reading

Comprehension passages. Not knowing the meaning of such words could affect your comprehension of what the author speaks about in the passage, hence it is more than worthwhile knowing the meaning of such words.

For example, one passage I read said that “Classroom coaching has become de rigueur” for the IIT-JEE. What does this word, derived from French mean? It means ‘something necessary or mandatory, typically due to a social custom or tradition’.

Similarly, one may refer to an ‘avant-garde’ painting. This word, again derived from French, means ‘something new or innovative’, ‘ahead of its time’, ‘first of its kind’, etc.

List of Words Used in English Derived from Foreign Languages⁵

Here are some words that are relatively used in English, but are derived from foreign languages:

à la carte

‘on the menu’ (from the menu card); refers to ordering specific dishes rather than a buffet

à propos

regarding or concerning

abattoir

slaughter-house, typically for cattle

adieu

good-bye, to bid farewell

adroit

skillful, clever

ad absurdum

to the point of absurdity

ad infinitum

to infinity.

aide-mémoire

“memory aid”; an object or memorandum to assist in remembering

aficionado

an ardent devotee

aperçu

preview; a first impression; initial insight.

apéritif

a before-meal drink

art nouveau

a style of decoration and architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

attaché

a person attached to an embassy; the word is often used in the form ‘diplomatic attaché)

au contraire

on the contrary.

au courant

up-to-date; well versed with current affairs.

⁵ Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_French_words_and_phrases_used_by_English_speakers; <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001619.html>; <http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0001619.html>; <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/Words/loanwords.html>

au fait

being conversant in or with, or instructed in or with

au revoir!

“See you later!” I

avant-garde

applied to something new, creative innovative; especially in art, music and literature

avec plaisir

“with pleasure”

ballet

a classical type of dance

beaucoup

lots of, in great quantity

bel esprit

literally “fine mind”; a cultivated, highly intelligent person

beau geste

a fine or noble gesture

beau monde

high society.

belle

a beautiful woman or girl

belles-lettres

literally “fine letters

bien fait !

literally “well done”;

blasé

something common, average, unimpressive

bon appétit

enjoy your meal

bon vivant

a person who lives luxuriously and enjoys good food and drink

bon mot

well-chosen word(s), particularly a witty remark

bon vivant

one who enjoys the good life,

bon voyage

literally “good journey”

bona fide

in good faith; genuine

bonjour

“good day”

bonne chance

“good luck”

bourgeois

applies to a person whose beliefs, attitudes, and practices are conventionally middle-class

bric-à-brac

small miscellaneous objects, with little value

brunette

a brown-haired woman

bureau

office. Also means “desk” in French. Think of the word ‘bureaucratic’

café

a coffee shop

café au lait

coffee with milk

canard

a misleading argument, a red herring

carte blanche

to give someone unlimited authority; literally “a white or blank card”

carte de visite

visiting card

carte d’identité

identity card.

c’est bon

“That’s good.”

c’est la mode.

“That’s the fashion.”

c’est magnifique!

“it’s magnificent”

c’est tout

that is everything

Champs-Élysées

Refers to the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, one of the largest boulevards in Paris. Literally “Elysian Fields”

chargé d’affaires

a diplomat left in charge of day to day business at a diplomatic mission

charlatan

a person who is a fraud, a con man

chauffeur

a driver

chef d’œuvre

a masterpiece; the main work of an artist

chez

at the house of

chic

stylish

cliché

an often repeated remark, a stereotype

clique

a small exclusive group of friends; typically a group that plots something

commandant

a commanding officer

comme ci, comme ça

“like this, like that”

communiqué

an official communication

concierge

a housekeeper; a receptionist at a hotel

contretemps

an awkward clash; a delay

coquette

a flirtatious woman

cotte d’armes

a coat of arms.

coup de maître

stroke of the master, master stroke

coup d’œil

a glance

coup de théâtre

a twist in the tale; unexpected dramatic turn of events

couture

fashion

couturier

a fashion designer

crèche

a place where children are left by their parents for short periods under supervision

crème brûlée

a dessert consisting primarily of caramel custard; literally “burnt cream”

crème de la crème

best of the best, “cream of the cream,” used to describe highly skilled people or objects

crème fraîche

literally “fresh cream”

crêpe

a thin pancake eaten as a light meal or dessert

croissant

a crescent-shaped bread

critique

a critical analysis or evaluation of a work

cul-de-sac

a dead-end

de nouveau

again; anew

de règle

according to custom

de rigueur

required or expected

décor

the layout and furnishing of a room

dépôt

a storehouse, typically a transportation hub

déjà vu

literally “already seen”: an impression of having seen or experienced something before

dénouement

the end result

derrière

literally “behind”

détente

easing of tension

divertissement

an amusing diversion; entertainment

dolce vita

literally “the sweet life”; the good life

dossier

a file containing detailed information about a person

douceur de vivre

“sweetness of life”

doyen

the senior member of a group

du jour

literally “of the day”

eau de Cologne

a type of perfume

eau de toilette

literally “grooming water”

eau de vie

literally “water of life”

éclat

brilliance, great skill; as of performance or achievement

élan

a distinctive style

en garde

“be on your guard”

en bloc

as a group

en famille

an action done with one’s family

en passant

in passing

en plein air

literally “in the open air”

enchanté

“to be enchanted”

ennui

boredom

entente

diplomatic agreement or cooperation

entre nous

confidentially; literally “between us”

entrée

literally “entrance”

entrepreneur

a person who undertakes and operates a new enterprise or venture

escargot

a snail

esprit de corps

“spirit of the body”: a feeling of solidarity among members of a group

excusez-moi

excuse me

excusez le mot!

excuse the word

ex post facto

retroactively

extraordinaire

extraordinary

fait accompli

literally “an accomplished fact”; something that has already happened and is thus unlikely to be reversed

faux

false, a mistake

faux pas

“a false step”

femme fatale

literally a “deadly woman”: an attractive woman who seduces and takes advantage of men for her personal goals

fiancé/e

betrothed; lit. a man/woman engaged to be married

flambé

a cooking style in which alcohol is added in a hot pan to create a burst of flames

flambeau

a torch

fleur-de-lis

a stylized-flower heraldic device

force majeure

literally ‘a major force’; an overpowering event, an act of God (often used in Contracts)

garçon

literally “boy” or “male servant”

gauche

tactless

gaucherie

boorishness

gendarme

member of the police

genre

a type or class

Grand Prix

a type of motor racing, literally “Great Prize”

grand projet

literally “large project”

haute couture

high fashion

haute cuisine

upscale gastronomy; literally “high cooking”

hauteur

pride or arrogance

haut monde

fashionable society, literally the “upper world”

hors de combat

out of the fight: prevented from fighting, usually by injury

hors d’œuvre

an appetizer

impasse

a deadlock; situation of no forward movement

j’adore

literally, “I adore”

je suis

I am

joie de vivre

“joy of life/living”

in situ

situated in the original or natural position

laissez-faire

often used within the context of economic policy or political philosophy, meaning “to leave alone”, or not to interfere

laissez-passer

a travel document, a passport

liaison

a close relationship or connection

Liberté,

Liberty

lieu

“instead of,” “in place of”

littérateur

an intellectual

mademoiselle

young unmarried lady

maison

a house

mélange

a mixture

mêlée

a chaotic fight

merci beaucoup

“Thank you very much!”

métier

a field of work

milieu

the social environment

mise en table

table setting

moi

“me”

Mon ami

my friend

monsieur

a gentleman

montage

a group of pictures or scenes

le mot juste

“the just word”; the right word at the right time

motif

a thematic element

mousse

a whipped dessert

noblesse oblige

literally “nobility obliges”; those granted a higher position in life have a duty to extend favours to those in lower positions

nom de guerre

pseudonym; literally “war name”

nom de plume

author’s pseudonym, literally “pen name”

nouveau riche

newly rich

nouvelle cuisine

new style of cooking

objet d’art

a work of art, commonly a painting or sculpture

œuvre

“work,” in the sense of an artist’s work; by extension

oui

yes

d. panache

verve; flamboyance

papier-mâché

a craft medium using paper and paste

par avion

by air mail

par excellence

“by excellence”

parvenu

a social upstart.

passe-partout

a document or key that allows the holder to travel without hindrance from the authorities or enter any location

pastiche

an imitation

peut-être

perhaps, possibly, maybe

pince-nez

literally “pinch nose”, a type of spectacles

prêt-à-porter

“ready to wear”; clothing off the shelf

première dame

“first lady”

prima facie

at first sight or look, something that appears clear and evident

prix fixe

“fixed price”

protégé

a man/woman who receives support from a mentor

quid pro quo

for something; an equal exchange

raison d’être

“reason for being”: justification or purpose of existence

rapport

to be in synch with someone else

rapprochement

the establishment of cordial relations, often used in diplomacy

reconnaissance

to check; to scout

renaissance

meaning ‘rebirth’, a cultural movement in the 14-17th centuries in Europe

reportage

reporting; journalism

répondez s’il vous plaît. (RSVP)

Please reply

reservoir

An artificial lake

sauté

quickly fry in a small amount of oil

savant

a wise or learned person

savoir-faire

done with skill; literally “know how to do”

silhouette

the image of a person

sobriquet

an assumed name, a nickname

soirée

an evening party

sommelier

a wine steward

“soup of the day,” meaning the particular kind of soup offered that day

tête-à-tête

literally “head to head”; an intimate get-together or private conversation

toilette

the process of dressing or grooming

touché

acknowledgment of an effective counterpoint

tour de force

“feat of strength”: a brilliant action or creation

tout le monde

literally “all the world”; everybody

très

very

très beau

very beautiful

vis-à-vis

literally “face to face with”; in comparison to or in relation to

vive**Vive la République!**

Long live the Republic

voilà!

literally “see there”

volte-face

a complete reversal of opinion or position, an about-turn

veni, vidi, vici

I came, I saw, I conquered

vox populi

the voice of the people

Zeitgeist

the thoughts or way of life characteristic of a particular period of time

Summary

This chapter introduced the candidate to words derived from foreign languages and used commonly in English.

As mentioned in the chapter, a knowledge of such words will be useful for answering direct questions based on these as well as comprehending passages given in Reading Comprehension or questions based on Critical Reasoning in the CAT and other B-school entrance examinations.

Practice Exercises—Based on Vocabulary Questions from MBA Entrance Examinations

From CAT 2005

Directions (Q I-IV): Each of the following questions has a paragraph with one italicized word that does not make sense. Choose the most appropriate replacement for that word from the options given below the paragraph.

- I. Intelligent design derives from an early 19th-century explanation of the natural world given by an English clergyman, William Paley. Paley was the popularizer of the famous watchmaker analogy. Proponents of intelligent design are *crupping* Paley's argument with a new gloss from molecular biology.
- (1) destroying (2) testing
(3) resurrecting (4) questioning
- II. Women squat, heads covered, beside huge piles of limp fodder and *blunk* oil lamps, and just about all the cows in the three towns converge upon this spot. Sinners, supplicants and yes, even scallywags hand over a few coins for a crack at redemption and a handful of grass.
- (1) shining (2) bright
(3) sputtering (4) effulgent
- III. It is *klang* to a sensitive traveller who walks through this great town, when he sees the streets, the roads, and cabin doors crowded with beggars, mostly women, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags and importuning every passenger for alms.
- (1) amusing (2) irritating
(3) disgusting (4) distressing
- IV. Or there is the most *fingummy* diplomatic note on record: when Philip of Macedon wrote to the Spartans that, if he came within their borders, he would leave not one stone of their city, they wrote back the one word—"If".

- (1) witty
- (3) simple

- (2) rude
- (4) terse

Answers

- I. Paley started the concept of intelligent design. The *proponents* of it are supporting Paley's argument-this is what proponents means. Hence Proponents cannot *destroying*, *questioning* or *test* Paley's concepts. *Resurrect* means to raise or bring in use again; hence, the correct answer is option 3.
- II. The word that is to be replaced refers to the oil lamps. The context with women squatting with piles of limp fodder etc., indicates that the lamps were not bright, shining or radiant; rather they were dim and almost ready to be extinguished.
Hence, 'sputtering' is the best choice: the correct answer is option 3.
- III. The main reference is to 'the *sensitive* traveler'. He is unlikely to find these scenes as amusing; and his being sensitive, eliminates *disgust* and *irritation*. Distress is therefore most appropriate, since he is sensitive. Hence, the correct answer is option 4.
- IV. Terse means to the point; brief and concise. Option 4 (terse) is the best choice, as the reply was just a single word 'if'. Hence, the correct answer is option 4.

From FMS 2004

Directions (Q 1-6): Each question consists of a sentence which has one or two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Below each sentence are four sets of words, labelled (A) through (D). Choose the word or set of words that when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

1. Her desire for soon became apparent when she adamantly refused to answer questions about her identity or mission.
 - (a) assistance
 - (b) recognition
 - (c) success
 - (d) anonymity
2. After a period of protracted disuse, a muscle will atrophy, both its strength and the ability to perform its former function.
 - (a) regaining
 - (b) sustaining
 - (c) losing
 - (d) insuring
3. The report issued by the committee was completely extolling in great detail the plan's strengths but failing to mention its
 - (a) one-sided ... shortcomings
 - (b) unbiased ... weaknesses
 - (c) comprehensive ... approval
 - (d) printed ... good points
4. There are many dialects of English with radically different pronunciations of the same word, but the spelling of these words is
 - (a) inconsistent
 - (b) abbreviated
 - (c) shortened
 - (d) uniform
5. The plot of the movie was extremely complicated and included many minor characters to the central events.
 - (a) momentous
 - (b) tangential
 - (c) contemporary
 - (d) impervious
6. In order to the deadline for submitting the research paper, the student tried to additional time from the professor.
 - (a) extend ... wheedle
 - (b) accelerate ... obtain
 - (c) postpone ... forego
 - (d) conceal ... procure

Answers

- (d) Since she refused to answer questions, she obviously did not want recognition or success. She wished to remain anonymous i.e., without recognition. Hence (d)
- (c) Since the muscle atrophies or decays, it shall lose its strength and vitality.
- (a) It is mentioned that the report only extols or praises the plans in great detail. Hence, the report was one-sided and failed to mention the other side i.e., the shortcomings.
- (d) The statement says that while the pronunciation is different, the spellings are similar or uniform. Hence (d)
- (b) The minor characters were not important with respect to the main event, as is clear from the word 'minor'. Hence, we can state that these minor characters were 'tangential' or away from the central part
- (a) Since the student wanted extra time, he/she would need to wheedle or cajole the professor into granting the extra time

From FMS 2004

Directions: In each of the following questions, there is a related pair of words or phrases in capital letters. Four pairs of words or phrases follow each capitalized pair. Select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair.

- I. LUGUBRIOUS: SORROWFUL

(a) Euphoric: Cheerful	(b) Credible: Incredible
(c) Frenzied: Excited	(d) Lustrous: Luscious
- II. PRIMEVAL: MEDIEVAL

(a) Snow: Ice	(b) Evolution: Revelation
(c) Dinosaur: Dragon	(d) Thorn: Rose
- III. REMORSE: ABSOLUTION

(a) Disdain: Corruption	(b) Banter: Passion
(c) Serious: Humour	(d) Evasion: Suspicion
- IV. ZEPHYR: GALE

(a) Death: Sickness	(b) Trickle: Torrent
(c) Imprint: Emboss	(d) Fossil: Aged
- V. IMPLICATE: INCRIMINATION

(a) Perjury: Fraud	(b) Exonerate: Acquittal
(c) Sleaze: Malpractice	(d) Embezzlement: Charged

Answers

- I. (c) Lugubrious and sorrowful are synonyms. So are the two words expressed in (c), the correct option.
The words in option (b) are antonyms, while those in (d) are not related. In (a), there is a difference in the degree
- II. (c) The medieval period succeeded the primeval one. Similarly, the dragon was heard of in a period well after dinosaurs in terms of time.
- III. (d) Remorse may lead to absolution; similarly, if you try to evade something, it could lead to your being suspected
- IV. (b) A zephyr is a gentle breeze, while a gale is a big storm. The relationship is one of degrees. Hence option (b) is correct—a trickle is a small water flow, while a torrent is a rapid, gushing flow of water
- V. (b) Similar words—as expressed in option (b)

Directions (Q I-V): Each question consists of sentences, which have one or two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Below each sentence are four numbered words or sets of words, labelled (A) through (D). Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

- I. New concerns about growing religious tension in northern India were this week after at least fifty people were killed and hundreds injured or arrested in rioting between Hindus and Muslims.
 - (a) invalidated
 - (b) restrained
 - (c) fuelled
 - (d) lessened
- II. To the dismay of the student body, the school prefect was berated by the principal at a school assembly.
 - (a) ignominiously
 - (b) inconspicuously
 - (c) fortuitously
 - (d) magnanimously
- III. A statement is an comparison; it does not compare things explicitly, but suggests, a likeness between them.
 - (a) sarcastic ... unfair
 - (b) blatant ... overt
 - (c) metaphorical ... implied
 - (d) sanguine ... inherent
- IV. If you are seeking that will resolve all our ailments, you are undertaking an impossible task.
 - (a) a precedent
 - (b) a panacea
 - (c) a contrivance
 - (d) a direction
- V. Faced with these massive changes, the government keeps its own counsel; although generally benevolent, it has always been regime.
 - (a) an unpredicable
 - (b) a reticent
 - (c) a sanguine
 - (d) an indifferent

Answers

- I. (c) As people were killed, clearly the concerns would have been increased or fuelled.
- II. (a) The student body was unhappy that the prefect was berated i.e., scolded. Hence the word ignominious is appropriate.
- III. (c) A metaphor is an indirect or implied comparison (while a 'similie' is a direct comparison). Hence, it does not compare things explicitly, but only suggests something common.
- IV. (b) A panacea is a 'cure all', something that solves all problems.
- V. (b) Since it has been stated that the government keeps its own counsel, the word 'reticent' (not saying much/reserved) is appropriate

From CAT 2001

Directions (Q 1-5): For the word given at the top, match the dictionary definitions (A, B, C, D) with their corresponding usage given (E, F, G, H). Out of the four possibilities given below select the one that has all the definitions and their usages correctly matched.

1. Exceed

Dictionary Definition

- A. To extend outside of or enlarge beyond used chiefly in strictly physical relations
- B. To be greater than or superior to
- C. Be beyond the comprehension of
- D. To go beyond a limit set by (as an authority or privilege)

Usage

- E. The mercy of god exceeds our finite minds.
 F. Their accomplishments exceeded our expectation.
 G. He exceed his authority when he paid his brother's gambling debts with money from the trust.
 H. If this rain keeps up, the river will exceed its banks by morning.
- (a) A—H B—F C—E D—G (b) A—H B—E C—F D—G
 (c) A—G B—F C—E D—H (d) A—F B—G C—H D—E

2. Infer

Dictionary Definition

- A. To derive by reasoning or implication
 B. To surmise
 C. To point out
 D. To hint

Usage

- E. We see smoke and infer fire.
 F. Given some utterance, a listener may infer from it things which the utterer never implied.
 G. I waited all day to meet him, from this you can infer my zeal to see him.
 H. She did not take part in the debate except to ask a question inferring that she was not interested in the debate.
- (a) A—G B—H C—E D—F (b) A—F B—H C—E D—G
 (c) A—H B—G C—F D—E (d) A—E B—F C—G D—H

3. Mellow

Dictionary Definition

- A. Adequately and properly ages so as to be free of harshness
 B. Freed from the rashness of youth
 C. Of soft and loamy consistency
 D. Rich and full but free from stridency

Usage

- E. He has mellowed with age.
 F. The tones of the old violin were mellow.
 G. Some wines are mellow.
 H. Mellow soil is found in the Gangetic plains.
- (a) A—E B—G C—F D—H (b) A—E B—F C—G D—H
 (c) A—G B—E C—H D—F (d) A—H B—G C—F D—E

4. Relief

Dictionary Definition

- A. Removal or lightening of something distressing
 B. Aid in the form of necessities for the indigent
 C. Diversion
 D. Release from the performance of duty

Usage

- E. A ceremony follows the relief of a sentry after the morning shift.
 F. It was a relief to take off the tight shoes.
 G. The only relief I get is by playing cards.
 H. Disaster relief was offered to the victims.
- (a) A—F B—H C—E D—G (b) A—F B—H C—G D—E
 (c) A—H B—F C—G D—E (d) A—G B—E C—H D—F

5. Purge

Dictionary Definition

- A. Remove a stigma from the name of
- B. Make clean by removing whatever is superfluous, foreign
- C. Get rid of
- D. To cause evacuation of

Usage

- E. The opposition was purged after the coup.
- F. The committee heard his attempt to purge himself of a charge of heresy.
- G. Drugs that purge the bowels are often bad for the brain.
- H. It is recommended to purge water by distillation.

- (a) A—E B—G C—F D—H
- (b) A—F B—E C—H D—G
- (c) A—H B—F C—G D—E
- (d) A—F B—H C—E D—G

Answers

- 1. (b)
- 2. (d)
- 3. (c)
- 4. (b)
- 5. (d)

From CAT 2001

Each of the words below, a contextual usage is provided. Pick the word from the alternatives given that is most appropriate in the given context.

- I. Disuse: Some words fall into disuse as technology makes objects obsolete.
 - (a) Unused
 - (b) Outdated
 - (c) Misuse
 - (d) Obsolescence
- II. Facetious: When I suggested that war is a method of controlling population, my father remarked that I was being facetious.
 - (a) Jovian
 - (b) Jovial
 - (c) Jocular
 - (d) Joking
- III. Specious: A specious argument is not simply a false one but one that has the ring of truth.
 - (a) Deceitful
 - (b) Fallacious
 - (c) Credible
 - (d) Deceptive
- IV. Parsimonious: The evidence was constructed from very parsimonious scraps of information.
 - (a) Frugal
 - (b) Penurious
 - (c) Thrifty
 - (d) Altruistic
- V. Obviate: The new mass transit system may obviate the need for the use of personal cars:
 - (a) Prevent
 - (b) Forestall
 - (c) Preclude
 - (d) Bolster

Answers

- I. (a) Some words stop being used, hence ‘
- II. (d) Facetious means to be casual, not serious; hence ‘joking’
- III. (d) Something that is not true (false), but appears to be true; hence ‘deceptive’ is appropriate as you may think it is true, while it is not so.
- IV. (a) Very less, hence ‘frugal’.
- V. may decrease the need for the cars, hence (a)

Directions (Q I-V): In each of the following sentences, parts of the sentence are left blank. Beneath each sentence, four different ways of completing the sentence are indicated. Choose the best alternative from among the four.

- I. But _____ are now regularly written to describe well-established practices, organizations and institutions, not all of which seem to be _____ away.
 - (a) reports, withering
 - (b) stories, trading
 - (c) books, dying
 - (d) obituaries, fading
- II. The Darwin who _____ is most remarkable for the way in which he _____ the attributes of the world class thinker and head of the household.
 - (a) comes, figures
 - (b) arises, adds
 - (c) emerges, combines
 - (d) appeared, combines
- III. Since her face was free of _____ there was no way to _____ if she appreciated what had happened.
 - (a) make-up, realise
 - (b) expression, ascertain
 - (c) emotion, diagnose
 - (d) scars, understand
- IV. In this context, the _____ of the British labour movement is particularly _____.
 - (a) affair, weird
 - (b) activity, moving
 - (c) experience, significant
 - (d) atmosphere, gloomy
- V. Indian intellectuals may boast, if they are so inclined, of being _____ to the most elitist among the intellectual _____ of the world.
 - (a) subordinate, traditions
 - (b) heirs, cliques
 - (c) ancestors, societies
 - (d) heir, traditions

Answers

- I. (a) Note carefully the key words ‘well-established’ (which refers to the practices, organizations and institutions) and ‘not all of which’. Hence it appears that not all of these established practices are declining or withering away; so option (a) is appropriate.
- II. (c) Darwin cannot come now, since he is no longer alive. He cannot appear either. However, he can emerge or arise. Since we are referring in the second part of the sentence to two distinct entities i.e., ‘the world class thinker’ and the ‘head of the household’; what is remarkable is the way that Darwin combines the attributes of these two entities. Hence option (c) is appropriate.
- III. (b) The second part of the sentence states that “there was no way to _____ if she appreciated what had happened”. Hence we can infer that option (b) or (c) would fit. Out of the two, the word ‘ascertain’ is more appropriate than ‘diagnose’ to fill the second blank. Hence option (b) is correct.
- IV. (c) the most appropriate choice. The ‘experience’ is most ‘significant’ in the context.
- V. (d) Indian intellectuals cannot boast is they are subordinates. Ancestors also cannot boast, we can boast about the achievements of our ancestors. Hence the word ‘heir’ (in singular) is most appropriate along with ‘traditions’ for the second blank.

CAT 2004

Directions (Q I-IV): Fill up the blanks, in the two passages below with most appropriate word from the options given for each blank.

At that time the white house was as serene as a resort hotel out of season. The corridors were [I]. In the various offices, [II] grey men in waistcoats talked to one another in low-pitched voices. The only

colour, or choler, curiously enough, was provided by President Eisenhower himself. Apparently, his [III] was easily set off; he scowled when he [IV] the corridors.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| I. | 1. striking | 2. hollow |
| | 3. empty | 4. white |
| II. | 1. quiet | 2. faded |
| | 3. loud | 4. stentorian |
| III. | 1. laughter | 2. curiously |
| | 3. humour | 4. temper |
| IV. | 1. paced | 2. strolled |
| | 3. stormed | 4. prowled |

Answers

- (3) Since we are told that it was ‘out of season’, the corridors are likely to be empty.
- (1) This choice is appropriate because the men were talking in low-pitched voices. ‘Stentorian’ means having a loud or booming voice and does not go with the tone of the statements.
- (4) The usage of the word ‘choler’ (which means anger or irritability) indicates that his temper was easily set off.
- (1) If his temper had been on display, he would not stroll down the corridors, since a stroll is a leisurely walk. Prowling is done by an animal looking for something and is inappropriate for a President! One cannot say ‘storm a corridor’, since this is incorrect usage of grammar. The word ‘pace’ is appropriate here—to walk rapidly up and down.

Directions (Q I to III): In each question, the word at the top of the table is used in four different ways, numbered 1 to 4. Choose the options in which the usage of the word is **INCORRECT** or **INAPPROPRIATE**.

I. BOLT

- The shopkeeper showed us a bolt of fine silk.
- As he could not move, he made a bolt for the gate.
- Could you please bolt the door?
- The thief was arrested before he could bolt from the scene of the crime.

II. FALLOUT

- Nagasaki suffered from the fallout of nuclear radiation.
- People believed that the political fallout of the scandal would be insignificant.
- Who can predict the environmental fallout of the WTO agreements?
- The headmaster could not understand the fallout of several of his good students at the public examination.

III. PASSING

- She did not have passing marks in mathematics.
- The mad woman was cursing everybody passing her on the road.
- At the birthday party all the children enjoyed a game of passing the parcel.
- A passing taxi was stopped to rush the accident victims to the hospital.

Answers

- (2) Should have been—‘he bolted for the gate’.
- (4) The headmaster could not understand the failure of his students.
- (4) The usage of ‘passing’ is redundant here.

XAT 2006

Directions: Questions I is based on the passage below.

Enterprises in the throes of discovery have an aura of magic around them. In the world of software this becomes many-splendoured with a certain joie de vivre, quite distinct from what obtains elsewhere: a sense of wonderment, surprise and eventual delight; a coming within reach of power and profits; possibly through a little tweak in technology with a touch of novelty, opening up vistas that had always seemed so near yet so far. In professional management terms, this waving of the wizard's wand, as it were, is nothing more than an effective recovery of strategy from a technological paradigm. This book is about exploring the journey from rules and norms to solutions, specific solutions prized out of the anoured covers of sector-specific industrial structures and often resources determined mindsets that Indian software' firms seems to have mastered. Originality is the fountainhead of such a strategy. It then progresses into the realms of the economics of innovation to give itself a solid foundation from where it becomes possible to retrieve a new language of strategy and of innovation. In this high- natural yet dynamic world, the profit motive, backed by ingenuity, lend support to many of the arguments that evolve in this flow of events. The Indian software experience is a unique demonstration of how this process—the coalescing of the economics of surprise and novelty and the economics of knowledge works. This forms the basics of the strategy theory.

There are several grand theories of even grander traditions: the industrial organization approach, including several kinds of structure-conduct performance assertions and game theoretic models, evolutionary theories and corresponding case' studies, resource-based approaches or several intermediate variants of competency based ideas that provide us with a rich yet incomplete landscape. This landscape is perhaps oblivious of certain traditions provided by theory; the rich repertoire bequeathed by Marshall and Shackle is a case in point, as they are immensely rewarding. Each important traditions or theory has made global assertions and has proved to be prescriptive or normative. Some authors have looked back at Marshall and a handful at Shackle. Fewer still reconsidered certain rich -traditions of thinking on strategy. This book does not attempt to issue prescriptive or normative guidelines purely because, the global canvass is too large and often beyond the capacity of intelligent comprehension. A strategist acts on a local scale following what Simon has generally observed. Pragmatism emerges as an important guide-and achieving the surprise element is above all the key to definitive strategy. While this strategy evolves from governance, it also influences governance at every stage. Handicapped by a paucity of resources, the strategist must dovetail the two to increase immensely the scope of governance not only over what the incumbent possesses, but also over a much larger group of firms not under its direct control. This need not necessarily be explained by another grand theory, with globally prescriptive assertions or powers of predictions. Surprise must stand beyond predictability. 'It must govern to earn windfall profit. Strategy thus cannot be prescribed; it would comprise piecemeal engineering. This is what this book explains.

- I. From the passage which would be an adequate characterization of the author?
- A. Positivist
 - B. Pragmatist
 - C. Empiricist
 - D. Cynical

Answers

I (B) The word 'pragmatic' means something that is 'relevant', 'realistic' or 'practical' and is appropriate here. Look at the lines "Pragmatism emerges as an important guide-and achieving the surprise element is above all the key to definitive strategy."

FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

From CAT 2000

Directions (Q I to V): In each of the following sentences, parts of the sentence are left blank. Beneath each sentence, four different ways of completing the sentence are indicated. Choose the best alternative from among the four.

- I. Though one eye is kept firmly on the _____, the company now also promotes _____ contemporary art.
 - (1) present, experimental
 - (2) future, popular
 - (3) present, popular
 - (4) market, popular
- II. The law prohibits a person from felling a sandalwood tree, even if it grows on one's own land, without prior permission from the government. As poor people cannot deal with the government, this legal provision leads to a rip-roaring business for _____, who care neither for the _____, nor for the trees.
 - (1) middlemen, rich
 - (2) the government, poor
 - (3) touts, rich
 - (4) touts, poor
- III. It will take some time for many South Koreans to _____ the conflicting images of North Korea, let alone _____ to what to make of their northern cousins.
 - (1) reconcile, decide
 - (2) understand, clarify
 - (3) make out, decide
 - (4) reconcile, understand
- IV. In these bleak and depressing times of _____ prices, non-performing governments and _____ crime rates, Sourav Ganguly has given us, Indians, a lot to cheer about.
 - (1) escalating, increasing
 - (2) spiralling, booming
 - (3) spiralling, soaring
 - (4) ascending, debilitating
- V. The manners and of the nouveau riche is a recurrent in the literature.
 - (1) style, motif
 - (2) morals, story
 - (3) wealth, theme
 - (4) morals, theme

From CAT 2008

Directions (Q I to IV): Each of the following questions has a sentence with two blanks. Given below each question are five pairs of words. Choose the pair that best completes the sentence.

- I. The genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda, apart from being mis-described in the most sinister and _____ manner as 'ethnic cleansing', were also blamed, in further hand-washing rhetoric, on something dark and interior to _____ and perpetrators alike.
 - (1) innovative; communicator
 - (2) enchanting; leaders
 - (3) disingenuous; victims
 - (4) exigent; exploiters
 - (5) tragic; sufferers
- II. As navigators, calendar makers, and other _____ of the night sky accumulated evidence to the contrary, ancient astronomers were forced to _____ that certain bodies might move in circles about points, which in turn moved in circles about the earth.
 - (1) scrutinizers; believe
 - (2) observers; agree
 - (3) scrutinizers; suggest
 - (4) observers; concede
 - (5) students; conclude

- III. Every human being, after the first few days of his life, is a product of two factors; on the one hand, there is his _____ endowment; and on the other hand, there is the effect of environment, including _____.
- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) constitutional; weather | (2) congenital; education |
| (3) personal; climate | (4) economic; learning |
| (5) genetic; pedagogy | |
- IV. Exhaustion of natural resources, destruction of individual initiative by governments, control over men's minds by central _____ of education and propaganda are some of the major evils which appear to be on the increase as a result of the impact of science upon minds suited by _____ to an earlier kind of world.
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) tenets; fixation | (2) aspects; inhibitions |
| (3) institutions; inhibitions | (4) organs; tradition |
| (5) departments; repulsion | |

Directions (Q V to VIII): In each of the questions a word has been used in sentences in five different ways. Choose the option corresponding to the sentence in which the usage of the word is incorrect or inappropriate.

V. **Run**

- (1) I must run fast to catch up with him.
- (2) Our team scored a goal against the run of play.
- (3) You can't run over him like that.
- (4) The newly released book is enjoying a popular run.
- (5) This film is a run-of-the-mill production.

VI. **Round**

- (1) The police fired a round of tear gas shells.
- (2) The shop is located round the corner.
- (3) We took a ride on the merry-go-round.
- (4) The doctor is on a hospital round.
- (5) I shall proceed further only after you come around to admitting it.

VII. **Buckle**

- (1) After the long hike our knees were beginning to buckle.
- (2) The horse suddenly broke into a buckle.
- (3) The accused did not buckle under police interrogation.
- (4) Sometimes, an earthquake can make a bridge buckle.
- (5) People should learn to buckle up as soon as they get into the car.

VIII. **File**

- (1) You will find the paper in the file under C.
- (2) I need to file an insurance claim.
- (3) The cadets were marching in a single file.
- (4) File your nails before you apply nail polish.
- (5) When the parade was on, a soldier broke th

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Word List with the Roots of Words and Their Origins

abase

To lower; degrade; to 'make base'

abash

embarrass

abate

Root 'ab': away/separate/from
subside or moderate

abbreviate

Root 'ab': away/separate/from
shorten

abdicate

Root 'ab': away/separate/from
renounce; give up (especially a position or responsibility)

aberrant

Root 'ab': away/separate/from
abnormal or deviant

aberration

Root 'ab': away/separate/from
deviation from the normal; mental disorder

abet

assist usually in doing something wrong; encourage

abeyance

Root 'ab': away/separate/from
suspended action

abhor

Root 'ab': away/separate/from
detest; hate

abide

dwelt; abide by: comply with; put up with; tolerate; E.g., abide by the rules; E.g., I can't abide rude people.

abject

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

(of a condition) wretched; as low as possible; lacking pride; very humble; showing lack of self-respect; E.g., abject apology

abjure

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

To give up; to renounce

ablution

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

Washing oneself

abnegation

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

renunciation; self-sacrifice; self-abnegation

abode

Place of residence; dwelling place; home

abolish

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

cancel; put an end to

abominable

detestable; extremely unpleasant

abominate

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

loathe; hate

aboriginal

primitive; native

abortive

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

Incomplete; unsuccessful; fruitless

abrasive

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

To grind or rub

abridge

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

condense or shorten

abrogate

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

To cancel; abolish

abscission

cutting off; separation

abscond

To run away; hide

absolute

complete; total

absolve

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

pardon

abstain

refrain; withhold from participation; intentionally not use one's vote;

abstemious

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

sparing in eating and drinking; temperate

abstinence

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

Exercise restraint

abstract

Root 'ab': away/separate/from

not defined; not concrete;

abstruse

obscure; difficult to understand

abusive

insulting;

abut

border upon; adjoin

abysmal

Without a base; bottomless

abyss

A chasm; vast bottomless pit

academic

related to a school; not practical or directly useful

accede

agree

accelerate

To increase speed

accessible

approachable; obtainable

accessory

additional object; useful but not essential thing

acclaim

applaud; praise; greet with great approval; announce with great approval; E.g., The new drug has been acclaimed as the most important discoveries for years; N: strong expression of approval and praise

acclimate

adjust to climate or environment; adapt

acclivity

sharp upslope of a hill; OP. declivity

accolade

praise or approve

accommodate

Adjust; make enough space for

accomplice

A partner, typically in crime

accord

An agreement

accost

approach and speak first to a person

accretion

increase in size by gradual addition;

accrue

accumulate over time

acerbity

bitterness of speech and temper

acidulous

Biting; sharp; caustic

acknowledge

recognize; admit

acme

Peak; highest point

acne

skin disease (on the face)

acoustics

science of sound; quality that makes a room easy or hard to hear in

acquiesce

assent; agree passively; comply without protest

acquittal

To free from a charge or accusation;

acrid

Bitter; sharp

acrimonious

stinging; caustic; bitter in words or manner; N. acrimony: bitter ill-natured animosity in speech or behavior

acrophobia

fear of heights

actuarial

calculating; pertaining to insurance statistics

actuary

someone who advises insurance companies

actuate

motivate; activate; cause to act

acuity

sharpness (of mind or senses of sight or hearing)

acumen

mental keenness; sharpness of judgment; ability to judge quickly and well

acute

sharp; quickly perceptive;

adage

wise saying; proverb

adamant

hard; inflexible

adapt

Root 'ad': to/toward

make or become suitable for a specific use; alter; modify

addendum

Root 'ad': to/toward

addition; appendix to book; something that is added (as at the end of a speech or book)

addiction

Root 'ad': to/toward

compulsive habitual need

addle

to confuse; muddle;

address

Root 'ad': to/toward

direct a speech towards; speak to; deal with or discuss; direct one's efforts or attention to; make with a destination; N: formal speech

adept

Root 'ad': to/toward

expert at; very skilled

adhere

Root 'ad': to/toward

To stick

adherent

Root 'ad': to/toward

supporter; follower

adjacent

Root 'ad': to/toward

adjoining; neighbouring; to the side of

adjoin

Root 'ad': to/toward

be next to

adjourn

Root 'ad': to/toward

suspend until a later time; move from one place to another

adjunct

Root 'ad': to/toward

something attached to but holding an inferior position

adjuration

solemn urging; V. adjure: entreat earnestly; enjoin solemnly

adjutant

staff officer assisting the commander; assistant

admonish

warn or speak to with gentle disapproval; reprove

adore

Root 'ad': to/toward

love deeply

adorn

Root 'ad': to/toward

decorate

adroit

skilful

adulation

Root 'ad': to/toward

flattery; admiration that is more than is necessary or deserved

adulterate

Root 'ad': to/toward

make impure or of poorer quality by adding inferior substances

advent

Root 'ad': to/toward

arrival

adventitious

accidental; casual; happening by chance

adversary

opponent; enemy

adverse

unfavourable; hostile

adversity

Hardships or difficulties

advert

Root 'ad': to/toward

Refer to

advocacy

Root 'ad': to/toward

support; active pleading on behalf of someone or something

advocate

Root 'ad': to/toward

speak in favor of;

egis

protection;

aesthetic

artistic;

affable

easily approachable; easy to talk to; warmly friendly

affected

artificial; pretended

affidavit

written statement made under oath

affiliation

joining; associating with

affinity

Liking; feeling of kinship; similarity

affirmation

positive assertion; confirmation; solemn pledge

affliction

state of distress

affluence

abundance; wealth

affront

insult; act of disrespect

afterlife

life after death; later part of one's life

agape

Open-mouthed

agenda

items of business at a meeting

agglomeration

A collection of different objects;

aggrandize

make greater; increase in power

aggregate

To bring together; to add up

aghast

filled with great surprise or fear; horrified

agility

nimbleness; ability to move quickly

agitate

To stir up or make turbulent

agnostic

Root 'gnos': to know

one who is sceptical; who doubts

agog

highly excited; intensely curious

agrarian

pertaining to land or its cultivation; E.g., agrarian reform

airy

High; lofty; unreal

alacrity

promptness

alchemy

medieval chemistry-turning base metals into gold

alcove

A recess

alias

an assumed name esp. by a criminal (usually to mislead people); ADV. alias

alienate

make unfriendly or hostile; estrange; separate; change the ownership of

alimony

payments made regularly to an ex-spouse after divorce

allay

calm; pacify

allege

state without proof

allegiance

loyalty

allegory

story, play, or picture in which characters are used as symbols; fable

alleviate

To soothe or relieve

alliteration

repetition of the first syllable

allocate

assign; set apart for a particular purpose

alloy

mixture as of metals

allude

refer indirectly

allure

to attract; to charm

alluvial

deposits of mud left by rivers or running water

alms

money or goods given to the poor

aloft

upward; high up in the air

aloof

To be reserved; stand apart;

altercation

noisy quarrel

altruistic

concerned for others

amalgam

combination of different things; a mixture

amalgamate

to combine; to bring together

amass

collect (gradually, in a very large amount)

amazon

A female warrior

ambidextrous

Root 'ambi': both/around

capable of using both hands with equal ease

ambience

Root 'ambi': both/around

environment; atmosphere;

ambiguous

Root 'ambi': both/around

Not clear or doubtful; not defined

ambivalence

Root 'ambi': both/around

the state of having contradictory or conflicting emotional attitudes or opinions

amble

Root 'ambi': both/around

walking at an easy unhurried pace;

ambrosia

food of the gods

ambulatory

Root 'ambi': both/around
able to walk

ambush

act of lying in wait to attack by surprise; sudden attack made from a concealed position; E.g., lie in ambush; V.

ameliorate

improve

amenable

obedient; compliant;

amend

correct; change ; generally for the better

amenities

convenient features that helps to make life pleasant; social courtesies

amiable

Friendly; agreeable; lovable; friendly

amicable

peaceful; friendly

amiss

Something out of place or wrong; faulty

amity

friendship; peaceful relationship as between nations

amnesia

loss of memory

amnesty

pardon (allowed by government to political criminals)

amok/amuck

in a state of anger; chaos

amoral

Without morals; having no understanding of right and wrong

amorous

love;

amorphous

Not defined or with a definite position

amphibian

able to live both on land and in water; N.

amphitheatre

oval building with tiers of seats;

ample

enough; abundant; spacious; large in size;

amplify

Increase; expand; broaden

amputate

cut off a part of the body

amulet

charm; talisman; an object worn believed to protect against evil, bad luck

anachronism

an error involving time in a story; something or someone misplaced in time; ADJ. anachronistic

analgesia

condition of being unable to feel pain

analgesic

causing relief from pain;

analogous

comparable; similar

analogy

similarity; parallelism; comparing two similar things

anarchist

person who seeks to overturn the established government; advocate of abolishing authority

anarchy

state of chaos and disorder

anathema

solemn curse; someone or something regarded as a curse; V. anathematize

ancestry

family descent

anchor

To secure or fasten firmly

ancillary

Root 'an': not/absence of

serving as an aid or accessory; not main

anecdote

Root 'an': not/absence of

short story of an amusing or interesting occurrence not generally known

anaemia

Root 'an': not/absence of

condition in which blood lacks red corpuscles;

anaesthetic

Root 'an': not/absence of

substance that removes sensation; used in operations

anguish

Root 'an': not/absence of

acute pain; extreme suffering

angular

Root 'an': not/absence of

sharp-cornered; having an angle; not rounded

animadversion

critical remark; V. animadvert: comment critically with disapproval

animated

lively; spirited

animosity

Root 'an': not/absence of

active enmity

animus

Root 'an': not/absence of

hostile feeling or intent; animosity; hostility; disposition

annals

records arranged in yearly parts; history

anneal

reduce brittleness and improve toughness by heating and cooling (metal or glass)

annexure

attachment

annihilate

Root 'an': not/absence of

destroy

annotate

comment; make explanatory notes

annuity

Root 'anni': year

yearly allowance

annul

Root 'an': not/absence of

make void

anodyne

drug that relieves pain or trouble; opiate; ADJ. E.g., anodyne statement

anoint

consecrate; put oil on (in a religious ceremony)

anomalous

Root 'an': not/absence of

abnormal; irregular

anomaly

Root 'an': not/absence of

irregularity

anonymity

Root 'an': not/absence of

state of being nameless; anonymousness; ADJ. anonymous

antagonism

Root 'anti': against

hostility; active opposition; V. antagonize: cause to become an enemy;

antecede

Root 'ante': before

precede

antecedents

Root 'ante': before

preceding events that influence what comes later; ancestors or early background

antediluvian

Root 'ante': before

antiquated; extremely ancient

anthem

song of praise or patriotism; E.g., national anthem

anthology

book of literary selections by various authors; CF. omnibus

anthropoid

Root 'anthrop': man

manlike; resembling a human being; N.

anthropologist

Root 'anthrop': man
student of the history and science of humankind

anthropomorphic

Root 'anthrop': man
having human form or characteristics

anticlimax

Root 'anti': against
letdown in thought or emotion; something unexciting, ordinary, or disappointing coming after something important or exciting

antidote

Root 'anti': against
remedy to counteract a poison or disease;

antipathy

Root 'anti': against
aversion; dislike or opposition

antiquated

obsolete; old-fashioned; outdated

antique

made in an earlier period and usu. valuable;

antiquity

Root 'anti': against
quality of being very old; ancient times;

antiseptic

Root 'anti': against
something that prevents infection in a wound

antithesis

Root 'anti': against
contrast; direct opposite of or to;

antler

bony growth on the head of a deer

anvil

iron block used in hammering out metals

apathy

lack of caring; indifference; lack of concern or interest in important matters

ape

imitate or mimic (a person's behavior or manner)

aperture

opening; hole; adjustable opening in a camera that limits the amount of light

apex

tip; summit; climax; highest point

aphasia

loss of speech due to injury or illness

aphorism

pithy maxim or saying; ADJ. aphoristic

apiarist

person who keeps bees

apiary

a place where bees are kept

apiculture

bee-keeping

aplomb

poise; composure in difficult situations; assurance; self-confidence

apocalyptic

prophetic; pertaining to revelations especially of disaster; N. apocalypse

apocryphal

(of a story) widely believed but untrue

apogee

highest point; the point farthest from the earth; OP. perigee

apolitical

having an aversion or lack of concern for political affairs

apologist

one who writes in defense of a cause or institution; N. apologia

apoplexy

stroke; loss of consciousness caused by too much blood in the brain

apostate

one who abandons his religious faith or political beliefs

apothecary

druggist; pharmacist

apothegm(apophthegm)

pithy, compact saying

apotheosis

elevation to godhood; an ideal example of something

apall

dismay; shock deeply

apparent

evident; easily seen or understood; appearing as such; E.g., apparent improvement

apparition

ghost; phantom

appease

pacify or soothe; E.g., appease a crying baby; N. appeasement

appellation

name; title

append

attach

application

diligent attention; diligence; V. apply oneself

apposite

appropriate; fitting

appraise

estimate value of; N. appraisal

appreciate

be thankful for; increase in worth; be thoroughly conscious of; ADJ. appreciable: enough to be felt; E.g., appreciable difference

apprehend

arrest (a criminal); dread; perceive; N. apprehension

apprehensive

fearful; discerning

apprise

inform

approbation

approval

appropriate

acquire; take possession of for one's own use without permission; set aside for a particular purpose; allocate; CF. misappropriate

appurtenances

subordinate possessions; something added to a more important thing

apropos

with reference to; regarding;

aptitude

fitness; talent

aquiline

curved; hooked; of or like an eagle; E.g., aquiline nose

arable

fit for growing crops; E.g., arable land

arbitrator

person with power to decide a matter in dispute; judge who is in a position to make influential judgments;

arbitrary

Without procedure or method; capricious; random

arbitrate

act as judge (at the request of both sides)

arboreal

of or living in trees

arboretum

place where different trees and shrubs are studied and exhibited

arcade

a covered passageway

arcane

secret; mysterious

archaeology

study of artifacts and relics of early mankind

archaic

antiquated; no longer used; belonging to the past; N.

archetype

The best example; a prototype

archipelago

group of islands

archives

public records; place where public records are kept

ardour

With passion

arduous

hard; strenuous; E.g., arduous work

argot

slang; speech spoken by only a small group of people

aria

operatic solo; a song sung by one person in an opera or oratorio

arid

(of land) dry; barren; unproductive

aristocracy

hereditary nobility; privileged class; government by nobility; N. aristocrat

armada

fleet of warships

aromatic

fragrant; having a sweet smell; N. aroma: strong pleasant smell

arraign

charge in court; indict

array

marshal; draw up in order; arrange in order; clothe splendidly; adorn; N: fine clothes; ordered group; E.g., in battle array

arrears

being in debt; money that should have been paid; work that should have been done

arrhythmic

lacking rhythm or regularity; N. arrhythmia

arrogance

pride; haughtiness

arsenal

storage place for military equipment

artery

blood-vessel;

artful

exhibiting art or skill; deceitful; cunning;

articulate

effective; distinct; expressing ideas clearly

artefacts

object made by human beings, typically old ones

artifice

deception; trickery

artisan

a manually skilled worker

artless

without guile; open and honest

ascendancy

controlling influence; position of controlling influence; CF. in the ascendant

ascertain

find out for certain; make certain

ascetic

practicing self-denial; avoiding physical pleasures and comforts; austere;

ascribe

refer; attribute; assign

aseptic

preventing infection; having a cleansing effect

ashen

Colour of ash i.e., pale grey

asinine

foolish

askance

with a sideways or indirect look

askew

Not straight; crookedly; slanted

asperity

sharpness; roughness; severity (of temper or weather); E.g., asperities of a Russian winter

aspersion

slandorous remark; E.g., cast aspersions on

aspirant

seeker after position or status

aspire

seek to attain (position or status); long for; E.g., aspire to become president; E.g., aspire to/after the leadership

assail

assault

assay

analyze or evaluate

assent

agree; accept; N. assessment

assert

Firmly declare

assiduous

diligent

assimilate

absorb; understand completely

assuage

To soothe, calm

assumption

something taken for granted; the taking over or taking possession of; E.g., her assumption of power; V. assume

assurance

firm statement that something is certainly true; promise or pledge; certainty; confidence in one's own ability; self-confidence;

asteroid

small planet

astigmatism

eye defect which prevents proper focus; OP. stigmatism

astral

relating to the stars

ast stringent

binding; causing contraction (stopping bleeding); harsh or severe; stringent;

astronomical

enormously large or extensive

astute

Clever; shrewd

asunder

Split into parts

asylum

place of refuge or shelter; protection (religious or political)

asymmetric

not identical on both sides of a dividing central line

atavism

resemblance to remote ancestors

atheistic

denying the existence of God; N. atheism

atone

make amends for; pay for; E.g., atone for

atrocious

brutal deed

atrophy

To decay

attentive

alert and watchful; listening carefully; paying attention

attenuate

make thin; weaken

attest

testify; bear witness

attire

clothe; N: clothing; array; apparel

attribute

essential quality; V: ascribe; explain

attrition

rubbing away by friction;

atypical

not normal; not typical

audacious

daring; bold; N. audacity

audit

examination of accounts of a business; official examination; V.

augment

increase; add to

augury

omen; prophecy; sign of coming events

august

impressive; majestic

aureole

sun's corona

auspicious

favoring success; giving signs of future success; Cf. auspices

austere

forbiddingly stern; ascetic; without comfort or enjoyment; severely simple and unornamented;

authenticate

prove genuine

authoritative

having the weight of authority; regarded as providing knowledge that can be trusted; reliable; peremptory and dictatorial;

autocratic

Root 'auto': self

having absolute power

automaton

Root 'auto': self

mechanism that imitates actions of humans; machine that works by itself

autonomous

Root 'auto': self

self-governing

autopsy

Root 'auto': self

examination of a dead body

auxiliary

offering or providing help; additional or subsidiary; N: helper; assistant

avalanche

great mass of falling snow and ice

Avant-garde

New, innovative, creative

avarice

greed

avenge

take vengeance

aver

state confidently; declare as true

averse

reluctant; disinclined; not liking or opposed; E.g., averse to cats/doing the house work

aversion

firm dislike

avert

prevent; avoid; turn away (eyes or thought); E.g., An accident was averted by his quick thinking;

E.g., She averted her eyes from the terrible sight.

aviary

enclosure for birds; large cage

avid

greedy; extremely eager for; E.g., avid learner; N. avidity

avocation

secondary or minor occupation

avow

declare openly; N. avowal

avuncular

of or like an uncle

awe

solemn wonder; feeling of respect mixed with wonder and fear; V: fill with awe; ADJ. awesome

awful

terrible; very bad

awl

pointed tool used for piercing

awry

distorted; crooked; bent; E.g., Our plans have gone awry.

axiom

self-evident truth requiring no proof

azure

sky blue

babble

Confused speech

bacchanal

noisy party with a lot of drinking

bacchanalia

from Bacchus, the God of wine

the ancient Roman festival in honour of Bacchus, the God of wine

bacchanalian

from Bacchus, the God of wine

Drunken;

backslide

reverse

backwards

To go in the reverse direction

badger

pester; annoy continually with demands; persuade by asking again and again; E.g., The children

badgered me into taking them into the cinema; N: a kind of mountain animal

badinage

teasing conversation; banter; joking talk

baffle

frustrate; perplex

bait

harass; tease; torment;

baleful

evil; malignant in intent or effect; deadly; having a malign influence; portending evil; ominous;

threatening; E.g., baleful look

balk

stop short,

ballast

heavy substance used to add stability or weight; V. supply with ballast

balm

something that relieves pain; oily liquid with a pleasant smell from trees

balmy

soft and mild (of air); fragrant

banal

hackneyed; commonplace; trite; lacking originality;

bandy

discuss lightly or glibly; discuss in a frivolous manner; exchange (words) heatedly; quarrel; E.g., bandy words with

bane

cause of ruin; harmful

bank

heap; piled-up mass; embankment; lateral tilting (as of an aircraft in turning); V: pile up; protect with a bank; tilt in turning

bantering

joking talk; good-naturedly ridiculing; N.V. banter

bar

railing in a courtroom; legal profession;

barb

sharp projection from fishhook, arrow, or other object; openly cutting remark

bard

poet

barefaced

shameless and noticeable; blatant; bold; unconcealed; having no covering on the face; E.g., barefaced lie

bargain

agreement between two groups or people;

baroque

highly ornate

barrage

barrier laid down by artillery fire; overwhelming profusion; large number of questions or statements; E.g., a barrage of criticism

barrister

counsellor-at-law or lawyer in the higher court of law; CF. bar

barterer

trader; V. barter: trade; exchange good for other goods rather than money

base

contemptible; morally bad; inferior in value or quality; E.g., base motives/conduct;

bask

luxuriate; take pleasure in warmth

bastard

illegitimate child

bastion

stronghold; something seen as a source of protection; E.g., the last bastion of male chauvinism

bate

let down; lessen the force of; moderate; restrain; E.g., with bated breath; CF. abate

battalion

army unit made up of four or more companies

bauble

trinket; cheap jewel; trifle

bawdy

indecent; obscene; about sex in a rude funny way; CF. bawd

bearing

deportment; connection

beatific

giving or showing bliss; blissful

beatitude

blessedness; state of great happiness

bedizen

dress with vulgar finery

bedraggle

wet thoroughly;

beeline

direct quick route

befuddle

confuse

beget

father; become the father of; produce; give rise to

begrudge

envy; give or allow unwillingly; grudge; E.g., We shouldn't begrudge him his success.

beguile

deceive; mislead or delude

behemoth

huge creature; something of monstrous size or power

beholden

obligated; indebted; owing thanks; obliged or indebted from gratitude

behove

be suited to; be incumbent upon;

belabour

Repeat; keep dwelling on

belated

delayed

beleaguer

besiege or

belie

contradict; give a false impression;.

belittle

disparage; depreciate

bellicose

Root 'bell': war

warlike

belligerent

Root 'bell': war

quarrelsome

bemoan

lament; moan for; express sorrow or disapproval of

bemused

confused; lost in thought; preoccupied

benediction

Root 'ben': good
Root 'dict': speak
blessing

benefactor

Root 'ben': good
gift giver; patron; person who does good or who gives money for a good purpose

beneficent

Root 'ben': good
kindly; doing good

beneficial

Root 'ben': good
helpful; useful; advantageous

beneficiary

Root 'ben': good
person entitled to benefits or proceeds of an insurance policy or will

benefit

Root 'ben': good
advantage; anything that brings help

benevolent

Root 'ben': good
generous; charitable; having a wish to do good

benign

Root 'ben': good
favourable; not malignant

benison

Root 'ben': good
blessing

bent

determined; E.g., bent on advancing in the business; N: natural talent or inclination

bequeath

leave to someone by means of a will; hand down in his will; N. bequest

berate

scold strongly

bereaved

deprived of (someone beloved through death)

bereavement

state of being deprived of something valuable or beloved; state of being bereaved or bereft

bereft

deprived of (something valuable); lacking

berserk

mad with violent anger; frenzied; madly excited

beseech

beg; plead with

beset

harass or trouble from all directions; hem in

besiege

surround with armed forces; harass (with requests); annoy continually

besmirch

soil; defile; make dirty

bestial

beastlike; brutal; inhuman; very cruel

bestow

confer

betoken

signify; indicate; be a sign of

betray

be unfaithful; reveal (unconsciously or unwillingly); E.g., Her trembling hands betray her anxiety.

betroth

become engaged to marry

bevy

large group;

beware

be cautious of

bewitch

cast a spell over; captivate completely

bicameral

Root 'bi': two

two-chambered

bicker

quarrel

bid

command;

biennial

Root 'bi': two

every two years

bifurcated

Root 'bi': two

divided into two branches or parts

bigot

one who is intolerant; a zealot

bigotry

stubborn intolerance

bilious

suffering from indigestion; sick from having too much bile; irritable; easily irritated

bilk

swindle; cheat

billow

large wave of water; a great swell or surge (of smoke); V: surge, swell, roll in billows

billowing

swelling out in waves; surging

biting

sharply painful to the body or mind;

bitter

having a sharp taste;

bizarre

fantastic; violently contrasting; noticeably odd; strikingly unconventional

blackball

vote against (an applicant); ostracize; N: negative vote

blanch

bleach; whiten; make white or pale

bland

soothing or mild (food); agreeable; causing no trouble or offence

blandishment

flattery

blare

loud or harsh roar or screech; dazzling blaze of light

blase

Boring; uninterested

blasphemy

irreverence; sacrilege;

blatant

Done openly; obvious

bleak

Cold; depressing

blemish

A spot that spoils the beauty or perfection of something; a flaw or defect

blight

plant disease; V: infect with blight; ruin; destroy

blighted

suffering from a disease; destroyed

bliss

complete happiness; ADJ. blissful

blithe

joyous

bloated

swollen or puffed up

blotch

spot; blot;

blowhard

talkative boaster; braggart

bludgeon

club; a heavy weapon

blue

gloomy; depressed

blues

state of depression or melancholy

bluff

Pretense; deception;

blunder

A mistake

blunt

having a dull edge;

brusque in manner or speech

blurt

utter impulsively from nervousness or excitement

blush

become red in the face

bluster

blow in heavy gusts;

bode

foreshadow; portend

bog

soft wet land; hinder

bogus

Not genuine; false

Bohemian

unconventional

boisterous

violent; rough; noisy

bolster

support; reinforce

bolt

A fastening pin or screw

To run away

bombardment

attack

bombastic

pompous speech

bombastic

pompous; using inflated language

bookish

fond of books and reading

boon

blessing; benefit; something very helpful

boor

rude, insensitive person

boorish

rude; insensitive

boost

lift by pushing up from below; increase; raise; N: push upward; increase

botch

To mess up

bound

leap or spring;

limit or confine;

bountiful

generous; graciously generous; showing bounty

bourgeois

middle class;

bout

A round in a match; short period of great activity

bovine

Cow-like; placid and dull;

bowdlerize

To remove something objectionable

brackish

salty

brag

boast

braggart

One who boasts

braid

plait

brand

trademark; mark burned on the hide of an animal

brandish

wave around

bravado

swagger; assumed air of defiance; false show of bravery

brave

face courageously; E.g., brave the storm

brawl

noisy quarrel

brawn

human muscle; muscular strength; sturdiness

brawny

muscular; having well-developed muscles

brazen

insolent; bold;

breach

breaking of contract or duty; fissure or gap; opening; V.

breadth

width

breed

kind or sort of animal

brevity

Short and concise

bridle

harness fitted about a horse's head

brim

uppermost edge of a cup

brink

edge of a precipice

brisk

quick and active; marked by liveliness and vigor

bristle

short stiff hair; V: (hair or fur) stand up stiffly

bristling

rising like bristles; showing irritation

brittle

easily broken

broach

introduce as a subject; moot; open up

brocade

A patterned fabric

brochure

pamphlet

broil

cook by direct heat

brooch

ornamental clasp; pin

brood

think deeply or ponder over

brook

tolerate; endure;

browbeat

bully; intimidate

browse

graze; feed on growing grass; skim or glance at casually

bruise

injure without breaking the skin; N.

brunt

main impact or shock (of an attack or blow); E.g., brunt of the argument

brusque

blunt; abrupt; curt; not wanting to waste time being nice

buccaneer

A pirate

bucolic

rustic; pastoral

buffet

table with food set out for people to server themselves

buffoon

stupid person; clown

buffoonery

clowning

bugaboo

bugbear; object of baseless terror

bulge

protruding part; swelling of a surface; E.g., The apple made a bulge in his pocket; V: swell outward; protrude

bulk

size or volume (esp. when very large); main part; E.g., The bulk of the work has already been done; ADJ. bulky: having great size

bullion

gold and silver in the form of bars

bully

one who is habitually cruel to weaker people; V.

bulwark

strong wall built for defense; earthwork or other strong defense; person who defends

bump

hit or knock against with force; N.

bungle

mismanage; blunder; botch; blow; spoil by clumsy behaviour

buoyant

able to float; cheerful and optimistic; N. buoyancy; E.g., buoyancy of wood/water/American market

bureaucracy

administrative system

burgeon

grow rapidly

burlesque

give an imitation that ridicules; imitate mockingly

burnish

make shiny by rubbing; polish

bust

piece of sculpture showing a person's head, shoulders, and upper chest; V: break up; arrest;

buttress

support; prop up; N. stationary structure to support wall; E.g., flying buttress

buxom

full-bosomed; plump; jolly

cabal

Restricted group of persons acting in secret

cache

Storage or hiding place;

cacophonous

Root 'phon': sound

discordant; inharmonious; N. cacophony: unpleasant mixture of loud sounds

cadaver

corpse; dead human body

cadaverous

like a corpse; pale

cadence

rhythmic beat

cadet

student at a military school

cajole

persuade by praise or false promise; coax; wheedle

calamity

disaster; misery

calculated

deliberately planned; likely

caldron (cauldron)

large kettle

caliber

ability; skill

diameter of the inside of a round cylinder

calligraphy

beautiful writing; excellent penmanship

callous

hardened; unfeeling; without sympathy for the sufferings of others; unkind

callow

Raw and inexperienced

calorific

heat-producing

calumny

malicious misrepresentation; slander

camaraderie

good-fellowship; CF. comrade

cameo

shell or jewel carved in relief; star's special appearance in a minor role in a film

camp

group sharing a common cause or opinion

canard

unfounded false rumour; exaggerated false report

candor

frankness; open honesty; ADJ. candid

canine

related to dogs; doglike

canker

any ulcerous sore; ulcer; any evil; CF. cancer

canny

shrewd in money matters; thrifty

cant

insincere speech or expression of piety; jargon of thieves; special words used by a particular group of people

cantankerous

ill-humored; irritable

canter

slow gallop;

canto

division of a long poem

canvass

determine or seek opinions, votes, etc.; go through (a region) to solicit votes or orders; conduct a survey; N.

capacious

Root 'cap': to take/receive

Spacious; roomy

capacity

Root 'cap': to take/receive

mental or physical ability;

capillary

having a very fine bore;

capitulate

surrender; give up all resistance

caprice

whim; sudden change of mind without any real cause

capricious

unpredictable; fickle

capsize

(of a boat) turn over

caption

title; chapter heading; text under illustration

captious

faultfinding; too critical

carafe

glass water bottle; decanter

carapace

shell covering the back (of a turtle, tortoise, crab, etc.)

carat(karat)

unit of weight for precious stones; measure of the purity of gold

carcinogenic

causing cancer; N. carcinogen

cardinal

chief; most important;

N: priest;

cardiologist

doctor specializing in ailments of the heart

careen

lurch; sway from side to side; move with irregular swinging movement; stagger

career

rush wildly; go at full speed

carefree

free from worries; having no problems

caricature

distortion; burlesque

carillon

a set of bells (often in a tower) capable of being played

carnage

destruction of life; slaughter; killing of large numbers of people or animals

carnal

fleshly; sensual; concerning the desires of the body

carnivorous

meat-eating

carousal

drunken revelry

carping

petty criticism; fault-finding; fretful complaining; quibble

carion

rotting flesh of a dead body; CF. vulture

cartographer

map-maker

cascade

small waterfall

caste

one of the hereditary classes in Hindu society; social stratification; prestige

castigation

Scold; criticise

castrate

remove the sex organs

casual

happening by chance; irregular; occasional; informal; showing or feeling little interest;

casualty

serious or fatal accident; person killed or wounded in an accident or battle

cataclysm

deluge; upheaval; earthquake; violent and sudden event or change

catalyst

agent which brings about a chemical reaction while it itself remains unaffected

catapult

slingshot

catastrophe

calamity ; disaster

catcall

shout of disapproval or displeasure

catechism

book for religious instruction in question-and-answer form; religious instruction by question and answer; V. catechize

categorical

without exceptions; made without any doubt in mind; unqualified; absolute

cater

provide food and drink

catharsis

purging or cleansing of any passage of the body; decrease in strong emotions

cathartic

purgative; medicine that causes the bowels to empty

catholic

universal; general; broad

caucus

private meeting of a group of people in a political party to select officers or determine policy; CF. the Caucus club of Boston

caulk

To make watertight

causal

implying a cause-and-effect relationship;

caustic

burning; corrosive; able to burn by chemical action; sarcastically biting; (of remarks) intended to hurt; bitter; harmful; OP. harmless

cauterize

burn (a wound or snakebite, etc.) with hot iron

cavalcade

procession of riders or horse-drawn carriages; parade; CF. cavalry

cavalier

casual and offhand; arrogant; N: knight

cavil

quibble; make frivolous objections; find fault unnecessarily

cede

yield (title or territory) to (esp. after losing a war); surrender formally; N. cession

celerity

speed; rapidity

celestial

heavenly

celibate

abstaining from sexual intercourse; unmarried; N. celibacy

cemetery

place for burying the dead

censor

To remove inappropriate matter

ensorious

severely critical

censure

blame; criticize; express strong disapproval; N: severe criticism; strong disapproval

centaur

mythical figure, half man and half horse

centigrade

denoting a widely used temperature scale (basically same as Celsius)

centrifugal

radiating; departing from the center

centrifuge

machine that separates substances by whirling them

centripetal

tending toward the center

centurion

Roman army officer (commanding a company of about 100 soldiers)

cerebral

pertaining to the brain or intellect; intellectual rather than emotional; CF. cerebrum

cerebration

thought; working of the brain

ceremonious

marked by formality; extremely formal and polite; CF. ceremony: conventional social courtesy

certitude

certainty

cessation

stoppage

cession

yielding to another; ceding

chafe

warm by rubbing; make sore by rubbing; N.

chaff

husk (outer seed cover) of grain;

chaffing

bantering; joking

chagrin

disappointment

chalice

consecrated cup

chameleon

lizard that changes colour in different situations

champion

support militantly; fight for;

championship

position of champion; defense or support; competition held to determine a champion

chancellor

legal official of high rank;

chant

tune(melody) in which a number of words are sung on the same note; V: sing (a chant); utter (a slogan) in the manner of a chant

chaotic

in utter disorder

chapel

small church (in a prison, college, or hospital)

chaperon

older person who accompanies and supervises a young unmarried woman

chaplain

A member of the clergy

char

make or become black by burning

charisma

divine gift; great popular charm or appeal; magnetism

charlatan

quack; a pretender

charm

quality of pleasing; amulet; action or formula thought to have magical power; spell; V: attract; cast a spell on; bewitch

chary

cautious

chase

follow rapidly to catch

chasm

abyss

chassis

framework and working parts of an automobile; framework to which components are attached

chaste

pure

chasten

discipline; punish in order to correct; CF. castigate

chastise

punish as by beating; criticize severely

chauvinist

blindly devoted patriot; zealous adherent of a group, cause, or sex; ADJ. chauvinistic; CF. chauvinism; Nicolas Chauvin

check

stop motion; curb or restrain

chequered

marked by great changes in fortune

cherubic

angelic

chicanery

trickery; fraud; deception

chide

scold; rebuke (someone who has done wrong)

chimerical

Fanciful; highly unrealistic

chip

lose a small piece from the surface or edge; N: small piece broken off something; CF. French fry; Potato chip/crisp

chisel

A tool for cutting

chivalrous

courteous

choice

delicate; of very fine quality

choir

group of people who sing together

choleric

hot-tempered; bad-tempered; irritable; easily angered; CF. cholera

chore

daily domestic task (such as cleaning, cooking, and shopping); unpleasant task

choreography

art of representing dances in written symbols; arrangement of dances

chortle

chuckle with delight

chorus

phrase repeated throughout a song or poem

chronic

Root 'chron': time

long established as a disease

chronicle

Root 'chron': time

record (in chronological order)

chuckle

laugh quietly

churlish

boorish; rude; N. churl: boor; yahoo

ciliated

having minute hairs

cipher

nonentity; worthless person or thing; zero; secret code; V.

circuit

closed circular line around an area; circumference; regularly repeated journey from place to place

circuitous

roundabout

circumlocution

Root 'circum': around

indirect or roundabout expression

circumscribe

limit; confine; draw a line around

circumspect

prudent; cautious; acting after careful thought

circumvent

outwit; defeat by behaving more cleverly; outsmart; baffle; avoid; get around

cistern

reservoir or water tank

citadel

fortress

cite

quote; commend; E.g., cited for bravery in an official record

civil

having to do with citizens; not military or religious; courteous and polite

clairvoyant

having predictive abilities

clamber

climb by crawling with difficulties; scramble

clamour

loud noise; continuous demand or complaint

clandestine

secret

clangour

loud resounding noise;

clap

strike the palms of the hands together with a sudden explosive sound; come together suddenly with a sharp sound; put or send promptly; E.g., clap the thief in jail; N: clapping; loud or explosive sound;

CF. applause

clapper

striker (tongue) of a bell

clarion

shrill, trumpetlike sound; kind of trumpet used in former times

clasp

hold firmly within arms

claustrophobia

fear of being locked in

clavicle

collarbone

cleave

split or sever

cleft

split

clemency

disposition to be lenient in deciding punishments; mildness as of the weather; ADJ. clement

cliche

An oft-repeated phrase

clientele

body of customers

climactic

relating to the highest point

clime

climate

clip

cut off

clipper

sailing vessel built for great speed

clique

small exclusive group of people

cloister

monastery or convent

clot

half-solid lump formed from a liquid (or blood); V.

clout

great influence (especially political or social); hard blow with fist

clown

act stupidly; play the fool;

cloying

distasteful (because excessive); excessively sweet or sentimental; V. cloy: become unpleasant through too much sweetness or excess

coagulate

Root 'co': together

congeal;

coalesce

Root 'co': together

combine; fuse

coalition

Root 'co': together

partnership; league; union of separate political parties

coax

persuade by flattery

coda

concluding section of a musical or literary composition

coddle

treat gently; indulge excessively; pamper;

codify

classify;

coercion

use of force to get someone to object; compelling; V. coerce

coeval

Root 'co': together

living at the same time as; existing during the same period of time; contemporary; of the same age

cog

tooth projecting from a wheel

cogent

convincing

cogitate

think over; ponder

cognate

Root 'co': together

having a common origin; related linguistically;

cognitive

Root 'cog': to know

having to do with knowing or perceiving related to the mental processes;

cognizance

Root 'cog': to know

knowledge; ADJ. cognizant; having knowledge; aware

cohabit

Root 'co': together

live together

cohere

Root 'co': together

stick together; adhere

cohesion

Root 'co': together

tendency to keep together

cohorts

Root 'co': together

group of people who share some common feature

coiffure

hairstyle

coin

make coins; invent or fabricate (a word or phrase); N. coinage: word or phrase recently invented

coincidence

Root 'co': together

the chance occurrence, at the same time, of two or more seemingly connected events; V. coincide:

happen at the same time; be in agreement; CF. coincident; CF. coincidental

colander

utensil with perforated bottom used for straining

collaborate

Root 'co': together

work together; cooperate treasonably with the enemy

collage

Root 'co': together

work of art put together from fragments

collate

Root 'co': together

examine and compare in order to verify authenticity;

collateral

Root 'co': together

security given for loan; not primary; secondary

collation

a light meal; collating

collected

composed; calm; self-possessed

colloquial

pertaining to conversational or common speech; informal

colloquy

informal discussion; conversation

collusion

Root 'co': together

Conspire to do something wrong

colossal

huge

colossus

gigantic statue

coma

deep prolonged unconsciousness caused by disease, poison, or a severe blow

comatose

in a coma; extremely sleepy

combustible

easily burned;

comeback

retort; quick clever reply; return to former status

comely

attractive; charming

comestible

something fit to be eaten

comeuppance

deserts; well-deserved punishment or misfortune; rebuke

comity

courtesy; civility

commandeer

take over; seize

commemorate

honour the memory of; serve as a memorial to

commemorative

remembering; honouring the memory of

commensurate

Root 'co': together

equal in extent; of the same size

commiserate

feel or express pity or sympathy for

commodious

spacious and comfortable

commonplace

ordinary; N: something ordinary or common; trite remark

commonwealth

nation governed by the people; republic

communal

Root 'co': together

held in common; of the same community

commune

small community whose members share common traits

compact

tightly packed

compartment

one of the parts into which an enclosed space is divided

compassion

sympathy for the suffering of others;

compatible

Root 'co': together

harmonious; in harmony with; able to exist together

compelling

holding one's attention

compendium

Root 'co': together

brief, comprehensive summary; bringing together all facets

compensatory

making up for; repaying

compilation

Root 'co': together

listing of information in tabular or book form; compiling together

compile

Root 'co': together

Gather together; accumulate

complacency

self-satisfaction;

complaisant

trying to please; obliging; willing to please others

complement

Root 'co': together

To go along with, to accompany or to complete;

complementary

Root 'co': together

serving to complete something

compliance

to fulfil the requirements; to agree to do

compliant

readily acting in accordance with a rule, order

complicity

Root 'co': together

participation; involvement

component

A part of; an element of

compost

mixture of decaying organic matter used as fertilizer

composure

mental calmness

compound

combine

comprehend

understand

comprehensive

including everything; thorough

compress

force into less space; squeeze; contract; put into fewer words; N: thick mass of cloth pressed to part of the body to stop bleeding or swelling, reduce fever, etc.

comprise

include; consist of

compromise

adjust or settle by making mutual concessions.

compulsion

desire that is difficult to control

compulsive

resulting from compulsion

compulsory

obligatory; that must be done

compunction

remorse; strong uneasiness caused by guilt

compute

To calculate

concatenate

l Root 'co': together

ink together

concave

hollow; curved inwards; OP. convex

concede

admit; acknowledge as being true

conceit

Pride or arrogance

concentric

having a common center; as in concentric circles

conception

beginning;

concerted

mutually agreed on; done together by agreement; E.g., concerted effort; CF. in concert: working together

concession

To yield or give in to something

conciliatory

To soothe

concise

brief and compact

conclave

private secret meeting

conclusive

decisive; ending all debate

concoct

Root 'co': together

prepare by mixing or combining together

concomitant

Root 'co': together
that which accompanies

concord

harmony; accord

concur

agree; coincide; happen at the same time

concurrent

Root 'co': together
happening at the same time;

condescend

To show superiority

condign

adequate; (of punishment) severe and well deserved

condiments

seasonings; spices

condole

express condolences; N. condolence: sympathy for someone who has experienced great sorrow

condone

To ignore or overlook; forgive

conducive

helpful;

conduit

aqueduct; passageway for fluids

confidant(confidante)

trusted friend (to whom one tells one's secret)

confide

tell in confidence (to a person one trusts); be confident about

confidence

self-assurance;

confidential

spoken or written in secret; trusted with private matters

confine

shut in an enclosed space; restrict; keep within limits; N. confinement

confiscate

seize; take possession of

conflagration

great fire

confluence

Root 'co': together
flowing together; the place where two rivers meet

conformist

person who uncritically conforms to the customs of a group;

conformity

Root 'co': together
harmony; agreement with established rules or customs; similarity

confound

confuse; puzzle

congeal

Root 'co': together

To coagulate

congenial

pleasant; friendly

congenital

existing at birth

conglomerate

Root 'co': together

Bring together different things

conglomeration

mass of material sticking together

congruence

Root 'co': together

correspondence of parts; harmonious relationship

congruent

Root 'co': together

in agreement; harmonious

conifer

A cone or pine tree

conjecture

surmise; guess

conjugal

pertaining to marriage

conjure

cause to appear by magic;

connivance

To assist

connoisseur

person competent to act as a judge of art, etc

connotation

suggested or implied meaning of an expression; V. connote

connubial

Root 'co': together

pertaining to marriage or the matrimonial state

consanguineous(consanguine)

Root 'co': together

having a common ancestor

consanguinity

Root 'co': together

relationship by blood

conscientious

scrupulous; thorough and careful

conscript

draftee; person forced into military service; V.

consecrate

To make sacred; to dedicate

consensus

general agreement; opinion reached by a group

consequential

as a result of;

conservatory

school of the fine arts

consign

send to a person or place for sale; deliver officially; entrust; put into the care of another

consistency

uniformity

console

lessen sadness or disappointment; give comfort; allay the sorrow of; N. consolation

consolidation

unification; process of becoming firmer or stronger; V. consolidate: merge; strengthen

consonance

harmony; agreement

consonant

harmonious; in agreement;

consort

Partner; husband or wife

conspiracy

treacherous plot; secret plan

conspire

take part in a conspiracy

consternation

great shock; dismay

constituency

voters represented by an elected official; district so represented; group of supporters (or constituents)

constituent

supporter; voter; member of a constituency; component

constitution

system of laws

constraint

Restraint; repression

construe

explain; interpret;

consummate

complete; V.

contagion

infection

contaminate

pollute

contempt

scorn; disdain; ADJ. contemptuous; CF. contemptible

contend

struggle; compete;

contention

claim;

contentious

controversial; likely to cause disputes

contest

dispute; argue about the rightness of; compete for

context

circumstance in which an event occurs

contiguous

adjacent to; touching upon

continence

self-restraint;

contingent

dependent on something uncertain or in the future; conditional;

contortions

twistings; distortions;

contraband

illegal trade; smuggling; smuggled goods; ADJ.

contravene

Root 'contra': against/opposite

contradict; oppose; violate (a rule, law, or custom); N. contravention

contrite

repentant

contrive

To make up; fabricate

contrived

unnatural and forced; artificial; not spontaneous

controvert

Root 'contra': against/opposite

oppose with arguments; attempt to refute; contradict;

contumacious

stubborn and disobedient; resisting authority (esp. disobedient to an order made by a court)

contusion

bruise

conundrum

A puzzle or riddle

convene

come together; call to meet

convention

social or moral custom; established practice; formal meeting; international agreement

conventional

ordinary; typical; not nuclear;

converge

Root 'co': together/with

To come together

conversant

Root 'co': together/with

familiar with; having knowledge of

converse

opposite; ADJ.

convert

one who has adopted a different religion or opinion;

convex

curving outward

conveyance

vehicle; transfer; act of conveying; E.g., public conveyance

conviction

judgment that someone is guilty of a crime; strongly held belief

convivial

Root 'viv': life

Full of life; jolly

convoke

Root 'co': together/with

call together;

convoluted

complicated; comple

convulsion

violent uncontrollable shaking movement

copious

plentiful

coquette

flirtatious woman

cordial

friendly

cordon

extended line of men or fortifications to prevent access or egress;

cornice

projecting moulding on a building

cornucopia

horn overflowing with fruit and grain; symbol of abundance; horn of plenty

corollary

natural consequence (which naturally follows from something else)

coroner

public official who investigates any death thought to be of other than natural causes

corporeal

bodily (rather than spiritual); of a bodily form; material; tangible

corpulent

very fat; N. corpulence

corpus

collection (of writings or information); E.g., the corpus of Shakespear's works; Cf. corpse

corpuscle

red or white cell in the blood

correlate

either of the correlated things; V.

correlation

mutual relationship

corroborate

confirm; support; strengthen

corrode

destroy or wear away gradually by chemical action (over a long period)

corrosive

eating away by the elements

corrugated

wrinkled; ridged

cosmic

pertaining to the universe; vast

coterie

group that meets socially; select circle; close group of people with shared interests

countenance

approve; support; tolerate; E.g., countenance his rude behavior; N: face; appearance

countermand

cancel; revoke (an order)

counterpart

thing that completes another; things very much alike; thing that has the same purpose in a different system

coup

a sudden blow or attack

couple

join; unite;

courier

messenger

court

attempt to gain; seek; woo; risk; behave so as to invite; attempt to gain the favor of by attention; E.g., court disaster

covenant

binding agreement between two groups or people; compact; V: enter into a covenant; promise

covert

secret; hidden; implied; OP. overt

covetous

avaricious; desirous of someone else's possessions

cow

terrorize; intimidate

cower

shrink quivering as from fear; cringe

coy

shy

cozen

cheat; hoodwink; swindle

crabbed

sour; bad-tempered; peevish; difficult to read as handwriting

craft

skill (esp. with one's hands); skill in deceiving people; guile; ADJ. crafty: cleverly deceitful; cunning

crass

very unrefined; grossly insensible; crude and indiscriminating; E.g., crass behaviour

crave

desire; want intensely

craven

cowardly

credence

Root 'cred': to believe
belief

credential

Root 'cred': to believe
evidence concerning one's authority; written proof of a person's position;

credo

Root 'cred': to believe
Beliefs; creed

credulity

Root 'cred': to believe
belief on slight evidence; gullibility

creed

Root 'cred': to believe
system of religious or ethical belief

creep

move with body close to the ground; move stealthily or slowly; N.

cremate

incinerate (a corpse);

crescendo

increase in the volume or intensity as in a musical passage; climax; CF. crescent

crest

Apex or top

crestfallen

dejected; dispirited

crevice

crack; fissure

cringe

shrink back

crinkle

wrinkle

criteria

standards used in judging; CF. criterion

crone

hag; ugly old woman

cross

bad-tempered; showing ill-humor; angry

crossbreed

hybridize; N: hybrid; CF. interbreed; CF. inbreed

crotchety

(of someone old) eccentric; odd; whimsical; bad-tempered;

crust

hard outer covering

crux

essential or main point; E.g., the crux of the problem; ADJ. crucial: of deciding importance

crypt

secret underground room or vault

cryptic

mysterious; hidden; secret

cubicle

small chamber used for sleeping or work

cue

A signal or prompt

cuisine

style of cooking

culinary

relating to cooking or kitchen

cull

pick out from others

culmination

highest point; climax; V. culminate in: reach the highest point in; end in; E.g., a series of minor clashes culminating in war

culpable

deserving blame; blameworthy

culprit

one guilty of a crime

culvert

artificial channel for water; drain crossing under a road

cumbersome

heavy and awkward to carry or wear; burdensome; E.g., cumbersome parcel/uniform

cumulative

growing by addition; accumulative

cunning

clever in deceiving; sly; N: cleverness in deceiving; deceit

cupidity

greed

curator

superintendent; manager (in charge of a museum or a library)

curb

chain or strap used with a bit to restrain a horse; something that checks; V: check; restrain

curfew

regulation requiring all people to leave the streets at stated times;

curmudgeon

churlish, miserly individual; bad-tempered old person

cursive

(of writing) flowing; running; having the successive letters joined

cursor

casual; hastily done with little attention to detail

curtail

shorten; reduce

cynical

sceptical or distrustful of human motives; N. cynicism; CF. cynic: person who believes all people are motivated by selfishness

cynosure

object of general attention; at the center of attention

dabble

work at in a nonserious fashion; splash around; move noisily in a liquid

dainty

delicate; delicately beautiful; fastidious; not easy to please; E.g., dainty movement/dress

dais

raised platform for speakers or other important people

dally

trifle with; toy with; treat without the necessary seriousness; procrastinate; waste time

damn

condemn; criticize severely; condemn to everlasting punishment; doom; bring to ruin; N. damnation

dank

damp; unpleasantly wet

dapper

neat and trim (in appearance); (of small men) neat in appearance and quick in movements; neat; spry

dappled

spotted

dart

move or throw suddenly and quickly

daub

smear with paint

daunt

intimidate; frighten; discourage; dishearten

dauntless

bold; fearless

dawdle

loiter; hang around; waste time doing nothing

daze

stun as with a blow or shock; bemuse; benumb; N.

dazzle

make blind with a sudden intense light; amaze; fill with wonder

deadlock

standstill resulting from the opposition of two unrelenting forces; stalemate

deadpan

wooden; impassive; with no show of feeling; with an expressionless face

dearth

scarcity

debacle

sudden disastrous downfall or defeat; complete disaster

debar

bar; forbid; exclude;

debase

degrade; reduce in quality or value; degenerate; lower in esteem; disgrace; N. debasement

debauch

corrupt morally; seduce from virtue; N. debauchery: wild behaviour (with sex and alcohol)

debilitate

weaken (esp. through heat, hunger, illness); enfeeble

debonair

(of men) friendly, charming, and fashionably dressed; aiming to please;

debris

rubble; wreckage; scattered remains of something broken or destroyed

debunk

expose as false, exaggerated, worthless, etc.; ridicule

debut

first public appearance

debutante

making a formal entrance into society

decadence

decay; fall to a lower level (of morality, civilization, or art); ADJ. decadent

decant

pour off gently

decapitate

behead

decelerate

slow down

deciduous

falling off at a specific season or stage of growth as of leaves;

decimate

kill (usually one out of ten or every tenth man); destroy or kill a large part of

decipher

decode; CF. indecipherable

declivity

downward slope

decomposition

decay; V. decompose: decay; break and separate into simple parts

decorous

proper (in behaviour, conduct, or appearance)

decorum

propriety; orderliness and good taste in manners; appropriateness of behavior or conduct

decoy

lure or bait; V.

decree

authoritative order; edict; judgment of a court of law; V: order or judge by decree

decrepit

weak and in bad condition from old age or hard use; E.g., decrepit old chair/man

decrepitude

state of collapse or weakness caused by illness or old age

decry

express strong disapproval of; criticize

deducible

derived by reasoning;

deface

mar; disfigure

defalcate

embezzle

defame

harm someone's reputation; malign; speak evil of; slander; N. defamation; ADJ. defamatory

default

failure to act; failure to perform a task or be present; V.

defeatist

resigned to defeat or failure; accepting defeat or failure as a natural outcome; N. CF. defeatism

defect

shortcoming; V: desert (in order to join the opposite one)

defection

desertion

defer

give in; submit; delay

deference

courteous regard for another's wish;

defiance

refusal to yield; resistance; V. defy; ADJ. defiant

defile

pollute; make filthy or dirty;

definitive

most reliable; authoritative and complete; that cannot be improved; conclusive; decisive; definite; E.g., definitive decision by the supreme court

deflect

turn aside; turn away from a straight course

defoliate

destroy leaves; deprive of leaves (by the use of chemicals); N. defoliant

defray

provide for the payment of; undertake the payment of; pay

defrock

strip a priest or minister of church authority; unfrock

deft

neat; skillful

defunct

dead; no longer in use or existence

degenerate

become worse in quality; deteriorate; ADJ: having become worse; E.g., a degenerate species; N: depraved or corrupt person

degradation

humiliation; debasement;

dehydrate

remove water from; dry out

deify

turn into a god; idolize

deign

condescend; stoop

delete

erase; strike out

deleterious

harmful

deliberate

consider; ponder; ADJ: done on purpose; slow

delineate

portray; depict; sketch; describe; N. delineation

delirium

mental disorder marked by confusion; uncontrolled excitement; ADJ. delirious

delta

flat plain of mud or sand between branches of a river

delude

deceive

deluge

flood; rush; V.

delusion

false belief; hallucination; deluding; E.g., delusions of grandeur; E.g., under the delusion that

delusive

deceptive; likely to delude; misleading; raising vain hopes; E.g., delusive promises

delve

dig; search deeply; investigate

demagogue

Root 'dem': people

person who appeals to people's prejudice; false leader of people; CF. demagoguery

demean

disgrace; humiliate; debase in dignity; behave

demeanor

behavior; bearing

demented

insane

demerit

fault; bad quality

demise

death

demographic

Root 'dem': people

related to population balance; N. demography: statistical study of human population

demolition

destruction; V. demolish

demoniacal

cruel; like a demon

demotic

Root 'dem': people

of or pertaining to the people

demur

oppose

demure

(of a woman or child) grave; quiet and serious; coy; pretending to be demure

denigrate

blacken; defame

denizen

(animal, person, or plant) inhabitant or resident of a particular place; regular visitor

denomination

religious group; unit in a system; name or designation; CF. denominator: common trait or characteristic

denotation

meaning; distinguishing by name; V. denote: indicate; refer to directly; mean; CF. connotation

denouement

final outcome; final development of the plot of a play or other literary work; the end of a story when everything is explained

denounce

condemn; criticize; N. denunciation

depict

portray

deplete

reduce; exhaust

deplore

regret; express sorrow and severe disapproval

deploy

spread out systematically

deport

send out of the country;

depose

dethrone; remove from office; give a deposition; testify

deposition

testimony under oath; deposing; dethroning

depravity

extreme corruption; wickedness; V. deprave

deprecate

express disapproval of; deplore; protest against; belittle; ADJ. deprecatory

depreciate

lessen in value; belittle; represent as of little value

depredation

plundering; destruction

deputize

work or appoint as a deputy; N. deputy: person who has the power to take charge when the leading person is away

deranged

insane

derelict

negligent; (of someone) neglectful of duty; (of something) deserted by an owner; abandoned; N: abandoned property; homeless or vagrant person

dereliction

neglect of duty; abandonment

deride

ridicule; mock; make fun of

derision

ridicule;

derivation

deriving; origin or source of something; E.g., the derivation of the word

derivative

unoriginal; obtained from another source; E.g., derivative prose style; N.

dermatologist

Root 'derm': skin

one who studies the skin and its diseases

derogatory

expressing a low opinion; disparaging; V. derogate: detract; disparage

descry

catch sight of (something distant)

desecrate

profane; violate the sanctity of

deserts

what someone deserves

desiccate

dry up

desolate

make desolate; forsake; abandon and desert

desperado

reckless, desperate outlaw

desperate

having lost all hope; despairing; reckless and violent because of loss of hope or despair; undertaken as a last resort

despise

look on with scorn; regard as worthless or distasteful; ADJ. despicable: contemptible

despoil

plunder; sack; E.g., despoil the village

despondent

without hope and courage; depressed; gloomy; N. despondency: loss of hope with gloom; dejection

despot

tyrant; harsh, authoritarian ruler;

destitute

extremely poor; lacking means of subsistence; utterly lacking; devoid; E.g., destitute of any experience

desultory

aimless; haphazard; digressing at random

detached

emotionally removed; free from emotional involvement; calm and objective; physically separate; N. detachment; CF. attachment

detain

keep waiting; prevent from leaving or going; N. detention

determinate

having a fixed order of procedure; precisely defined; invariable; fixed; conclusive; final

determination

resolve; firmness of purpose; measurement or calculation; decision

deterrent

something that discourages or deters

detonation

explosion

detraction

slandering; aspersion; detracting; CF. detractor

detrimental

harmful; damaging; N. detriment

deviate

turn away from (a principle, norm); move away from an accepted standard; swerve; depart; diverge; N. deviation; E.g., deviation of the path of light by a prism

devious

roundabout; erratic; deviating from the straight course; not straightforward; not completely honest; E.g., devious route

devise

think up; invent; plan; bequeath; N: bequest

devoid

empty; lacking

devolve

deputize; pass or be passed to others (power, work, or property); E.g., devolve on/upon/to

devotee

enthusiastic follower; enthusiast; E.g., devotee of Bach

devout

pious; deeply religious; sincere; earnest; E.g., my devout hope

dexterous

skillful; skill in using hands or mind; N. dexterity

diabolical

devilish; fiendish

diadem

crown

dialectical

Root 'di': two

relating to the art of debate; mutual or reciprocal;

diaphanous

sheer; transparent

diatribe

bitter scolding or denunciation; invective; abuse

dichotomy

division into two opposite parts; split; branching into two parts (especially contradictory ones)

dictum

Root 'dict': to state; to say

authoritative and weighty statement (made by a judge in court); saying; maxim;)

didactic

intending to teach a moral lesson; teaching;

die

metal block used for shaping metal or plastic; device for stamping or impressing; mold; CF. dice

diffidence

shyness; lack of self-confidence; timidity; ADJ. diffident

diffuse

wordy; verbose; rambling; spread out (like a gas); V: spread out in all directions; disperse; N. diffusion; CF. suffuse

dignitary

person of high rank or position

digression

wandering away from the subject; V. digress

dilapidated

falling to pieces; in a bad condition; ruined because of neglect; E.g., dilapidated old car/castle; N. dilapidation

dilate

expand; dilate on/upon: speak or write at length on (a subject)

dilatory

delaying; tending to delay

dilemma

situation that requires a choice between equally unfavorable options; problem; choice of two unsatisfactory alternatives

dilettante

aimless follower of an art or a field of knowledge (not taking it seriously); amateur; dabbler; CF. delight

diligence

steadiness of effort; persistent hard work

dilute

make (a liquid) less concentrated; reduce in strength; E.g., dilute the influence of the president

diminution

lessening; reduction in size; V. diminish

din

continued loud noise; V. make a din; instill by wearying repetition

dinghy

small boat (often ship's boat)

dingy

(of things and place) dirty and dull; E.g., dingy street/curtain

dint

means; effort; E.g., by dint of hard work

diorama

life-size, three-dimensional scene from nature or history; three-dimensional scene with modeled figures against a painted background

dire

warning of disaster; disastrous; (of needs and dangers) very great; urgent; E.g., dire prediction/need of food

dirge

funeral song; slow mournful piece of music (sung over a dead person)

disabuse

correct a false impression; undeceive; free from a wrong belief

disaffected

disloyal; lacking loyalty; V. disaffect: cause to lose affection or loyalty

disapprobation

disapproval; condemnation

disarray

state of disorder; a disorderly or untidy state; E.g., with her clothes in disarray

disavowal

denial; disclaiming; repudiating; disowning; V. disavow; CF. disclaim

disband

dissolve; disperse; (of a group) break up and separate; E.g., The club has disbanded.

disbar

make (a lawyer) leave the bar or the legal profession

disburse

pay out (as from a fund); N. disbursement; CF. purse

discernible

distinguishable; perceivable; E.g., discernible improvement

discerning

mentally quick and observant; having insight;

disclaim

disown; renounce claim to;

disclose

reveal; N. disclosure

discombobulated

discomposed; confused

discomfit

frustrate; put to rout; defeat; disconcert; embarrass; perturb

discompose

disturb the composure of; confuse

disconcert

confuse; upset; embarrass; perturb

disconsolate

hopelessly sad (at the loss of something)

discord

conflict; lack of harmony; dissonance (when musical notes are played)

discordant

not harmonious; conflicting

discount

disregard; regard (a story or news) as unimportant; deduct from a cost

discourse

serious speech, writing, or conversation; formal discussion (either written or spoken); conversation; V.

discredit

defame; disgrace; destroy confidence in; disbelieve; N. CF. discreditable: causing discredit; shameful

discrepancy

lack of consistency or agreement as between facts; difference; E.g., discrepancy between two descriptions

discrete

separate; unconnected

discretion

prudence; ability to adjust actions to circumstances; freedom of action or judgment; ADJ. discreet; CF. discretionary

discriminate

distinguish; make distinctions on the basis of preference

discriminating

able to see differences; discerning; prejudiced; N. discrimination

discursive

(of a person or writing) digressing; rambling (without any clear plan)

disdain

treat with scorn or contempt

disembark

debark; go ashore

disenfranchise

deprive of a civil right

disengage

uncouple; separate; disconnect; stop fighting; OP. engage

disfigure

mar the appearance of; spoil

disgorge

surrender something (stolen); eject; vomit; OP. gorge

disgruntle

make discontented

dishearten

discourage

disheveled

untidy (of hair or clothing); V. dishevel

dishonor

disgrace; N. ADJ. dishonorable

disinclination

unwillingness

disingenuous

not naive; not candid; sophisticated; worldly wise; OP. ingenuous

disinter

dig up; unearth;

disinterested

unprejudiced; free from bias and self-interest; objective

disjointed

disconnected; lacking coherence; V. disjoint: disconnect; disjoin

disjunction

act or state of separation; disunity

dislodge

Remove; force out of a position;

dismantle

take apart; disassemble

dismember

cut into small parts; cut (a body) apart limb from limb

dismiss

eliminate from consideration; no longer consider; put out of court without further hearing; reject;

discharge from employment; direct to leave; ADJ. dismissive; N. dismissal

disparage

belittle

disparate

basically different; impossible to compare; unrelated

disparity

difference; condition of inequality; OP. parity

dispassionate

calm; impartial; not influenced by personal feelings

dispatch

speediness; prompt execution; message sent with all due speed; V: send to a specified destination;

finish promptly; kill

dispel

scatter; drive away; cause to vanish

dispense

distribute; prepare and give out (medicines); N. dispensation: dispensing; religious system; official exemption from an obligation or a rule

disperse

scatter; E.g., disperse the cloud/crowd

dispirited

lacking in spirit

disport

amuse; E.g., disport oneself; CF. divert

disproportion

lack of proportion (between the parts); ADJ. disproportionate

disputatious

argumentative; fond of argument

disquietude

uneasiness; anxiety; V. disquiet: make anxious

disquisition

formal systematic inquiry; explanation of the results of a formal inquiry; long formal speech or written report

dissection

analysis; cutting apart in order to examine

dissemble

disguise; hide the real nature of; pretend

disseminate

distribute; spread; scatter (like seeds)

dissension

disagreement of opinions causing strife within a group

dissent

disagree

dissertation

formal essay; treatise

dissident

Not agreeing to; rebellious

dissimulate

pretend; conceal by feigning; dissemble

dissipate

squander; waste foolishly; scatter

dissolution

disintegration; reduction to a liquid form; looseness in morals; sensual indulgence; debauchery; ADJ. dissolute: lacking in moral restraint; leading an immoral life

dissonance

discord

dissuade

persuade not to do; discourage; N. dissuasion

distant

reserved or aloof; cold in manner; E.g., distant greeting; ADV. distantly

distend

expand; swell out

distill

refine (a liquid by evaporating and subsequent condensation); concentrate; separate the most important parts from; E.g., distill fresh water from sea water; CF. brew

distinct

clearly different; clearly noticed

distinction

honor; excellence; difference; contrast; discrimination; E.g., graduated with distinction; E.g., a writer of real distinction

distinctive

clearly different from others of the same kind

distort

twist out of shape; give a false account of; misrepresent; N. distortion

distract

take one's attention away from something important

distrait

absentminded; distracted

distraught

Emotionally upset; distracted

diurnal

daily; occurring during the daytime

diva

operatic singer; prima donna

diverge

vary; go in different directions from the same point; ADJ. divergent: differing; deviating

diverse

differing in some characteristics (from each other); various; N. diversity: | variety; dissimilitude; lack of resemblance

diversion

act of turning aside; pastime; V. divert: turn aside from a course; distract; amuse

divest

strip (as of clothes); deprive (as of rights); dispossess; N. divestiture(divestment)

divine

perceive intuitively (by or as if by magic); foresee the future; foretell; dowse; ADJ. N. divination

divulge

reveal

docile

obedient; easily managed; submissive

docket

program as for trial; book where such entries are made; list of things to be done; agenda; label fixed to a package listing contents or directions; V. describe in a docket

doctrinaire

unable to compromise about points of doctrine; dogmatic; unyielding; marked by inflexible attachment to a doctrine without regard to its practical difficulties

doctrine

Teachings; particular principles

document

provide written evidence

doddering

shaky; infirm from old age; V. dodder

doff

take off

dogged

determined; stubborn; stubbornly persevering; tenacious; E.g., Inspector Javert's dogged pursuit of Jean Valjean

doggerel

poor verse

dogmatic

opinionated; holding stubbornly to one's opinion; arbitrary; doctrinal

doldrums

Listlessness; lack of energy

dolorous

sorrowful

dolt

Dim-witted person

domicile

Residence;

dominant

exercising the most influence; high and easily seen; stronger than the other part of a system; not recessive

dominate

control;

domineer

rule over tyrannically

don

put on; OP. doff

dormant

sleeping; temporarily inactive; lethargic; latent

dormer

window projecting upright from roof; CF. sleeping room

dorsal

relating to the back of an animal; E.g., dorsal fin

dossier

file of documents on a subject or person; file; CF. bundle of papers labeled on the back

dotage

senility; feeble-mindedness of old age; E.g., In one's dotage

dote

be excessively fond of; show signs of mental decline

dour

sullen; gloomy; stubborn

douse

plunge into water or liquid; dip; immerse; drench; wet thoroughly; extinguish; throw water over; douse

dowdy

untidy shabby;

downcast

disheartened; dejected;

dowry

money or property brought by a bride to her husband at marriage

dowse

use a divining rod to search for underground water or minerals

doze

Sleep off; nap

drab

dull; lacking colour;

draconian

extremely harsh or severe;

draft

first rough form;

drama

prose or verse composition to be performed by actors; play; exciting and unusual situation

drastic

Radical; severe

draught

current of air (through a room or to a fire); act of pulling roads; act of swallowing liquid or amount of liquid swallowed at a time

draw

choosing of a lot or card

dregs

sediment in a liquid; lees; worthless residue

dribble

flow or fall in drops; let saliva flow out slowly from the mouth; move a ball; N.

drip

fall or let fall in drops; shed drops; N: action or sound of falling in drops; liquid that falls in drops

drivel

nonsense;

droll

amusing

drone

talk dully; buzz or murmur like a bee; N.

droop

bend or hang downward; become weakened; E.g., His shoulders drooped with tiredness; N.

dross

waste matter; worthless impurities

drudge

do drudgery; N: person who drudges

drudgery

hard unpleasant work; menial work

dubious

questionable; (of something) causing doubt; (of someone) filled with doubt; N. dubiety

ductile

Flexible; that which can be worked upon; of someone easily influenced or controlled

dulcet

sweet sounding; pleasing to the ear; melodious

dull

Not bright; unintelligent

dumbfound

Surprise; astonish

dummy

imitation of a real object used as a substitute; effigy

dupe

someone easily fooled or deceived; V: deceive

duplicitous

double-dealing; hypocrisy; being dishonest and deceitful; ADJ. duplicitous

duration

length of time something lasts

duress

forcible restraint, especially unlawfully; coercion by threat; illegal coercion; E.g., a promise made under duress

dutiful

respectful; filled with a sense of duty

dwindle

reduce gradually

dynamic

energetic; vigorously active

dynamo

generator for producing electricity; energetic person

dysentery

inflammatory disorder of the lower intestinal tract

dyslexia

word blindness; learning disorder marked by impairment of the ability to read

dyspeptic

suffering from indigestion; N. dyspepsia: indigestion; difficulty in digesting food

earmark

set aside (money or time) for a particular purpose

earn

gain for the performance of service or labor; gain (something that one deserves); deserve

earthly

of this earth; terrestrial; worldly; not divine; possible; E.g., no earthly reason

earthy

unrefined; coarse; of the earth

ebb

recede; lessen; diminish;

ebullient

showing high spirits and enthusiasm

eccentric

irregular; odd; unconventional;

eccentricity

oddity; idiosyncrasy

ecclesiastic

pertaining to the church

eclectic

selective; composed of elements drawn from disparate sources;

eclipse

darken; extinguish; outshine; surpass; cause an eclipse

ecliptic

path of the sun and the planets

ecologist

person concerned with the interrelationship between living organisms and their environment

economy

efficiency or conciseness in using something; thrifty management of resources

ecosystem

ecological community together with its environment

ecstasy

very strong feeling of joy and happiness

eddy

swirling currents of water or air

edict

decree; an official command

edifice

A large building

edify

instruct; correct morally

eerie

weird; causing fear because strange

efface

rub out; remove the surface of

effective

effectual; producing a strong response; striking; in operation; in effect; E.g., effective speech/photograph

effectual

able to produce a desired effect; valid

effectuate

effect; produce; achieve; E.g., effectuate a reconciliation

effeminate

having womanly traits

effervescence

inner excitement or exuberance; emitting bubbles

effete

having lost one's original power; barren; worn out; exhausted

efficacy

power to produce desired effect; ADJ. efficacious: effectual

effigy

dummy; likeness of a person

effluvium

Noxious smell

effrontery

rudeness

effulgent

shining brightly; brilliant

effusion

pouring forth;

ego

one's opinion of oneself; self-esteem

egoism

excessive interest in one's self;

egotism

tendency to speak or write of oneself excessively; conceit; self-importance

egotistical

egotistic;

egregious

notorious; conspicuously bad or shocking

egress

exit; opening for going out; act of going out; OP. ingress

ejaculation

exclamation; abrupt ejection (to discharge sperm); V. ejaculate

elaborate

work out carefully; add more detail or information; ADJ.

elaboration

addition of details; intricacy

elastic

able to spring back into shape; quick to recover

elated

filled with excited joy and pride; overjoyed; in high spirits

elegy

poem or song expressing lamentation

elevation

Add to the height of something; raise

elicit

draw out fact or information

elixir

A cure-all drink

ellipsis

omission of words from a text; mark used to indicate an omission

elliptical

oval; of an ellipse;

elope

run away secretly with the intention of getting married

eloquence

expressiveness; persuasive speech

elucidate

explain; make clear; clarify; enlighten; CF. lucid

elusive

evasive; not frank; baffling; hard to grasp, catch, or understand; V. elude: escape from; escape the understanding or grasp of; E.g., elude the hunter; E.g., His name eludes me.

elysian

relating to paradise; blissful

Elysium

place or condition of bliss

emaciated

thin and wasted (from hunger or illness)

emanate

issue forth; come out

emancipate

set free; liberate

emasculate

weaken; castrate

embargo

ban on commerce or other activity

embark

commence; go on board a boat; begin a journey

embed (imbed)

enclose; place in something; fix firmly in a surrounding mass

embellish

adorn; ornament; enhance as a story (by adding fictitious details)

embezzlement

taking for one's own use in violation of trust; stealing (of money placed in one's care)

embitter

make bitter; fill with painful or bitter feelings; make sad and angry; E.g., He was embittered by many disappointments.

emblazon

ornament richly

embody

give a bodily form to; incorporate; include

emboss

produce a design in raised relief; decorate with a raised design

embrace

hug; clasp with the arms

embroider

decorate with needlework

embroil

throw into confusion; entangle;

embryonic

undeveloped; rudimentary;

emend

correct (usually a text); N. emendation: correction of errors; improvement

emetic

substance causing vomiting; ADJ.

eminent

rising above others; high; lofty; distinguished;

emissary

agent (sent on a mission to represent another); messenger

emollient

soothing or softening remedy (for the skin); ADJ.

emolument

salary; payment for an office; compensation

empathy

ability to identify with another's feelings, ideas, etc

empirical

based on experience

emulate

Try to match or imitate

enact

make (a bill) into law

enamoured

in love

encipher

encode; convert a message into code; put into cipher

encircle

surround

enclave

territory enclosed within an alien land

encomium

praise

encompass

surround; include

encroachment

gradual intrusion; E.g., I resent all these encroachments on my valuable time; V. encroach: take another's possessions or right gradually or stealthily; intrude; E.g., encroach on/upon

encumber

burden; N. encumbrance

endear

make beloved; E.g., endear her to everyone; ADJ. dear: loved; cherished; high-priced

endearment

fond word or act; expression of affection

endemic

prevailing among a specific group of people or in a specific area or country; peculiar to a particular region or people; CF. pandemic

endorse

approve; support; write one's signature on the back of; N. endorsement; CF. dorsal

endue

provide with some quality; endow

enduring

Long-lasting; surviving

energize

invigorate; give energy to; make forceful and active

enervate

weaken; take away energy from

enfranchise

admit to the rights of citizenship (especially the right to vote); CF. franchise

engage

attract; employ; hire;

engaged

employed; busy; betrothed; involved in conflict

engaging

charming; attractive

engender

cause; produce; give rise to

engross

occupy fully; absorb

engulf

surround and swallow up

enhance

increase; make greater

enigma

puzzle; mystery

enjoin

command; order; forbid

enlist

To get someone to join a group

enliven

make lively or spirited; animate

enmity

ill will; hatred; hostility

ennui

boredom; listlessness and dissatisfaction resulting from lack of interest; CF. annoy

enormity

hugeness (in a bad sense); excessive wickedness; E.g., enormity of the crime; ADJ. enormous

enrapture

please intensely; fill with rapture and delight

ensconce

settle comfortably; place comfortably (in a secure place)

ensue

follow (as a result)

entail

make necessary; require; necessitate

enterprise

willingness to take new ventures; initiative

enterprising

full of initiative; showing enterprise

enthrall

capture; enslave; captivate; hold the complete attention of (as if magic); hold spellbound

entice

lure; persuade to do (something wrong); attract; tempt

entity

real being

entomology

study of insects

entourage

group of attendants; retinue; CF. surround

entrance

put under a spell(condition caused by magical power); carry away(fill with strong feeling) with emotion; put into a trance; fill with delight

entreat

plead; ask earnestly

entree

entrance;

main dish of a meal

entrepreneur

businessperson (who assumes the risk of a business venture); contractor; ADJ. entrepreneurial

enumerate

list; mention one by one

enunciate

announce; proclaim; utter or speak, especially distinctly; pronounce clearly; articulate; E.g., This theory was first enunciated by him.

environ

enclose; surround; N. environs: surrounding area (as of a city)

eon(aeon)

long period of time; an age; longest division of geologic time containing two or more eras

epaulet(epaulette)

ornament worn on the shoulder (of a uniform, etc.)

ephemeral

short-lived; fleeting

epic

long heroic poem, novel, or similar work of art (celebrating the feats of a hero); ADJ: (of stories or events) resembling an epic; grand

epicure

connoisseur of food and drink; gourmet; ADJ. epicurean; CF. Epicurus

epicurean

believing that pleasure is good and suffering is bad and should be avoided; N.

epigram

witty thought or saying, usually short

epilogue

short speech at conclusion of dramatic work

episodic

(of a story or play) loosely connected; made up of separate and loosely connected parts; N. episode: incident in the course of an experience

epitaph

inscription in memory of a dead person (as on a tombstone)

epithet

word or phrase characteristically used to describe a person or thing

epitome

perfect example or embodiment; brief summary; E.g., epitome of good manners; V. epitomize: make an epitome of; be an epitome of; embody

epoch

period of time

equable

tranquil; of even calm temper; (of temperature) steady; uniform

equanimity

calmness of temperament; composure

equestrian

rider on horseback; ADJ.

equilibrium

balance of opposing forces; balance of the mind; equanimity

equine

resembling a horse; E.g., equine face

equinox

period of equal days and nights; the beginning of spring and autumn; E.g., vernal/autumnal equinox; ADJ. equinoctial

equipoise

balance; balancing force; equilibrium

equitable

fair; impartial; OP. inequitable

equity

fairness; justice; OP. inequity

equivocal

(of words or statements) ambiguous; intentionally misleading; (of behaviour) questionable; OP. unequivocal

equivocate

use equivocal language to deceive people; lie; mislead; attempt to conceal the truth; N. equivocation

erode

eat away; wear away gradually by abrasion;

erotic

pertaining to passionate love or sexual love

errant

Wandering; straying from proper moral standards;

erratic

odd; irregular in movement or behavior; unpredictable

erroneous

mistaken; wrong; incorrect

erudite

(of a person or book) learned; full of learning; scholarly; N. erudition

escapade

prank; flighty conduct; reckless adventure that disobeys rules

eschew

To avoid

esoteric

hard to understand; knowledge restricted to a few

espionage

Act of spying

espouse

adopt; support (an idea or aim); marry; N. espousal

esteem

respect; value; judge; N.

estimable

(of a person) worthy of esteem; admirable; deserving esteem; possible to estimate

estranged

separated; alienated; V. estrange: alienate (people in a family); N. estrangement

ethereal

like a spirit or fairy; unearthly light; heavenly; unusually refined; E.g., She has an ethereal beauty;
CF. ether: upper air

ethnic

relating to races

ethnology

study of humankind; study of the different races of human beings; CF. anthropology

ethos

underlying character of a culture, group, etc., character or ideas peculiar to a specific person, group, or culture; E.g., the company ethos

etymology

study of the origins of words

eugenic

Root 'eu': good

pertaining to the improvement of race

eulogy

Root 'eu': good

To praise; to compliment

eulogy

Root 'eu': good

expression of praise, often on the occasion of someone's death; V. eulogize

euphemism

Root 'eu': good

mild expression in place of an unpleasant one; ADJ. euphemistic

euphony

Root 'phon': sound

Root 'eu': good

sweet sound;

euphoria

Root 'eu': good

feeling of great happiness

evanescent

fleeting; vanishing; soon disappearing; V. evanesce

evasive

not frank; trying to hide the truth; eluding; evading; V. evade: avoid (a duty or responsibility) or escape from by deceit

Even-handed

impartial; fair

eventual

happening at last as a result; E.g., eventual victory

evince

show clearly

evocative

tending to call up (emotions, memories)

evoke

call forth (memory or feeling); E.g., That old film evoked memories of my childhood; N. evocation

ewe

female sheep

exacerbate

worsen; aggravate; embitter

exact

Root 'ex': out; from

demand and obtain out of someone by force

exacting

Root 'ex': out; from

To demand from someone

exalt

Root 'ex': out; from
raise in rank or dignity; praise highly; inspire;

exasperate

Root 'ex': out; from
vex; annoy or make angry (by testing the patience)

except

Root 'ex': out; from
Exclude from something;

exceptionable

Root 'ex': out; from
objectionable; likely to cause dislike; offensive; CF. unexceptionable: entirely acceptable

excerpt

Root 'ex': out; from
selected part taken out of a longer work;

exchequer

Root 'ex': out; from
treasury; E.g., Chancellor of the exchequer

excise

Root 'ex': out; from
cut away; cut out; N: government tax on good produced and used inside a country; N. excision

exclaim

Root 'ex': out; from
cry out suddenly; N. exclamation; ADJ. exclamatory

excoriate

Root 'ex': out; from
scold with biting harshness; censure strongly; strip the skin off

exculpate

Root 'ex': out; from
clear from blame or guilt

execrable

Root 'ex': out; from
very bad; detestable

execrate

Root 'ex': out; from
curse; express abhorrence for; detest

execute

Root 'ex': out; from
put into effect; carry out; kill as a lawful punishment; N. execution

executioner

Root 'ex': out; from
person administering capital punishment

executive

Root 'ex': out; from
person having administrative authority; one branch of government executing laws; ADJ: relating to executing

executor

Root 'ex': out; from
person designated to execute the terms of a will;

exemplary

Root 'ex': out; from
Standing out;

exemplify

Root 'ex': out; from
show by example; furnish an example; serve as an example of;

exempt

Root 'ex': out; from
not subject to a duty or obligation; free from a duty; V.

exertion

Root 'ex': out; from
effort; expenditure of much physical work; V. exert oneself: make a great effort

exhale

Root 'ex': out; from
breathe out; OP. inhale

exhilarating

Root 'ex': out; from
invigorating and refreshing; cheering; V. exhilarate: make cheerful and excited; E.g., exhilarated by the ride in the sports car

exhort

Root 'ex': out; from
encourage

exhume

Root 'ex': out; from
dig out of the ground; remove from a grave

exigency

Root 'ex': out; from
urgent situation; ADJ. exigent

exiguous

Root 'ex': out; from
small in amount; minute

existential

pertaining to existence; pertaining to the philosophy of existentialism

exodus

Root 'ex': out; from
departure (of a large number of people)

exonerate

Root 'ex': out; from
To free from blame or guilt

exorbitant

Root 'ex': out; from
(of costs or demands) excessive; exceeding reasonable bounds

exorcise

Root 'ex': out; from
drive out evil spirits

exotic

Root 'ex': out; from
from another part of the world; strange

expansive

Root 'ex': out; from
outgoing and sociable; broad and extensive; able to increase in size

expatiate

Root 'ex': out; from
talk at length; speak or write in detail

expatriate

Root 'ex': out; from
exile; someone who has withdrawn from his native land; V: exile; banish; leave one's country

expedient

Root 'ex': out; from
suitable (for a particular purpose although not necessarily morally correct); practical; politic(prudent);
N: something expedient

expedite

Root 'ex': out; from
hasten; make go faster

expeditious

Root 'ex': out; from
done with speed; quick; N. expedition

expenditure

payment or expense; expending; something expended; output;

expertise

specialized knowledge (in a particular field); expert skill

expiate

make amends for (a sin)

expletive

meaningless word; interjection; a profanity

explicate

explain in detail; interpret; clarify; CF. explicable

explicit

totally clear; definite; outspoken

exploit

Root 'ex': out; from
make use of, sometimes unjustly; N. exploitation

expose

Root 'ex': out; from
A public revelation of something discreditable

expository

Root 'ex': out; from
explanatory; serving to explain; N. exposition: explaining; exhibition

expostulation

protest; remonstrance; reasoning with someone to correct or dissuade; V. expostulate

exposure

risk, particularly of being exposed to disease or to the elements; unmasking; act of laying something open; E.g., exposure of governmental corruption

expound

explain

expropriate

take possession of (often for public use and without payment)

expunge

cancel; remove a word or name (from a book or list); erase

expurgate

clean; remove offensive parts of a book

exquisite

delicate; very finely made; extremely beautiful; E.g., exquisite piece of jewelry

extant

(of something written or painted) still in existence

extemporaneous

not planned; impromptu; extempore

extenuate

weaken; mitigate; lessen the seriousness of something

extirpate

root up; uproot; destroy completely

extol

praise very highly; glorify

extort

Root 'ex': out; from

wring from; get money by threats, etc

extradition

surrender of prisoner by one state to another; E.g., extradition treaty; V. extradite

extraneous

Root 'ex': out; from

not essential; irrelevant; superfluous; external; coming from the outside; E.g., extraneous details/noise/to the subject

extrapolation

Root 'ex': out; from

projection; conjecture; V. extrapolate:

extricate

free from an entanglement or difficulty; disentangle

extrinsic

external; not essential or inherent; extraneous; OP. intrinsic

extrovert

Root 'ex': out; from

person interested mostly in external objects and actions

extrude

force or push out; thrust out; shape (plastic or metal) by forcing through a die

exuberance

overflowing abundance; joyful enthusiasm; flamboyance; lavishness; ADJ. exuberant: high-spirited and lively; growing abundantly and strongly

exude

Root 'ex': out; from

flow out slowly; discharge (gradually); give forth; N. exudation

exult

rejoice

fabricate

build; lie; make up (a story) in order to deceive;

facade

front or face of a building);
a superficial appearance

facet

small plane surface (of a gem(precious stone)); a side

facetious

joking (often inappropriately); unserious; humorous

facile

easily accomplished; ready or fluent

facilitate

help bring about; make less difficult

facsimile

copy

faction

party; clique (within a large group); dissension

factious

inclined to form factions; causing dissension

factitious

artificial; produced artificially; sham; false; E.g., factitious tears

factotum

handyman; person who does all kinds of work; CF. do everything

faculty

mental or bodily powers; teaching staff

fake

not genuine;

fallacious

misleading

fallible

liable to err

fallow

(of land) plowed but not sowed (to improve the quality); uncultivated

falsify

make (something written) false by changing

falter

hesitate; weaken in purpose or action; walk or move unsteadily through weakness; N.

fanaticism

excessive zeal; extreme devotion to a belief or cause; N. fanatic; ADJ. fanatic

fancied

imagined; unreal

fancier

breeder or dealer of animals;

fanciful

whimsical; imaginary

fancy

imagination

fanfare

call by bugles or trumpets; showy display; spectacular public display

farce

broad comedy; mockery; humorous play full of silly things happening; ADJ. farcical

far-fetched

An unlikely story

fashion

give shape to; make; E.g., fashion the pot out of clay

fastidious

Hard to please

fatalism

belief that events are determined by forces or fates beyond one's control; ADJ. fatalistic; CF. fatal: causing death

fathom

comprehend; investigate; determine the depth of; N. unit of measurement for the depth of water

fathomless

too deep to be measured or understood; unfathomable

fatuous

smugly and unconsciously foolish; inane; silly; N. fatuity, fatuousness

fauna

animals of a period or region; CF. flora

favoritism

display of partiality toward a favored person

fawning

To be obsequious; flattering someone

faze

disconcert; dismay; embarrass

feasible

practical; able to be carried out; practicable

febrile

feverish

fecundity

fertility; fruitfulness; ADJ. fecund: very productive of crops or young

feebleminded

deficient in intelligence; very stupid

feign

pretend

feint

trick; shift; sham blow; feigned attack to draw away defensive action; V.

felicitous

(of a word or remark) apt; suitably expressed; well chosen

felicity

happiness; appropriateness (of a remark, choice, etc.); quality of being felicitous

feline

of a member of the cat family; N.

fell

cut or knock down (a tree or a person); bring down (with a missile)

felon

person convicted of a grave crime; CF. felony: serious crime

ferment

agitation; commotion (noisy and excited activity); unrest (of a political kind); V. produce by fermentation; undergo fermentation; cause (a state of trouble)

fermentation

chemical reaction that splits complex organic compounds; unrest; agitation

ferocious

fierce; violent; N. ferocity

ferret

drive or hunt out of hiding; hunt with ferrets; drive out (as from a hiding place); expel; uncover or discover by searching; E.g., ferret out the secret; N. small fierce animal which catches rats and rabbits by going into their holes

fertile

producing many young, fruits, or seeds;

fervent

ardent; zealous; hot

fervid

ardent; zealous; hot

fervor

glowing ardor; intensity of feeling; quality of being fervent or fervid; zeal; intense heat

fester

rankle; produce irritation or resentment; (of a cut or wound) generate pus or rot; E.g., His insult festered in my mind for days.

festive

joyous; celebratory; relating to a feast or festival

fete

To honour

A festival or feast

fetid (foetid)

malodorous; foul

fetish(fetich)

object believed to have spiritual powers; object of excessive attention or reverence; CF. fetishism

fetter

shackle; restrict the freedom of; N. chain or shackle for the foot of a prisoner; CF. foot

feud

A bitter quarrel

fiasco

total failure; CF. bottle

fiat

command; arbitrary order; E.g., presidential fiat; CF. let it be done

fickle

changeable (in affections or friendship); faithless

fictitious

imaginary; non-existent; purposely invented to deceive; untrue; E.g., fictitious name/boyfriend; CF. fictional

fideli ty

Root 'fid': to trust

loyalty;

fiend

evil spirit; devil

figment

invention; something invented; imaginary thing; E.g., figment of your imagination

figurative

not literal but metaphorical; using a figure(impression) of speech

figure

written symbols; number; amount represented in numbers; outline or silhouette of a thing or human body; person (well-known); impression; diagram; pattern; group in a dance; E.g., figure of speech; V. calculate with numbers; adorn with figures; app

figurine

small ornamental statuette(very small statue)

filch

steal (things of small value)

filial

pertaining to or befitting a son or daughter; E.g., filial respect

filibuster

block legislation or prevent action in a lawmaking body by making very slow long speeches; N; freebooter

filigree

delicate ornamental lacelike metalwork

filing

particle removed by a file

filth

dirty matter; ADJ. filthy

finale

conclusion; concluding part

finery

beautiful clothes for a special occasion

finesse

delicate skill; V: handle with finesse

finicky

too particular; fussy; difficult to please; too concerned with unimportant details or quality; E.g., finicky about her food

finish

surface texture; completeness of execution

finished

properly made and complete; E.g., finished product/performance

finite

limited

firebrand

piece of burning wood; hothead; troublemaker; person who stirs up trouble

fissure

crevice; crack

fit

sudden outburst of an illness or feeling; convulsion caused by epilepsy

fitful

spasmodic; intermittent; irregular

flaccid

flabby; lacking firmness; weak; E.g., flaccid muscles

flag

droop; grow weak

flagrant

conspicuously wicked, bad, or offensive; blatant; outrageous

flail

move wildly

flair

talent

flamboyant

ornate; highly elaborate; ostentatious; showy; CF. flame

flashy

showy; gaudy; giving a momentary brilliance

flaunt

display ostentatiously; E.g., ‘‘Honey, if you’ve got it, flaunt it !’’

flay

strip off skin; plunder; remove the skin from; criticize harshly

fleck

spot; mark with flecks; N: small mark or spot

fledgling (fledgeling)

inexperienced; N: young bird that has acquired wing feathers and is learning to fly; inexperienced person

fleece

wool coat of a sheep; V: shear the fleece from; rob by a trick; swindle; plunder

fleet

fast; rapid; N. ADJ. fleeting: passing quickly; ephemeral

flick

light stroke as with a whip; V: move with a light quick blow; strike with a light quick blow (as from a whip); E.g., flick the switch

flicker

burn unsteadily or fitfully; move waveringly; N: flickering movement or light; brief sensation; E.g., flicker of excitement

flighty

capricious; often changing

finch

hesitate; shrink back

flip

send spinning, often into the air

flippant

lacking proper seriousness; E.g., flippant remarks about death; N. flippancy

flirt

behave in a way that attracts attention;

flit

fly; fly or move lightly or quickly; dart lightly; pass swiftly by;

floe

flat mass of floating ice

flora

plants of a region or era

florescence

condition or period of flowering

florid

ruddy; (of a complexion) reddish; flowery; very ornate; CF. rose

flotsam

drifting wreckage

flounder

struggle and thrash about; proceed clumsily or falter (as in water, mud, snow, etc.); proceed in confusion

flourish

grow well; prosper; make sweeping gestures; wave; brandish; E.g., The trees flourished in the sun. N: showy movement or gesture; embellishment or ornamentation (esp. in handwriting)

flout

reject; mock; show contempt for; scorn; E.g., flout the rules

flowery

full of flowers; full of ornate expressions

fluctuate

waver; shift; rise and fall as if in waves; change or vary irregularly

fluency

smoothness of speech; ADJ. fluent

fluke

unlikely occurrence; stroke of fortune; accidental stroke of good luck; ADJ. fluky

flush

redden; blush; flow suddenly and abundantly

fluster

confuse; make nervous and confused; N.

fluted

having vertical parallel grooves as in a pillar

flutter

(of a bird with large wings) wave (the wings) lightly, rapidly, and irregularly; vibrate rapidly or erratically; fly by waving quickly; flitter; N.

flux

flowing; series of changes; fluctuation; E.g., in a state of flux

fodder

coarse food for cattle, horses, etc.; feed for livestock; CF. food

foible

small weakness of character; slight fault; CF. feeble

foil

defeat; frustrate; prevent from being successful; thwart; CF. fail

foist

insert improperly; impose upon another by coercion; palm off; pass off as genuine or worthy; CF. fist

foliage

masses of leaves; CF. defoliate

foment

stir up; incite; instigate; promote the growth of (something evil or unpleasant)

foolhardy

To be rash; reckless

foppish

vain about dress and appearance

foray

raid; sudden raid or military advance; V.

forbearance

patience; forgiveness; V. forbear: refrain from (in a generous and forgiving way); be patient; E.g., forbear to send him to prison

ford

place where a river can be crossed on foot; V.

forebears

ancestors

foreboding

premonition of evil; feeling of coming evil; V. forebode: be a warning of (something unpleasant)

forensic

suitable to debate or courts of law; of or used in legal proceedings and the tracking of criminals; E.g., forensic science/medicine

forerunner

predecessor; one that comes before and indicates the approach of another

foreshadow

give an indication beforehand; be a sign of (what is coming); portend; prefigure

foresight

ability to foresee future happenings; prudence in providing for the future

forestall

prevent by taking action in advance

forfeit

something surrendered as punishment for a crime or breach of contract; V: lose as a forfeit; N: forfeiture

forge

counterfeit; reproduce fraudulently; form by heating in a forge and hammering into shape; move with a sudden increase of speed or power; E.g., forged ahead in the last two years; N: furnace where metals are heated

forgo

To give up

forlorn

sad and lonely

formality

adherence to rules; to do something as per the norm

formidable

menacing; arousing fear; threatening; difficult to defeat; E.g., formidable foe/question

forsake

desert; abandon; renounce

forswear

renounce under oath; abandon; make a solemn promise to give up; CF. abjure

forte

strong point or special talent in a person's character

forthcoming

happening in the near future; ready; willing to help; E.g., No answer was forthcoming.

forthright

straightforward; direct; frank

fortitude

bravery; courage; strength of mind

fortuitous

accidental; by chance; N. fortuity

forum

public square of an ancient Roman city; public place for open discussion; court of law

forward

presumptuous or bold

foster

rear; bring up ; to encourage

foul

very bad or disagreeable

founder

person who establishes (an organization or business)

fracas

brawl(noisy quarrel or fight) in which a number of people take part; melee

fractious

unruly; peevish; cranky; bad-tempered; E.g., fractious horse

frail

weak; N. frailty

franchise

right or privilege granted by authority; right to vote; license to sell a product in a particular territory

frantic

wild; distraught as from fear or worry

fraudulent

cheating; deceitful; E.g., fraudulent means; N. fraud: deception; swindle

fray

brawl; fight; V: wear away or unravel by rubbing; have loose threads developing; cause to become worn out (a person's temper or nerves); CF. rub

freebooter

pirate or plunderer who makes war in order to grow rich

frenetic

frenzied; frantic

frenzied

Wildly excited

fresco

painting on wet plaster (usually fresh)

fret

be annoyed or vexed; E.g., fret over your poor grades; N: irritation of mind; ADJ. fretful

friction

clash or conflict in opinion; rubbing against

frieze

ornamental horizontal band on a wall

frigid

intensely cold; cold in manner; E.g., frigid zone

fringe

decorative edge of hanging threads; edge

frisk

move about playfully; frolic; ADJ. frisky: playful

fritter

waste (time or money on unimportant things)

frivolous

lacking in seriousness; flippant; self-indulgently carefree; unworthy of serious attention; relatively unimportant; trivial

frock

long loose garment

frolic

play and jump about happily; frisk; E.g., frolicking young lambs

frolicsome

prankish; gay; playful; merry; frisky

frond

fern leaf; palm or banana leaf

fructify

bear fruit; produce fruit

frugality

thrift; economy; ADJ. frugal: practicing economy; costing little; inexpensive

fruitful

producing results; profitable; prolific; producing in abundance

fruition

bearing of fruit; fulfillment; realization; E.g., come to/be brought to fruition

frustrate

thwart; defeat; prevent from accomplishing a purpose

fuddle

make stupid or confused as with alcoholic drink; N. in a fuddle: confused

fugitive

running away or fleeing as from the law

fulcrum

support on which a lever rests or pivots

fulminate

thunder; explode; issue a severe denunciation

fulsome

disgustingly excessive; offensively flattering; E.g., fulsome praise/expressions of admire

fumble

move the fingers and hands awkwardly (in search of something); mishandle or drop a ball that is in play; bungle; botch; spoil by mishandling; N.

functional

made for practical use only (without decoration); functioning; E.g., functional modern furniture; CF. functionalism

functionary

official (who performs a particular function)

fundamental

basic; primary; essential

funereal

sad; solemn; suitable for a funeral

furor

frenzy; great anger and excitement; CF. fury

furrow

long shallow trench made by a plow; deep wrinkle in the skin; V.

furtive

stealthy; quiet and secret (trying to escape notice); sneaky; E.g., furtive glance

fusillade

simultaneous firing or outburst

fusion

union; coalition; V. fuse

fuss:

trouble or worry over trifles; make nervous; pay too much attention to; N: needless concern or worry (about a trivial thing); anxious nervous condition; display of attention; E.g., make a fuss over the baby

fussy

fastidious; finicky; easily upset

futile

useless; hopeless; ineffectual

gadfly

animal-biting fly; irritating person

gaffe

social blunder

gainsay

deny

gait

manner of walking or running; speed

galaxy

large isolated system of stars, such as the Milky Way; collection of brilliant personalities

gale

windstorm; gust of wind; emotional outburst (laughters, tears); E.g., gale of laughter

gall

annoy; exasperate; chafe; N: skin sore caused by rubbing (as on the skin of a horse); exasperation

galleon

large three-masted sailing ship

galley

low ship with sails (rowed along by slaves)

gallows

framework from which a noose is suspended (used for execution by hanging)

galvanic

of the production of electricity by the action of an acid on a metal

galvanize

stimulate or shock by an electric current; stimulate by shock; shock into action; stir up; coat with rust-resistant zinc by using electricity

gambit

opening in chess in which a piece is sacrificed; action made to produce a future advantage

gambol

romp; skip about; leap about playfully; frolic; N.

gamely

in a spirited manner; with courage; E.g., fight gamely against a superior boxer; ADJ. game

gamut

entire range

gangrene

decay of body tissue caused by insufficient blood supply (usually following injury); ADJ. gangrenous

gape

open widely; open the mouth wide; stare wonderingly with the mouth open; CF. agape

garbled

mixed up; jumbled; distorted; V. garble: mix up or distort (a message) to such an extent as to make misleading or unintelligible

gargantuan

huge; enormous; gigantic

gargoyle

waterspout carved in grotesque figures on a building

garish

overbright in color; unpleasantly bright; gaudy

garner

gather; store up; amass

garnish

decorate; add a garnish to; decorate (food or drink) with small items such as lemon slices; N.

garrulous

loquacious; wordy; talkative; N. garrulity

gastronomy

art and science of preparing and serving good food; CF. gastronome

gauche

clumsy (in social behavior); coarse and uncouth

gaudy

flashy; showy

gaunt

lean and angular; thin and bony; emaciated; barren

gavel

hammerlike tool; mallet(wooden hammer) used by a presiding officer or an auctioneer; V.

gawk

look in open-mouthed awe

gazette

official periodical publication; newspaper

genealogy

record of descent; lineage; ancestry; study of ancestry

generality

vague statement; general statement which is not detailed; quality of being general; greater part; most; E.g., generality of people

generate

cause; produce; create

generic

characteristic of an entire class or species; of a genus

genesis

beginning; origin

geniality

cheerfulness; kindness; sympathy; ADJ. genial: cheerful and good-tempered

genre

particular variety of art or literature

genteel

well-bred; elegant; striving to convey an appearance of refinement; E.g., genteel poverty

gentility

those of gentle birth; high social class; refinement; quality of being genteel

gentle

kindly; soft; mild; of good family

gentry

People of high standing/position

genuflect

bend the knee as in worship

genus

division of animals or plants, below a family and above a species

geriatrics

medical treatment and care of old age

germ

earliest form of an organism; seed or bud; something that may develop into something larger or more important; microbe

germane

pertinent; bearing upon(having connection with) the case at hand; appropriate

germinal

pertaining to a germ; creative; E.g., germinal idea

germinate

cause to sprout; sprout

gerontocracy

government ruled by old people

gerontology

study of the sociological phenomena associated with old age

gerrymander

change voting district lines in order to favor a political party; N. CF. Elbridge Gerry + (sala)mander

gestate

evolve as in prenatal growth; N. gestation: period of development from conception until birth

gesticulation

To make a gesture

ghastly

horrible; terrifying

gibberish

nonsense; nonsensical or unintelligible talk or writing; babbling

gibe

mock; make jeering remarks; N: jeering remarks

giddy

light-hearted; not serious; frivolous; dizzy

gild

cover with a thin layer of gold

gingerly

very carefully; ADJ.

girth

distance around something; circumference

gist

essence; main point; substance

glacial

like a glacier; of an ice age; extremely cold; E.g., glacial epoch; CF. iceberg

glamour

showiness

glare

shine intensely and blindingly; stare fixedly and angrily; N.

glaring

Clear and highly conspicuous; harshly bright; shining intensely a

glaze

cover with a thin and shiny surface; apply a glaze to; N: thin, smooth, shiny coating (as for pottery); E.g., unglazed pottery

gleam

brief flash of light; glow; V.

glean

gather leavings; gather grain left behind by reapers; gather bit by bit (facts or information) often with difficulty

glib

Fluent, but with superficiality; slick or oily

glimmer

shine erratically; twinkle; N: dim or unsteady light; faint indication; E.g., glimmer of hope

glitter

shine brightly with flashing points of light; E.g., glittering diamond ring; N: sparkling light; attractiveness; glamor; E.g., glitter of the sun on the waves

loat

express evil satisfaction; look at or think about with evil satisfaction; view malevolently; E.g., The thief gloated over the stolen jewels.

gloss

brief explanation note or translation of a difficult expression; V.

Gloss over

To dismiss with the intention of hiding faults

glossary

brief explanation of words used in the text

glossy

smooth and shining;

glow

shine brightly

glower

scowl; glare; look or stare angrily

glut

overstock; fill beyond capacity (with food); fill to excess; N: oversupply

glutinous

sticky; viscous; gluey

glutton

someone who eats too much;

gnarl

protruding knot on a tree; V.

gnarled

twisted

gnome

dwarf; underground spirit who guards treasure hoards

goad

urge

gobble

eat very quickly

gorge

stuff oneself (with food); glut; CF. gorgeous: dazzlingly beautiful

gory

bloody; N. gore: blood

gossamer

very fine like a cobweb

gouge

overcharge (with high price); extort from; E.g., gouge the public; CF. usury

gourmand

person who takes pleasure in food and drink

gourmet

connoisseur of food and drink; epicure

gracious

kind in a generous way (to someone less important)

gradation

series of gradual stages; degree in such a progression

graduate

arrange into categories or grades; divide into marked intervals (for use in measurement); E.g., graduated ruler

graduated

arranged by degrees (of height, difficulty, etc.)

granary

storehouse for grain

grandeur

impressiveness; stateliness; majesty

grandiloquent

(of a person or speech) using high sounding or important-sounding language; pompous; bombastic

grandiose

grand; pretentious; big; exaggerated

granulate

form into grains or granules; N. granule: grain or particle

graphic

vividly described

graphite

black form of carbon used in lead pencils

grapple

wrestle; come to grips with; take hold of and struggle with; E.g., grapple with the burglar

grate

make a harsh noise; have an unpleasant effect; shred by rubbing against a rough surface; E.g., grated cheese N: framework of metal bars to hold fuel in a fireplace

gratify

please; satisfy; E.g., gratify a desire

gratis

free; without charge; ADJ.

gratuitous

given freely; unwarranted; uncalled for; done without good reason; E.g., gratuitous comment

gratuity

n. money given to sb who has done one a service; tip

gravity

Root 'grav': heavy

seriousness; ADJ. grave

graze

(of an animal) feed on growing grass; cause (an animal) to feed on grass; scrape (esp. the skin) or touch lightly in passing; brush; E.g., We can't graze the cattle till summer; N: surface wound

gregarious

Root 'greg': group

Group-loving; sociable

grievance

cause of complaint; complaint

grill

question severely;

grim

causing great fear; unrelenting; determined in spite of fear; E.g., grim smile

grimace

facial distortion to show feeling such as pain, disgust, etc; V.

grisly

ghastly; horrifying; E.g., grisly remains of the bodies

groom

man employed to take care of horses; V: make neat and trim; clean and brush (an animal)

groove

long narrow channel made in a surface to guide the movement of something; E.g., groove of the record

gross

total; fragrant; clearly wrong; (of people's behavior) coarse; corpulent; E.g., gross insolence/behavior; V: earn as a total amount; N: 12 dozens

grotesque

fantastic; comically hideous; strange and unnatural (causing fear or amusement)

grotto

small cavern

grouch

A bad-tempered person

grouse

complain; fuss; grumble; grouch; N: plump chickenlike game bird

grovel

crawl or creep on ground; remain prostrate; behave in a servile manner

growl

Low menacing sound made by dogs

grudge

deep feeling of dislike; E.g., grudge fight; V.

grudging

unwilling; reluctant; stingy(giving reluctantly)

gruel

thin liquid porridge

gruelling

exhausting;

gruesome

grisly; horrible

gruff

rough-mannered; rough voice

grumble

complain; mutter discontentedly; grouch; N.

grunt

utter a deep guttural sound (as a pig does); N.

guffaw

boisterous laughter; V.

guile

deceit; duplicity; wiliness; cunning; E.g., persuade her by guile

guileless

without deceit

guise

outward appearance; costume; E.g., in a new guise

gull

trick; deceive; hoodwink; N: person who is easily tricked; dupe

gullible

easily deceived

gush

pour out in large quantities

gust

strong abrupt rush of wind; V. CF. bluster

gustatory

affecting or relating to the sense of taste

gusto

eager enjoyment; zest; enthusiasm

gusty

windy

guy

cable or chain attached to something that needs to be braced or steadied; CF. guide

gyroscope

apparatus used to maintain balance, ascertain direction, etc.

habitat

natural home of a plant or animal; CF. habitation

habituate

accustom or familiarize; addict

hackles

hair on back and neck

hackneyed

commonplace; trite

haggard

wasted away; gaunt; E.g., haggard faces of the rescued miners

haggle

argue about prices (in an attempt to bargain)

hail

frozen rain drop; V: salute or greet; precipitate hail

halcyon

calm; peaceful; E.g., halcyon days

Refer to the chapters on 'Improving Vocabulary through knowing the Stories behind Words'

hale

healthy

Half-hearted

Not putting full effort; demonstrating only little interest or enthusiasm

hallowed

blessed; consecrated; E.g., hallowed ground

hallucination

delusion

halting

hesitant; faltering; not fluent;

hamper

obstruct; prevent the free movement of;

handsome

large in quantity; generous; E.g., handsome reward

hap

chance; luck

haphazard

random; by chance; happening in an unplanned manner; E.g., haphazard growth of the town

hapless

unfortunate; luckless

harangue

long, passionate, and vehement speech; V.

harass

annoy by repeated attacks

harbinger

forerunner (which foreshadows what is to come)

harbour

give protection

hardy

(of people or animals) sturdy; robust; (of plants) able to stand inclement(stormy) weather

harping

tiresome dwelling on a subject; V. harp: dwell on(think or speak a lot about) tediously

harrowing

agonizing; distressing; traumatic;

harry

harass, annoy, torment (by repeated attacks); raid

hatch

deck opening; lid covering a deck opening; V: emerge from an egg; produce (young) from an egg

haughtiness

pride; arrogance; ADJ. haughty

haunt

(of a spirit) visit (a place); come to mind continually; visit (a place) regularly; frequent; E.g., haunted house; E.g., haunted by his last words; N: place much frequented

haven

place of safety; refuge; harbor; E.g., tax haven

havoc

widespread damage; disorder; chaos

hazard

venture; put in danger; risk; E.g., hazard a guess; N: possible source of danger

hazardous

dangerous

hazy

slightly obscure; misty; unclear; N. haze: light mist or smoke; confused state of mind

headfirst

moving with the head leading; headlong

headlong

hasty; rash; headfirst; ADV.

headstrong

willful; stubborn; unyielding; determined to have one's own way; CF. no 'excessive'

healthful

conducive to good health; E.g., healthful mountain air

healthy

possessing good health; healthful

heckler

person who verbally harasses others; V. heckle: verbally harass as with gibes (by interrupting a speaker or speech)

hedonist

one who believes that pleasure is the sole aim in life; CF. hedonism: practice of living one's life purely for pleasure

heed

pay attention to; N: close attention

heedless

not noticing; disregarding

hegemony

dominance especially of one nation over others

heinous

atrocious; wicked; hatefully bad; E.g., heinous crime

helm

steering wheel of a ship; position of control

hem

surround tightly so that movement is impossible; E.g., hem in; N.

herald

messenger; sign of something to come; V: announce; proclaim; E.g., unheralded researcher

herbivorous

grain-eating; CF. herbivore

herd

group of animals; crowd; one who looks after a herd; E.g., shepherd/goatherd; E.g., herd instinct; E.g., herdsman; V: come together in a herd; look after a herd; E.g., herd cattle

hereafter

life after death

heresy

opinion contrary to popular belief; opinion contrary to accepted religion; ADJ. heretical; CF. heretic

hermetic

concerning alchemy or magic; obscure and mysterious; occult

hermitage

home of a hermit

herpetologist

one who studies reptiles; CF. herpetology: branch of zoology that deals with reptiles and amphibians

heterodox

(of beliefs) against accepted opinion; unorthodox; unconventional

heterogeneous

dissimilar; mixed; not homogeneous; consisting of dissimilar elements or plants

hew

cut to pieces with ax or sword; chop; N.

heyday

time of greatest success or power; prime

hiatus

gap; pause; gap or interruption in space or time; break

hibernal

wintery; wintry; of or like winter

hibernate

sleep throughout the winter; N. hibernation

hide

skin of an animal

hideous

repulsive to the sight; ugly; repugnant; E.g., hideous face/scream

hierarchy

arrangement by rank or standing

hieroglyphic

picture writing; ADJ.

high-flown

highly pretentious or inflated

hilarity

boisterous mirth(merriment; laughter); ADJ. hilarious: full of laughter

hindmost

furthest behind; farthest to the rear

hindrance

block; obstacle; V. hinder

hindsight

understanding the nature of an event after it has actually happened

hinterlands

back country; inner part of a country; OP. foreland

hireling

one who serves for hire (usually used contemptuously); one who works solely for compensation; E.g., hireling politician

hirsute

hairy; having a lot of hair

historic

important in history; E.g., historic battle

historical

connected with history; based on events in history (whether regarded as important or not)

histrionic

theatrical; excessively dramatic or emotional; affected; of actors or acting; N. histrionics: histrionic behavior

hive

box for bees; V: cause to go in a hive

hoard

stockpile; accumulate for future use; N: supply stored for future use

hoary

white with age

hoax

trick which makes someone take action; practical joke; E.g., hoax mail; V.

holster

leather pistol case (that hangs on a belt around the waist)

homage

honor; tribute; great respect; E.g., pay/do homage to

homely

not good-looking; unattractive

homeostasis

tendency of a system or organism to maintain relative stability or internal equilibrium

homespun

domestic; made at home

homily

sermon; tedious moralizing lecture; serious warning; ADJ. homiletic

homogeneous

of the same kind; uniform in composition throughout

hone

sharpen (a tool); N: whetstone for sharpening a tool

hoodwink

deceive; delude

horde

crowd; swarm

horoscope

diagram of the positions of stars at a given moment used by astrologers

hortatory

encouraging; exhortive; marked by exhortation; CF. exhort

horticultural

pertaining to cultivation of gardens; N. horticulture: science or art of cultivating fruits, vegetables, or ornamental plants; CF. agriculture: science or art of farming or growing crops

hostage

person who is kept as a prisoner by an enemy so that the other side will do what the enemy demands

hostility

unfriendliness; hatred; enmity; ADJ. hostile

hothead

person who does things too quickly without thinking; ADJ. hotheaded

hovel

shack; small wretched house

hover

hang about; (of birds or aircraft) stay in the air in one place; (of people) wait nearby; stay around one place; waver; be in an uncertain state

hubbub

confused uproar; loud noise; din

hubris

arrogance; excessive self-conceit

hue

color; aspect; E.g., opinions of every hue

Hue and cry

loud noise or protest

hull

husk; dry outer covering of a seed; frame or body of a ship

humane

marked by kindness or consideration; kind and compassionate; humanitarian

humanitarian

one devoted to the promotion of human welfare

humble

of low rank or position

humdrum

dull; monotonous

humid

damp; N. humidity

humility

humbleness of spirit

hummock

small hill; hillock

humor

indulge; comply with the wishes of; N. quality that makes something amusing; state of mind; mood;; E.g., out of humor

humus

substance or rich soil formed by decaying vegetable matter; CF. soil

hurl

throw forcefully; shout out violently

hurtle

crash; rush; move with great speed; E.g., hurtling runaway train

husband

use sparingly; conserve; save; E.g., husband one's energy; CF. house holder

husbandry

frugality; thrift; economy; agriculture; farming; E.g., animal husbandry; CF. husbandman

hut

crude dwelling; shack

hybrid

mongrel; mixed breed; V. hybridize

hydrophobia

Root 'hydro': water

Root 'phobe': to dislike

fear of water; rabies

hygiene

science and practice of the promotion and preservation of health

hyperbole

Root 'hyper': more

exaggeration; overstatement; ADJ. hyperbolic: of hyperbole; of a hyperbola

hypercritical

Root 'hyper': more excessively exacting; too critical (without noticing good qualities)

hypnosis

induced sleeping state; ADJ. hypnotic; V. hypnotize

hypochondriac

Root 'hypo': less

person unduly worried about his health; worrier without cause about illness; ADJ. CF. hypochondria: neurosis that one is or is becoming ill; CF. abdomen

hypocritical

pretending to be virtuous; deceiving; N. hypocrisy: profession of beliefs one does not possess; CF. hypocrite

hypothetical

based on assumptions or hypotheses; supposed; N. hypothesis

hysteria

excessive or uncontrollable excitement; N. hysteric: person suffering from hysteria; CF. hysterics: attack of hysteria

icon

religious image; idol; image or representation

iconoclastic

attacking cherished traditions; N. iconoclast: one who attacks traditional ideas; one who destroys sacred images

ideology

system of ideas characteristic of a group or culture

idiom

expression whose meaning as a whole differs from the meanings of its individual words

idiosyncrasy

individual trait; behavioural peculiarity; eccentricity

idle

not working; not employed or busy; lazy

idolatry

worship of idols; excessive admiration or devotion; ADJ. idolatrous

idyllic

charmingly carefree; simple and happy; E.g., idyllic scene

igneous

produced by fire; of fire; volcanic; (of rocks) formed from lava; E.g., igneous meteorite

ignite

kindle; light; catch fire or set fire to

ignoble

unworthy; not noble; dishonorable; E.g., ignoble deed

ignominy

deep disgrace; shame or dishonor; ADJ. ignominious; E.g., ignominious defeat

illicit

illegal

illimitable

infinite; limitless

illuminate

brighten; clear up or make understandable; enlighten; enable to understand; E.g., illuminating remarks

illusion

misleading vision or visual image; false idea or belief; CF. delusion

illusive

deceiving; based on illusion; causing illusion; deceptive

illusory

illusive; deceptive; not real

imbalance

lack of balance or symmetry; disproportion

imbecility

weakness of mind; state of being an imbecile; N. imbecile: stupid person; fool

imbibe

Root 'im/in': into
drink in

imbroglio

Root 'im/in': into
complicated situation (as in a play); painful or complex misunderstanding (as in a play); entanglement;
confused mass (as of papers); V. embroil

imbue

Root 'im/in': into
saturate(soak thoroughly); fill; E.g., imbue someone with feelings

immaculate

spotless; flawless; absolutely clean

imminent

Root 'im/in': into
impending; near at hand

immobility

state of being immovable

immolate

offer or kill as a sacrifice (by fire)

immune

Root 'im/in': into
resistant to; free or exempt from; N. immunity

immure

imprison; shut up in confinement; CF. wall

immutable

unchangeable

impair

injure; hurt; damage

impale

Root 'im/in': into
pierce (with a sharp point); E.g., impaled by the spear

impalpable

Root 'im/in': into
imperceptible(not easily understood); intangible; OP. palpable: tangible; easily perceptible

impart

Root 'im/in': into
grant a share of; make known; E.g., news to impart

impartial

not biased; fair; N. impartiality

impassable

Root 'im/in': into
not able to be traveled or crossed

impasse

Root 'im/in': into
predicament(dangerous condition) from which there is no escape; situation allowing for no further progress

impassioned

Root 'im/in': into
filled with passion; fervent

impassive

without feeling; expressionless; imperturbable; stoical; E.g., impassive face

impeach

charge (a public official) with crime in office; raise doubts about; indict; E.g., impeach a witness's credibility

impeccable

faultless

impecunious

without money

impede

hide; retard or obstruct the progress of; block

impediment

hindrance; stumbling-block; speech defect preventing clear articulation;

impel

drive or force onward; drive to take action; urge to action

impending

Root 'im/in': into
nearing; approaching; about to happen

impenetrable

Root 'im/in': into
not able to be pierced or entered into; beyond understanding; impossible to understand; E.g., impenetrable mystery

impenitent

not repentant

imperative

absolutely necessary; that must be done; critically important; expressing command; E.g., It is imperative that; N: something that must be done

imperceptible

Root 'im/in': into
unnoticeable; impossible to perceive; undetectable

imperial

like an emperor; related to an empire; CF. imperialism

imperil

put in danger

imperious

domineering; too commanding; haughty; CF. imperial/emperor

impermeable

impervious; not permitting passage through its substance; impossible to permeate

impersonal

not being a person; not showing personal feelings; E.g., impersonal force/manner/organization

impertinent

insolent; rude; not pertinent; N. impertinence

imperturbable

unshakably calm; placid

impervious

Root 'im/in': into

impenetrable; incapable of being damaged or distressed; incapable of being affected (in one's opinions); E.g., impervious to water/criticism

impetuous

violent; hasty; rash; impulsive; without careful thought; E.g., impetuous decision

impetus

moving force; momentum; force of a moving body; incentive; stimulus; impulse

impiety

irreverence; lack of respect for God or piety

impinge

infringe; encroach; influence; touch; collide with; E.g., The effects are impinging on every aspect of our lives.

impious

irreverent

implacable

incapable of being pacified; impossible to appease; E.g., implacable enemy

implausible

unlikely (to be true); unbelievable; E.g., implausible alibi

implement

put into effect; enforce; carry out; supply with tools; E.g., implement the plan/suggestion; N: tool or instrument

implicate

incriminate; involve incriminatingly; show to be involved (in a crime); E.g., implicate someone in the crime

implication

something hinted at or suggested; implying; implicating

implicit

understood but not stated; implied; unquestioning and complete; E.g., implicit trust

implode

Root 'im/in': into

burst inward;

implore

v. ask or beg earnestly; beseech

imply

suggest a meaning not expressed; signify

impolitic

not wise; not expedient; not politic

imponderable

weightless; that cannot undergo precise evaluation; CF. pound

import

significance; importance; meaning

importunate

urging; always demanding; troublesomely urgent or persistent

importune

beg persistently; make repeated requests (in an annoying way)

imposture

assuming a false identity; masquerade; CF. impostor

impotent

weak; ineffective; lacking in physical strength or power

impoverish

make poor; deprive of natural strength or something important; E.g., impoverished soil

imprecation

curse; swearword

impregnable

Root 'im/in': into

impossible to capture or enter into by force

impregnate

Root 'im/in': into

make pregnant; fill thoroughly; saturate

impromptu

Root 'im/in': not

without previous preparation; off the cuff

impropriety

Root 'im/in': not

Not proper;

improvident

Root 'im/in': not

thrifless; not providing for the future

improvise

compose on the spur of the moment

imprudent

Root 'im/in': not

lacking caution; not prudent; injudicious

impudence

impertinence; insolence

impugn

Root 'im/in': not

dispute or contradict (often in an insulting way);

impuissance

Root 'im/in': not

powerlessness; feebleness

impunity

freedom from punishment or harm; CF. punish

impute

attribute; ascribe; charge; N. imputation

inadvertently

Root 'im/in': not
unintentionally; by oversight; carelessly

inalienable

Root 'im/in': not
not to be taken away;

inamorata

woman whom a man loves

inane

silly; senseless; E.g., inane remarks; N. inanity

inanimate

Root 'im/in': not
lifeless; not animate

inarticulate

Root 'im/in': not
speechless; producing indistinct speech

inaugurate

Root 'in': into
Bstart; begin

incandescent

strikingly bright; shining with intense heat; emitting visible light when heated; E.g., incandescent light bulb; CF. candle

incantation

singing or chanting of magic spells;

incapacitate

Root 'im/in': not
disable; N. incapacity: lack of capacity

incarcerate

Root 'in': into
Put into prison

incarnate

Root 'in': into
endowed with flesh; invested with bodily form

incarnation

Root 'in': into
Getting into a human body

incendiary

arsonist; ADJ. causing fire; of arson; E.g., incendiary bomb

incense

enrage; infuriate

incentive

spur; motive; something which encourages one to greater activity

inception

start; beginning

incessant

Root 'im/in': not
Not stopping/unceasing

inchoate

recently begun; not explicit; at the beginning of development; rudimentary; elementary; E.g., inchoate mass

incidence

rate of occurrence; particular occurrence; E.g., high incidence of infant mortality

incident

event; event that causes a crisis

incidental

Root 'im/in': not

not essential; minor; N: something incidental

incinerate

burn to ashes

incipient

beginning; in an early stage

incisive

Root 'in': into

appreciatively) cutting; make a cut into

incite

Root 'in': into

arouse into action; motivate

inclement

Root 'im/in': not

Not kind; unmerciful;

incline

slope; slant;

inclined

Root 'in': into

tending or leaning into/toward

inclusive

Root 'in': into

tending to include all;

incognito

Root 'cog': to know

with identity concealed; using an assumed name; ADJ.

incoherent

Root 'im/in': not

Not clear; unintelligible; muddled; unable to express one's thoughts in a clear manner;

incommodious

Root 'im/in': not

not spacious; inconvenient

incompatible

Root 'im/in': not

inharmonious;

incongruity

Root 'im/in': not

lack of harmony

inconsequential

Root 'im/in': not

insignificant; unimportant

inconsistency

Root 'im/in': not

lack of uniformity

incontinent

Root 'im/in': not
lacking self-restraint; not continent; licentious

incontrovertible

Root 'im/in': not
Not disputable; impossible to dispute; not open to question; unquestionable

incorporate

Root 'in': into
introduce something into a larger whole; include; embody; give material form to; ADJ.

incorporeal

Root 'im/in': not
without a material body; insubstantial

incorrigible

Root 'im/in': not
uncorrectable

incredulity

Root 'im/in': not
Not believing

incredulous

Root 'im/in': not
Not believing/sceptical;

increment

increase

incriminate

accuse of or implicate in a crime; serve as evidence against

incrustation

hard coating or crust; V. incrust: encrust; cover with a crust

incubate

hatch;

incubus

burden

inculcate

Root 'in': into
instill

incumbent

Root 'in': into
currently holding an office;

incur

bring upon oneself

incursion

Root 'in': into
temporary invasion;

indecision

Root 'im/in': not
irresolution; inability to make up one's mind

indecisive

Root 'im/in': not
marked by indecision; inconclusive; E.g., indecisive battle

indefatigable

Root 'im/in': not
tireless; untiring; showing no sign of getting tired

indelible

Root 'im/in': not
not able to be erased

indemnify

Root 'im/in': not
make secure against damage or loss; compensate for damage or loss; CF. make uninjured

indentation

Root 'in': into
notch; deep recess into some material;

indeterminate

Root 'im/in': not
uncertain; not clearly fixed; indefinite

indicative

suggestive; implying; serving to indicate

indices

signs;

indict

charge; N. indictment

indifferent

Root 'im/in': not
Not concerned over

indigence

poverty

indigenous

native;

indigent

poor; destitute

indignation

anger at an injustice;

indignity

Root 'im/in': not
treatment or situation that causes shame or loss of dignity

indiscriminate

Root 'im/in': not
choosing at random; confused; not based on careful distinctions

indisputable

Root 'im/in': not
too certain to be disputed; beyond doubt

indissoluble

Root 'im/in': not
permanent; impossible to dissolve or disintegrate

indite

write; compose

indoctrinate

Root 'in': into
cause to accept a doctrine without questioning

indolent

lazy

indomitable

Root 'im/in': not

unconquerable; unyielding

indubitable

Root 'im/in': not

Not to be doubted;

induce

Root 'in': into

persuade; lead to do something; bring about; N. inducement

induct

Bring in; install;

inductive

pertaining to induction or proceeding from the specific to the general

indulge

yield to; gratify;

indulgent

lenient;

industrious

diligent; hard-working; N. industry

inebriate

make drunk; intoxicate; N. intoxicated person

inebriated

habitually intoxicated; drunk; N. inebriety

ineffable

Root 'im/in': not

unutterable; not to be uttered; taboo;

ineffectual

Root 'im/in': not

not effective; not having a desired effect; weak

ineluctable

Root 'im/in': not

irresistible; not to be escaped; unavoidable

inept

Root 'im/in': not

Not appropriate

inequity

Root 'im/in': not

Not fairness;

inerrancy

Root 'im/in': not

infallibility

inert

Root 'im/in': not

Not active; lacking power

inestimable

Root 'im/in': not

impossible to estimate;

inevitable

Root 'im/in': not
unavoidable

inexorable

Root 'im/in': not
relentless; unyielding

inextricable

Root 'im/in': not
from which it is impossible to break free

infallible

Root 'im/in': not
unerring; never making mistakes

infamous

notorious; well known, but in a negative way

infantile

childish; infant-like

infer

deduce; conclude; N. inference

infernal

pertaining to hell; devilish; N. inferno: place of fiery heat or destruction

infest

inhabit in numbers large enough to be harmful;

infidel

unbeliever

infiltrate

Root 'in': into
penetrate or enter

infinitesimal

very small

infirmity

Root 'im/in': not
Not firm; weakness

inflated

exaggerated; pompous; enlarged

influx

Root 'in': into
flowing into

infraction

breach

infringe

violate (a law); encroach

ingenious

marked by inventive skill; clever; resourceful; N. ingenuity

ingenuous

naive and trusting; young; unsophisticated; candid

ingrained

Root 'in': into
deeply established into; firmly rooted;

ingrate

ungrateful person (not expressing thanks)

ingratiate

Root 'in': into

become popular with; bring into favour of another;

inherent

Root 'in': into

firmly established by nature or habit into

inhibit

restrain;

inhibited

unable to express what one really feels

inimical

Root 'im/in': not

unfriendly; hostile;

inimitable

Root 'im/in': not

matchless; not able to be imitated

iniquitous

Root 'im/in': not

Not righteous;

initiate

begin;

injurious

harmful; causing injury

inkling

hint; slight indication

innate

Root 'in': into

inborn

innocuous

Root 'im/in': not

Not harmful

innovation

something new

innuendo

indirect or subtle (derogatory) hint; insinuation; E.g., sexual innuendo

inopportune

Root 'im/in': not

untimely; inappropriate or ill-timed; poorly chosen

inordinate

Root 'im/in': not

beyond reasonable limits; unrestrained; excessive; E.g., inordinate demands

inquisitive

eager for knowledge;

inquisitor

questioner (especially harsh); investigator;

inroad

Root 'in': into

Invasion into;

insalubrious

Root 'im/in': not

unwholesome; not healthful; E.g., insalubrious place

insatiable

Root 'im/in': not

not easily satisfied; unquenchable; E.g., insatiable appetite

inscrutable

Root 'im/in': not

difficult to understand; impenetrable; not readily understood; mysterious

insensate

Root 'im/in': not

without feeling; lacking sense; foolish

insensible

Root 'im/in': not

unconscious; not sensing

insidious

treacherous; stealthy;

insightful

Root 'in': into

discerning; perceptive

insinuate

hint; imply; suggest indirectly;

insipid

Root 'im/in': not

lacking in flavor; lacking interest; dull; E.g., insipid food/character

insolence

impudent disrespect; haughtiness; ADJ. insolent; CF. haughty + rude

insolvent

Root 'im/in': not

Not solvent; bankrupt;

insomnia

Root 'im/in': not

inability to sleep

insouciant

Root 'im/in': not

without concern or care; unconcerned; indifferent

instigate

start; urge; provoke; incite;

institute

organization for a special purpose; V: establish

institution

instituting; established custom,

institutionalize

make into an institution; put or confine in an institution

insubordination

disobedience; rebelliousness; ADJ. insubordinate

insubstantial

Root 'im/in': not
lacking substance; insignificant; frail; immaterial

insularity

Root 'im/in': not
narrow-mindedness; isolation;

insuperable

Root 'im/in': not
insurmountable; unbeatable;

insurgent

rebellious; N.

insurmountable

Root 'im/in': not
overwhelming; unbeatable; insuperable

insurrection

rebellion; uprising

intangible

Root 'im/in': not
not able to be perceived by touch; vague

integral

necessary

integrate

To bring together

integrity

honesty; uprightness; wholeness; state of being whole and undivided; completeness

intellect

higher mental powers; person of great intellectual ability

intelligentsia

intellectuals; members of the educated elite (often used derogatorily)

inter

bury; N. interment

interdict

Root 'inter': between/among
prohibit; forbid; N.

interim

Root 'inter': between/among
meantime;

interjection

Root 'inter': between/among
exclamation; E.g., "Ouch"

interloper

Root 'inter': between/among
intruder; one who interferes

intermediary

Root 'inter': between/among
intermediate; acting as a mediator; N: mediator; go-between

interminable

endless

intermittent

Root 'inter': between/among
periodic; on and off; stopping and starting at intervals

internecine

mutually destructive

interpolate

Root 'inter': between/among
insert between

interregnum

Root 'inter': between/among
period between two successive reigns or governments

interrogate

Root 'inter': between/among
question closely; cross-examine; cross-question

interstice

Root 'inter': between/among
narrow space between things

intervene

Root 'inter': between/among
come between; interfere; E.g., intervened to prevent a fight; N. intervention

intimate

hint; suggest; imply; ADJ. marked by close relationship; familiar; private; personal; E.g., intimate knowledge/thoughts in the diary; N: close friend or confidant; CF. intimacy

intimidate

frighten; N. intimidation

intolerant

not willing to accept ways of thinking different from one's own; CF. tolerant; CF. tolerate

intoxicate

make drunk; stimulate or excite; E.g., intoxicated by all the money he might win

intractable

unruly; difficult to manage; E.g., intractable problem/child

intransigence

refusal of any compromise; stubbornness; ADJ. intransigent: uncompromising

intrepid

fearless

intrigue

make secret plans; plot; arouse the curiosity of; N: secret scheme; plot; secret love affair

intrinsic

Root 'intro': inward/into
inherent; built-in

introspective

Root 'intro': inward/into
looking within oneself; N. introspection: self-examination

introvert

Root 'intro': inward/into
one who is introspective or inclined to think more about oneself; ADJ. introverted

intrude

put or force in without being asked; trespass; enter as an uninvited person; E.g., intrude one's own opinion into the report; CF. thrust in

intuition

Root 'intro': inward/into

immediate insight; power of knowing without reasoning; ADJ. intuitive; V. intuit: know by intuition

inundate

flood; overflow; submerge; cover completely; E.g., inundated with work

inured

Root 'intro': inward/into

accustomed; hardened;

invalid

Root 'intro': inward/into

one incapacitated by a chronic illness;

invalidate

Root 'intro': inward/into

weaken; destroy; make invalid; nullify

invective

abuse

inveigh

denounce; utter censure or invective;

inveigle

deceive; lead astray

inverse

opposite

invert

turn upside down or inside out; reverse the position or condition of

inveterate

Happening often; deep-rooted; habitual

invidious

designed to create ill will or envy; tending to rouse ill will or envy;

invincible

unconquerable

inviolable

secure from corruption, attack, or violation (or profanation); unassailable; E.g., inviolable oath/rights;
N. inviolability

invocation

To call upon; a prayer for help

invoke

To call on

invulnerable

incapable of injury; impossible to damage or injure

iota

very small quantity

irascible

irritable; easily angered

irate

angry

iridescent

exhibiting rainbow-like colors;

irksome

annoying; tedious; V. irk: annoy

ironic

occurring in an unexpected and contrary manner

irony

hidden sarcasm or satire; use of words that seem to mean the opposite of what they actually mean

irreconcilable

Root 'ir': not

impossible to reconcile; incompatible; not able to be resolved

irrefutable

Root 'ir': not

indisputable; undeniable

irrelevant

Root 'ir': not

not applicable; unrelated

irremediable

Root 'ir': not

impossible to correct

irreparable

Root 'ir': not

not able to be corrected or repaired;

irrepressible

Root 'ir': not

unable to be restrained or held back; impossible to hold back

irreproachable

Root 'ir': not

blameless; impeccable;

irresolute

Root 'ir': not

Not certain; lacking in resolution

irretrievable

Root 'ir': not

impossible to recover

irreverence

Root 'ir': not

lack of respect

irrevocable

Root 'ir': not

impossible to revoke or change

isotope

varying from of an element

isthmus

narrow neck of land connecting two larger bodies of land

itinerant

wandering; traveling from place to place (to perform work); E.g., itinerant preacher

itinerary

plan of a trip; record of a trip

jab

poke abruptly with something sharp; punch with short blows

jabber

chatter rapidly or unintelligibly

jaded

tired or uninterested by surfeit; fatigued; surfeited; worn out; wearied; E.g., jaded appetite

jargon

language used by special group; technical terminology; gibberish; nonsensical or incoherent talk

jaundice

medical condition in which the skin, the white part of the eyes, etc. turn yellow; V: affect with jaundice; affect with prejudice, envy, or hostility; bias

jaundiced

yellowed; prejudiced (envious, hostile, or resentful) from long and disappointing experience of human affairs; E.g., with a jaundiced eye

jaunt

trip; short journey

jaunty

cheerful and pleased with life; lighthearted; animated; easy and carefree; dapper in appearance; E.g., jaunty person/hat

jeopardize

endanger; imperil; put at risk; N. jeopardy: danger

jest

playful remark or act; V. act or speak playfully

jetsam

things thrown from a ship (to lighten the ship)

jettison

throw overboard (from a ship or plane)

jibe

agree; be in harmony with; gibe

jingoist

extremely aggressive and militant patriot; warlike chauvinist; N. jingoism: extreme nationalism

jocose

Tending to joke

jocular

said or done in jest or playfully; marked by joking

jocund

merry

jollity

gaiety; cheerfulness; ADJ. jolly: merry; gay

jostle

shove; bump; push against (someone) rather roughly; E.g., jostled by the crowds

jovial

good-natured; merry; cheerful

jubilation

rejoicing; great joy

judiciary

judicial branch of government

judicious

sound on judgment; wise

jug

pitcher; container for holding liquids

juggernaut

irresistible crushing force; overwhelming advancing force that crushes everything in its path

jumble

mix in a confused way

juncture

crisis; point in time; joining point; joint; act of joining

junket

trip especially one taken for pleasure by an official at public expense

junta

group of persons joined in political intrigue; cabal; group of military officers ruling a country after seizing power (by force)

juridical

of the law and its administration; CF. judicial: of courts of law; CF. judiciary

jurisdiction

right and power to apply the law; authority

jurisprudence

science of law

juxtapose

place side by side; CF. next

kaleidoscope

tube in which patterns made by the reflection in mirrors of colored pieces of glass

ken

range of knowledge; E.g., beyond one's ken

kernel

central or vital part; core; whole seed (as of corn)

killjoy

grouch; spoilsport; one who intentionally spoils the pleasure of others

kindle

start a fire; ignite; inspire; arouse

kindred

related; belonging to the same group; similar in nature or character; E.g., kindred languages; N: relative; kin; kinship

kinetic

producing motion; of motion

kismet

fate; destiny; E.g., Kismet is the Arabic word for fate.

kleptomaniac

person who has a compulsive desire to steal

knack

special talent; art

knave

untrustworthy person; rogue; scoundrel; jack; N. knavery

knead

mix; work dough; mix and work into a uniform mass (with the hands); E.g., knead dough

kneel

go down on one's knee(s)

knell

tolling of a bell especially to indicate a funeral, disaster, etc.; sound of the funeral bell; V.

knit

contract into wrinkles; grow together; join together closely; make (a fabric or garment) by intertwining yarn or thread; E.g., knit the brow; E.g., The bones should knit together in a few weeks.

knoll

little round hill; hillock

knotty

intricate; difficult; tangled; CF. knot

kudos

honor; glory; acclaim or praise for exceptional achievement

labile

likely to change; unstable; E.g., emotionally labile; N. lability

laborious

demanding much work or care; tedious

labyrinth

maze

lace

cord used to draw and tie together two opposite edges (as of a shoe); delicate fabric made of fine threads; V: draw together by tying a lace

laceration

torn ragged wound; V. lacerate: tear (the skin as with broken glass); wound

lachrymose

producing tears; tearful

lackadaisical

lacking interest or effort; lacking purpose or zest; lazy; halfhearted; languid

lackluster

lacking luster(shine; gloss); dull

laconic

brief and to the point; using few words; terse

Refer to the chapters on 'Improving Vocabulary through knowing the Stories behind Words'

lag

move or develop more slowly; straggle; E.g., lag behind the rest; N.

laggard

slow; sluggish; N: one who lags; straggler

lagoon

shallow body of water or lake near a sea; lake separated from a sea by sandbars or coral reefs

laity

laypersons; laymen; persons not connected with the clergy

lament

grieve; express sorrow; N. lamentation

lampoon

ridicule; N: written attack ridiculing or satirizing a person, group, or institution

lance

pierce with a lance; cut into; N: spearlike weapon

lancet

small surgical tool for making incisions

languid

lacking energy or vitality; weary; sluggish; listless

languish

lose animation or strength

languor

lack of physical or mental energy; lassitude; depression

lank

long and thin; E.g., Lank, gaunt, Abraham Lincoln

lap

take in food or drink with one's tongue; splash gently; E.g., waves lapping the shore; N: front area from the waist to the knees of a seated person

larceny

theft; E.g., petit larceny

larder

pantry; place where food is kept

largess

generous gift (given to people who do not have enough)

lascivious

lustful

lassitude

languor; weariness; listlessness

latch

fastening or lock consisting of a movable bar that fits into a notch; V: close with a latch

latent

present but not yet noticeable or active; dormant; hidden; N: latency; CF. potential

lateral

of or coming from the side

latitude

freedom from narrow limitations

laud

praise

lavish

liberal; wasteful; generous or wasteful in giving or using; abundant; profuse; great; E.g., decorated lavishly; V. give in abundance

lax

careless; negligent; not paying enough attention; E.g., lax service

layman

man who is not an expert

leash

restraining rope fastened to the collar of an animal (to control it); E.g., a dog on a leash

leaven

add leaven to; cause to rise or grow lighter; enliven; N: agent, such as yeast, that causes dough to rise (by fermentation); element that lightens or enlivens

leave-taking

farewell or departure

lechery

gross lewdness; lustfulness; ADJ. lecherous; N. lecher: lecherous man

lectern

reading desk or stand for a public speaker

leery

(of someone) suspicious; wary; cautious

leeway

room to move; margin; latitude; E.g., leeway for the deadline

legacy

gift made by a will; something handed down from an ancestor

legato

(of music) played smoothly

legend

explanatory list of symbols on a map

legerdemain

sleight(dexterity) of hand; CF. light of hand

legislature

legislating branch of government; CF. legislate: make laws

leniency

mildness; permissiveness; ADJ. lenient: not severe in judgment or punishment

leonine

like a lion

lethal

deadly

lethargic

drowsy; dull; N. lethargy: state of sluggishness and inactivity

levee

earthen or stone embankment to prevent flooding; CF. raise

levitate

rise and float in the air (especially by magical means); CF. light

levity

lack of seriousness or steadiness; frivolity; lightness of manner

levy

impose (a fine); collect (a payment); impose or collect (a tax); E.g., levy a tax on tobacco

lewd

lustful

lexicographer

compiler of a dictionary

lexicon

dictionary

liability

drawback; handicap; debts; obligation; responsibility; condition of being liable; ADJ. liable: likely; responsible (for paying)

liaison

communication between groups

libel

defamatory written statement; act of writing something that smears a person's character; V. ADJ. libelous

libertine

debauched person; dissolute or licentious person; rou\`e; CF. free

libidinous

lustful

libido

psychic and emotional energy or urges behind human activity; sexual desire

libretto

text of an opera or oratorio; CF. book

license

official or legal permission; latitude of action or speech; excessive freedom that causes harm or damage; V.

licentious

amoral; lewd and lascivious; unrestrained

lien

legal claim or right on a property

ligneous

like wood

lilliputian

extremely small; CF. Lilliput in Gulliver's Travels

limber

flexible; supple; pliable; V.

limbo

region near heaven or hell where certain souls are kept; prison (slang); E.g., Purgatory and Limbo

limn

draw; outline; describe; CF. line?

limp

walk lamely; ADJ: lacking firmness; weak

limpid

crystal clear

lineage

descent; ancestry

lineaments

features especially of the face; distinctive shape or contour of the face; CF. line

linger

loiter or dawdle; be slow in leaving; delay going; continue or persist; be slow to disappear; E.g., The smell lingered for days.

linguistic

pertaining to language

lionize

treat (a person) as a celebrity

liquidate

settle accounts; pay off (a debt); clear up; eliminate; kill or abolish

list

tilt (as of a ship); lean over (to one side)

listless

lacking in spirit or energy; languid

litany

supplicatory prayer; prayer in which the priest calls out and the people replies in the same words

lithe

flexible; supple; CF. limber

litigation

lawsuit; N. litigant: one party in a lawsuit; V. litigate

litter

waste material thrown away (as bits of paper scattered untidily); V: cover untidily with scattered litter

livid

lead-colored; black and blue (as from a bruise); ashen; enraged; extremely angry

loath

reluctant; unwilling; disinclined

loathe

detest; ADJ. loathsome: arousing loathing; offensive; E.g., loathsome smell

lode

metal-bearing vein(long deposit of an ore)

loft

room or space under the roof; attic

lofty

very high

log

record of a voyage or flight; record of day-to-day activities; section of a trunk; V.

loiter

hang about/around; stand idly about; linger

loll

lounge about

longevity

long life; long duration

lookout

act of keeping watch; high place commanding a wide view; person who keeps watch

loom

appear or take shape (usually in an enlarged, indistinct, or distorted form); E.g., The shadow of the gallows loomed threateningly. N: apparatus for making thread into cloth

lope

gallop slowly

lopsided

heavier or larger on one side than the other; E.g., lopsided way of walking

loquacious

Root 'loq': to speak

To speak a lot; talkative

lot

object used in making a determination at random; fate; piece of land

lottery

contest in which winners are selected in a drawing of lots

lounge

stand, sit, or lie in a lazy, relaxed way

lout

clumsy person; ADJ. loutish;

low

moo; make the sound of a cow

lubricate

apply a lubricant to; N. lubricant: substance that reduces friction

lucid

Root 'luc': light

easily understood; clear; intelligible; N. lucidity

lucrative

profitable; producing wealth

lucre

money; profit; E.g., filthy lucre

ludicrous

laughable; ridiculous; trifling

lugubrious

mournful; sorrowful

lull

moment of calm; period of reduced activity

lumber

move heavily or clumsily;

lumen

Root 'lum': light

unit of light energy (one candle's worth)

luminary

Root 'lum': light

Celebrity; object that gives light

luminous

Root 'lum': light

shining (esp. in the dark); issuing light;

lunar

Root 'lun': moon

pertaining to the moon

lunatic

insane;

lurk

stealthily lie in waiting; slink; exist unperceived

luscious

pleasing to taste or smell; delicious

lush

(of a plant or grass) growing very well

lust

intense sexual desire; intense eagerness; V.

luster

shine; gloss (of a polished surface)

lustrous

shining; brilliant; E.g., lustrous hair

luxuriant

abundant; growing healthily and in large amounts; excessively ornate; rich and splendid; fertile; E.g., luxuriant forests/prose; CF. luxurious, luxuriate

luxuriate

take pleasure in great comfort

macabre

gruesome; grisly; ghastly; CF. of death

mace

ceremonial staff used as a symbol of authority; clublike medieval weapon

macerate

soften by soaking in liquid; waste away; E.g., macerate powdered wood to make paper

Machiavellian

crafty; double-dealing; of the political doctrine of Machiavelli, which holds that craft and deceit are justified in pursuing political power

Refer to the chapters on 'Improving Vocabulary through knowing the Stories behind Words'

machinations

evil schemes or plots; schemes or plots to achieve an evil end; V. machinate

maculated

spotted; stained; CF. immaculate

madrigal

pastoral song; song for several singers without instruments

maelstrom

violent whirlpool; violent or turbulent situation; CF. stream

magisterial

authoritative; imperious; commanding; of a magistrate

magistrate

official with power to administer the law

magnanimity

generosity; ADJ. magnanimous: generous

magnate

Root 'magni': large

person of prominence or influence; powerful or influential person (in business or industry);

magniloquent

Root 'loq': to speak

Root 'magni': large

Boastful in speech; pompous

magnitude

Root 'magni': large

greatness in size or extent

maim

mutilate; injure lastingly; disable; cripple; E.g., maimed for life

makeshift

temporary expedient or substitute (in the case of urgent need); E.g., makeshift shelter

maladroit

Root 'mal': bad

clumsy; not skillful; awkward; bungling

malady

Root 'mal': bad

illness

malaise

Root 'mal': bad

uneasiness; vague feeling of ill health (without any particular pain or appearance of disease)

malapropism

Root 'mal': bad

comic misuse of a word

malapropos

Root 'mal': bad

inappropriate;

malcontent

Root 'mal': bad

person dissatisfied with existing state of affairs; discontented person; ADJ: discontented

malediction

Root 'mal': bad

Root 'dict': to speak

curse

malefactor

Root 'mal': bad
evildoer; criminal

maleficent

Root 'mal': bad
doing evil; N. maleficence

malevolent

Root 'mal': bad
wishing evil; exhibiting ill will; N. malevolence

malfeasance

Root 'mal': bad
wrongdoing; misconduct (by a public official)

malicious

Root 'mal': bad
hateful; spiteful;

malign

Root 'mal': bad
speak evil of; bad-mouth(criticize spitefully); defame; ADJ: harmful;

malignant

Root 'mal': bad
tending to cause death; highly injurious; aggressively malevolent;

malingerer

Root 'mal': bad
one who feigns illness to escape duty; V. malinge: feign illness to avoid work

malleable

(of a metal) capable of being shaped by pounding(beating); pliable; (of someone) impressionable(easily influenced); easily controlled; tractable

malodorous

Root 'mal': bad
foul-smelling

mammal

vertebrate animal whose female suckles its young

mammoth

gigantic; enormous

manacle

restrain; handcuff; N.

mandate

authoritative command

mandatory

obligatory; compulsory; of a mandate

maneuver (manoeuvre)

strategic movement

mange

skin disease (esp. of domestic animals) marked by loss of hair

mangle

tear or cut to pieces; mutilate or disfigure; E.g., badly mangled bodies

mangy

shabby; wretched; suffering from mange; of bad appearance

maniacal

raging mad; insane; N. maniac: insane person; CF. mania: disorder of the mind; intense enthusiasm

manifest

evident; visible; obvious; V: show plainly

manifestation

outward demonstration; manifesting; indication of the presence of something; E.g., manifestation of his pronounced musical bent

manifesto

public declaration of principles; statement of policy

manifold

many in number or kind; numerous; varied

manipulate

operate with one's hands; control or play upon (people, forces, etc.) artfully; maneuver; E.g., how to manipulate publicity and men; ADJ. manipulative

mannered

affected; not natural; E.g., mannered way of speech

mannerism

distinctive behavioral trait; affected style in art (according to a set of styles)

mantle

loose sleeveless outer garment; cloak; something that covers or envelops; the layer of the earth between the crust and the core

manumit

emancipate; free from slavery or bondage

mar

spoil the appearance of

maraud

move in search of plunder; E.g., marauding army

margin

border; room; allowance beyond what is needed; E.g., margin of safety

marginal

of a margin; barely within a limit

marital

pertaining to marriage

maritime

Relating to the sea

marked

noticeable; targeted for vengeance or attack; E.g., marked improvement/man

maroon

leave helpless on a deserted island or coast;
reddish brown colour

marred

damaged; affected; disfigured;

marrow

soft fatty tissue that fills most bone cavities and is the source of blood cells

marshal

put in order; guide ceremoniously to the correct place; E.g., marshal the children into the museum;
N: military officer; official

marsupial

one of a family of mammals that nurse their offspring in a pouch

martial

warlike; of war

martinet

A strict disciplinarian

martyr

one who voluntarily suffers death for his or her religion or cause; great sufferer; E.g., martyr to his rheumatism

mash

crush into mash; convert into mash; N: mixture of ground grain and nutrients fed to livestock and fowl

masochist

person who enjoys his own pain; CF. masochism

mason

one who builds or works with stone or brick; N. masonry: work of a mason; stonework or brickwork

masquerade

wear a mask or disguise; pretend; N: costume party or ball at which masks are worn; pretense; disguise

mass

Christian religious ceremony; CF. Mass: ceremony of the Eucharist

masticate

chew

mat

not shiny; matte; having a dull finish; N: flat piece of material used as a floor covering; V.

materialism

preoccupation with physical comforts and things; excessive regard for worldly concerns (rather than spiritual matters)

maternal

motherly; N. maternity: motherhood

matinee

dramatic or musical performance given in the afternoon

matriarch

woman who rules a family or larger social group

matriculate

enroll (in college or graduate school); CF. matrix

matrimony

state of being married

matrix

point of origin; array of numbers or algebraic symbols; mold or die; E.g., the matrix of Western civilization

maudlin

Emotional; sentimental

maul

handle roughly; batter; injure by beating; E.g., mauled by his overexcited fans; N: heavy long-handled hammer

mausoleum

monumental tomb; large stately tomb;

mauve

pale purple

maverick

rebel; nonconformist (in a group)

mawkish

mushy(sentimental) and gushy; icky-sticky sentimental; excessively and objectionably sentimental

maxim

proverb; truth pithily stated

mayhem

injury to body; crime of willfully maiming or crippling a person; violent disorder; E.g., mayhem in the zoo; CF. maim

meager

scanty; inadequate

mealymouthed

indirect in speech (when something unpleasant must be said); hypocritical; evasive

meander

wind or turn in its course; follow a winding or turning course; move aimlessly and idly

meddlesome

interfering; V. meddle: interfere

mediate

settle a dispute through the services of an outsider; act as an intermediary; produce by mediating; E.g., mediate a cease-fire

mediocre

ordinary; commonplace; neither good nor bad

meditation

reflection; thought; V. meditate

medium

element that is a creature's natural environment; nutrient setting in which microorganisms are cultivated; appropriate occupation or means of expression; channel of communication; compromise; middle position between extremes; intervening substan

medley

mixture

meek

submissive; patient and long-suffering

megalomania

mania for doing grandiose things; mental disorder characterized by delusions of wealth, power, or importance

melancholy

gloomy; morose; blue; N. ADJ. melancholic; CF. melancholia

melee

fight

mellifluous

(of words or a voice) sweetly or smoothly flowing; melodious; having a pleasant tune

memento

token; reminder of the past; keepsake; E.g., memento of your visit

memoir

memoirs; autobiography; biography

memorial

something, such as a monument or holiday, intended to honor the memory of a person or event; ADJ: commemorative

memorialize

commemorate

menace

threat; V: threaten

menagerie

collection of wild animals on exhibition; zoo

mendacious

lying; habitually dishonest; N. mendacity

mendicant

beggar;

menial

lowly

mentor

counsellor; teacher

mercantile

concerning trade or merchants

mercenary

motivated solely by money or gain; N.

mercurial

capricious; quick and changing; fickle; containing the element mercury; E.g., mercurial temper; CF. mood

meretricious

flashy; tawdry;

merger

combination

merit

deserve; ADJ. meritorious: deserving reward or praise

mesmerize

hypnotize;

metallurgical

pertaining to the art of removing metals from ores; N. metallurgy: science that deals with extracting metals from ores

metamorphosis

change of shape or form;

metaphor

implied comparison;

metaphysical

pertaining to speculative philosophy;

mete

measure; distribute; administer; E.g., mete out justice/punishment

meteoric

like a meteor; swift; momentarily brilliant; E.g., meteoric rise to fame; N. meteor

meter

arrangement of words in the form of poetry

methodical

systematic; N. method: systematic method of procedure

meticulous

Paying great attention to detail

metrical

metric; written in the form of poetry; E.g., metrical translation of Homer

metropolis

large city

mettle

courage (to continue bravely in spite of difficulties); spirit; ADJ. mettlesome

miasma

Foul smelling gas

microcosm

Root 'micro': small

small representative world; world in miniature

migrant

changing its location; not fixed in location

migratory

wandering; V. migrate: move from one region and settle in another; move periodically from one region to another

milieu

social environment

militant

combative; bellicose; N.

militate

work against;

militia

army composed of ordinary citizens rather than professional soldiers

millennium

A 1000-year period

mime

mimicry;

mimicry

To Imitate

minatory

menacing; threatening

mincing

affectedly dainty(delicate); V. mince: cut (esp. meat) into very small pieces; walk with exaggerated primness; walk in an unnatural way, taking little short steps; E.g., The actor minced across the stage; CF. mincemeat; CF. mincer

mingle

mix together in close association

miniature

small model; small painting; ADJ: small

minion

servile dependent; obsequious follower

miniscule

Small; tiny

minute

extremely small; CF. minutes: official record of the proceedings at a meeting

minutiae

petty or trivial details; CF. minutia

mirage

unreal reflection; optical illusion

mire

entangle; stick in swampy ground; stick or sink in mire; N: bog; deep mud; E.g., sucked deeper into the mire

mirth

merriment; laughter

misanthrope

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
ne who hates mankind

misapprehension

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
error; misunderstanding; V. misapprehend

miscellaneous

made up of a variety of parts

miscellany

mixture of writings on various subjects; collection of various items

mischance

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
ill luck

mischief

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
behavior (of children) causing trouble with no serious harm; damage; harm; E.g., mischief to the crops; ADJ. mischievous: causing mischief; playfully troublesome

misconduct

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
immoral behavior; bad management; V.

misconstrue

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
interpret wrongly; misinterpret; misjudge

miscreant

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
wretch; wrongdoer; villain;

misdeemeanour

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
minor crime; misdeed; wrongdoing

miserly

stingy; mean

misgivings

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
doubts

mishap

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
unfortunate accident

misnomer

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
wrong or improper name; incorrect designation

misogamy

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike
hatred of marriage

misogynist

Root 'mis': bad/wrong/to dislike

Root 'gyn': woman

hater of woman; CF. misogyny

missile

object to be thrown or projected

missive

letter; written statement; CF. sent

mite

very small object or insect-like creature; small coin

mitigate

appease; moderate; make or become less in force or intensity

mnemonic

assisting the memory

Refer to the chapters on 'Improving Vocabulary through knowing the Stories behind Words'

mobile

movable; not fixed; N. mobility

mock

ridicule; deride; imitate often in derision

mode

prevailing style; current fashion; manner; way of doing something; E.g., in the latest mode; E.g., simple mode of life

modicum

small amount

modish

fashionable; conforming to the current fashion

modulate

tone down in intensity; change the intensity or tone of; regulate; change from one musical key to another; E.g., modulate from E to G

moghul

An esteemed, powerful person

molecule

the smallest particle (one or more atoms) of a substance that has all the properties of that substance

mollify

soothe an angry person

mollycoddle

pamper; coddle; baby; indulge excessively

molten

melted

momentous

very important; N. moment; CF. momentary

momentum

quantity of motion of a moving body; impetus; moving force

monarchy

Root 'mono': one

Ruled by a king or queen-a single person

monastic

related to monks or monasteries; removed from worldly concerns

monetary

pertaining to money

mongrel

Animal, typically a dog) of mixed breed.

monochromatic

Root 'mono': one

Root 'chrome': colour

having one color

monogram

Root 'mono': one

design composed of one or more initials of a name; (mono: single)

monograph

Root 'mono': one

scholarly article written by one person (mono: single)

monolith

Root 'mono': one

large block of stone

monotheism

Root 'mono': one

belief in one God

monotony

Root 'mono': one

sameness leading to boredom; monotonousness

monumental

massive; impressively large; built as a monument

moodiness

given to changeable moods

moratorium

legal delay of payment or action; E.g., declare moratorium on the building of new houses

morbid

given to unwholesome or unhealthy thought

mordant

biting; sarcastic; stinging;

mores

conventions; moral standards; moral customs

morgue

mortuary; place where bodies are kept before burial or cremation

moribund

Lifeless

morose

Lacking in humour; sad

mortar

vessel in which substances are crushed with a pestle

mortician

undertaker; CF. death

mortify

humiliate by embarrassing excessively; shame

mosaic

picture made of small colorful inlaid tiles;

mote

small speck (esp. of dust)

motif

theme; recurrent thematic element in a musical or literary work; single or repeated pattern; figure

motility

ability to move spontaneously; ADJ. motile: moving spontaneously

motley

multi-colored (as of a garment worn by a jester); mixed; heterogeneous; CF. jester: one who jests (as a paid fool at medieval courts)

mottled

blotched in coloring; spotted

motto

brief statement used to express a principle

mountebank

A quack, a charlatan

muddle

confuse; mix up

muggy

(of weather) warm and damp

mulct

defraud a person of something; swindle; E.g., mulct the boy of his legacy

multifarious

Root 'multi': many

varied; greatly diversified;

multiform

Root 'multi': many

having many forms

multilingual

Root 'multi': many

having many languages; fluent in several languages

multiplicity

Root 'multi': many

state of being numerous or multiple; large number

mundane

worldly as opposed to spiritual; everyday; of the ordinary

munificent

generous in giving

mural

wall painting

murky

dark and gloomy

murmur

low, indistinct, continuous sound

muse

To think over or ponder

musky

having the odor of musk; N. musk: odorous substance secreted by an Asian deer

muster

gather; assemble (troops); E.g., muster up one's strength for the ordeal; N.

musty

stale (in odor or taste); spoiled by age; CF. moist

mutability

ability to change in form; fickleness; ADJ. mutable: able to change; fickle; CF. mutate; CF. mutant

mute

silent; without speech; not pronounced; unable to speak; N: one who is incapable of speech; V: soften the sound, color, shade of

muted

silent; muffled; toned down; E.g., muted traffic noise

mutilate

maim; injure lastingly; deprive of a limb or an essential part

mutinous

unruly; rebellious; E.g., mutinous teenagers; N. mutiny: open rebellion; CF. mutineer

mutter

utter in low tones

myopic

Short-sighted

myriad

very large number with great variety;

mystic

of hidden meaning and spiritual power; E.g., mystic ceremonies; N. CF. mysticism

nadir

lowest point; point on the celestial sphere diametrically opposite the zenith

naïveté (naivety)

quality of being unsophisticated; simplicity; artlessness; gullibility; ADJ. naïve (naïve): ingenuous; lacking worldliness; simple; credulous

narcissist

conceited person; N. narcissism; CF. narcissus

narrative

related to telling a story; N: narrated account; story; V. narrate: tell (a story); CF. narration

nascent

Just beginning; incipient

natal

connected with birth

natty

neatly or smartly dressed; dapper; smart; E.g., natty dresser

nausea

feeling of sickness and desire to vomit; disgust; CF. seasickness

nauseous

causing nausea; feeling nausea

nautical

pertaining to ships or navigation

navigable

(of a body of water) wide and deep enough to allow ships to pass through; (of a ship or aircraft) able to be steered

nebula

diffuse mass of interstellar dust or gas; galaxy

nebulous

vague; hazy; cloudy; of a nebula; E.g., nebulous proposal

necromancy

black magic; sorcery; dealings with the dead; art that professes to communicate with the spirits of the dead so as to predict the future; CF. necromancer; CF. necro+divination; CF. necro-: death; E.g., necropolis

nectar

drink of the gods; sweet liquid collected by bees

nefarious

very wicked

negate

cancel out; nullify; cause to have no effect; deny; N. negation

negligence

neglect; failure to take reasonable care; ADJ. negligent: neglectful; lax; not taking enough care

negligible

so small, trifling, or unimportant as to be easily disregarded

nemesis

someone seeking revenge; source of downfall or ruin; CF. Nemesis

neologism

Root 'neo': new

new or newly coined word or phrase

neophyte

Root 'neo': new

New convert; a beginner

nepotism

favoritism (to a relative); CF. nephew

nether

lower; E.g., nether garments/regions

nettle

irritate; annoy; vex; ADJ. nettlesome

nexus

connection

nib

beak(bill); pen point

nicety

precision; accuracy; minute distinction or difference; E.g., to a nicety: exactly; precisely; E.g., distinguish between niceties

niggardly

meanly stingy; parsimonious; N. niggard: stingy person

niggle

spend too much time on minor points

nihilist

one who wants to destroy the existing system

nimble

quick in movement; agile; quick in understanding; E.g., nimble climber/mind

nip

snip off; stop something's growth or development; bite; make numb with cold; E.g., nip the plan; E.g., A guard dog nipped the postman; E.g., fingers nipped by the extreme chill

nirvana

in Buddhist teachings, the ideal state in which the individual loses himself in the attainment of an impersonal beatitude

nocturnal

done or active at night; E.g., nocturnal animals/raids; CF. nocturne

noisome

foul smelling; very unpleasant; unwholesome

nomadic

wandering; N. nomad: tribe who migrates from place to place

nomenculture

terminology(system of specialized words); system of names or naming things

nominal

in name only; of a name; trifling; (of a sum of money) very small; CF. nominate: propose as a candidate; appoint

nonchalance

Root 'non': not

Not concerned

noncommittal

Root 'non': not

neutral; refusing commitment to a particular opinion; unpledged; undecided

nondescript

Root 'non': not

undistinctive; ordinary

nonentity

Root 'non': not

person of no importance; nonexistence

nonplus

Root 'non': not

confuse

nonsense

Root 'non': not

speech or writing with no meaning

noose

loop formed in a rope

nostalgia

homesickness; longing for the past;

nostrum

A quack remedy

notable

conspicuous; worthy of note; remarkable

notch

V-shaped cut in a surface;

notoriety

disrepute; ill fame

nourish

provide with food necessary for life and growth

nourishment

something that nourishes; food

nova

star that suddenly becomes much brighter and then returns to its original brightness

novelty

Root 'nov': new

original

novice

Root 'nov': new

A beginner

noxious

harmful; CF. obnoxious

nuance

shade of slight difference in meaning or color; subtle distinction

nubile

marriageable; of marriageable age; CF. connubial

nugatory

worthless; futile

nullify

make invalid; make null; invalidate

numismatist

person who collects coins; N. numismatics: study or collection of money, coins, and medals

nuptial

related to marriage or the wedding ceremony; N. nuptials: wedding ceremony

nurse

suckle; take care of (as a nurse); bear in mind; E.g., nursing mother; E.g., nurse a hope/grudge against someone

nurture

nourish; feed; educate; rear; care for while it is growing or developing; foster; cultivate; N: something that nourishes; rearing

nutrient

nourishing substance; ADJ: providing nourishment

nutrition

process of nourishing or being nourished; CF. malnutrition

nutritious

providing nourishment

oaf

stupid awkward person; CF. elf

oath

solemn promise; blasphemous use of sacred words to express strong feelings; swear-word; E.g., "For Christ's sake"

oatmeal

crushed oats used for making porridge

obdurate

stubborn; refusing to change one's belief

obeisance

bow (to show respect and obedience)

obelisk

tall column tapering (becoming gradually narrower toward the end) and ending in a pyramid

obese

excessively fat; N. obesity

obfuscate

confuse; muddle; cause confusion; make needlessly complex; make so confused as to be difficult to understand

obituary

death notice (esp. in a newspaper); ADJ.

objective

not influenced by emotions; fair; N: goal; aim

obligatory

binding; required; compulsory; V. oblige: constrain; make grateful; do a favor; accommodate

oblique

indirect; slanting (deviating from the perpendicular or from a straight line); E.g., oblique reference

obliterate

destroy completely; wipe out; E.g., obliterate the village

oblivion

obscurity; condition of being completely forgotten; forgetfulness

oblivious

inattentive or unmindful; unaware; wholly absorbed; forgetful(having the habit of forgetting)

obloquy

slander; disgrace; infamy

obnoxious

offensive; disagreeable; E.g., obnoxious smell

obscure

dark; vague; unclear; not well known; E.g., obscure meaning/village; V: darken; cover; make unclear; E.g., obscure the moon/meaning

obsequious

slavishly attentive; servile; full of servile compliance; sycophantic

obsequy

funeral ceremony

obsessive

related to thinking about something constantly; of an obsession; preoccupying; N. obsession: compulsive preoccupation with a fixed idea; compulsive idea; V. obsess: preoccupy the mind of excessively

obsidian

black volcanic rock

obsolete

outmoded; no longer used

obstetrician

physician specializing in delivery(assisting in giving birth) of babies; N. obstetrics; CF. midwife

obstinate

stubborn; hard to control or treat; E.g., obstinate cough; N. obstinacy

obstreperous

boisterous; noisy and uncontrollable

obtrude

push (oneself or one's ideas) forward or intrude; impose (oneself or one's ideas) on others; butt in; stick out or extrude; thrust out; E.g., obtrude A on B; ADJ. obtrusive; N. obtrusion; CF. unobtrusive

obtuse

blunt; not sharp; stupid; slow in understanding

obviate

make unnecessary; get rid of; E.g., obviate the need

Occident

the West

occlude

shut; close; obstruct; E.g., A blood clot occluded an artery.

occult

mysterious; secret; supernatural; beyond human comprehension; CF. mysterious to human ?; OP. bare

oculist

physician who specializes in treatment of the eyes

odds

chances; probability; disagreement; E.g., The odds are that it will rain. E.g., at odds with

odious

arousing strong dislike; hateful(causing hatred); vile

odium

detestation; quality of being odious; hatefulness; disrepute (resulting from hateful conduct)

odoriferous

giving off an odor

odorous

having an odor

odyssey

long, eventful, adventurous journey

offensive

attacking; insulting; distasteful; V. offend: violate; hurt the feelings of; N. offense: offending; violating of a moral or social code; crime; attack; E.g., first offense

offhand

casual; done without prior thought or preparation

officious

meddlesome; excessively pushy in offering one's services; overly eager in offering unwanted services or advices; E.g., officious bellboy

ogle

look at amorously; make eyes at; E.g., old men ogling young girls

olfactory

concerning the sense of smell

oligarchy

government by a privileged few

ominous

threatening; of an evil omen

omnipotent

all-powerful; having unlimited power

omnipresent

universally present; ubiquitous

omniscient

all-knowing

omnivorous

eating both plant and animal food; devouring everything

onerous

burdensome

onomatopoeia

words formed in imitation of natural sounds

onslaught

vicious assault; fierce attack; E.g., unexpected onslaught of the enemy

onus

burden; responsibility

ooze

(of a thick liquid) pass or flow slowly; N: mud or thick liquid as at the bottom of a river

opalescent

iridescent; lustrous; like an opal; N. opalescence

opaque

dark; not transparent; N. opacity

opiate

medicine to induce sleep or deaden pain; something that relieves emotions or causes inaction; sleep-producing drug containing opium

opportune

timely; well-chosen

opportunist

individual who sacrifices principles for expediency by taking advantage of circumstances; N. opportunism

opprobrium

infamy; disgrace arising from shameful conduct; vilification(slander); scorn; contempt; E.g., opprobrium hurled against him; ADJ. opprobrious: expressing contempt; shameful or infamous

optician

maker and seller of eyeglasses

optimist

person who looks on the bright side; N. optimism

optimum

most favorable; optimal; N: most favorable condition

optional

not compulsory; left to one's choice; N. option: act of choosing; choice; freedom or power to choose; something available as a choice; E.g., have no option; E.g., two options

optometrist

one who fits glasses to remedy visual defects

opulence

extreme wealth; luxuriousness; abundance; ADJ. opulent: possessing great wealth; abundant

opus

work (esp. musical composition); E.g., magnum opus: masterpiece; CF. opera

oracular

of an oracle; prophetic; uttered as if with divine authority; mysterious or ambiguous; hard to understand; N. oracle: wiser person; prophecy made by an oracle

orator

public speaker

oratorio

dramatic poem set to music; long musical work with singing but without acting; CF. cantata

ordain

decree or command; grant holy orders; predestine; install as a minister, priest, or rabbi; N. ordainment; CF. ordination

ordeal

severe trial or affliction; difficult experience; trial(test of patience or endurance); affliction

ordinance

decree; authoritative order

ordination

ceremony conferring holy orders; ceremony of ordaining a priest

orgy

wild drunken revelry; unrestrained indulgence in an activity; E.g., orgy of shopping

orient

get one's bearings; adjust; make familiar with a situation; orientate

orientation

act of finding oneself in society; orienting

orifice

mouthlike opening; small opening (esp. to a cavern or passage of the body); CF. mouth

ornate

excessively or elaborately decorated

ornithologist

scientific student of birds; N. ornithology: scientific study of birds

orthodox

traditional; (of someone) conservative in belief; adhering to an established doctrine

orthography

correct spelling; CF. ortho-: straight; correct; E.g., orthodontics

oscillate

vibrate pendulumlike; waver

osseous

made of bone; bony

ossify

change or harden into bone; become hard and unchanging in one's ideas

ostensible

apparent; appearing as such; professed(pretended); pretended; E.g., ostensible purpose of the expedition

ostentatious

showy; trying to attract attention; pretentious; N. ostentation: showy display

ostracize

banish from a group; exclude from public favor; ban; E.g., His friends ostracized him. N. ostracism

oust

expel; drive out; force out; N. ouster: ousting

outcast

one that has been excluded from a society; ADJ.

outfit

clothing or equipment for a special purpose; E.g., cowboy outfit

outgoing

sociable; eager to mix socially with others

outlandish

bizarre; peculiar; unconventional

outlaw

fugitive from the law (excluded from legal protection); V: declare (someone) to be an outlaw; deprive of the protection of the law; declare illegal; E.g., Drinking has been outlawed.

outlook

point of view; view from a particular place; expectation for the future; prospect; E.g., outlook on life; E.g., pleasing outlook; E.g., weather outlook

outmoded

no longer in fashion or use; no longer stylish; old-fashioned

outrage

act of extreme violence or viciousness; resentful anger; V: commit an outrage on; produce anger in;
ADJ. outrageous: offensive

outskirts

fringes; outer borders (as of a city); E.g., outskirts of Boston

outspoken

candid; blunt

outstrip

outrun; surpass; outdo

outwit

outsmart; defeat by behaving more cleverly

ovation

enthusiastic applause

overbearing

bossy; domineering and arrogant; decisively important; E.g., overbearing manner/importance; V.
overbear: dominate

overblown

inflated; exaggerated

oversee

watch over and direct; supervise; N. oversight: unintentional failure to notice or do something;
supervision

overt

open to view; public; not secret; CF. covert

overthrow

topple; N.

overture

musical introduction to a long musical piece; first offer or proposal

overturn

turn over; capsize; topple

overweening

arrogant; presumptuous

overwhelm

(of water) cover completely; defeat completely by much greater force; E.g., overwhelmed by grief

overwrought

nervous or excited; extremely agitated; hysterical; wrought-up; CF. wrought: made or done

ovoid

egg-shaped

pachyderm

Root 'derm': skin
thick-skinned animal

pacifist

one opposed to force; antimilitarist; ADJ. N. pacifism: opposition to war as a means of resolving
disputes

pacify

soothe; make calm or quiet; subdue; bring peace to

padre

chaplain (in the armed forces)

paean

song of praise or joy; E.g., paeans celebrating the victory

painstaking

taking pains; showing hard work; taking great care; very careful and thorough

palatable

agreeable; pleasing to the taste

palate

roof of the mouth; sense of the taste

palatial

of or suitable for a palace; magnificent

paleontology

study of prehistoric life or fossils; CF. paleo-: ancient or prehistoric; E.g., paleography: study of ancient written documents

palette

board on which painter mixes pigments (coloring matters)

palimpsest

parchment or piece of writing material used for second time after original writing has been erased

pall

become boring; grow tiresome

pallet

small poor bed; E.g., straw pallet

palliate

ease pain (without curing); make less severe or offensive (a crime or illness)

pallid

pale; wan; E.g., pallid complexion

palm

conceal in the palm of the hand; palm off: pass off; E.g., palm off some bad oranges onto the lady/ the painting as a real Renoir

palpable

tangible; (of something bad) easily perceptible; obvious; E.g., palpable blunder

palpitate

throb; beat rapidly; flutter; tremble; E.g., Her heart began to palpitate.

paltry

insignificant; petty; trifling; contemptible; E.g., paltry sum; CF. trash

pan

criticize harshly

panacea

cure-all; remedy for all diseases

panache

flair; manner of doing things without any difficulty (causing admiration); flamboyance; bunch of feathers (on a helmet); E.g., with great panache;

pandemic

widespread; affecting the majority of people; N: pandemic disease; CF. all people

Pandemonium

wild tumult(commotion); wild noisy disorder; CF. Paradise Lost

pander

cater to (the low desires of others)

panegyric

formal praise; encomium; E.g., I don't deserve such panegyrics.

pang

sudden sharp feeling of pain

panoramic

denoting an unobstructed and comprehensive view; N. panorama: unbroken view of a wide area

pantomime

acting without dialogue; V.

papyrus

ancient paper made from stem of papyrus plant

parable

short simple story teaching a moral

paradigm

model; example that serves as a model; pattern; list of all the inflectional forms of a word

paradox

something apparently contradictory in nature (that may nonetheless be true); statement that looks false but is actually correct

paragon

model of perfection; E.g., paragon of virtue

parallel

similar; analogous; corresponding; N: parallel line; person or thing that is parallel (to another); similarity; E.g., know of no parallel to the case; E.g., without parallel; V: be similar to; make parallel; E.g., Your experience parallels mine; CF. unp

parallelism

state of being parallel; similarity; analogy

parameter

limit; independent variable; E.g., parameters of the problem; E.g., within the parameters of the budget

paramount

foremost in importance; supreme; CF. para-: beyond; above; E.g., paranormal

paramour

illicit lover

paranoia

psychosis marked by delusions of grandeur or persecution; N: ADJ: paranoid, paranoiac

paraphernalia

equipment; odds and ends used in a particular activity; personal belongings; E.g., photographic paraphernalia; CF. married woman's property exclusive of her dowry

paraphrase

restate a passage in one's own words while retaining thought of author; N: restatement of a text in other words

parasite

animal or plant living on another; toady; sycophant; CF. para-: beside

parched

extremely dry; very thirsty; V. parch: make or become extremely dry (by exposure to heat)

parchment

writing material made from the skin of a sheep or goat

pare

cut away the outer covering or skin of (with a knife); trim; E.g., pare apples/expenses

pariah

social outcast; E.g., Mariah the pariah

parish

area in the care of a single priest and served by one main church

parity

equality; close resemblance; CF. disparate

parlance

language; manner of speaking; idiom; E.g., in legal/common parlance

parley

conference (between opponents); CF. speak

parochial

narrow in scope or outlook; provincial; related to parishes

parody

humorous imitation; spoof; takeoff; travesty; V.

paroxysm

fit or attack of pain, laughter, rage; sudden outburst

parquet

floor made of wood strips inlaid in a mosaic like matter; CF. strip: long narrow piece

parry

ward off a blow; deflect; E.g., He parried the unwelcome question very skillfully; N.

parsimony

stinginess; excessive frugality; ADJ. parsimonious

partial

incomplete; favoring one side over another; having a liking for something

partiality

state of being partial; inclination; favorable bias; special fondness; preference

partisan

one-sided; prejudiced; committed to a party (with dislike of any others); N: strong supporter of a party; guerrilla

partition

divide into parts

parvenu

upstart; newly rich person

passe

old-fashioned; past the prime

pass_off

present falsely; represent falsely to be

passive

not active; acted upon; receiving an action without acting in return; accepting without resistance

paste

smooth viscous mixture as of flour(powder made by crushing grain) and water (used as an adhesive); V: cause to adhere by applying paste

pastiche

imitation of another's style in musical composition or in writing; work of art openly imitating the works of other artists

pastoral

rural; of rural life; idyllic; of a pastor

pastry

paste of flour and water (eaten when baked)

patent

obvious; easily seen; open for the public to read; of or protected by a patent; E.g., patent to everyone; N.

pathetic

causing sadness, compassion, pity; touching

pathological

pertaining to disease; N. pathology: study of disease

pathos

tender sorrow; pity; quality in art or literature that produces these feelings; E.g., pathos that runs through the novel

patina

green crust on old bronze works or copper; tone slowly taken by varnished painting

patois

local or provincial dialect

patriarch

father and ruler of a family or tribe

patrician

noble; aristocratic; N: person of high rank; aristocrat; CF. member of the governing classes in ancient Rome; CF. plebian

patrimony

property inherited from a father

patronize

support; act superior toward; treat in a condescending manner; be a customer of; N. patron: one that supports; regular customer; N. patronage; CF. boycott

paucity

Shortage or scarcity

pauper

very poor person

peccadillo

slight offense or fault; CF. sin

pecuniary

pertaining to money

pedagogue

Root 'ped/paed': child

teacher; CF. child leader

pedagogy

Root 'ped/paed': child

teaching; art of education

pedant

scholar who overemphasizes book learning, trivial details of learning, or technicalities

pedantic

bookish; showing off learning; marked by an excessive ostentatious concern for book learning; N. pedantry

peddle

travel about selling (wares); CF. foot

pedestal

Root 'ped': foot

support or base as for a pillar or statue

pedestrian

Root 'ped': foot

ordinary; dull; unimaginative(lacking in imagination);

going on foot;

paediatrician

Root 'ped/paed': child
physician specializing in children's diseases;

pedigree

ancestry; lineage

peer

one who has equal standing with another

peerless

having no equal; incomparable

peevisish

bad-tempered; irritable; V. peeve: make angry

pejorative

(of a word or phrase) suggesting that someone is of little value; negative in connotation; having a belittling effect; E.g., Many women now considers "housewife" a pejorative expression, because it patronized them.

pell-mell

in confusion; disorderly; E.g., dash pell-mell

pellucid

transparent; limpid(crystal clear); clear in meaning; easy to understand

pen

fenced enclosure for animals; confining space; E.g., sheep pen; V: confine in a pen; enclose

penance

self-imposed punishment for sin; E.g., do penance for one's sins; CF. penitent

penchant

strong inclination; strong liking (esp. for something that is disapproved of by other people); E.g., penchant for fast cars

pendant (pendent)

hanging down from something; pending; N: ornament (hanging from a necklace etc.)

pending

not yet decided or settled; impending; E.g., pending decision; PREP. while awaiting; until; E.g., delay the decision pending his return

pendulous

hanging; suspended

penetrate

enter into; pierce; permeate; see through; grasp the inner significance of; understand

penitent

repentant; N.

penology

study of prison management and criminal rehabilitation

pensive

dreamily or deeply thoughtful; sadly thoughtful; thoughtful with a hint of sadness; contemplative; CF. think over

penumbra

partial shadow (in an eclipse); CF. almost shadow

penury

extreme poverty; stinginess; ADJ. penurious: very poor; stingy

peon

landless agricultural worker; bond servant; menial worker; N. peonage

perceptive

insightful; showing a good ability at perceiving and understanding; aware; wise; of perception

percussion

striking one object against another sharply; E.g., percussion instrument; N: striking together of two bodies; sound caused by percussion

perdition

damnation; complete ruin; hell

peregrination

journey; V. peregrinate

peremptory

demanding and leaving no choice; a necessity

perennial

long-lasting

perfidious

treacherous; disloyal; N. perfidy: treachery

perforate

pierce; put a hole through

perfunctory

Mechanical; done routinely and with little interest

perigee

point of moon's orbit when it is nearest the earth; CF. apogee

perimeter

Root 'peri': around

outer boundary; length of the outer boundary; circumference

peripatetic

Root 'peri': around

walking about from place to place (to work); moving

peripheral

Root 'peri': around

marginal; outer; of minor importance; not central;

periphery

Root 'peri': around

outside edge especially of a round surface; perimeter;

perjury

false testimony while under oath; V. perjure oneself: testify falsely under oath

permeable

that can be permeated; penetrable; porous; allowing liquids or gas to pass through; V. permeate: spread or flow throughout; charge

permissive

allowing much freedom; lenient; E.g., permissive society

pernicious

very harmful; deadly; very destructive; E.g., pernicious effect/anemia

peroration

conclusion of an oration; perorating; V. perorate: conclude a speech; speak at great length

perpetrate

commit an offense; do (something wrong)

perpetual

everlasting

perpetuate

make perpetual; make something last for a long time

perquisite(perk)

any gain above stipulated salary; E.g., perquisites such as free meals and a car

persevere

continue steadily in spite of difficulties

persist

continue in existence; last;

personable

attractive (in personality or appearance)

personify

Exemplify; represent

perspicacious

Root 'pic': clear

having insight; penetrating; astute

perspicuity

Root 'pic': clear

clearness of expression;

perspicuous

Root 'pic': clear

Clear and obvious; easy to understand;

pert

impertinent;

pertinacious

holding tenaciously to an action; stubborn; persistent

pertinent

suitable; to the point; relevant

perturb

disturb greatly

peruse

read through with care; N. perusal

pervasive

spread throughout; V. pervade: (of smells, ideas, feelings) spread throughout; charge; permeate

perverse

purposely continuing to do something wrong

perversion

corruption; turning from right to wrong

pervert

corrupt; turn from right to wrong; misuse;

pessimism

gloominess; tendency to take a negative possible view of a situation;

pestilential (pestilent)

causing plague; tending to cause death; baneful; N. pestilence: fatal epidemic disease (esp. bubonic plague)

pestle

tool for mashing or grinding substances in a hard bowl or mortar

petrify

turn to stone; cause to become stonelike; stun or paralyze

petty

trivial; unimportant; very small; small-minded; petty-minded

petulant

touchy; peevish; ill-tempered

phalanx

formation of infantry carrying overlapping shields and long spears

pharisee

Pharisee: member of an ancient Jewish group that emphasized strict observance of the Mosaic law; a hypocritical self-righteous person

philanderer

Root 'philo': to love
faithless lover; flirt

philanthropist

Root 'philo': to love
Root 'anthrop': man
lover of mankind; doer of good; N. philanthropy

philatelist

Root 'philo': to love
stamp-collector; N. philately: stamp collecting

Philistine

narrow-minded person, uncultured and exclusively interested in material gain;

philology

study of language or words

phlegmatic

calm and unexcitable; not easily disturbed; CF. phlegm: sticky mucus produced in the respiratory tract

phobia

Root 'philo': to dislike
morbid fear

phoenix

symbol of immortality or rebirth; E.g., phoenix rising from its ashes

phylum

major classification, second to kingdom, of plants and animals; category ranking below a kingdom and above a class; division

physiological

pertaining to the science of the function of living organisms; N. physiology

piebald

of different colors; mottled; spotted in different colors

piecemeal

one part at a time; gradually; in stages; E.g., read a novel piecemeal

pie

piebald; variegated(many-colored); multicolored

piety

devoutness; reverence for God; ADJ. pious

pigment

coloring matter (usually powder to be mixed with water or oil)

pilfer

steal things of small value; filch; snitch

pillage

plunder

pillory

punish by placing in a wooden frame or pillory; subject or expose to criticism and ridicule; N.

pinch

squeeze between the thumb and a finger, or other edges; E.g., I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. N: amount that can be held between the thumb and a finger

pine

long for; yearn; languish from longing or grief; decline

pinion

restrain or immobilize by binding the wings or legs; N: bird's wing

pinnace

small boat

pinnacle

peak; highest point; acme; E.g., pinnacle of fame

pious

devout; religious; N. piety

piquant

pleasantly tart-tasting; spicy; pleasantly stimulating; E.g., piquant situation when my old enemy asked for my help

pique

irritation; resentment from wounded pride (e.g., loss in a contest); V: provoke; arouse; annoy; cause to feel resentment; E.g., pique her curiosity

piscatorial

pertaining to fishing; CF. Pisces

pitfall

hidden danger; concealed trap

pith

core or marrow; spongelike substance in the center of stems; essence; substance

pithy

concise and meaningful; substantial; meaty

pittance

small amount (of money); small allowance or wage

pivotal

of a pivot; central; critical; crucial

placate

pacify; bring peace to; conciliate; appease

placebo

harmless substance prescribed as a dummy pill

placid

peaceful; calm; E.g., placid child/lake

plagiarize

steal another's ideas or writings and pass them off as one's own; E.g., ideas plagiarized from my article; N. plagiarism; CF. kidnap

plaintive

expressing sorrow; mournful; E.g., plaintive song

plait

braid; intertwine; interweave strands or lengths of; make by weaving strands together; E.g., plaited hair; N: braided length as of hair or fabric; CF. pigtail, ponytail

plane

carpenter's tool for smoothing and leveling wood; V. CF. flat

plaster

paste that hardens to a smooth solid and is used for coating walls; V.

plasticity

ability to be molded; ADJ. plastic: capable of being shaped or molded; E.g., plastic material such as clay

platitude

trite remark; commonplace statement; ADJ. platitudinous

platonic

purely spiritual; theoretical; without sensual desire

plaudit

praise; enthusiastic approval; round(succession or series) of applause; ADJ. plauditory; CF. applaud

plausible

conceivably true; having a show of truth but open to doubt; specious

plebeian

common; vulgar; pertaining to the common people; N: common people in ancient Rome; CF. patrician

plebiscite

direct vote by the entire electorate (on an important issue)

plenary

(of power) complete; full; fully attended by all qualified members; E.g., plenary power

plenitude

abundance; plenty; great amount; completeness; fullness; CF. plenary, plenty

plethora

excess; overabundance; E.g., a plethora of excuses

pliable

flexible; easily influenced; yielding; adaptable

pliant

flexible; easily influenced

plight

difficult condition; condition or state (esp. a bad state or condition); predicament

ploy

stragem to gain an advantage; tactic; E.g., management ploy

pluck

courage; V: pull off or out; pull out the hair or feathers of; ADJ. plucky: courageous; brave

plumage

feathers of a bird;

plumb

exactly vertical; N: weight on the end of a line; V: examine very carefully or critically in order to understand; measure depth (by sounding); E.g., plumb the depth of

plumber

one who installs and repairs pipes and plumbing(pipes)

plume

feather, esp. large or showy one; something that rises into the air (like the shape of a feather); E.g., plume of smoke

plummet

fall sharply; fall straight down; E.g., Stock prices plummeted.

plump

pleasantly fat; nicely rounded

plutocracy

society ruled by the wealthy

podiatrist

doctor who treats ailments of the feet; chiropodist; N. podiatrics

podium

pedestal; raised platform

poignancy

quality of being deeply moving; keenness of emotion; ADJ. poignant: touching; deeply moving; (of sorrow, grief, etc.) painful; keenly distressing to the mind; E.g., poignant memory/anxiety; CF. prick

poise

good judgment with composure; balance; V: place in a carefully balanced position

polar

of a pole; characterized by opposite extremes; E.g., polar opposites

polarity

state of having two opposite qualities

polarize

split into opposite extremes or camps

polemic

attack or defense of an opinion; controversy or refutation; argument in support of point of view; N. polemics: art of debate or controversy

polemical (polemic)

aggressive in verbal attack; disputatious (rather than simply expressing opinions)

politic

prudent; judicious; well judged; expedient; well devised

polity

(particular form of) political organization; form of government of nation or state; E.g., student polity

polygamist

Root 'poly': many

one who has more than one spouse at a time; CF. bigamy; CF. polyandry

polyglot

Root 'poly': many

speaking several languages; multilingual; E.g., polyglot person/society; N.

pomposity

self-important behavior; acting like a stuffed shirt(pompous person); ADJ. pompous: self-important

ponderous

having great weight; weighty; unwieldy; lacking lightness; dull; E.g., ponderous body/style of writing

pontifical

pertaining to a bishop or pope; pompous or pretentious; CF. pontiff: pope; bishop

pore

study industriously; ponder; scrutinize; E.g., pore over the book; N.

porous

full of pores; like a sieve

porridge

soft food made by boiling oatmeal

portend

foretell; presage; be a sign or warning of; N. portent: sign; omen; forewarning

portly

stout; corpulent

pose

assume a particular posture; put forward; present; affect a particular attitude (to impress others); E.g., pose a threat; N.

poseur

person who pretends to be sophisticated, elegant, etc., to impress others; person who poses; CF. pose

posterity

Root 'post': after

descendants; future generations; E.g., go down to posterity; CF. posterior, anterior

posthumous

Root 'post': after

after death (as of child born after father's death or book published after author's death); coming or occurring after one's death;

postmortem

Root 'post': after

autopsy; ADJ: occurring after death; of a postmortem

postulate

self-evident truth; something assumed without proof; V: assume the truth of (as a basis of an argument)

posture

assume an affected pose; act artificially; N: pose; attitude

potable

suitable for drinking; drinkable

potent

Root 'poten/posse': power

powerful; convincing; persuasive; greatly influential

potentate

Root 'poten/posse': power

A king; monarch;

potential

Root 'poten/posse': power

expressing possibility; latent; N: capacity for growth

potion

dose (of liquids); liquid dose

potpourri

heterogeneous mixture; medley; mixture of dried flower petals a pot (to give a pleasant smell to a room)

poultice

soothing application applied to sore and inflamed portions of the body

precis

concise summing up of main points

practicable

feasible

practical

based on experience; of or acquired through practice (rather than theory); useful; E.g., practical man

pragmatic

practical (as opposed to idealistic); concerned with practical worth or impact of something; E.g., pragmatic test of the skill

pragmatist

practical person; N. pragmatism: pragmatic way of dealing with things

prance

move about in a spirited manner (proudly and confidently)

prank

mischievous trick

prate

talk idly; speak foolishly; boast idly

prattle

talk idly; babble; N. CF. prate

preamble

Root 'pre': before

more introductory statement

precarious

unsafe; lacking in stability; uncertain; risky; E.g., precarious living

precedent

Root 'pre': before

Coming before

precept

practical rule guiding conduct;

precinct

division of a city for election or police purposes; precincts: space that surrounds a building;

precipice

cliff; dangerous position;

precipitant

something that causes a substance in a chemical solution to separate out in solid form; OP. solvent

precipitate

hurl downward; throw headlong; hasten; cause to happen sooner; condense and fall as rain or snow;

cause (a solid substance) to be separated from a solution; ADJ. hasty; rash; premature; sudden

precipitous

steep; overhasty; precipitate

precise

exact

preclude

To exclude; eliminate

precocious

advanced in development; N. precocity

precursor

Root 'pre': before

forerunner; predecessor

predator

creature that seizes and devours another animal

predecessor

Root 'pre': before

former occupant of a post

predetermine

Root 'pre': before

determine in advance; predestine; settle or decide beforehand; influence markedly

predicament

Root 'pre': before
difficult situation; tricky or dangerous situation; dilemma

predilection

Root 'pre': before
preference; partiality

predispose

Root 'pre': before
give an inclination toward (in advance); make susceptible to; E.g., predispose people to certain cancer; N. predisposition

Pre eminent

Root 'pre': before
outstanding; superior

Pre empt

Root 'pre': before
prevent in advance; head off (forestall); forestall by acting first;

preen

make oneself tidy in appearance; feel self-satisfaction or pride; (of a bird) smooth or clean (feathers) with the beak; E.g., preen oneself on; CF. prune

prefatory

Root 'pre': before
introductory; of a preface

prefigure

Root 'pre': before
be a sign of; foreshadow

prehensile

capable of grasping or holding (esp. by wrapping around); E.g., prehensile tails

prelude

introduction; introductory performance or event; forerunner

premeditate

Root 'pre': before
plan in advance; E.g., premeditated murder

premise

Root 'pre': before
assumption; postulate; proposition upon which an argument is based

premonition

Root 'pre': before
forewarning; presentiment; foreboding

premonitory

Root 'pre': before
serving to warn

preponderance

superiority of power, quantity, etc., V. preponderate: be greater in power, weight, or importance; ADJ. preponderant

prepossessing

attractive; charming

preposterous

absurd; completely unreasonable; ridiculous

prerogative

privilege; unquestionable right; CF. ask before

presage

Root 'pre': before

foretell; be a warning or sign of; N: presentiment; foreboding; omen

prescience

Root 'pre': before

ability to foretell the future; knowledge of actions before they occur; ADJ. prescient

presentiment

Root 'pre': before

premonition; foreboding; feeling something will happen; anticipatory fear

prestige

respect or admiration; impression produced by achievements or reputation; ADJ: causing admiration;

ADJ. prestigious: having prestige

presume

Root 'pre': before

take for granted; assume; act overconfidently; take liberties; presume on/upon: take unfair advantage of (someone's kindness or connection); N. presumption

presumptuous

Root 'pre': before

going beyond what is right;

pretend

feign; pretend to: claim to possess; make pretensions to;

pretension

pretentiousness; claim (without foundation);

pretentious

ostentatious; showy; pompous; making unjustified claims; overambitious; E.g., pretentious films that claim to be art

preternatural

beyond what is normal in nature; supernatural; E.g., preternatural strength/forces

pretext

excuse

prevail

be widespread; triumph over; gain victory; prevail on: persuade; induce; E.g., Justice has prevailed;

E.g., prevail on someone to do something

prevalent

widespread; generally accepted

prevaricate

lie; hide the truth (by equivocating)

prey

target of a hunt; victim; V: hunt and eat as prey; victimize; E.g., Cats prey on mice.

prim

proper to the point of affectation; very precise and formal; exceedingly proper

primal

first in rank or importance; being first in time; original; E.g., man's primal innocence

primary

first in rank or importance; principal; earliest in time; E.g., primary stages; N. CF. first

primate

group of mammals including humans

prime

period of ideal or peak condition; earliest or beginning stage; E.g., in the prime of life; E.g., prime of the year(spring); ADJ: first in importance or rank; first; V: make ready; prepare

primogeniture

seniority by birth; state of being the first-born child; right of the eldest child (to inherit the entire property of one or both parents)

primordial

existing at the beginning (of time); rudimentary

primp

groom oneself with care; adorn oneself

pristine

unspoiled; remaining in a pure state; characteristic of earlier times; primitive; E.g., an old book in pristine condition

privation

lack of the basic necessities or comforts of life; hardship; want; CF. deprive

privy

secret; hidden; not public; made a participant in something secret; E.g., privy chamber government; E.g., be privy to a discussion; CF. private

prize

pry; move with a lever; value highly; esteem; E.g., his most prized possession; N: something captured during war-time (esp. an enemy ship)

probe

explore with a probe or tools; investigate; N: slender instrument used to explore a wound or body cavity; device designed to investigate an unknown region; thorough investigation; E.g., space probe

probity

uprightness; honesty; incorruptibility

problematic

causing a problem; open to doubt; doubtful; unsettled; questionable; E.g., Whether the arena will ever be completed is problematic.

proclivity

inclination; natural tendency (esp. towards something bad)

procrastinate

postpone; delay or put off

procurement

obtaining; V. procure: obtain by effort; obtain (a prostitute) for another

prod

poke (with a pointed object); stir up; urge; goad to action; N: pointed object used to prod; prodding

prodigal

wasteful; reckless with money; profuse; E.g., a mind prodigal of ideas; N. prodigality

prodigious

enormous; marvellous; extraordinary;

prodigy

highly gifted child; person with exceptional talents

profane

violate; desecrate

profligate

Extravagant; wasteful

profound

deep;

profusion

great amount; plenty;

progenitor

ancestor

progeny

children; offspring

prognosis

Root 'gnos': to know

forecasted course of a disease; prediction; CF. prognostic

prognosticate

Root 'gnos': to know

predict (according to present indications)

prohibitive

so high as to prohibit purchase or use; tending to prevent the purchase or use of something; prohibiting; inclined to prevent or forbid; E.g., prohibitive tax

projectile

missile; fired or thrown object (such as stone or bullet)

proletarian

member of the working class; blue collar guy; N. proletariat: working class (who have to work for wages)

proliferate

grow rapidly (in numbers); spread; multiply; N. proliferation

prolific

producing offspring or fruit in abundance; fertile; fecund; abundantly fruitful; producing abundant works; E.g., prolific writer

prolixity

tedious wordiness; verbosity; ADJ. prolix: wordy; verbose; diffuse

prologue

introduction (to a poem or play)

prolong

lengthen; extend; draw out

prominent

protruding(sticking out); conspicuous; notable; eminent

promiscuous

mixed indiscriminately; indiscriminate; not choosing carefully; indiscriminate in the choice of sexual partners; irregular, particularly sexually; E.g., promiscuous life/girl; N. promiscuity

promontory

headland

promote

Root 'pro': in favour of

advance in rank; advance; help to flourish; advocate; help actively in forming; publicize or popularize; E.g., Milk promotes health; E.g., promote a match/bill; E.g., promote a new product

prompt

cause; urge; provoke; provide a cue (for an actor); ADJ: done without delay; done at the right time; punctual; on time; N: reminder or cue

promulgate

announce; proclaim a doctrine or law; make known by official publication

prone

inclined to; likely to (suffer); prostrate; lying with the front downward; E.g., prone to disease/make mistakes; E.g., accident-prone

prong

pointed projecting part

pronounced

distinct; very noticeable; E.g., pronounced limp

prop

support placed under or against something; V.

propagate

increase in number ;multiply

propellant

substance which pushes or drives

propensity

natural inclination

prophetic

predicting the future

prophylactic

used to prevent disease

propinquity

Nearness; proximity

propitiate

appease; make tranquil; conciliate;

propitious

favorable; auspicious; advantageous; fortunate; E.g., propitious day/sign

proponent

supporter; backer; opposite of opponent

propound

put forth for consideration or analysis; set forth; E.g., propound a problem/theory

propriety

fitness; quality of being proper; correct conduct; conformity to prevailing customs and usages; CF. proprietor, proprietary

propulsive

driving forward; N. propulsion

prosaic

lacking in imagination; dull and unimaginative; matter-of-fact(concerned with facts, not imagination or feelings); factual; CF. prose

proscenium

part of stage in front of curtain; front arch of a stage

proscribe

prohibit; ostracize; banish; outlaw

proselytize

(induce someone to) convert to a religion or belief; N. proselyte: new convert to a doctrine or religion

prosody

art of versification; study of the metrical structure of verse

prosper

become successful; grow well;

prosperity

good fortune and financial success; physical well-being

prosperous

successful; rich; affluent; well-to-do; well-off

prostrate

stretch out on ground;

prot\`eg\`e

person receiving protection and support from a patron

protagonist

leader or noticeable supporter of an idea; chief character in a play or story

protean

able to take on many forms; versatile; CF. Proteus: sea god to change his shape at will

protocol

manner or procedure; diplomatic etiquette

prototype

a model; a representation

protract

prolong; lengthen in time; draw out

protrude

stick out; jut; project; E.g., protruding teeth

protuberance

A bulge or protrusion

provenance

place of origin; origin or source of something

proverb

adage; someone or something well known for notoriety; ADJ. proverbial: of a proverb; widely known; ADV. proverbially

providence

quality of being provident; divine care; god's care; Providence: god; E.g., It seemed like providence that the doctor happened to be there; ADJ. providential: of divine providence; fortunate

provident

providing for future needs; displaying foresight; thrifty; preparing for emergencies; OP. improvident

provincial

pertaining to a province; limited in outlook; narrow; unsophisticated

provision

act of providing; something provided; preparatory measure; provisions: necessary supplies (esp. food); stipulation; condition in an agreement; E.g., According to the provisions of the agreement

provisional

tentative; temporary

proviso

stipulation; condition in an agreement; provision

provocative

arousing anger or sexual interest; annoying

prowess

extraordinary ability; military bravery; E.g., prowess in battle

proximity

nearness; ADJ. proximate

proxy

authorized agent; authority to act for another

prude

One who is easily shocked by improper things

prudent

cautious; careful; prudential

prune

cut away; trim

prurient

having or causing lustful desires and thoughts; arousing immoderate sexual desire

pry

Try to spy or look into another's private affairs

pseudonym

pen name; fictitious name assumed by an author; ADJ. pseudonymous

psyche

soul; mind

psychiatrist

doctor who treats mental diseases

psychic

of psyche; mental; of or possessing extraordinary mental powers

psychopathic

mental disorder;

psychosis

mental disorder;

psychosomatic

of the influence of the mind on the body

pucker

gather into wrinkles or folds

pudding

hot sweet dish

puerile

childish; immature

pugilist

boxer; CF. pugilism: boxing

pugnacity

combateness; disposition to fight; ADJ. pugnacious: (of people) belligerent; combative in nature

puissant

powerful; strong; potent; N. puissance: power

pulchritude

beauty; comeliness; ADJ. pulchritudinous

pulmonary

pertaining to the lungs

pulpit

raised platform used in preaching (in a church)

pulsate

throb; beat regularly; vibrate regularly

pulse

rhythmical throbbing of arteries; brief sudden change in a normally constant quantity; V: pulsate

pulverize

crush or grind into very small particles

pummel

pommel; beat or pound with fists

punctilious

Greatly attentive to detail

pundit

authority on a subject; expert; learned person

pungent

stinging; acrid; sharp in taste or smell; (of speech or writing) caustic; N. pungency

punitive

punishing; E.g., punitive measures

puny

tiny; weak; insignificant

purchase

secure grasp or hold; firm grasp or footing

purgatory

place of spiritual expiation; temporary state or place in which the souls must expiate their sins

purge

remove or get rid of something or someone unwanted; eliminate;

purport

intention; purpose; meaning; V: claim; profess; E.g., order which purports to be signed by the general

purported

alleged; claimed; reputed or rumored; E.g., purported Satanists

purse

pucker; contract (lips) into wrinkles; N: wallet

purveyor

Seller; especially of foodstuffs;

pushy

disagreeably aggressive

pusillanimous

cowardly; lacking courage; fainthearted

putative

supposed; reputed; generally regarded as such; E.g., putative father of the child

putrefy

make or become putrid; N. putrefaction

putrescent

becoming putrid; putrefying

putrid

decayed and foul-smelling; foul; rotten; decayed; N. putridity

puzzle

baffle or confuse by a difficult problem; ponder over a problem in an effort to solve; clarify or solve by reasoning; E.g., puzzle out the answer; N.

pyromaniac

person with an insane desire to set things on fire

quack

A pretender; an impostor

quadruped

Root 'quad': four

A four-footed animal;

quaff

drink with zest; drink with relish(zest; hearty enjoyment); CF. sip

quagmire

bog; marsh; soft, wet, boggy land; predicament; complex or dangerous situation from which it is difficult to free oneself

quail

cower; shrink back in fear; lose heart

quaint

odd in an old-fashioned way; odd; old-fashioned; picturesque

qualified

limited; restricted; V. qualify: limit the meaning of; modify

qualify

reach a necessary standard; limit the meaning of something stated

qualms

uneasy feelings; misgivings; uneasy fears especially about matters of conscience; E.g., I have no qualms about giving this assignment to Helen.

quandary

dilemma; state of uncertainty; E.g., She is in a quandary about whether to go.

quarantine

isolation of a person, place, or ship to prevent spread of infection; V: isolate in quarantine

quarry

A mine;

quash

crush; suppress; squash; subdue; annul; E.g., quash a rebellion/the decision of the low court

quay

dock; wharf; pier; landing place (for boats)

queasy

experiencing nausea; nauseated; easily nauseated; squeamish; E.g., feel a little queasy

queer

strange; eccentric; deviating from the normal

quell

suppress; put an end to

quench

assuage or satisfy (thrust); slake; douse or extinguish; put out; suppress

querulous

given to complaining; complaining; fretful; whining

query

inquiry; question; V.

queue

line (of waiting people or vehicles)

quibble

minor objection or complaint; V: raise minor objections; carp; cavil

quicksilver

mercury

quiescent

dormant; temporarily inactive; at rest; N. quiescence

quietude

tranquillity; calmness

quintessence

purest and highest example

quip

taunt; clever sarcastic remark; V.

quirk

sudden sharp turn or twist;

quisling

traitor who aids invaders

quiver

tremble; shake; N.

quixotic

idealistic but impractical

Refer to the chapters on 'Improving Vocabulary through knowing the Stories behind Words'

quizzical

curious; suggesting puzzlement (without saying); questioning; teasing; mocking; bantering; E.g., quizzical glance

quorum

minimal number of members necessary to conduct a meeting

quotidian

daily; commonplace; customary; E.g., quotidian routine

rabble

mob; noisy crowd

rabid

of or suffering rabies; like a fanatic;

rabies

disease passed on by the bite of an infected animal (causing madness and death)

raconteur

story-teller; one who tells stories with wit and skill

raffle

lottery; V: award as a prize in a raffle;

rag

scrap of cloth; ADJ. ragged: old and torn; seeming unfinished and imperfect; E.g., ragged debut/performance

ragamuffin

dirty child in torn clothes; person wearing tattered clothes

rail

scold; rant;

raiment

clothing; garments;

rake

immoral or dissolute person

rakish

jaunty; stylish; sporty; morally corrupt; dissolute;

rally

come or bring together; call up or summon N: act of rallying; mass gathering

ram

male sheep; V. strike or drive against with a heavy impact

ramble

wander aimlessly (physically or mentally); digress

ramification

branching out; subdivision

ramify

branch out; divide into branches or subdivisions

ramp

slope; inclined plane or roadway (connecting two levels)

rampant

growing or spreading uncontrollably

rampart

defensive mound of earth

ramshackle

About to collapse or fall apart

rancid

stale

rancor

long-lasting hatred; bitterness; E.g., negotiation without rancor; ADJ. rancorous

random

without definite purpose, plan, or aim; haphazard; E.g., random shots; E.g., chosen at random

rank

offensive in odor or flavour

rankle

irritate; fester; annoy

ransack

search thoroughly; pillage (going through a place); E.g., Enemy soldiers ransacked the town.

rant

speak violently or excitedly; rave; talk excitedly showing anger; scold; make a grandiloquent speech; E.g., The priest ranted about the devil.

rapacious

voracious; ravenous; taking everything one can; excessively grasping; plundering; subsisting on live prey; E.g., rapacious birds

rapport

close relationship; emotional closeness; harmony

rapt

engrossed; absorbed; enchanted; E.g., rapt listener

rapture

great joy and delight; ecstasy; ADJ. rapturous

rarefied

made less dense (of a gas); V. rarefy: make less dense; N. rarefaction

rasp

make a harsh noise.

raspy

making a harsh noise; grating; harsh

ratify

approve formally; confirm; verify

ratiocination

reasoning; act of drawing conclusions from premises; V. ratiocinate: reason logically

ration

fixed portion; V. distribute as rations

rational

(of a person) having reason; (of ideas) based on reason; logical

rationale

fundamental reason or principle (on which a system or principle is based); fundamental reason or justification; grounds for an action

rationalize

make rational; devise false reasons for (one's behavior);

raucous

(of voice) harsh and unpleasant; (of people) disorderly and boisterous; E.g., raucous shouts

ravage

devastate; plunder; despoil;

rave

overwhelmingly favourable review; V: talk wildly as if mad; E.g., raving lunatic

ravel

fall apart into tangles; entangle; unravel or untwist

ravenous

extremely hungry; voracious

ravine

narrow valley with steep sides; gorge; CF. gully, canyon

raze

destroy completely;

reactionary

strongly opposed to social or political change; opposing progress; politically ultraconservative; N.
OP. radical

realm

kingdom; field or sphere;

reaper

one who harvests grain; E.g., the Grim Reaper; V. reap: cut and gather (crop); harvest a crop

rebate

return of part of a payment; discount; V.

rebuff

reject bluntly; snub; beat back

rebuke

scold harshly; criticize severely

rebus

representation of words in the form of pictures or symbols; puzzle in which pictures or letters stand for words

rebuttal

refutation; response with contrary evidence; V. rebut: refute; disprove

recalcitrant

disobedient or resisting authority even after being punished; obstinately stubborn

recant

disclaim or disavow; retract a previous statement; openly confess error;

recapitulate

summarize

recast

reconstruct (a sentence, story, statue, etc.); fashion again

receptive

quick or willing to receive (ideas, suggestions, etc.); E.g., receptive to the proposal

recess

pause; temporary cessation; alcove; secret inner place; E.g., parliament in recess; V. CF. recessive

recession

withdrawal; retreat; time of low economic activity

recidivism

habitual return to crime

recipient

receiver

reciprocal

mutual; given and received in return; exchangeable; interacting; E.g., reciprocal trade agreement

reciprocate

do or give something in return; repay in kind; give or take mutually; interchange; move

recital

act of reciting publicly

recite

repeat aloud (something learned); describe; E.g., recite his complaints; N. recitation

reckon

count; calculate; regard as; think; suppose

recline

lie down

recluse

hermit; loner; ADJ. reclusive

reconcile

make friendly again (after quarrel); make consistent (two ideas in opposition); correct inconsistencies

recondite

abstruse; not easily understood; profound; secret

reconnaissance

survey of enemy by soldiers;

recount

narrate or tell (a story); count over again

recourse

resorting to help when in trouble; E.g., without recourse to

recreant

disloyal; cowardly; N: disloyal and cowardly person

recrimination

Counter-charges; V. recriminate

rectify

set right; correct;

rectitude

moral correctness; moral uprightness; moral virtue; correctness of judgment

recumbent

reclining; lying down completely or in part

recuperate

recover; return to health; regain;

recurrent

occurring again and again

redolent

odorous; fragrant; suggestive (of an odor); E.g., redolent of onions/mystery

redoubtable

formidable; causing fear

redress

remedy; compensation;

redundant

superfluous; more than is necessary

reek

emit an unpleasant

refectory

dining hall; room where meals are served (in a school)

referendum

direct vote by all the people

refraction

bending of a ray of light

refractory

unmanageable; disobedient and stubborn; E.g., refractory horse

refrain

abstain from; resist; forbear; N: chorus

refulgent

effulgent; brilliant; brightly shining; gleaming; E.g., refulgent moon

refurbish

renovate; make clean, bright, or fresh (make new) again; make bright by polishing; E.g., refurbish an old theater; CF. furbish: polish

refuse

anything discarded or rejected as worthless; trash

refute

disprove; prove to be false; N. refutation

regal

royal; of a monarch; E.g., regal manner

regale

entertain

regatta

boat or yacht race

regeneration

spiritual rebirth; E.g., regeneration of the prisoners; V. regenerate: give or obtain new life; reform spiritually

regent

a person who governs in place of a ruler

regicide

murder of a king or queen

regime

method of system or government

regimen

prescribed course of diet or exercise; prescribed diet and habits; E.g., daily regimen of a dancer

regiment

military unit;

rehabilitate

restore to proper condition (health or useful life); restore the former rank of

reimburse

repay; pay back

reinstate

restore to a previous condition or position

reiterate

repeat

rejoinder

reply; retort; comeback; V. rejoin: say in reply

rejuvenate

make young again

relapse

return to a former state (esp. after improvement); N.

relegate

put into a lower or worse place; banish to an inferior position; delegate; assign; E.g., relegate the old furniture to the children's room; E.g., relegated to the second division

relent

become less severe; give in(surrender); ADJ. relentless: unyielding; continuously severe

relevant

having importance; pertinent; referring to the case in hand; N. relevance, relevancy

relic

surviving remnant from an extinct culture; memento; keepsake; relics: corpse

religious

of religion; (of a person) pious; having reverence for a deity

relinquish

give up something (with reluctance); yield; release; E.g., relinquish power/the claim to the land/his hold on my arm

relish

enjoy; savor; N: enjoyment; zest

remediable

reparable

reminiscence

recollection; V. reminisce: recollect the past

reminiscent

suggestive of something (in the past); of reminiscence

remiss

negligent; careless about a duty

remission

temporary moderation (of disease symptoms); remitting of a debt or punishment; cancelation of a debt; pardon; E.g., The disease went into remission; E.g., Christians pray for the remission of sins.

remit

transmit (money) in payment; free someone from a debt or punishment

remittance

remitting of money; amount of money remitted

remnant

remainder

remonstrate

protest; objection; V. remonstrate: say in protest

remorse

deep regret for wrongdoing; guilt; self-reproach

remunerative

(of work) compensating; rewarding; profitable; well-paid; V. remunerate: reward; pay (someone) for work or trouble

rend

split; tear apart; N. rent; CF. heartrending: causing deep sorrow

render

give; deliver; provide; represent in verbal or artistic form; depict; perform; make; translate; E.g., render the song beautifully

rendezvous

meeting place; meeting at a set time or place; V.

rendition

rendering; translation; artistic interpretation of a song, etc

renegade

deserter; traitor; ADJ.

renege

break a promise; deny; go back on; E.g., renege on the contract/paying off the debt

renounce

abandon; give up (by formal announcement); disown; repudiate; E.g., renounce one's claim to the property/one's religion; N. renunciation

renovate

restore to good condition; renew

renown

fame; ADJ. renowned

rent

tear made by rending; rip; split

reparable

capable of being repaired

reparation

compensation (for loss or wrong); amends; E.g., make reparation for the damage; CF. repair

repartee

quick clever reply

repast

meal; feast; banquet

repeal

revoke; annul

repel

drive away; disgust; E.g., repel the attack/moisture; E.g., repelled by the dirty room; CF. repulsion

repellent

driving away; disgusting; offensive; repulsive; unattractive; N.

repercussion

rebound; reaction; reverberation; E.g., serious repercussion

repertoire

list of works of music, drama, etc., a performer is prepared to present; CF. repertory

repine

fret; complain; be annoyed; E.g., repine over the undone work

replenish

fill up again

replete

fully filled; filled to the brim or to the point of being stuffed; abundantly supplied; E.g., report replete with errors

replica

copy

replicate

reproduce; duplicate

repose

resting; state of being at rest; calmness; V: lie at rest; relax; put or place; E.g., repose our hopes in a single man

repository

storehouse

reprehensible

deserving blame; blameworthy; V. reprehend: blame

representational

(of a style of art) showing things as they actually appear in real life

repress

hold back (the natural expression of); restrain; crush; oppress; E.g., repressed child; E.g., repress a laugh/rebellion

reprieve

postponement or cancelation of a punishment; temporary stay; V: postpone or cancel the punishment of

reprimand

reprove severely; rebuke; N.

reprisal

retaliation

reprise

musical repetition; repeating of a piece of music; repeat performance; recurrent action; E.g., reprise in the finale; E.g., constant reprises

reproach

blame (not angrily but sadly); express disapproval or disappointment; N. ADJ. reproachful

reprobate

morally disapproved person; person hardened in sin, devoid of a sense of decency; CF. disapproved by God ?

reprobation

severe disapproval; CF. approbation

reprove

censure; rebuke; N. reproof

repudiate

disown; disavow; deny

repugnance

disgust; strong dislike; loathing; ADJ. repugnant: arousing disgust; repulsive

repulse

reject with rudeness or coldness (an offer or friendship); drive back (an enemy attack); CF. repulse $\neq$ cause repulsion

repulsion

distaste; disgust; act of driving back; ADJ. repulsive: causing disgust; tending to drive away; V. repel (not 'repulse')

reputable

respectable; having a good reputation

reputed

supposed; E.g., reputed father of the child; V. repute: consider; N. repute: reputation; esteem

requiem

mass for the dead; dirge

requisite

necessary requirement; something required; ADJ. required; necessary

requisition

formal demand or request; E.g., requisition for more computing equipment; V.

requite

make return for; repay; reciprocate; revenge; N. requittal

rescind

repeal; annul; cancel (a law, decision, or agreement)

resentment

indignation; bitterness; displeasure; V. resent: feel anger about

reserve

self-control; self-restraint; formal but distant manner; reticence; E.g., without reserve: freely and openly; ADJ. reserved: shy and uncommunicative

residual

remaining; left over; of a residue; N: residue

residue

remainder; balance

resign

give up (a position, right, or claim); submit (oneself) passively

resignation

patiently submissiveness; statement that one is quitting a job; ADJ. resigned: acquiescent

resilient

elastic; having the power of springing back; able to recover quickly (as from misfortune)

resolution

determination; resoluteness; ADJ. resolute: firm or determined in purpose

resolve

decide; settle; solve; separate; make a determined decision; N. resolution

resonant

echoing;

resort

turn to for help; E.g., resort to violence; N.

resound

(of a place) be filled with sound; (of a sound) sound loudly; sound back; echo; E.g., hall resounded with laughter

resourceful

Being able to use resources well; smart and clever

respiration

breathing

respite

A break; rest; interval

resplendent

Bright; brilliant

responsiveness

To reacting

restitution

returning something

restive

Impatient, restless

restraint

moderation or self-control; controlling force; restriction

resumption

Root 're': again

To start again; to resume

resurge

Root 're': again

rise again; surge again

resurrect

Root 're': again

revive

resuscitate

Root 're': again

revive; bring back to life or consciousness;

retain

Root 're': again

keep; maintain possession of;

retaliate

Root 're': again

repay in kind

retard

delay

retentive

Root 're': again

Remember; hold

reticent

Silent; aloof; uncommunicative; reserved

retinue

following; attendants

retiring

shy and reserved

retort

Root 're': again

quick sharp reply;

retract

Root 're': again

withdraw; take back; draw back

retrench

Reduce

retribution

deserved punishment for wrongdoing;

retrieve

recover; bring back

retroactive

taking effect before its enactment (as a law) or imposition (as a tax); (of a law) having effect on the past as well as the future

retrograde

go backwards; deteriorate; ADJ.

retrospective

looking back

revelry

Fun and merrymaking;

reverberate

echo repeatedly; resound; E.g., The thunder reverberated across the valley.

reverend

respected

reverent

respectful; worshipful; V. revere: regard with reverence; N. reverence: profound respect

reverie

daydream; abstracted musing

revert

relapse; backslide; turn back to; return to the former owner; N. reversion

revile

attack with abusive language;

revoke

To bring back; cancel; retract

revulsion

sudden strong feeling of disgust; sudden violent change of feeling; negative reaction; E.g., revulsion from the scenes of torture

rhapsodize

speak or write in an exaggerated manner;

rhapsody

excessively enthusiastic expression of feeling; musical composition of irregular form (as if made up as one plays it)

rhetoric

art of effective communication; art of using language effectively and persuasively; style of speaking or writing; grandiloquent language; E.g., political rhetoric; ADJ. rhetorical; CF. rhetorical question: question to which no answer is expected as

ribald

marked by vulgar lewd humor; wanton; profane; N. ribaldry: ribald language or joke

rickety

(of buildings) likely to break or fall apart; of rickets; CF. rickets; CF. vitamin D

riddle

pierce with holes; permeate or spread throughout; E.g., The gunman riddled the car with bullets; E.g., The whole report is riddled with errors; N. large sieve (separating earth from stone)

rider

amendment or clause added to a legislative bill

rife

(of something bad) widespread; abundant; current

rift

narrow opening; break

rig

arrangement of masts and sails;

righteous

morally upright; just

rightful

legally correct;

rigid

Stiff; unbending

rigor

severity;

rile

irritate; vex; muddy

rip

tear or be torn quickly and violently;

rivet

metal pin used for fastening metal plates together; V: fasten with a rivet; engross

riveting

holding one's attention; absorbing; engrossing

rivulet

small stream;

robust

strong; vigorous

rococo

ornate; highly decorated

roil

make liquids murky by stirring up sediment; disturb

rolling

rising and falling

romp

play or frolic boisterously; gambol; N.

rooster

cock; adult male chicken

roseate

rosy; optimistic;

roster

list

rostrum

raised platform for speech-making; pulpit

rote

repetition; memorization through repetition without understanding; E.g., learn poetry by rote

rotund

(of a person) fat and round

rotunda

circular building or hall covered with a dome

rotundity

roundness;

rousing

lively; inducing excitement; stirring; V. rouse: waken; arouse from sleep or depression; excite; stir up

rout

put to rout; stampede; drive out; N: complete defeat and disorderly retreat

rubble

Fragments; pieces

rubric

title or heading (in red print); directions for religious ceremony; protocol

ruddy

reddish; (of the face) reddish and healthy-looking

rudimentary

elementary; not developed; crude; N. rudiment: fundamental element or principle; E.g., rudiments of the language

rue

regret; lament; mourn; E.g., He will rue the day; N. ADJ. rueful

ruffian

violent scoundrel; bully

rumble

make or move with a deep rolling sound (as thunder or stomach)

ruminant

animal that ruminates; ADJ.

ruminate

chew over and over (mentally or, like cows, physically); mull over(ponder)

rummage

ransack; thoroughly search

run-down

(of a place) dilapidated; in a bad condition; (of a person) weak or exhausted

ruse

trick to deceive; stratagem

rustic

pertaining to country people; unsophisticated; simple; crude; uncouth; (of furniture) rough with the bark left on; N. rural person; rustic person

rusticate

banish to the country; dwell in the country

rustle

make slight sounds like silk moving or being rubbed together

ruthless

pitiless; merciless; cruel

saboteur

one who commits sabotage; destroyer of property; N. sabotage: destruction of property (usually carried out secretly)

saccharine

cloying sweet; characteristic of sugar or saccharin

sacrilegious

desecrating; profane; N. sacrilege: desecration, misuse, or theft of something sacred

sacrosanct

Highly sacred;

sadistic

inclined to cruelty; N. sadism: delight in cruelty

saga

Scandinavian myth; any legend; long heroic narrative

sagacious

wise; perceptive; shrewd; having insight; N. sagacity

sage

person celebrated for wisdom; wise person; ADJ: wise

salacious

lascivious; lustful; E.g., salacious monk

salient

prominent; projecting beyond a line; conspicuous; E.g., salient features

saline

salty

sallow

(of the skin) yellowish and unhealthy-looking; sickly in color; E.g., sallow complexion due to jaundice

salubrious

healthful; conducive to health or well-being; socially desirable; E.g., salubrious area; CF. health

salutary

Have a positive or healthy effect; improve or ameliorate

salvage

rescue (goods or property) from loss; N: saving; property saved

sanctimonious

displaying ostentatious or hypocritical devoutness; N. sanctimony: hypocritical piety

sanction

approve; ratify; N: permission; penalty intended to enforce compliance

sanctuary

place of refuge; shelter;

sanguinary

bloody; with much bloodshed

sanguine

optimistic; cheerful; hopeful; of the color of blood; red

sap

diminish; weaken; undermine the foundations of (a fortification)

sarcasm

cutting ironic remark; scornful remarks; stinging rebuke

sardonic

scornfully mocking; sarcastic

sartorial

pertaining to tailors or tailoring; E.g., a man of great sartorial elegance; CF. sartor: tailor

sate

satisfy to the full; satisfy to excess; cloy

satellite

small body revolving around a larger one

satiate

satisfy fully (physical needs such as hunger); sate; N. satiety: condition of being satiated

satire

form of literature in which irony, sarcasm, and ridicule are employed to attack human vice and folly

satirical

using satire; mocking

saturate

soak thoroughly; imbue; impregnate; charge; fill to capacity

saturnine

morose; gloomy; E.g., Do not be misled by his saturnine countenance.

saunter

stroll (go for a leisurely walk) slowly; N.

savant

scholar; learned person; CF. savour: know

savour

enjoy; have a distinctive flavour

savoury

pleasant in taste; tasty; pleasing

scabbard

case for a sword blade; sheath

scad

a great quantity; E.g., scads of clothes

scaffold

temporary platform for workers (to work at heights above the ground); bracing framework; platform for execution

scale

climb up; ascend; remove or come off in scales; N: flake of epidermis; ascending or descending series of musical tones

scanty

meager; insufficient

scapegoat

someone who bears the blame for others; whipping boy; CF. escape+goat

scavenge

hunt through discarded materials for usable items or food; search, especially for food; N. scavenger: one who scavenges; animal that feeds on refuse and carrion

scenario

plot outline; screenplay(script for a movie); opera libretto; outline of possible future events

schematic

of a schema or scheme; relating to an outline or diagram

scheme

systematic plan; plot;

schism

division into factions (esp. within a religious body); split

scholarly

full of learning; erudite; like a scholar; E.g., scholarly journal

scintilla

trace; minute amount; shred; least bit; E.g., There is not a scintilla of truth; CF. spark

scintillate

Bright and sparkling; flashing;

scion

detached plant shoot used in grafting; descendant

scoff

Laugh at; ridicule

scorch

sear; N.

scotch

To stop; put an end to; restrict

scourge

lash; whip (formerly used for punishment); source of severe punishment; V: whip; afflict

scowl

frown angrily; N: angry frown

scrap

small bit or fragment;

scrappy

quarrelsome

scraps

leftover food

screech

unpleasant high sharp sound; shriek; V.

scrimmage

disorderly fight between two or more people

scruple

hesitate for ethical reasons; fret about; E.g., She did not scruple to read his diary; N: uneasy feeling arising from conscience; conscience

scrupulous

conscientious; extremely thorough;

scrutinize

examine closely and critically; N. scrutiny

scuffle

struggle confusedly;

scurrilous

abusive; obscene; indecent; E.g., scurrilous remark

scurry

move quickly and furtively

scuttle

Act of destroying

seamy

sordid; base; filthy; unwholesome; E.g., seamy side of city life

sear

burn the surface of; char or burn; brand; parch; cause (a plant) to wither

seasonable

occurring at the proper time or season; opportune; E.g., seasonable intervention in the dispute

seasonal

of a particular season; E.g., seasonal rise in employment

seasoned

experienced

secession

withdrawal; V. secede: withdraw formally from membership

seclusion

isolation; solitude; V. seclude: set apart from others; isolate

secrete

conceal; hide away or cache; produce and release a substance into an organism; CF. secretive

sect

separate religious body; faction; group of people with common beliefs within a larger group

sectarian

of a sect; narrow-minded; parochial; N: member of a sect; narrow-minded person

secular

worldly; not pertaining to church matters or religion; temporal

sedate

composed (with no excitement); grave; V: administer a sedative to; CF. sedative

sedentary

requiring sitting; done while sitting; not moving from one place to another; settled; E.g., sedentary job/population

sedition

inciting rebellion

seduce

entice

sedulous

diligent; assiduous

seedy

disreputable

seemly

proper; appropriate

seep

pass slowly through small openings; ooze; trickle; N. seepage

seethe

be violently disturbed; boil; (of a liquid) move about wildly as if boiling; E.g., The nation was seething with discontent.

seine

seine net; net for catching fish

seismic

pertaining to earthquakes

selective

Discerning; choosy

self-indulgence

excessive indulgence of one's own desire

self-righteous

sure of one's own righteousness; moralistic

semblance

outward appearance; guise;

seminal

Innovative; creative

seminary

school for training future ministers; secondary school, especially for young women

senility

feble-mindedness associated with an old person

sensitization

process of being made sensitive or acutely responsive to an external agent or substance; V. sensitize: make or become sensitive

sensual

devoted to the pleasures of the sense; carnal; voluptuous; E.g., sensual woman/curves/lips

sensuous

giving pleasure to the senses; pertaining to the physical senses

sententious

pithy; terse; concise; aphoristic

sentient

aware; sensitive

sentimental

swayed by sentiment; appealing to the sentiments

sentinel

sentry; lookout

septic

of or causing sepsis; putrid; producing putrefaction; N. sepsis: poisoning of part of the body (producing pus)

sepulchre

tomb; V: place in a sepulchre; ADJ. sepulchral

sequester

isolate; segregate; seclude; retire from public life

sere

sear; parched; dry

serendipity

gift for finding valuable things by accident

serenity

calmness; placidity; ADJ. serene

serpentine

winding; twisting; of or like a serpent; E.g., serpentine course of the river; N. serpent: snake

serrated

having a toothed edge;

servile

slavish; cringing; N. servility

servitude

slavery; compulsory labor imposed as a punishment

sever

cut off

severity

harshness; intensity; sternness; austerity

sextant

navigation tool used to determine a ship's latitude and longitude

shack

crude cabin

shackle

chain; fetter; confine with shackles; N.

shade

slight difference in degree; nuance; degree of color; E.g., shades of meaning/grey

sham

pretend; feign; ADJ: not genuine; fake; E.g., sham jewelry; N: something that is not what it appears; impostor; pretense; E.g., The agreement was a sham.

shambles

(place or scene of) complete disorder or ruin; wreck; mess; E.g., After the hurricane, the coast was a shambles.

Shangri-la

imaginary paradise

shard

fragment generally of broken pottery (glass, clay bowl, or cup)

shaving

very thin piece, usually of wood (cut from a surface with a sharp blade)

sheaf

bundle of stalks of grain; any bundle of things tied together

shear

remove (fleece or hair) by cutting; remove the hair or fleece from; cut with or as if with shears; N: shears; pair of scissors

sheathe

place into a case; insert into or provide with a sheath

shed

small roofed structure for storage and shelter

sheer

pure; thin and transparent; very steep

sherbet

flavored dessert ice

shimmer

shine with a flickering light; glimmer intermittently; E.g., The moonlight shimmered on the water; N.

shirk

avoid (responsibility, work, etc.); malingering

shoddy

made of inferior material; sham; not genuine; inferior; dishonest; E.g., shoddy goods/trick

shoot

new growth from a plant

shove

push forward; push roughly; E.g., pushing and shoving to get on the bus; N.

shrew

An ill-tempered woman

shrewd

clever; astute

shrivel

to become shrunken

shudder

shake uncontrollably; tremble; V.

shuffle

mix together; jumble;

shun

keep away from; avoid deliberately

shunt

move from one track to another; divert

sibling

brother or sister

sibylline

prophetic; oracular; N. sibyl: woman prophet (in the ancient world)

sidereal

relating to stars;

sidetrack

switch (a railroad car) to a siding; divert from a main issue; N. CF. siding: short section of railroad track connected by switches with a main track

sift

put through a sieve to separate fine from coarse particles; sort or examine carefully

significant

expressing a meaning; important;

silt

sediment deposited by running water (at the entrance to a harbor or by a bend in a river)

simian

Monkey-like;

simile

comparison of one thing with another, using the word like or as

simper

smirk; smile in a silly way; smile affectedly

simplistic

oversimplified

simulate

feign; imitate

sinecure

well-paid position with little responsibility;

sinewy

(of meat) tough; strong and firm; muscular; N. sinew: tendon; strong cord connecting a muscle to a bone

singular

Extraordinary; unique

sinister

evil; ominous

sinuous

twisting; winding; bending in and out; not morally honest

siren

apparatus for making sounds; womanlike creature

sceptic

One who doubts

skiff

small light sailboat or rowboat

skim

read or glance through quickly; touch lightly in passing; brush; remove from the surface of a liquid

skimp

provide or use scantily; live very economically; E.g., skimp on necessities; ADJ. skimpy: inadequate in amount; scanty; stingy; niggardly

skinflint

miser; stingy person

skirmish

minor fight; minor battle in war; V.

skittish

inconstant; capricious; frivolous; not serious; E.g., charming but skittish young woman; CF. skit

skulduggery

Trickery; deceit

skulk

move furtively and secretly; E.g., He skulked through the less fashionable sections of the city.

slack

moving slowly; sluggish; inactive; (of a rope) loose; negligent; lax; E.g., slack season; E.g., slack in one's work; N. V.

slacken

slow up; loosen; make or become slack

slag

glassy residue from smelting metal; dross; waste matter

slake

satisfy (thirst); quench; sate

slander

defamation; utterance of false statements;

slap

hit quickly with the flat part of the hand; N. CF. smack

slapdash

hasty and careless; haphazard; sloppy (carelessly done)

slaughter

killing of animals for food; massacre; V: butcher (animals) for food; kill in large numbers

slavish

of or like a slave; servile;

sleazy

shabby and dirty; flimsy; insubstantial; E.g., sleazy back-street hotel/fabric

sledge

large sled drawn by work animals

sleek

smooth and shining (as from good health); V.

sleep

one that achieves unexpected success; something originally of little value or importance that in time becomes very valuable

sleigh

large vehicle drawn by a horse over snow or ice

sleight

dexterity; CF. sleight of hand: legerdemain; quickness of the hands in doing tricks

slew

large quantity or number;

slick

make oily, smooth or glossy;

slight

insult to one's dignity; snub;

slink

move furtively; ADJ. slinky: stealthy; furtive; sneaky (as in ambush)

slipshod

slovenly; careless; sloppy; untidy; shabby;

slither

slip or slide

sloth

slow moving tree-dwelling mammal; laziness; ADJ. slothful: lazy; indolent

slough

(of a snake) shed or cast off (dead outer skin); N: outer layer that is shed

slovenly

untidy; careless in work habits; slipshod; N. sloven: one who is habitually untidy or careless

sluggard

lazy person

sluggish

lazy; slow; inactive; lethargic; CF. slug: nail with no shell

sluice

artificial channel for directing or controlling the flow of water (with a gate to regulate the flow)

slur

pronounce indistinctly; speak indistinctly; mumble

sly

clever in deceiving; secretive; not telling one's intentions

smart

intelligent; quick and energetic; fashionable; E.g., smart pace/restaurant; V: cause or feel a sharp pain; N: smarting pain

smattering

slight knowledge; small scattered number or amount; E.g., smattering of German

smear

spread or cover with a sticky substance; N: mark made by smearing

smelt

melt (ore) for separating and removing the metal; melt or blend ores changing their chemical composition

smirk

conceited smile; offensively self-satisfied smile (often at someone else's misfortune); V.

smolder

smoulder; burn slowly

smother

kill from lack of air; suppress; cover thickly; E.g., smothered in little stickers

smudge

dirty mark with unclear edges made by rubbing; V.

smug

self-satisfied; complacent

sneak

move, give, or take in a quiet, stealthy way; N: one who sneaks;

snicker

half-stifled laugh;

snip

short quick cut with scissors; V: cut with scissors

snivel

complain or whine tearfully; run at the nose; snuffle; E.g., Don't come back snivelling to me.

snub

ignore or behave coldly toward; E.g., I made a suggestion but she snubbed me; N.

snuffle

sniffle; sniff repeatedly (in order to keep liquid from running out of the nose)

soar

rise or fly high in the air; E.g., The rocket soared into the sky.

sober

serious; solemn; not drunken; abstemious or temperate; V: make or become sober

sobriety

moderation (especially regarding indulgence in alcohol); seriousness

sodden

thoroughly soaked; dull or stupid as if from drink

sojourn

temporary stay; V: stay for a time

solace

comfort in sorrow or trouble; consolation; V: comfort or console in time of sorrow or trouble

solder

repair or make whole by using a metal alloy; N: metal alloy (usually tin and lead) used in the molten state to join metallic parts

solecism

nonstandard grammatical construction; construction that is flagrantly incorrect grammatically;
violation of social etiquette

solemnity

seriousness; gravity

solicit

entreat; request earnestly; seek to obtain; E.g., solicit votes; CF. solicitor: one who solicits; chief law officer

solicitor

lawyer in the lower court of law

solicitous

anxious; worried; concerned; eager; E.g., solicitous to do something; N. solicitude

soliloquy

Root 'solo': one
talking to oneself

solitude

Root 'solo': one
state of being alone; seclusion

solstice

Root 'sol': sun
point or time at which the sun is farthest from the equator

soluble

able to be dissolved in a liquid; able to be worked out or solved

solvent

substance that dissolves another; ADJ: capable of dissolving another substance

somatic

pertaining to the body; bodily; physical

somber

dark; gloomy;

somnambulist

Root 'somm': sleep
sleepwalker; V. somnambulate; N. somnambulism

somnolent

Root 'somm': sleep
half asleep; drowsy; N. somnolence

sonic

of sound or its speed in air; CF. subsonic, supersonic

sonnet

14-line poetic verse form with a fixed rhyme pattern

sonorous

resonant; producing a full deep sound; producing sound

soothsayer

one who foretells the future

sophist

teacher of philosophy; quibbler; employer of fallacious reasoning; N. sophism: plausible but fallacious argument

sophisticated

worldly wise and urbane; refined; complex; N. sophistication; V. sophisticate

sophistry

seemingly plausible but fallacious reasoning; sophism

sophomoric

immature; half-baked; like a sophomore

soporific

sleep-causing; marked by sleepiness; drowsy

sordid

filthy; foul; base; vile; E.g., sordid bed/story

sound

in good condition; showing good judgment or good sense; thorough; complete

sour

having a sharp or acid taste; acid; tart; bad-tempered; V.

sovereign

ruler in a monarchy; ADJ: (of a country) independent and self-governing; having supreme power; supreme; excellent

sovereignty

complete independence and self-government (of a country); supremacy of authority; power to govern

sow

plant or scatter seed

spangle

small shiny metallic piece sewn to clothing for ornamentation

spare

give; use; refrain from harming

sparse

not thick; thinly scattered; scanty

Spartan

without attention to comfort; lacking luxury and comfort; sternly disciplined; E.g., spartan living condition/life

Refer to the chapters on 'Improving Vocabulary through knowing the Stories behind Words'

spasmodic

fitful; periodic; of or like a spasm; N. spasm: sudden involuntary muscular contraction; sudden burst of energy or emotion

spat

squabble; minor dispute; minor quarrel

spate

sudden flood or rush; E.g., spate of accidents

spatial

Pertaining to space

spatula

broad-bladed instrument used for spreading or mixing

spawn

lay eggs (in large numbers); produce offspring (in large numbers); N: eggs of aquatic animals

specious

seemingly reasonable but incorrect; misleading

speck

small piece or mark; E.g., speck of dust in the eye

spectral

ghostly

spectrum

colored band produced when a beam of light passes through a prism; broad and continuous range;
E.g., whole spectrum of modern thoughts

speechless

unable for the moment to speak

spendthrift

someone who wastes money; CF. thrift: accumulated wealth

sphinx-like

enigmatic; mysterious

spin

rotate swiftly; make (thread) by twisting (cotton, wool, etc.); N.

splice

join together end to end to make one continuous length

spoilsport

one who spoils the pleasure of others

spontaneity

naturalness; not planned or premeditated

spoof

parody

spoonerism

accidental transposition of sounds in successive words

sporadic

occurring irregularly; intermittent

sportive

playful; frolicsome; merry; CF. sport: play or frolic; CF. sportsmanlike

sprout

begin to grow; give off shoots or buds; N: new growth on a plant; shoot

spruce

neat and trim in appearance; smart; E.g., Be spruce for your job interview; V.

spry

(esp. of older people) vigorously active; nimble

spurious

false; counterfeit; forged; illogical; E.g., spurious arguments

spurn

reject disdainfully; scorn; E.g., She spurned all offers of help.

squabble

minor quarrel; bickering; V: engage in a minor quarrel; E.g., squabbling children

squalor

condition of being squalid; filth; degradation; dirty neglected state; ADJ. squalid: dirty; sordid;
morally repulsive; E.g., squalid story

squander

waste; spend foolishly

squash

crush; quash; suppress

squat

short and thick; stocky; E.g., ugly squat tower; V. N.

squeamish

easily shocked or sickened by unpleasant things; fastidious; E.g., A nurse should not be squeamish.

squelch

produce a splashing sound (when stepping through mud); crush; squash;

staccato

played in an abrupt manner; marked by abrupt sharp sound; E.g., staccato applause

stagnant

not moving or flowing

staid

serious and sedate; sober; E.g., staid during the funeral ceremony

stalemate

deadlock; situation in which further action is blocked

stalwart

physically strong; brawny

stamina

power of endurance; strength; staying power

stammer

speak with involuntarily pauses or repetitions

stamp

step on heavily

stampede

sudden frenzied rush (of panic-stricken animals or people); V: participate in or cause stampede; E.g., stampede before the price rises

stanch

stop or check flow of blood; E.g., stanch the gushing wound

standstill

condition of no movement or activity; stop

stanza

division of a poem (composed of two or more lines)

start

move suddenly or involuntarily; E.g., start at the sight of a snake

stately

formal; ceremonious; grand in style or size; majestic

static

having no motion; unchanging; lacking development; N. stasis: stable state

statute

law enacted by the legislature

statutory

created by statute or legislative action; regulated by statute; E.g., statutory age limit

steadfast

steadily loyal; unswerving; steady

stealth

action of moving secretly or unseen; slyness; sneakiness; secretiveness; ADJ. stealthy

steep

soak; saturate; E.g., steep the fabric in the dye bath; ADJ: precipitous

stellar

a star act or performance; outstanding;

stem

stop or check (the flow of); E.g., stem the bleeding from the slashed artery; N: main axis of a plant; stalk

Stem from

originate from

stench

Bad smell

stentorian

extremely loud;

Refer to the chapters on 'Improving Vocabulary through knowing the Stories behind Words'

stereotype

one regarded as embodying a set image or type

sterile

incapable of producing young

stickler

perfectionist; person who insists things be exactly right

stifle

suppress; extinguish; inhibit; smother or suffocate

stigma

token of disgrace; brand;

stilted

bombastic; stiffly pompous;

stink

stench; V: emit a strong foul odor

stint

supply; allotted amount of work; assigned portion of work; limitation; E.g., two-year stint in the army; E.g., without stint

stipend

pay for services

stipple

paint or draw with dots or short strokes

stipulate

state as a necessary condition (of an agreement); make express conditions; specify;

stock

standard; kept regularly in stock or supply; typical; routine; common; E.g., stock sizes of paper; E.g., stock excuse/character; N: goods for sale in a shop; OP. unique

stockade

wooden enclosure or pen; fixed line of posts used as defensive barrier

stodgy

dull; stuffy;

stoic

stoical; impassive;

stoke

stir up a fire or furnace; feed plentifully

stolid

dull; impassive; showing little emotion when strong feelings are expected

stoop

bend forward and down; lower or debase oneself;

stout

rather fat; strong in body; sturdy; resolute; determined; strong in determination;

straggle

stray or fall behind (a main group); spread out in a scattered group; E.g., straggling marathon racer;
E.g., straggling branch

strangle

kill by choking or suffocating; suppress

stratagem

deceptive scheme; clever trick

stratified

divided into levels or strata

stratum

layer of earth's surface; layer of society; PL. strata

strew

spread randomly; sprinkle; scatter;

striated

marked with parallel bands; striped; grooved

stricture

severe and adverse criticism; critical comments; limit or restriction

strident

loud and harsh; insistent; N. stridency

stringent

(of rules) binding; rigid; marked by scarcity of money;

strut

supporting bar; CF. airplane wing building support

studied

deliberate;

studious

given to diligent study

stultify

make stupid in mind; cause to appear or become stupid or inconsistent; suppress; frustrate or hinder

stumble

trip and almost fall; proceed unsteadily; act falteringly; N.

stump

base of a tree trunk left after the rest has been cut down; V: walk in a heavy manner; baffle; puzzle

stun

make unconscious or numb as by a blow; amaze; astound

stupefy

stun; make numb (as with a drug); amaze

stupor

state of being stupefied; state of apathy; daze; lack of awareness

sturdy

strong and firm (in the body)

stygian

unpleasantly dark; gloomy;

stymie

thwart; present an obstacle; stump

suavity

urbanity; polish; ADJ. suave: smooth and courteous

subaltern

Root 'sub': below/under
subordinate

subdue

Root 'sub': below/under
less intense; quieter;

subjective

influenced by personal feelings

subjugate

Root 'sub': below/under
conquer; bring under control

sublimate

refine; purify

sublime

Exalted; lofty; noble

subliminal

Root 'sub': below/under
below the threshold of conscious perception

submerge

Root 'sub': below/under
place under water; Cover completely

submissive

Root 'sub': below/under
willing to obey orders; yielding; timid

subordinate

Root 'sub': below/under
occupying a lower rank; inferior; submissive; N. V: put in a lower rank or class

subpoena

writ summoning a witness to appear in court

subsequent

Root 'sub': below/under
following in time or order; later

subservient

Root 'sub': below/under
behaving like a slave; servile; obsequious

subside

Root 'sub': below/under
sink to a lower level; settle down

subsidiary

Root 'sub': below/under
subordinate; secondary;

subsidy

direct financial aid by government, etc., V. subsidize: assist with a subsidy

subsistence

Root 'sub': below/under
existence; means of subsisting; means of support; livelihood

substantial

of substance; material; solid; essential or fundamental; ample; considerable; well-to-do; wealthy

substantiate

support with evidence

substantive

substantial; essential

subsume

include as a part of a group

subterfuge

A deceptive plan; a pretense

subtlety

Slight; not blatant; delicate

subversive

tending to overthrow or ruin; V. subvert: overthrow completely (an established system); destroy completely; CF. undermine

succour

assist (someone in difficulty); aid; comfort; N.

succulent

juicy

succumb

To give in; to yield

suckle

give or take milk

suffocate

die or kill from lack of air; suppress

suffragist

advocate of the extension of voting rights (for women); CF. suffrage

suffuse

spread through or over (with a color or liquid); charge; E.g., A blush suffused her cheeks.

suitor

man who is courting a woman

sullen

silently showing ill humor or resentment; dark; gloomy

sully

defile; soil; tarnish; E.g., sully one's hands in menial labour

sultry

(of weather) hot; sweltering; sensual; voluptuous

summation

act of finding the total; summing-up; summary (esp. one given by the judge at the end of a trial)

sumptuous

grand suggesting great expense; lavish; rich; E.g., sumptuous feast

sunder

separate; part; CF. asunder

sundry

miscellaneous; various; several; N. sundries: small miscellaneous items

superannuated

Root 'super': above; beyond

retired or disqualified because of age; outmoded; obsolete

supercilious

condescending; patronizing

supererogatory

Root 'super': above; beyond
superfluous; more than needed or demanded

superficial

Root 'super': above; beyond
of the surface; not deep; shallow; not thorough; trivial; E.g., superficial analysis/knowledge

superfluous

Root 'super': above; beyond
excessive; overabundant; unnecessary; N. superfluity

superimpose

Root 'super': above; beyond
place over something else

supernumerary

Root 'super': above; beyond
person or thing excess of what is necessary; extra; ADJ: additional to the usual or necessary number

supersede

Root 'super': above; beyond
replace; cause to be set aside

supine

lying on back; passive; inactive; E.g., The defeated pugilist lay supine; E.g., supine acceptance of the decision

supplant

take the place of unfairly; usurp; replace

supple

flexible; limber; pliant

suppliant

entreating; beseeching; N.

supplicant

one who supplicates; ADJ.

supplicate

petition humbly; pray to grant a favour

supposition

assumption; hypothesis; surmise; V. suppose

supposititious

assumed; counterfeit; hypothetical

suppress

put an end to forcibly; subdue; stifle; overwhelm; inhibit the expression of; check; prevent from being published or made public; E.g., suppress a smile; E.g., suppress the magazine/truth

surfeit

satiated; feed or supply to excess; stuff; indulge to excess in anything; N: surfeiting; excessive amount; E.g., surfeit of food

surge

powerful movement of or like a wave; V.

surly

bad-tempered; rude; cross

surmise

guess; N.

surmount

overcome

surpass

exceed

surreptitious

done secretly; secret; furtive; sneaky; hidden

surrogate

substitute; person or thing used in place of another; E.g., surrogate mother; ADJ.

surveillance

close observation of a person (esp. one under suspicion); watching; guarding

susceptible

impressionable; easily influenced;

suspend

cause to stop for a period; interrupt

suspense

state of being undecided; anxiety or apprehension resulting from uncertainty

sustain

support; maintain

sustenance

sustaining; means of livelihood, support, food, nourishment; something that maintains life; food

suture

stitches sewn to hold the cut edges of a wound or incision; material used in sewing; V: sew together a wound

swagger

walk or behave with an over-confident manner

swamp

wetland; marsh; V: flood; overwhelm; drench in with liquid

swarm

large group of insects moving in a mass; crowd of people or animals; V: move in a crowd or mass

swarthy

Dark or dusky in complexion

swathe

swath; wrap around; bandage

sway

swing from side to side; influence (someone) to change one's opinion; N.

swear

vow; promise; use profane oaths; use offensive words

swear-word

word considered offensive

swell

long wave of water that moves continuously without breaking; V.

swelter

(of a person) suffer from oppressive heat; be oppressed by heat

swerve

deviate; turn aside sharply from a straight course

swill

drink greedily

swindler

cheater

swipe

hit with a sweeping motion; N.

sybarite

lover of luxury; person devoted to pleasure and luxury; CF. Sybaris: an ancient Greek city in Italy

sycophant

servile flatterer; bootlicker; yes man; ADJ. sycophantic

syllogism

logical formula consisting of a major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion; deceptive or specious argument

sylvan

pertaining to the woods or the country

symbiosis

Roots 'sys', 'syl', 'sys', 'sym', 'syn' - all mean with; together; along
interdependent relationship (between groups, species) often mutually beneficial; ADJ. symbiotic;
CF. together + life

symmetry

Roots 'sys', 'syl', 'sys', 'sym', 'syn' - all mean with; together; along
arrangement of parts so that balance is obtained; congruity; ADJ. symmetrical

synchronous

Roots 'sys', 'syl', 'sys', 'sym', 'syn' - all mean with; together; along
similarly timed; simultaneous with; occurring at the same time; V. synchronize

synoptic

Roots 'sys', 'syl', 'sys', 'sym', 'syn' - all mean with; together; along
providing a general overview; summary; N. synopsis

synthesis

Roots 'sys', 'syl', 'sys', 'sym', 'syn' - all mean with; together; along
combining parts or separate things into a whole; the whole so formed; PL. syntheses; V. synthesize

synthetic

Roots 'sys', 'syl', 'sys', 'sym', 'syn' - all mean with; together; along
not natural; artificial; resulting from synthesis;

tablet

small round piece of medicine; flat piece of stone or metal bearing an inscription; E.g., stone tablet on the wall

tacit

understood (without actually being expressed); not put into words; E.g., tacit agreement

taciturn

habitually silent; talking little

tact

skill or sensitivity in dealing with people without causing offence

tactful

careful not to cause offence; OP. tactless

tactile

pertaining to the organs or sense of touch

taint

contaminate; cause to lose purity; modify with a trace of something bad; E.g., tainted reputation; N: stain; touch of decay or bad influence; CF. touch

takeoff

burlesque; act of leaving the ground

talisman

charm; object believed to give supernatural powers to or protect its bearer

talon

claw of bird

tan

convert (hide) into leather; make brown by exposure to the sun

tangential

only slightly connected; not central; peripheral; digressing; showing divergence; CF. tangent

tangible

able to be touched; real; concrete; palpable; possible to realize or understand; E.g., tangible proof

tanner

person who turns animal hides into leather

tantalize

tease; excite by exposing something desirable while keeping it out of reach; torture with disappointment; CF. Tantalus: Greek mythological figure

tantamount

equivalent in effect or value; E.g., This invasion is tantamount to a declaration of war; CF. amount

tantrum

fit of bad temper; fit of petulance; caprice; E.g., The child went into tantrums.

taper

very thin candle; gradual decrease in the width of a long object; V. make or become gradually narrower toward one end

tarantula

venomous spider

tardy

slow; sluggish; not on time; late; E.g., tardy arrival

tarnish

make or become dull or discolored; N.

tarry

linger; delay in starting or going; dawdle

tart

sharp to the taste; acid-tasting; caustic; sarcastic; E.g., tart apple/reply

tatter

torn piece of cloth; ADJ. tattered: (of clothes) old and torn; (of a person) dressed in old torn clothes

taunt

deride or provoke; challenge in derision; N.

taut

tight; strained; tense; ready; OP. slack

tautological

needlessly repetitious; E.g., "It was visible to the eye"; N. tautology: needless repetition of the same sense; statement that is always true

tawdry

cheap and gaudy; not having much worth

tawny

brownish yellow

taxonomist

specialist in classifying (animals, etc.); CF. taxonomy: science of classification

tedium

boredom; weariness; ADJ. tedious

teetotalism

practice of abstaining from alcoholic drinks

temerity

boldness; audacity

temper

moderate; make less severe; tone down or restrain

temperament

characteristic frame of mind; disposition

temperate

moderate; restrained; self-controlled; moderate in respect to temperature; CF. temperance: moderation and self-restraint; abstinence of alcoholic drinks; E.g., temperance society

tempestuous

stormy; violent; impassioned; N. tempest: violent storm

tempo

speed of music

temporal

of time; not lasting forever; limited by time; temporary; secular; worldly

temporize

gain time as by postponing an action; avoid committing oneself

tenacious

holding fast (as to a belief); persistent

tenacity

firmness; persistence

tenancy

possession of land or building by rent; period of a tenant's occupancy

tenant

one that pays rent to use property owned by another

tend

have a tendency; take care of; minister; serve at; apply one's attention; attend

tendentious

promoting a particular point of view; biased; having an aim; designed to further a cause;

tender

offer formally; extend

tenet

doctrine; dogma

tensile

capable of being stretched; of tension

tension

stretching; condition of being stretched; mental strain; strained relationship between groups or people

tentative

not fully worked out or developed; provisional; experimental; uncertain; hesitant; not definite or positive; E.g., tentative agreement/reply

tenuous

thin; slim; rare

tenure

holding of an office or real estate; time during which such an office is held

tepid

lukewarm; slightly warm; half-hearted; not eager; E.g., tepid reaction to the new film; E.g., tepid supporter

terminal

part that forms the end; railroad or bus station; ADJ. forming an end; ending in death; fatal; E.g., terminal cancer

termination

end; V. terminate

terminology

terms used in a science or art; study of nomenclature

terminus

last stop of railroad; end

terrestrial

on or relating to the earth

terse

concise; abrupt; pithy

tertiary

third in order or rank

tessellated

mosaic; inlaid;

testator

maker of a will; CF. testatrix

testy

irritable; impatient and bad-tempered; short-tempered; N. testiness

tether

tie with a rope or tether

thematic

of a theme; relating to a unifying motif or idea

theocracy

Root 'theo': God

government run by religious leaders

theoretical

based on theory; not practical or applied; hypothetical

therapeutic

curative; N. therapy

thermal

pertaining to heat; producing heat; warm; E.g., thermal bath; N: rising current of warm air

thesis

opinion put forward and supported by reasoned arguments

thespian

pertaining to drama; N: actor or actress

thrall

slave; bondage; slavery; E.g., Her beauty held him in thrall; CF. enthrall

thrash

beat with a whip or flail; defeat completely

threadbare

worn out completely; shabby

threat

sign or warning

thresh

beat (cereal plants) with a machine or flail to separate the grains from the straw

thrifty

careful about money; economical; N. thrift

thrive

prosper; flourish

throb

beat rapidly or violently; N.

throes

violent anguish

throng

crowd (of people or things); V.

throttle

strangle; regulate the speed of

thwart

block or hinder; baffle; frustrate

tickle

touch (the body) lightly so as to cause laughter; please

tightwad

miser; excessively frugal person

tiller

handle used to move boat's rudder (to steer)

timbre

quality of a musical tone produced by a musical instrument (which distinguishes it from others of the same pitch)

timidity

lack of self-confidence or courage

timorous

fearful; timid; demonstrating fear

tinge

give a slight degree of a color or quality to; N: slight degree of a color or quality; E.g., tinged with grey/jealousy

tint

slight degree of color

tipple

drink frequently

tirade

long angry denunciatory speech; diatribe; harangue; extended scolding; denunciation

titanic

gigantic; N. titan

tithe

tax of one-tenth (contributed to a church); V: pay a tithe

titillate

tickle; excite pleasantly; E.g., not to titillate the audience but to enlighten it

title

name (of a book, film, etc.); mark of rank; formal appellation as of rank or office (such as Lord or General); right or claim to possession; championship; E.g., title as head of the family; E.g., title to the estate

titter

nervous giggle; nervous laugh; V.

titular

of a title; in name only; nominal; having the title of an office without the obligations; E.g., titular head of the company

toady

servile flatterer; yes man; sycophant; V: be a toady to; fawn

toga

Roman outer robe

token

outward sign; E.g., a token of our gratitude

toll

sound (a large bell) slowly at regular intervals

tome

large volume; book

tonsure

shaving of the head especially by person entering religious orders; V.

topography

physical features of a region (such as the shape and height); CF. topo-: place

topple

become unsteady and fall down

torpedo

underwater explosive apparatus; V.

torpor

lethargy; sluggishness

torque

twisting force; force producing rotation

torrent

rushing stream; flood; E.g., The rain fell in torrents.

torrid

(of weather) hot or scorching; passionate; E.g., torrid love affairs

torso

trunk of statue with head and limbs missing; human trunk

tortuous

winding; full of curves; E.g., tortuous mountain road

toss

throw lightly; move or lift (the head) with a sudden motion; flip (a coin) to decide something

totem

animal, plant, or natural object serving as a symbol of a clan or family; representation of this; E.g., totem pole

totter

shake or move unsteadily; sway as if about to fall

touching

causing a feeling of pity or sympathy; pathetic; V. touch: cause to feel pity or sympathy; ADJ. touched

touchstone

stone used to test the fineness of gold alloys; criterion; standard

touchy

oversensitive; easily offended; irascible; delicate; needing delicate handling; E.g., touchy situation

tout

promote or publicize (one's goods or service); praise excessively (as a form of advertisement)

toxic

poisonous; N. toxicity

tract

propaganda pamphlet

tractable

Flexible; adjusting

traduce

expose to slander

trajectory

path taken by a projectile; E.g., trajectory of a bullet

tramp

walk with a heavy step; travel on foot; N: vagrant; one who travels aimlessly about; long walk; sound of heavy walking

trample

step heavily with the feet; crush under the feet

trance

hypnotic state; ecstatic state; detachment from one's physical surrounding (as in contemplation or daydreaming); CF. transition

tranquillity

calmness; peace

transcendent

Root 'trans': beyond; through
exceeding ordinary limits; superior; surpassing

transcendental

Root 'trans': beyond; through
going beyond common thought or ideas; impossible to understand by practical experiences or practices

transcribe

copy; write a copy of; N. transcription

transgression

Root 'trans': beyond; through
violation of a law; go beyond a limit

transient

Root 'trans': beyond; through
staying for a short time; momentary; temporary; N: one that is transient

transition

Root 'trans': beyond; through
going from one state of action to another

transitory

Root 'trans': beyond; through
transient; impermanent; fleeting; N. transitoriness

translucent

Root 'trans': beyond; through
partly transparent

transmute

Root 'trans': beyond; through
transform; change; convert to something different

transparent

Root 'trans': beyond; through
permitting light to pass through freely; easily detected; obvious; clear; E.g., transparent lie

transpire

Root 'trans': beyond; through
become known; be revealed

transpose

Root 'trans': beyond; through
reverse the order or position of

trappings

outward decorations; ornaments (as an outward sign of rank)

traumatic

deeply disturbing; causing anguish; causing lasting psychological damage

travail

strenuous work; toil; painful labor; labor of childbirth

traverse

go through or across

travesty

copy or example of something that completely misrepresents the true nature of the real thing; comical parody or imitation; treatment aimed at making something appear ridiculous; E.g., travesty of justice; OP. paragon

tread

walk; trample; N: grooved face of a tire; horizontal part of a step

treasure

keep as precious; cherish

treatise

article treating a subject systematically and thoroughly

trek

travel; journey; V: make a long difficult journey

tremor

trembling; slight quiver (as of the earth or from nervous agitation)

tremulous

trembling; wavering

trenchant

cutting; incisive; keen

trepidation

fear; nervous apprehension

tribulation

suffering; ordeal; distress; trial

tribunal

court of justice

tribune

official of ancient Rome elected by the plebians to protect their rights; protector of the people

tribute

tax levied by a ruler; payment made by one nation to another in acknowledgment of submission;

trickle

flow in drops or in a thin stream; N.

trickster

person who cheats people

trident

Root 'tri': three
three-pronged spear

trifle

something of little importance or value; small amount; E.g., a trifle; V: treat without seriousness; flirt

trifling

trivial; unimportant

trigger

set off; start

trilogy

Root 'tri': three
group of three related works (connected by a shared subject but each complete in itself)

trim

make neat or tidy by clipping;

trinket

knickknack; bauble; cheap jewelry

trite

hackneyed; commonplace

trivia

trifles; unimportant matters

troth

pledge of good faith especially in betrothal; betrothal; E.g., by my troth

trough

long narrow container for feeding farm animals; lowest point (of a wave, business cycle, etc.); long narrow depression as between waves

truculence

aggressiveness; ferocity; ADJ. truculent: aggressive; pugnacious; fierce

truism

self-evident truth

truncate

cut the top off; shorten

trunk

main wooden stem of a tree; human body excluding the head and limbs; torso; prehensile nose of an elephant

tryst

meeting arranged by lovers; arrangement between lovers to meet

tumid

(of a part of the body) swollen; distended; bombastic; pompous

tumult

commotion of a great crowd; riot; noise; uproar; ADJ. tumultuous: noisy and disorderly

tundra

rolling treeless plain in Siberia and arctic North America

turbid

(of a liquid) having the sediment disturbed; muddy; thick

turbulence

state of violent agitation; ADJ. turbulent: violently agitated or disturbed

tureen

deep dish for serving soup

turgid

swollen; distended (as from liquid)

turmoil

extreme confusion; great commotion and confusion; E.g., throw the country into turmoil

turncoat

traitor

turpitude

depravity; baseness; E.g., moral turpitude

tutelage

guardianship; training; function of a tutor; instruction

tutelary

protective; pertaining to a guardianship; E.g., tutelary deities

tycoon

wealthy and powerful businessperson; wealthy leader; magnate

typhoon

tropical hurricane or cyclone

tyranny

oppression; cruelty

tyro

beginner; novice

ubiquitous

being everywhere; omnipresent

ulcer

sore place appearing on the skin inside or outside the body; E.g., stomach ulcer; ADJ. ulcerous; V. ulcerate

ulterior

intentionally hidden; beyond what is evident; situated beyond; unstated and often questionable; E.g., ulterior motive

ultimate

final; not susceptible to further analysis; fundamental; E.g., The sun is the ultimate source of energy.

ultimatum

last demand; last warning; last statement of conditions that must be met; E.g., They have ignored our ultimatum.

umbrage

resentment; anger; sense of injury or insult; E.g., take umbrage at his rudeness

unaccountable

unexplicable; impossible to account for; unreasonable or mysterious

unanimity

complete agreement

unassailable

not open to attack; impregnable; not subject to question

unassuaged

unsatisfied; not soothed

unassuming

modest

unbridled

uncontrolled

uncanny

strange; mysterious

unceremonious

not done politely without due formalities

unconscionable

unscrupulous; not guided by conscience; excessive; beyond reason;

uncouth

boorish; clumsy in speech or behaviour

unction

the act of anointing with oil

unctuous

oily; bland; insincerely suave

underhand

Root 'under': below

done slyly and secretly

underlying

Root 'under': below

lying below; fundamental

undermine

Root 'under': below

weaken gradually; sap; dig a mine beneath

underscore

Root 'under': below

underline; emphasize

understate

Root 'under': below

state with less truth than seems warranted by the facts

undertaker

funeral director; one whose business is to arrange burials

undulating

Root 'under': below

moving with a wavelike motion

unearth

dig up; discover by searching

unearthly

not earthly; supernatural; weird; ghostly

unequivocal

plain; clear; obvious

unerringly

infallibly; ADJ. unerring: making no mistakes

unexceptionable

entirely acceptable; not offering any basis for criticism

unfaltering

steadfast; firm; not changing

unfeigned

genuine; real

unfetter

liberate; free from chains; V. unfetter

unfledged

immature; not having the feathers necessary to fly; CF. fledgling

unfrock

defrock; strip a priest or minister of church authority

ungainly

(of someone) awkward in movement; clumsy; (of something) unwieldy; E.g., ungainly dancer/instrument

unguent

ointment

uniformity

Root 'uni': one
sameness; monotony

unilateral

Root 'uni': one
one-sided; involving or affecting only one side; E.g., unilateral declaration

unimpeachable

that cannot be impeached; beyond doubt or question; blameless and exemplary

uninhibited

unrepressed; free in behaviour and feelings

unique

without an equal; single in kind

unison

unity of pitch (in musical performance); complete accord

universal

characterizing or affecting all; general

unkempt

disheveled; uncared for in appearance; not combed

unmitigated

(of something bad) not moderated; unrelieved or immoderate; without qualification; absolute

unobtrusive

inconspicuous; not blatant

unprecedented

having no previous example; novel; unparalleled

unprepossessing

unattractive

unravel

disentangle; solve

unregenerate

making no attempt to change one's bad practices

unrequited

not requited; not reciprocated; E.g., unrequited love

unruly

disobedient; lawless; difficult to control

unsavory

distasteful; disagreeable; morally offensive

unscathed

unharmful; E.g., escape the accident unscathed

unseemly

unbecoming; not proper in behaviour; indecent

unsightly

ugly; unpleasant to look at

unsullied

untarnished; CF. sully

untenable**untoward**

unexpected and adverse

unwarranted

unjustified; having no justification; groundless; baseless; undeserved

unwieldy

awkward (to carry or move); cumbersome; unmanageable

unwitting

not knowing; unaware; unintentional; E.g., She was their unwitting accomplice; E.g., unwitting insult; CF. wit: know

unwonted

unaccustomed; unusual; E.g., He arrived with unwonted punctuality.

upbraid

reprimand; severely scold

upright

(sitting or standing) straight up; honest; moral

uproar

noisy confusion

uproarious

marked by commotion or uproar; very noisy (esp. with laughter); hilarious; causing loud laughter; extremely funny

upshot

outcome; final result

urbane

suave; refined in manner; elegant

urchin

mischievous child (usually a boy); CF. urchin: hedgehog; CF. porcupine: pig with spikes ?; CF. sea urchin

urge

drive or force forward (by causing impulses); drive to take action; impel; entreat earnestly; E.g., urge horses; N: impulse that prompts action

urgent

compelling immediate action; pressing; persistent; importunate; E.g., urgent in his demands

ursine

bearlike; pertaining to a bear

usage

act or manner of using; accepted practice; way in which words are actually used

usurp

seize another's power or rank (without legal authority); supplant; appropriate; N. usurpation; CF. take for one's own use

usury

lending money at illegal high rates of interest

utopia

ideal place, state, or society; ADJ. utopian

uxorious

excessively submissive or devoted to one's wife; CF. uxor: wife

vacillate

waver (in opinion); fluctuate; sway to and fro; N. vacillation

vacuous

empty; lacking in ideas; inane; stupid; E.g., vacuous expression; N. vacuity

vagabond

wanderer (without a permanent home); tramp

vagary

capricious happening; caprice; whim; CF. wander

vagrant

homeless wanderer

vain

full of self-admiration; conceited; without result; unsuccessful; N. vanity

vainglorious

boastful; excessively conceited; N. vainglory: great vanity

valediction

saying farewell; expression of leave-taking

valedictory

pertaining to farewell; N: farewell address (esp. at graduation exercises)

valid

logically convincing; sound; legally acceptable; effective; E.g., valid reasoning/passport

validate

make valid; confirm; ratify

valor

bravery; ADJ. valiant: possessing valor; brave

vampire

ghostly being that sucks the blood of the living

vanguard

forerunners; foremost position of an army; advance forces; foremost position in a trend or movement; CF. rearguard

vantage

position giving an advantage (such as a strategic point); CF. vantagepoint

vapid

lacking liveliness; dull and unimaginative; insipid and flavorless; E.g., vapid lecture

vaporize

turn into vapor (steam, gas, fog, etc.)

variegate

change the appearance of (by marking with different colors)

variegated

(esp. of a flower or leaf) many-colored

varnish

paint used to coat a surface with a glossy film; glossy coating produced by using this substance; E.g., nail varnish; V.

vassal

in feudalism, one who held land of a superior lord; subordinate or dependent

vaunted

boasted; bragged; highly publicized; V. vaunt: boast; brag

veer

change in direction; swerve

vegetate

live in a monotonous way (without interests or activity); CF. vegetation: plants of an area; CF. vegetarian; CF. vegan

vehement

forceful; intensely emotional; with marked vigor; strong; N. vehemence

velocity

speed

venal

capable of being bribed; corrupt; CF. vernal

vendetta

blood feud (esp. between two families); CF. Nina Williams

vendor

seller

veneer

thin surface layer (of good quality wood, glued to a base of inferior material); cover; surface show; fa\c{c}ade; V.

venerable

deserving high respect; commanding respect; CF. command: deserve and get

venerate

revere; treat with great respect

venial

(of a fault or sin) forgivable; trivial

venison

meat of a deer; CF. cow: beef; CF. pig: pork, ham, bacon; CF. calf: veal; CF. sheep: mutton; CF. lamb: lamb

venom

poison (of an animal); hatred; E.g., remarks full of venom; ADJ. venomous

vent

release or discharge through a vent; express (esp. unfairly); utter; E.g., He vented his wrath on his family.

ventilate

admit fresh air into to replace stale air

ventral

abdominal

ventriloquist

someone who can make his or her voice seem to come from another person or thing (without moving lips or jaws); N. ventriloquism, ventriloquy

venture

risk; expose to risk; dare; undertake a risk; N.

venturesome

(of a person) bold; adventurous; daring; (of an action) risky

venue

location; place (of a crime, trial, gathering, etc.); CF. come

veracious

Root 'ver': truth

Truthful

veracity

Root 'ver': truth

truthfulness; adherence to the truth

verbalize

put into words; ADJ. verbal: of words; spoken rather than written; oral; of a verb

verbatim

word for word; in the same words; repeating the actual words exactly

verbiage

pompous array of words; too many unnecessary words; wordiness

verbose

Using too many words

verdant

green; covered with green plants or grass; lush in vegetation

verdigris

green coating or patina on copper which has been exposed to the weather

verge

border; edge, rim, or margin; E.g., on the verge of: very near to; V: border on

verisimilar

Root 'ver': truth

having the appearance of truth or reality; probable or likely to be true; plausible

verisimilitude

Root 'ver': truth

appearance of truth; quality of appearing to be true or real; likelihood

veritable

being truly so; real or genuine; actual; not false or imaginary

verity

quality of being true; lasting truth or principle; E.g., the verity of his testimony; E.g., one of the eternal verities

vernacular

living language (as compared to the official language); language spoken in a country or region; natural style; E.g., lapse into the vernacular

vernal

pertaining to spring

versatile

having many talents; capable of working in many fields; having many uses or functions; N. versatility

vertebrate

having a backbone or spinal column; N: group of animals having a segmented spinal column

vertex

summit; highest point; PL. vertices

vertigo

severe dizziness; giddiness

verve

enthusiasm (as in artistic performance or composition); liveliness; vigor

vestige

trace; remains; E.g., vestiges of some ancient religion

veto

vested power to reject a bill; exercise of this right; V: prevent or forbid by exercising the power of veto

vex

annoy; distress

viable

capable of maintaining life; feasible; practical or workable; E.g., viable scheme

vial

food; CF. live

vibrant

full of vigor or energy; vibrating

vicar

parish priest; representative

vicarious

experienced as if one were taking part in the experience of another; done by a deputy for other people; acting as a substitute; E.g., vicarious thrill at the movies; E.g., the vicarious sufferings of Christ

vicissitude

change (esp. from good to bad); change of fortune; CF. the last emperor of China

victuals

food; provisions; V. victual: provide with food

vie

contend; compete

vigil

keeping watch (during normal sleeping hours); E.g., all-night vigil

vigilant

watchful; on the alert; watchfully awake; alert to spot danger; N. vigilance

vigilante

one who without authority assumes law enforcement powers

vignette

small drawing placed at the beginning or end of a chapter; picture; short literary sketch; short written description of a character or scene

vigor

active strength; energy; enthusiasm; ADJ. vigorous

vile

despicable; unpleasant; disgusting; E.g., vile slander

vilify

slander; speak evil of; N. vilification

vindicate

clear from blame; free from blame or accusation (with supporting proof); exonerate; substantiate; justify or support; avenge; E.g., vindicate one's client; E.g., vindicate one's claim; CF. vindicator

vindictive

disposed to revenge; vengeful; out for revenge; spiteful; intended to cause harm; malicious; E.g., vindictive streak

vintner

wine merchant; winemaker; seller of wine

violate

break (a law); defile; desecrate; assault sexually; E.g., violate graves

viper

poisonous snake

virile

manly; having masculine spirit or strength; full of strength

virtual

in essence; existing in essence though not in actual form; for practical purposes; E.g., virtual ruler/space

virtue

goodness; moral excellence; good quality; advantage; E.g., by virtue of; E.g., make a virtue of necessity

virtuoso

highly skilled artist (esp. in music); E.g., piano virtuoso

virulent

(of a disease or poison) extremely harmful or poisonous; (of a feeling) hostile; bitter; N. virulence; CF. virus; CF. venom

virus

disease communicator

visage

face; appearance

visceral

felt in one's inner organs; N. viscera: internal body organs; CF. eviscerate

viscid

adhesive; gluey

viscous

(of a liquid) thick and sticky; gluey; viscid; CF. consistency

vise

vice; tool for holding work in place; clamping device

vision

eyesight; foresight; mental image produced by the imagination; experience of seeing the supernatural

visionary

produced by imagination; fanciful; mystical; showing foresight; N: one having foresight; one given to speculative impractical ideas

vital

full of life; animated; vibrant and lively; critical; of great importance; necessary to stay alive; of life; living; breathing; N. vitality; V. vitalize

vitiate

spoil the effect of; make inoperative; corrupt morally

vitreous

of glass; pertaining to or resembling glass; V. vitrify: change into glass; CF. petrify

vitriolic

Biting; causing sharp pain

vituperative

abusive; scolding; V. vituperate: berate; scold; rail against abusively

vivacious

Root 'viv': life

lively or animated; sprightly/sprightly/lively

vivid

bright and distinct;

vivisection

Root 'viv': life

An operation on a living creature

vixen

female fox; ill-tempered woman

vociferous

Loud and noisy

vogue

In fashion;

volatile

changeable; of a quickly changing nature (as of temper); mercurial; tending to violence; evaporating rapidly; E.g., volatile character/situation in the street

volition

using one's will; act of making a conscious choice

volley

simultaneous discharge of a number of shots; V.

voluble

fluent; talkative; glib

voluminous

having great volume (as of a garment or container); bulky; large

voluptuous

sensual; of or giving sensual pleasure; indulging in sensual pleasures; E.g., voluptuous lines; E.g., voluptuous life of the Romans; N. voluptuary: voluptuous person

voodoo

religion practiced chiefly in Haiti

voracious

ravenous; eating large quantities of food; exceedingly eager; insatiable; E.g., voracious animal/reader

vortex

whirlwind; whirlpool; center of turbulence; predicament into which one is inexorably plunged

vouch

give a personal guarantee; E.g., I can vouch for his integrity; N. voucher

vouchsafe

grant condescendingly; guarantee;

voyeur

A peeping Tom

vulgar

of the common people; deficient in refinement; not refined; coarse; E.g., vulgar display of wealth; N. vulgarism: vulgarity; crudely indecent word; CF. vulgarian: vulgar person; boor; lout

vulnerable

susceptible to wounds or attack; N. vulnerability

vulpine

like a fox; crafty

vulture

A bird of prey

vying

To fight for

wade

walk through a substance, such as water, that impedes movement

waffle

speak equivocally about an issue; N.

waft

move gently (in air or in seas) by wind or waves; E.g., leaves wafting past the window

wag

shake repeatedly from side to side

wage

begin and continue (a war)

waggish

humorous; mischievous; tricky

waif

homeless child or animal; E.g., waifs and strays

waive

give up temporarily; yield; N. waiver: waiving a right or claim; document that waives a right or claim

wake

trail of ship or other object through water; path of something that has gone before; E.g., hunger followed in the wake of the war

wallow

roll in mud; indulge in; (of a ship) roll in a rough sea; become helpless; E.g., wallow in the mud/luxury

wan

having a pale or sickly colour; pallid

wanderlust

strong longing to travel

wane

decrease in size or strength

wangle

achieve by cleverness or trick; wiggle out

wanton

unrestrained; gratuitously cruel; willfully malicious; unchaste; sexually improper; promiscuous; E.g., wanton spending/killing; CF. having no just cause

ward

administrative division of a city

warp

twist out of shape; N.

warrant

justification; written order that serves as authorization (esp. a judicial writ); E.g., search/death warrant; V: justify; guarantee

warranted

justified; authorized

warranty

guarantee; an assurance given by the seller to the buyer

warren

tunnels in which rabbits live
crowded place where people live

wary

very cautious; watchful

wastrel

waster; profligate

waver

move or swing back and forth; be uncertain or unsteady in decision or movement

wax

increase gradually in size

waylay

ambush; lie in wait for and attack

wean

accustom a baby not to nurse

weary

tired

weather

pass safely through (a storm or difficult period); endure the effects of weather or other forces

weird

eerie; strange; unnatural

well-bred

of good upbringing; well-mannered and refined

welt

raised mark from a beating or whipping

wheddle

deceive, persuade, or obtain by flattery; cajole; coax; E.g., wheedle a promise out of her

whelp

young animal (esp. of the dog or cat family); young wolf, dog, tiger, etc.

whet

sharpen; stimulate; E.g., whet someone's appetite

whiff

puff or gust (of air, scent, etc.), short-lasting smell; hint; E.g., whiff of perfume/scandal

whim

sudden capricious idea; fancy

whimsical

capricious; fanciful; amusingly strange

whimsy

whim; tendency to behave amusingly strangely; E.g., story full of whimsy

whine

complain

whinny

neigh like a horse

whit

small amount; smallest speck; E.g., not a whit of

whittle

cut away; trim

wholesome

conducive to mental or physical health; healthful

whorl

ring of leaves around stem; ring; circular arrangement; E.g., whorls on the fingers

wiggle

wriggle; move from side to side with irregular twisting motions

wilful

Deliberate; intentional

willowy

Like a willow tree; flexible, thin and slender

wilt

lose freshness; droop

wily

crafty; cunning; artful; N. wile: deceitful stratagem

wince

move back suddenly; shrink back; flinch; E.g., She winced as she touched the cold body.

windfall

An unexpected fortunate event, like winning a lottery

winnow

sift; separate the chaff from grain; used in the sense of separating the good parts from the bad

winsome

Charming; attractive

wisp

small bunch (of hair); faint streak (of smoke)

wispy

thin; slight; barely discernible

wistful

sadly thoughtful (because of desires or memories); sadly pensive; vaguely longing

withdrawn

To be an introvert; distant in manner

wither

To dry up from loss of moisture; to shrivel; decay

withhold

refuse to give; hold back; E.g., withholding tax

withstand

stand up against; resist successfully

witless

lacking intelligence or wit; foolish; idiotic

witticism

witty saying; wisecrack (clever joking remark)

wizardry

sorcery; magic

wizened

shriveled; withered; E.g., wizened apple/old lady

woe

great sorrow; deep inconsolable grief; affliction; suffering; E.g., financial woes

woeful

sad; miserable

wont

As per habit or custom

worldly

engrossed in matters of this world; as opposed to being spiritual

wrangle

To quarrel or argue over

wrath

anger; fury

wreak

inflict; E.g., wreak one's vengeance on

wrench

twist; pull; strain; E.g., He wrenched the gun out of her hands.

wrest

obtain by pulling violently; pull away; take by violence; E.g., wrest victory from their grasp

wretch

miserable person; bad or despicable person; ADJ. wretched: miserable; bad; contemptible; vile

wring

twist (to extract liquid); extract by twisting; wrench painfully (necks or hands)

wrinkle

small ridge on a smooth surface (face or cloth); V.

writ

written command issued by a court (telling someone to do or not to do something)

writhe

contort in pain

wrongheaded

stubbornly wrong

wry

(esp. of an expression of the face) twisted; with a humorous twist (expressing displeasure)

xenophobia

fear or hatred of foreigners; N. xenophobe

yen

strong desire; longing; urge; E.g., yen for travel

yeoman

A small farmer or worker

yield

amount produced; crop; income on investment; profit obtained from an investment; V: produce; give in; surrender

yoke

To join together; unite; the word 'yoga' derives from this

yokel

A rustic; a country bumpkin;

yore

time long past;

zany

funky; crazy; N: clown; comical person (given to outlandish behavior)

zeal

eager enthusiasm

zealot

A fanatic; person who shows excessive zeal

zenith

point directly overhead in the sky; summit; acme; highest point

zephyr

gentle breeze; west wind

zest

interest; excitement