aberration | ˌabəˈrāSH(ə)n |
noun
a departure from what is normal, usual, or expected, typically one that is unwelcome: they described the outbreak of violence in the area as an aberration | I see these activities as some kind of mental aberration | [mass noun] : the decade was seen as a period of aberration in the country's progress towards a democratic society. • Biology a characteristic that deviates from the normal type: color aberrations. • Optics the failure of rays to converge at one focus because of limitations or defects in a lens or mirror. • Astronomy the apparent displacement of a celestial object from its true position, caused by the relative motion of the observer and the object. DERIVATIVES aberrational | -SHənl | adjective ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin aberratio(n-), from aberrare 'to stray' (see aberrant).

abhorrent | əbˈhôrənt |
adjective
inspiring disgust and loathing; repugnant: racial discrimination was abhorrent to us all. DERIVATIVES abhorrently adverb ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin abhorrent- 'shuddering away from in horror', from the verb abhorrere (see abhor).

abstemious | abˈstēmēəs |
adjective
not self-indulgent, especially when eating and drinking: "We only had a bottle." "Very abstemious of you.". DERIVATIVES abstemiously | abˈstēmēəslē | adverb abstemiousness | abˈstēmēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin abstemius, (from ab- 'from' + a word related to temetum 'alcoholic drink') + -ous.

abstracted | əbˈstraktəd |
adjective
showing a lack of concentration on what is happening around one: she seemed abstracted and unaware of her surroundings | an abstracted smile. DERIVATIVES abstractedly | əbˈstraktədlē | adverb

accoutrement | əˈkōōdərmənt, əˈkōōtrəmə |
noun (usually accoutrements)
additional items of dress or equipment, or other items carried or worn by a person or used for a particular activity: the accoutrements of religious ritual. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from French, from accoutrer 'clothe, equip' (see accoutre).

acquiescence | ˌakwēˈes(ə)ns |
noun
the reluctant acceptance of something without protest: in silent acquiescence, she rose to her feet.

adjourn | əˈjərn |
verb [with object]
break off (a meeting, legal case, or game) with the intention of resuming it later: the meeting was adjourned until December 4 | [no object] : let's adjourn and reconvene at 2 o'clock. • [no object, with adverbial] (of people who are together) go somewhere else, typically for refreshment: they adjourned to a local bar. • put off or postpone (a resolution or sentence): the sentence was adjourned. ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'summon someone to appear on a particular day'): from Old French ajorner, from the phrase a jorn (nome) 'to an (appointed) day'.

admonish | ədˈmäniSH |
verb [with object]
warn or reprimand someone firmly: she admonished me for appearing at breakfast unshaven | "You mustn't say that, Shiona," Ruth admonished her. • [with object and infinitive] advise or urge (someone) earnestly: she admonished him to drink no more than one glass of wine. • archaic warn (someone) of something to be avoided: he admonished the people against the evil of such practices. ORIGIN Middle English amonest 'urge, exhort', from Old French amonester, based on Latin admonere 'urge by warning'. Later, the final -t of amonest was taken to indicate the past tense, and the present tense changed on the pattern of verbs such as abolish; the prefix became ad- in the 16th century by association with the Latin form.

adumbrate | ˈadəmˌbrāt, əˈdəmˌbrāt |
verb [with object] formal
report or represent in outline: they have adumbrated the importance of education as a means of social transformation. • indicate faintly: the walls were not more than adumbrated by the meager light. • foreshadow or symbolize: what qualities in Christ are adumbrated by the vine? • overshadow: her happy reminiscences were adumbrated by consciousness of something else. DERIVATIVES adumbration | ˌadəmˈbrāSH(ə)n | noun adumbrative | əˈdəmbrətiv, ˈadəmˌbrā- | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin adumbrat- 'shaded', from the verb adumbrare, from ad- 'to' (as an intensifier) + umbrare 'cast a shadow' (from umbra 'shade').

adversarial | ˌadvərˈserēəl |
adjective
involving or characterized by conflict or opposition: industry and government had an adversarial relationship. • opposed; hostile: the reviewer's presumed adversarial relationship to his subject. • Law (of a trial or legal procedure) in which the parties in a dispute have the responsibility for finding and presenting evidence: equality between prosecution and defense is essential in an adversarial system of justice. Compare with inquisitorial. DERIVATIVES adversarially adverb

aggrandize | əˈgranˌd |
verb [with object]
increase the power, status, or wealth of: an action intended to aggrandize the Frankish dynasty. • enhance the reputation of (someone) beyond what is justified by the facts: he hoped to aggrandize himself by dying a hero's death. DERIVATIVES aggrandizement | əˈgranˌdīzmənt | (British also aggrandisement) noun aggrandizer (British also aggrandiser) noun ORIGIN mid 17th century (in the general sense 'increase, magnify'): from French agrandiss-, lengthened stem of agrandir, probably from Italian aggrandire, from Latin

grandis ‘large’. The ending was changed by association with verbs ending in -ize.

alacrity | əˈlakrədē |
noun
brisk and cheerful readiness: she accepted the invitation with alacrity. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin alacritas, from alacer ‘brisk’.

aleatory | ˈālēəˌtô |
adjective
depending on the throw of a dice or on chance; random. • relating to or denoting music or other forms of art involving elements of random choice (sometimes using statistical or computer techniques) during their composition, production, or performance: aleatory music | a photograph can capture the aleatory chaos of modern urban life. ORIGIN late 17th century: from Latin aleatorius, from aleator ‘dice player’, from alea ‘die’, + -y1.

altruistic | ˌalˌtro͞oˈistik |
adjective
showing a disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others; unselfish: it was an entirely altruistic act | I question how altruistic his motives were. DERIVATIVES altruistically | ˌalˌtro͞oˈistək(ə)lē | adverb

amalgam | əˈmalgəm |
noun
a mixture or blend: a curious amalgam of the traditional and the modern. • Chemistry an alloy of mercury with another metal, especially one used for dental fillings: [as modifier] : amalgam fillings. ORIGIN late 15th century: from French amalgame or medieval Latin amalgama, from Greek malagma ‘an emollient’.

ambiguous | amˈbigyəwəs |
adjective
(of language) open to more than one interpretation; having a double meaning: ambiguous phrases | the question is rather ambiguous. • unclear or inexact because a choice between alternatives has not been made: the election result was ambiguous | this whole society is morally ambiguous. DERIVATIVES ambiguousness | amˈbigyəwəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 16th century (in the sense ‘indistinct, obscure’): from Latin ambiguus ‘doubtful’ (from ambigere ‘waver, go around’, from ambi- ‘both ways’ + agere ‘to drive’) + -ous.

ambivalent | amˈbiv(ə)lənt |
adjective
having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone: some loved her, some hated her, few were ambivalent about her | an ambivalent attitude to technology. DERIVATIVES ambivalently adverb ORIGIN early 20th century: from ambivalence (from German Ambivalenz), on the pattern of equivalent.

ameliorate | əˈmēlyəˌrāt |
verb [with object] formal
make (something bad or unsatisfactory) better: the reform did much to ameliorate living standards. DERIVATIVES ameliorative | əˈmēlyərədiv, əˈmēlyəˌrādiv | adjective ameliorator | -ˌrātər | noun ORIGIN mid 18th century: alteration of meliorate, influenced by French améliorer, from meilleur ‘better’.

anathema | əˈnaTHəmə |
noun
1 something or someone that one vehemently dislikes: racial hatred was anathema to her | [in singular] : the usual norms of decorum are an anathema to him. 2 a formal curse by a pope or a council of the Church, excommunicating a person or denouncing a doctrine: the Pope laid special emphasis on the second of these anathemas. • literary a strong curse: the sergeant clutched the ruined communicator, muttering anathemas. ORIGIN early 16th century: from ecclesiastical Latin, ‘excommunicated person, excommunication’, from Greek anathema ‘thing dedicated’, (later) ‘thing devoted to evil, accursed thing’, from anatithenai ‘to set up’.

anomaly | əˈnäməlē |
noun (plural anomalies)
1 something that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected: there are a number of anomalies in the present system | [with clause] : the apparent anomaly that those who produced the wealth were the poorest | the position abounds in anomaly | a legal anomaly. 2 Astronomy the angular distance of a planet or satellite from its last perihelion or perigee. ORIGIN late 16th century: via Latin from Greek anōmalia, from anōmalos (see anomalous).

antagonist | anˈtagənəst |
noun
a person who actively opposes or is hostile to someone or something; an adversary: he turned to confront his antagonist. • Biochemistry a substance that interferes with or inhibits the physiological action of another. Compare with agonist. • Anatomy a muscle whose action counteracts that of another specified muscle. Compare with agonist. ORIGIN late 16th century: from French antagoniste or late Latin antagonista, from Greek antagōnistēs, from antagōnizesthai ‘struggle against’ (see antagonize).

antipathy | anˈtēpəTHē |
noun (plural antipathies)
a deep-seated feeling of dislike; aversion: his fundamental antipathy to capitalism | a thinly disguised mutual antipathy. DERIVATIVES antipathic | ˈan(t)əˌpaTHik | adjective ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense ‘opposition of feeling, nature, or disposition’): from French antipathie, or via Latin from Greek antipatheia, from antipathēs ‘opposed in feeling’, from anti ‘against’ + pathos ‘feeling’.

antithetical | ˌan(t)əˈTHedəkəl |
adjective
1 directly opposed or contrasted; mutually incompatible: people whose religious beliefs are antithetical to mine | two antithetical emotions pulled at her. 2 [attributive] connected with, containing, or using the rhetorical device of antithesis: when praising the government, Pyrocles invokes the familiar oxy-

moronic and antithetical mode. DERIVATIVES antithetic | ˌan(t)əˈTHedik | adjective antithetically | ˌan(t)əˈTHedək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 16th century (in antithetical (sense 2)): from Greek antithetikos, from antithetos 'placed in opposition', from antitithenai 'set against'.

apathetic | ˌapəˈTHedik |
adjective
showing or feeling no interest, enthusiasm, or concern: apathetic slackers who don't vote. DERIVATIVES apathetically | ˌapəˈTHedək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 18th century: from apathy, on the pattern of pathetic.

aphorism | ˈafəˌrizəm |
noun
a pithy observation that contains a general truth, such as, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it.": the old aphorism "the child is father to the man" | [mass noun] : the debate begins and ends at the level of aphorism, with commentators saying that something must be done. • a concise statement of a scientific principle, typically by an ancient classical author: the opening sentence of the first aphorism of Hippocrates. DERIVATIVES aphorist noun aphoristic | ˌafəˈristik | adjective aphoristically | ˌafəˈristik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 16th century: from French aphorisme or late Latin aphorismus, from Greek aphorismos 'definition', from aphorizein 'define'.

apocryphal | əˈpäkrəf(ə)l |
adjective
(of a story or statement) of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true: there is an apocryphal story about a disgraced rock star who ended up in bankruptcy court | many remarks were attributed to him, most of them probably apocryphal. • (also Apocryphal) of or belonging to the Apocrypha: the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. DERIVATIVES apocryphally adverb

apotheosis | əˌpäTHēˈōsəs |
noun (plural apotheoses | -ˌsēz |) [usually in singular]
the highest point in the development of something; culmination or climax: his appearance as Hamlet was the apotheosis of his career. • the elevation of someone to divine status; deification. ORIGIN late 16th century: via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek apotheōsis, from apotheoun 'make a god of', from apo 'from' + theos 'god'.

appellation1 | ˌapəˈlāSHən |
noun formal
a name or title: the city fully justifies its appellation "the Pearl of the Orient.". • the action of giving a name to a person or thing. ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from Latin appellatio(n-), from the verb appellare (see appeal). appellation2 | ˌapəˈlāSHən | noun an appellation contrôlée: about 20 percent of French wines with an appellation come from Alsace. • a wine bearing an appellation contrôlée: the top appellations Saint-Émilion and Pomerol. • the district in which a wine bearing an appellation contrôlée is produced: the northeast corner of the appellation. ORIGIN abbreviation of appellation (d'origine) contrôlée.

appendage | əˈpendij |
noun
(often with negative or pejorative connotations) a thing that is added or attached to something larger or more important: they treat Scotland as a mere appendage of England. • Biology a projecting part of an invertebrate or other living organism, with a distinct appearance or function: many species have specialized clutching appendages.

approbation | ˌaprəˈbāSH(ə)n |
noun formal
approval or praise: the opera met with high approbation. DERIVATIVES approbative | ˈaprəˌbātiv, əˈprōbətiv | adjective approbatory | ˈaprəbəˌtôrē, əˈprōbəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from Latin approbatio(n-), from the verb approbare (see approbate).

arboreal | ärˈbôrēəl |
adjective
(chiefly of animals) living in trees: arboreal rodents. • relating to trees. DERIVATIVES arboreality | ärˌbôrēˈalitē | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin arboreus, from arbor 'tree', + -al.

arboreal | ärˈbôrēəl |
adjective
(chiefly of animals) living in trees: arboreal rodents. • relating to trees. DERIVATIVES arboreality | ärˌbôrēˈalitē | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin arboreus, from arbor 'tree', + -al.

arcane | ärˈkān |
adjective
understood by few; mysterious or secret: modern math and its arcane notation. DERIVATIVES arcanely adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin arcanus, from arcere 'to shut up', from arca 'chest'.

archetype | ˈärk(ə)ˌtīp |
noun
a very typical example of a certain person or thing: the book is a perfect archetype of the genre. • an original that has been imitated: the archetype of faith is Abraham. • a recurrent symbol or motif in literature, art, or mythology: mythological archetypes of good and evil. • Psychoanalysis (in Jungian psychology) a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors, and supposed to be present in the collective unconscious. DERIVATIVES archetypical | ˌärk(ə)ˈtipik(ə)l | adjective archetypically adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century: via Latin from Greek arkhetupon 'something moulded first as a model', from arkhe- 'primitive' + tupos 'a model'.

arduous | ˈärjəwəs |
adjective
involving or requiring strenuous effort; difficult and tiring: an arduous journey. DERIVATIVES arduously | ˈärjəwəslē | adverb arduousness | ˈärjo͞oəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin arduus 'steep, difficult'+ -ous.

artifice | ˈärdəfəs |
noun
clever or cunning devices or expedients, especially as used to trick or deceive others: the style is not free from the artifices of the period | artifice and outright fakery. ORIGIN early 16th century (in the sense ‘workmanship’): from Anglo-Norman French, from Latin artificium, based on ars, art- ‘art’ + facere ‘make’. Late Middle English has the form artificie, directly from Latin.

ascetic | əˈsedik |
adjective
characterized by or suggesting the practice of severe self-discipline and abstention from all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons: an ascetic life of prayer, fasting, and manual labor | a narrow, humorless, ascetic face. noun a person who practices severe self-discipline and abstention. DERIVATIVES ascetically | əˈsedək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from medieval Latin asceticus or Greek askētikos, from askētēs ‘monk’, from askein ‘to exercise’.

aspersion | əˈspərZHən, aˈspərSHən |
noun (usually aspersions)
an attack on the reputation or integrity of someone or something: I don't think anyone is casting aspersions on you. ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting the sprinkling of water, especially at baptism): from Latin aspersio(n-), from aspergere (see asperse).

assuage | əˈswāj |
verb [with object]
make (an unpleasant feeling) less intense: the letter assuaged the fears of most members. • satisfy (an appetite or desire): an opportunity occurred to assuage her desire for knowledge. DERIVATIVES assuagement noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French assouagier, asouagier, based on Latin ad- ‘to’ (expressing change) + suavis ‘sweet’.

astringent | əˈstrinj(ə)nt |
adjective
1 causing the contraction of skin cells and other body tissues: an astringent skin lotion. 2 (of taste or smell) slightly acidic or bitter: fresh blackcurrants have a rather astringent flavor. 3 sharp or severe in manner or style: his subversive and astringent humor. noun an astringent lotion applied to the skin to reduce bleeding from minor abrasions or as a cosmetic to make the skin less oily. DERIVATIVES astringently adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century: from French, from Latin astringent- ‘pulling tight’, from the verb astringere, from ad- ‘towards’ + stringere ‘bind, pull tight’.

asunder | əˈsəndər |
adverb archaic or literary
apart; divided: those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder. • into pieces: the desk burst asunder. ORIGIN Old English on sundran ‘in or into a separate place’; compare with sunder.

atavistic | ˌadəˈvistik |
adjective
relating to or characterized by reversion to something ancient or ancestral: atavistic fears and instincts. DERIVATIVES atavistically | -tik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 19th century: based on Latin atavus ‘forefather’ + the adjectival suffix -istic.

attrition | əˈtriSHən |
noun
1 the action or process of gradually reducing the strength or effectiveness of someone or something through sustained attack or pressure: the council is trying to wear down the opposition by attrition | the squadron suffered severe attrition of its bombers. • the gradual reduction of a workforce by employees' leaving and not being replaced rather than by their being laid off: with so few retirements since March, the year's attrition was insignificant. • wearing away by friction; abrasion: the skull shows attrition of the edges of the teeth. 2 Christian Theology (in scholastic theology) sorrow, but not contrition, for sin. DERIVATIVES attritional | -SHənl | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in attrition (sense 2)): from late Latin attritio(n-), from atterere ‘to rub’.

audacious | ôˈdāSHəs |
adjective
1 showing a willingness to take surprisingly bold risks: a series of audacious takeovers. 2 showing an impudent lack of respect: an audacious remark. DERIVATIVES audaciously | ôˈdāSHəslē, äˈdāSHəslē | adverb audaciousness noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin audax, audac- ‘bold’ (from audere ‘dare’) + -ious.

auspicious | ôˈspiSHəs |
adjective
conducive to success; favorable: it was not the most auspicious moment to hold an election. • giving or being a sign of future success: they said it was an auspicious moon—it was rising. • archaic characterized by success; prosperous: he was respectful to his auspicious customers. DERIVATIVES auspiciously | ôˈspiSHəslē, äˈspiSHəslē | adverb auspiciousness noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from auspice + -ous.

authentic | ôˈTHen(t)ik |
adjective
1 of undisputed origin; genuine: the letter is now accepted as an authentic document | authentic 14th-century furniture. • made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original: the restaurant serves authentic Italian meals | every detail of the movie was totally authentic. • based on facts; accurate or reliable: an authentic depiction of the situation. • (in existentialist philosophy) relating to or denoting an emotionally appropriate, significant, purposive, and responsible mode of human life. 2 Music (of a church mode) comprising the notes lying between the principal note or final and the note an octave higher. Compare with plagal. ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from late Latin authenticus, from Greek authentikos ‘principal, genuine’.

autonomy | ôˈtänəmē |
noun (plural autonomies)
1 the right or condition of self-government: Tatarstan demanded greater autonomy within the Russian Federation. • a self-governing country or region: the national autonomies of the Russian Republic. • freedom from external control or influence; independence: economic autonomy is still a long way off for many women. 2 (in Kantian moral philosophy) the capacity of an agent to act in accordance with objective morality rather than under the influence of desires. DERIVATIVES autonomist | -mist | noun & adjective ORIGIN early 17th century: from Greek autonomia, from autonomos 'having its own laws', from autos 'self' + nomos 'law'.

avarice | ˈavərəs |
noun
extreme greed for wealth or material gain: he was rich beyond the dreams of avarice. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, from Latin avaritia, from avarus 'greedy'.

aversion | əˈvərZH(ə)n |
noun
a strong dislike or disinclination: he had a deep-seated aversion to most forms of exercise | they made plain their aversion to the use of force. • a person or thing that arouses strong feelings of dislike: my dog's pet aversion is visitors, particularly males. ORIGIN late 16th century (originally denoting the action of turning away or averting one's eyes): from Latin aversio(n-), from avertere 'turn away from' (see avert).

Balkanize | ˈbôlkəˌnīz, ˈbälkəˌn |
verb [with object]
divide (a region or body) into smaller mutually hostile states or groups: ambitious neighbors would snatch pieces of territory, Balkanizing the country | (as adjective Balkanized) : records are stored in a segmented, Balkanized system. DERIVATIVES Balkanization | ˌbôlkənəˈzāSHən, ˌbôlkəˌnīˈzāSHən, ˌbälkənəˈzāSHən, ˌbälkəˌnīˈzāSHən | (British also Balkanisation) noun ORIGIN 1920s: from Balkan Peninsula (where this was done in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) + -ize.

banal | ˈbānl, bəˈnal, bəˈnäl |
adjective
so lacking in originality as to be obvious and boring: songs with banal, repeated words. DERIVATIVES banally adverb ORIGIN mid 18th century (originally relating to feudal service in the sense 'compulsory', hence 'common to all'): from French, from ban 'a proclamation or call to arms'; ultimately of Germanic origin and related to ban1.

bane | bān |
noun [usually in singular]
a cause of great distress or annoyance: the bane of the decorator is the long, narrow hall | the depressions that were the the bane of her existence. • archaic something, typically poison, that causes death. ORIGIN Old English bana 'thing causing death, poison', of Germanic origin.

baroque | bəˈrōk, bəˈräk |
adjective
relating to or denoting a style of European architecture, music, and art of the 17th and 18th centuries that followed mannerism and is characterized by ornate detail. In architecture the period is exemplified by the palace of Versailles and by the work of Bernini in Italy. Major composers include Vivaldi, Bach, and Handel; Caravaggio and Rubens are important baroque artists. • highly ornate and extravagant in style: the candles were positively baroque. noun the baroque style or period: the interior of the church is in lavish baroque | the sculptural group in Rome is a key work of the baroque. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from French (originally designating a pearl of irregular shape), from Portuguese barroco, Spanish barrueco, or Italian barocco; of unknown ultimate origin.

bastion | ˈbasCHən, ˈbastēən |
noun
1 a projecting part of a fortification built at an angle to the line of a wall, so as to allow defensive fire in several directions. • a natural rock formation resembling a bastion. 2 an institution, place, or person strongly defending or upholding particular principles, attitudes, or activities: the last bastion of male privilege. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from French, from Italian bastione, from bastire 'build'.

belie | bəˈlī |
verb (belies, belying, belied) [with object]
1 (of an appearance) fail to give a true notion or impression of (something); disguise or contradict: his lively, alert manner belied his years. 2 fail to fulfill or justify (a claim or expectation); betray: the notebooks belie Darwin's later recollection. ORIGIN Old English belēogan 'deceive by lying', from be- 'about' + lēogan 'to lie'. Current senses date from the 17th century.

bellicose | ˈbeləˌkōs |
adjective
demonstrating aggression and willingness to fight: a group of bellicose patriots. DERIVATIVES bellicosity | ˌbeləˈkäsədē | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin bellicosus, from bellicus 'warlike', from bellum 'war'.

benighted | bəˈnīdəd |
adjective
1 in a state of pitiful or contemptible intellectual or moral ignorance, typically owing to a lack of opportunity: they saw themselves as bringers of culture to poor benighted peoples. 2 overtaken by darkness: a storm developed and we were forced to wait benighted near the summit. DERIVATIVES benightedness noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in benighted (sense 2)): past participle of archaic benight 'cover in the darkness of night, obscure' (see be-, night).

bereft | bəˈreft |
adjective
1 (bereft of) deprived of or lacking (something): her room was stark and bereft of color. 2 (of a person) sad and lonely, especially through someone's death

or departure: his death in 1990 left her bereft. ORIGIN late 16th century: archaic past participle of bereave.

beset | bəˈset |
verb (besets, besetting; past and past participle beset) [with object]
1 (of a problem or difficulty) trouble or threaten persistently: the social problems that beset the inner city | she was beset with self-doubt | [as adjective] : poverty is a besetting problem. • surround and harass; assail on all sides: I was beset by clouds of flies. • hem in; enclose: the ship was beset by ice. 2 (be beset with) archaic be covered or studded with: blades of grass beset with glistening drops of dew. ORIGIN Old English besettan, from be- 'about' + settan (see set1).

blatant | ˈblātnt |
adjective
(of bad behavior) done openly and unashamedly: blatant lies. • completely lacking in subtlety; very obvious: despite their blatant attraction to each other they try to stay just friends | incredibly blatant product placement. DERIVATIVES blatancy | ˈblātnsē | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: perhaps an alteration of Scots blatand 'bleating'. It was first used by Spenser as an epithet for a thousand-tongued monster produced by Cerberus and Chimaera, a symbol of calumny, which he called the blatant beast. It was subsequently used to mean 'clamorous, offensive to the ear', first of people (mid 17th century), later of things (late 18th century); the sense 'unashamedly conspicuous' arose in the late 19th century.

bode | bōd |
verb [no object] (bode well/ill)
be an omen of a particular outcome: their argument did not bode well for the future | [with object] : the 12 percent interest rate bodes dark days ahead for retailers. ORIGIN Old English bodian 'proclaim, foretell', from boda 'messenger', of Germanic origin; related to German Bote, also to bid1.

bombastic | bämˈbastik |
adjective
high-sounding but with little meaning; inflated: bombastic rhetoric | bombastic music that drowned out what anyone was saying. DERIVATIVES bombastically | bämˈbastək(ə)lē | adverb

bourgeois | bo͝orˈZHwä, ˈbo͝orZHwä |
adjective
of or characteristic of the middle class, typically with reference to its perceived materialistic values or conventional attitudes: a rich, bored, bourgeois family | these views will shock the bourgeois critics. • (in Marxist contexts) upholding the interests of capitalism; not communist: bourgeois society took for granted the sanctity of property. noun (plural same) a bourgeois person: a self-confessed and proud bourgeois. ORIGIN early 17th century: from French, from medieval Latin burgensis, from Latin burgus 'castle' (in medieval Latin 'fortified town'), either from Greek purgos 'tower', or of Germanic origin and related to borough. Compare with burgess.

bucolic | byo͞oˈkälik |
adjective
relating to the pleasant aspects of the countryside and country life: the church is lovely for its bucolic setting. noun (usually bucolics) a pastoral poem. DERIVATIVES bucolically adverb ORIGIN early 16th century (as a noun): via Latin from Greek boukolikos, from boukolos 'herdsman', from bous 'ox'.

bumptious | ˈbəm(p)SHəs |
adjective
self-assertive or proud to an irritating degree: these bumptious young boys today. DERIVATIVES bumptiously | ˈbəm(p)SHəslē | adverb bumptiousness | ˈbəm(p)SHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 19th century: humorously from bump, on the pattern of fractious.

burgeon | ˈbərj(ə)n |
verb [no object]
begin to grow or increase rapidly; flourish: the city's suburbs have burgeoned, sprawling out from the center. • archaic or literary put forth young shoots; bud. noun archaic or literary a bud or young shoot. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French bourgeonner 'put out buds', from borjon 'bud', based on late Latin burra 'wool'.

Byzantine | ˈbizənˌtēn |
adjective
1 relating to Byzantium (now Istanbul), the Byzantine Empire, or the Eastern Orthodox Church. • of an ornate artistic and architectural style that developed in the Byzantine Empire and spread especially to Italy and Russia. The art is generally rich and stylized (as in religious icons) and the architecture typified by many-domed, highly decorated churches. 2 (also byzantine) (of a system or situation) excessively complicated, and typically involving a great deal of administrative detail: Byzantine insurance regulations. • characterized by deviousness or underhanded procedure: he has the most Byzantine mind in politics | Byzantine intrigues. noun a citizen of Byzantium or the Byzantine Empire. DERIVATIVES Byzantinism | bəˈzantəˌnizəm, bī- | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin Byzantinus, from Byzantium.

cabal | kəˈbäl, kəˈbal |
noun
a secret political clique or faction: a cabal of dissidents. ORIGIN late 16th century (denoting the Kabbalah): from French cabale, from medieval Latin cabala (see Kabbalah).

cache | kaSH |
noun
1 a collection of items of the same type stored in a hidden or inaccessible place: an arms cache | a cache of gold coins. • a hidden or inaccessible storage place for valuables, provisions, or ammunition: there was a good supply of meat in the caches. 2 (also cache memory) Computing an auxiliary memory from which high-speed retrieval is possible: [as modifier] : typical cache sizes range from 64K to 256K. verb [with object] 1 store away in hiding or for future use: he decided that they must cache their weapons. 2 Computing

store (data) in a cache memory: the operating system tries to cache every disk operation. • provide (hardware) with a cache memory: the device comes complete with 4MB of RAM to cache the hard drive | (as adjective cached) : a cached host adapter. DERIVATIVES cacheable adjective cacheless adjective ORIGIN late 18th century: from French, from cacher ‘to hide’.

cacophony | kəˈkäfənē |
noun (plural cacophonies)
a harsh discordant mixture of sounds: a cacophony of deafening alarm bells | figurative : a cacophony of architectural styles | songs of unrelieved cacophony. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French cacophonie, from Greek kakophōnia, from kakophōnos ‘ill-sounding’, from kakos ‘bad’ + phōnē ‘sound’.

calumny | ˈkaləmnē |
noun (plural calumnies)
the making of false and defamatory statements about someone in order to damage their reputation; slander: a bitter struggle marked by calumny and litigation. • a false and slanderous statement: a change in the law would prevent the press from publishing calumnies. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin calumnia.

camaraderie | ˌkäm(ə)ˈradərē, ˌkam(ə)ˈrädərē |
noun
mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together: a genuine camaraderie on the hockey team. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from French, from camarade ‘comrade’.

canard | kəˈnärd |
noun
1 an unfounded rumor or story: the old canard that LA is a cultural wasteland. 2 a small winglike projection attached to an aircraft forward of the main wing to provide extra stability or control, sometimes replacing the tail. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from French, literally ‘duck’, also ‘hoax’, from Old French caner ‘to quack’.

candor | ˈkand |
noun
the quality of being open and honest in expression; frankness: a man of refreshing candor. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the Latin sense): from Latin candor ‘whiteness’. The current sense dates from the mid 18th century; the development of the senses paralleled that of candid.

capricious | kəˈpriSHəs, kəˈprēSHəs |
adjective
given to sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behavior: it's terrible to feel our livelihood hinges on a capricious boss | a capricious climate. DERIVATIVES capriciously | kəˈpriSHəslē, kəˈprēSHəslē | adverb capriciousness | kəˈpriSHəsnəs, kəˈprēSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from French capricieux, from Italian (see capriccioso).

carnal | ˈkärn(ə)l |
adjective
relating to physical, especially sexual, needs and activities: carnal desire. DERIVATIVES carnality | kärˈnalədē | noun carnally adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Christian Latin carnalis, from caro, carn- ‘flesh’.

castigate | ˈkastəˌgāt |
verb [with object] formal
reprimand (someone) severely: he was castigated for not setting a good example. DERIVATIVES castigation | ˌkastəˈgāSHən | noun castigative adjective castigatory | ˈkastəgəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin castigare ‘reprove’, from castus ‘pure, chaste’.

cataclysm | ˈkadəˌklizəm |
noun
a large-scale and violent event in the natural world: the cataclysm at the end of the Cretaceous Period. • a sudden violent upheaval, especially in a political or social context: the cataclysm of the First World War. DERIVATIVES cataclysmal adjective ORIGIN early 17th century (originally denoting the biblical Flood described in Genesis): from French cataclysme, via Latin from Greek kataklusmos ‘deluge’, from kata- ‘down’ + kluzein ‘to wash’.

catalyst | ˈkadləst |
noun
a substance that increases the rate of a chemical reaction without itself undergoing any permanent chemical change: chlorine acts as a catalyst promoting the breakdown of ozone. • a person or thing that precipitates an event: the governor's speech acted as a catalyst for debate. ORIGIN early 20th century: from catalysis, on the pattern of analyst.

categorical | ˌkadəˈgôrək(ə)l |
adjective
unambiguously explicit and direct: a categorical assurance. DERIVATIVES categoric | ˌkadəˈgôrik | adjective ORIGIN late 16th century: from late Latin categoricus (from Greek katēgorikos, from katēgoria ‘statement’: see category) + -al.

caustic | ˈkôstik |
adjective
1 able to burn or corrode organic tissue by chemical action: a caustic cleaner. 2 sarcastic in a scathing and bitter way: the players were making caustic comments about the refereeing. 3 Physics formed by the intersection of reflected or refracted parallel rays from a curved surface. noun 1 a caustic substance. 2 Physics a caustic surface or curve. DERIVATIVES caustically | ˈkôstək(ə)lē | adverb causticity | kôˈstisədē | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: via Latin from Greek kaustikos, from kaustos ‘combustible’, from kaiein ‘to burn’.

celestial | səˈlesCH(ə)l, səˈlesˌtēəl |
adjective [attributive]
positioned in or relating to the sky, or outer space as observed in astronomy:

a celestial body. • belonging or relating to heaven: the celestial city. • supremely good: the celestial beauty of music. DERIVATIVES celestially adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from medieval Latin caelestialis, from Latin caelestis, from caelum 'heaven'.

cerebral | səˈrēbrəl, ˈserəbrəl |
adjective
1 of the cerebrum of the brain: a cerebral hemorrhage | the cerebral cortex. • intellectual rather than emotional or physical: photography is a cerebral process. 2 Phonetics another term for retroflex. DERIVATIVES cerebrally adverb ORIGIN early 19th century: from Latin cerebrum 'brain'+ -al.

chastise | CHaˈstīz |
verb [with object]
rebuke or reprimand severely: he chastised his colleagues for their laziness. • dated punish, especially by beating: the General cruelly chastised them with a whip. DERIVATIVES chastisement | CHasˈtīzm(ə)nt, ˈCHasˌtīzm(ə)nt | noun chastiser | ˈCHastīzər | noun ORIGIN Middle English: apparently formed irregularly from the obsolete verb chaste (see chasten).

chicanery | SHəˈkān(ə)rē |
noun
the use of trickery to achieve a political, financial, or legal purpose: an underhanded person who schemes corruption and political chicanery behind closed doors. ORIGIN late 16th century: from French chicanerie, from chicaner 'to quibble' (see chicane).

churlish | ˈCHərliSH |
adjective
rude in a mean-spirited and surly way: it seems churlish to complain. DERIVATIVES churlishly | ˈCHərləSHlē | adverb churlishness | ˈCHərləSHnəs | noun ORIGIN Old English cierlisc, ceorlisc (see churl, -ish1).

circuitous | sərˈkyo͞oədəs |
adjective
(of a route or journey) longer than the most direct way: the canal followed a circuitous route | figurative : a circuitous line of reasoning. DERIVATIVES circuitously | sərˈkyo͞oədəslē | adverb circuitousness noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from medieval Latin circuitosus, from circuitus 'a way around'(see circuit).

coalesce | ˌkōəˈles |
verb [no object]
come together to form one mass or whole: the puddles had coalesced into shallow streams | the separate details coalesce to form a single body of scientific thought. • [with object] combine (elements) in a mass or whole: to help coalesce the community, they established an office. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin coalescere 'grow together', from co- (from cum 'with') + alescere 'grow up' (from alere 'nourish').

coda | ˈkōdə |
noun Music
the concluding passage of a piece or movement, typically forming an addition to the basic structure: the first movement ends with a fortissimo coda. • the concluding section of a dance, especially of a pas de deux or the finale of a ballet in which the dancers parade before the audience. • a concluding event, remark, or section: his new novel is a kind of coda to his previous books. ORIGIN mid 18th century: Italian, from Latin cauda 'tail'.

cogent | ˈkōj(ə)nt |
adjective
(of an argument or case) clear, logical, and convincing: they put forward cogent arguments for British membership | the newspaper's lawyers must prepare a cogent appeal. DERIVATIVES cogently | ˈkōjən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin cogent- 'compelling', from the verb cogere, from co- 'together' + agere 'drive'.

cognoscenti | kägnəˈSHen(t)ē, ˌkänyəˈSHen(t)ē |
plural noun
people who are considered to be especially well informed about a particular subject: it was hailed by the cognoscenti as one of the best golf courses in Europe. ORIGIN late 18th century: Italian, literally 'people who know', from Latin cognoscent- 'getting to know', from the verb cognoscere.

collusion | kəˈlo͞oZH(ə)n |
noun
secret or illegal cooperation or conspiracy, especially in order to cheat or deceive others: the armed forces were working in collusion with drug traffickers | collusion between media owners and political leaders. • Law illegal cooperation or conspiracy, especially between ostensible opponents in a lawsuit. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin collusio(n-), from colludere 'have a secret agreement' (see collude).

compendium | kəmˈpendēəm |
noun (plural compendiums or compendia | -dēə |)
a collection of concise but detailed information about a particular subject, especially in a book or other publication: an invaluable compendium of useful information about language. • a collection of things, especially one systematically gathered: the program is a compendium of outtakes from our archives. ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin, 'profit, saving' (literally 'what is weighed together'), from compendere, from com- 'together' + pendere 'weigh'.

complaisant | kəmˈplās(ə)nt |
adjective
willing to please others; obliging; agreeable: when unharnessed, Northern dogs are peaceful and complaisant. DERIVATIVES complaisance | kəm ˈplās(ə)ns, kəmˈplāzns | noun complaisantly adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: French, from complaire 'acquiesce in order to please', from Latin complacere 'to please'. USAGE See usage at complacent.

concatenation | kənˌkadəˈnāSH(ə)n |
noun
a series of interconnected things or events: a singular concatenation of events unlikely to recur. • the action of linking things together in a series: the concatenation of lists.

conciliate | kənˈsilēˌāt |
verb [with object]
1 stop (someone) from being angry or discontented; placate; pacify: concessions were made to conciliate the peasantry. • [no object] act as a mediator: he sought to conciliate in the dispute. • formal reconcile; make compatible: all complaints about charges will be conciliated if possible. 2 archaic gain (esteem or goodwill): the arts which conciliate popularity. DERIVATIVES conciliative | kənˈsilēədiv | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century (in conciliate (sense 2)): from Latin conciliat- 'combined, gained', from the verb conciliare, from concilium (see council).

concomitant | kənˈkämәd(ə) |
adjective
naturally accompanying or associated: she loved travel, with all its concomitant worries | concomitant with his obsession with dirt was a desire for order. noun a phenomenon that naturally accompanies or follows something: some of us look on pain and illness as concomitants of the stresses of living. ORIGIN early 17th century: from late Latin concomitant- 'accompanying', from concomitari, from con- 'together with' + comitari, from Latin comes 'companion'.

conduit | ˈkänˌdo͞oət |
noun
1 a channel for conveying water or other fluid: a conduit for conveying water to the power plant. • a person or organization that acts as a channel for the transmission of something: the office acts as a conduit for ideas to flow throughout the organization. 2 a tube or trough for protecting electric wiring: the gas pipe should not be close to any electrical conduit. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, from medieval Latin conductus, from Latin conducere 'bring together' (see conduct).

conflate | kənˈflāt |
verb [with object]
combine (two or more texts, ideas, etc.) into one: the urban crisis conflates a number of different economic and social issues. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'fuse or melt down metal'): from Latin conflat- 'kindled, fused', from the verb conflare, from con- 'together' + flare 'to blow'.

congenial | kənˈjēnyəl |
adjective
(of a person) pleasant because of a personality, qualities, or interests that are similar to one's own: his need for some congenial company. • (of a thing) pleasant or agreeable because suited to one's taste or inclination: he went back to a climate more congenial to his cold stony soul. DERIVATIVES congeniality | kənˌjēnēˈaləd ē | noun congenially adverb

connotation | ˌkänəˈtāSH(ə)n |
noun
an idea or feeling that a word invokes in addition to its literal or primary meaning: the word "discipline" has unhappy connotations of punishment and repression | the work functions both by analogy and by connotation. • Philosophy the abstract meaning or intension of a term, which forms a principle determining which objects or concepts it applies to. Often contrasted with denotation. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from medieval Latin connotatio(n-), from connotare 'mark in addition' (see connote).

consensus | kənˈsensəs |
noun [usually in singular]
a general agreement: [as modifier] : a consensus view | a consensus of opinion among judges. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin, 'agreement', from consens- 'agreed', from the verb consentire.

construe | kənˈstro͞o |
verb (construes, construing, construed) [with object]
interpret (a word or action) in a particular way: his words could hardly be construed as an apology. • dated analyze the syntax of (a text, sentence, or word): both verbs can be construed with either infinitive. • dated translate (a passage or author) word for word, typically aloud. DERIVATIVES construable adjective construal | -ˈstro͞oəl | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin construere (see construct), in late Latin 'analyze the construction of a sentence'.

contiguous | kənˈtigyo͞oəs |
adjective
sharing a common border; touching: the 48 contiguous states. • next or together in sequence: five hundred contiguous dictionary entries. DERIVATIVES contiguously adverb ORIGIN early 16th century: from Latin contiguus 'touching', from the verb contingere 'be in contact, befall' (see contingent), + -ous.

contravene | ˌkäntrəˈvēn |
verb [with object]
violate the prohibition or order of (a law, treaty, or code of conduct): this would contravene the rule against hearsay. • conflict with (a right, principle, etc.), especially to its detriment: this contravened Washington's commitment to its own proposal. DERIVATIVES contravener | ˌkäntrəˈvēnər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from late Latin contravenire, from Latin contra- 'against' + venire 'come'.

contumacious | ˌkäntoo͝ˈmāSHəs |
adjective archaic or Law
(especially of a defendant's behavior) stubbornly or willfully disobedient to authority: his refusal to make child support payments was contumacious. DERIVATIVES contumaciously | ˌkäntoo͝ˈmāSHəslē | adverb ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin contumax, contumac- (perhaps from con- 'with' + tumere 'to swell') + -ious.

conundrum | kəˈnəndrəm |
noun (plural conundrums)
a confusing and difficult problem or question: one of the most difficult conundrums for the experts. • a question asked for amusement, typically one with a pun in its answer; a riddle. ORIGIN late 16th century: of unknown origin, but first recorded in a work by Thomas Nashe, as a term of abuse for a crank or pedant, later coming to denote a whim or fancy, also a pun. Current senses date from the late 17th century.

convivial | kənˈvivēəl |
adjective
(of an atmosphere or event) friendly, lively, and enjoyable: a convivial cocktail party. • (of a person) cheerful and friendly; jovial: she was relaxed and convivial. DERIVATIVES convivially | kənˈvivēəlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century (in the sense 'fit for a feast, festive'): from Latin convivialis, from convivium 'a feast', from con- 'with' + vivere 'live'.

copious | ˈkōpēəs |
adjective
abundant in supply or quantity: she took copious notes. • archaic profuse in speech or ideas: I had been a little too copious in talking of my country. DERIVATIVES copiousness | ˈkōpēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French copieux or Latin copiosus, from copia 'plenty'.

cornucopia | ˌkôrn(y)əˈkōpēə |
noun
a symbol of plenty consisting of a goat's horn overflowing with flowers, fruit, and corn. • an ornamental container shaped like a goat's horn. • an abundant supply of good things of a specified kind: the festival offers a cornucopia of pleasures. DERIVATIVES cornucopian adjective ORIGIN early 16th century: from late Latin, from Latin cornu copiae 'horn of plenty' (a mythical horn able to provide whatever is desired).

corporeal | kôrˈpôrēəl |
adjective
relating to a person's body, especially as opposed to their spirit: he was frank about his corporeal appetites. • having a body: a corporeal God. • Law consisting of material objects; tangible: corporeal property. DERIVATIVES corporeality | kôrˌpôrēˈalədē | noun corporeally adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'material'): from late Latin corporealis, from Latin corporeus 'bodily, physical', from corpus, corpor- 'body'.

coruscate | ˈkôrəˌskāt |
verb [no object] literary
(of light) flash or sparkle: the light was coruscating from the walls. DERIVATIVES coruscation | kôrəˈskāSH(ə)n | noun ORIGIN early 18th century: from Latin coruscat- 'glittered', from the verb coruscare.

cosset | ˈkäsət |
verb (cossets, cosseting, cosseted or cossetted) [with object]
care for and protect in an overindulgent way: all her life she'd been cosseted by her family. ORIGIN mid 16th century (as a noun denoting a lamb brought up by hand, later a spoiled child): probably from Anglo-Norman French coscet 'cottager', from Old English cotsæta 'cottar'.

coterie | ˈkōdərē |
noun (plural coteries)
a small group of people with shared interests or tastes, especially one that is exclusive of other people: a coterie of friends and advisers. ORIGIN early 18th century: from French, earlier denoting an association of tenants, based on Middle Low German kote 'cote'.

coup | kōō |
noun (plural coups | kōōz |)
1 a sudden, violent, and unlawful seizure of power from a government: he was overthrown in an army coup. 2 a notable or successful stroke or move: it was a major coup to get such a prestigious contract. • an unusual or unexpected but successful tactic in card play. 3 historical (among some North American Indian peoples) an act of touching an armed enemy in battle as a deed of bravery, or an act of first touching an item of the enemy's in order to claim it. 4 a contusion caused by contact of the brain with the skull at the point of trauma. Compare with contrecoup. ORIGIN late 18th century: from French, from medieval Latin colpus 'blow' (see cope1).

covenant | ˈkəvənənt |
noun
an agreement: there was a covenant between them that her name was never to be mentioned. • Law a contract drawn up by deed. • Law a clause in a contract. • Theology an agreement which brings about a relationship of commitment between God and his people. The Jewish faith is based on the biblical covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and David. See also Ark of the Covenant. verb [no object] agree by lease, deed, or other legal contract: the landlord covenants to repair the property. PHRASES Old Covenant Christian Theology the covenant between God and Israel in the Old Testament. New Covenant Christian Theology the covenant between God and the followers of Jesus Christ. DERIVATIVES covenantal | ˌkəvəˈnantl | adjective ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, present participle of covenir 'agree', from Latin convenire (see convene).

credibility | ˌkredəˈbilədē |
noun
the quality of being trusted and believed in: the very public loss of credibility led to the demise of the magazine. • the quality of being convincing or believable: the book's anecdotes have scant regard for credibility. • another term for street credibility. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from medieval Latin credibilitas, from Latin credibilis (see credible).

credulous | ˈkrejələs |
adjective
having or showing too great a readiness to believe things: a ceremony staged for credulous tourists. DERIVATIVES credulously | ˈkrejələslē | adverb credu-

lousness noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the general sense ‘inclined to believe’): from Latin credulus (from credere ‘believe’) + -ous.

cretin | ˈkrētn |
noun
1 informal, derogatory a stupid person (used as a general term of abuse). 2 Medicine, dated a person whose mental and physical development has been impaired by a deficiency of thyroid hormone in fetal or early life. ORIGIN late 18th century: from French crétin, from Swiss French crestin ‘Christian’ (from Latin Christianus), here used to mean ‘human being’, apparently as a reminder that, though deformed, cretins were human and not beasts.

Crux | krə |
another term for the Southern Cross.
adjective [postpositive] (Crucis | ˈkro͞osis |) used with preceding Greek letter or numeral to designate a star in the constellation Crux: the star Beta Crucis. ORIGIN Latin. Crucis is the Latin genitive form of Crux. crux | krəks | noun (plural cruxes or cruces | ˈkro͞osēz |) (the crux) the decisive or most important point at issue: the crux of the matter is that attitudes have changed | herein lies the crux of the issue. • a particular point of difficulty: both cruces can be resolved by a consideration of the manuscripts. ORIGIN mid 17th century (denoting a representation of a cross, chiefly in crux ansata ‘ankh’, literally ‘cross with a handle’): from Latin, literally ‘cross’.

cryptic | ˈkriptik |
adjective
1 having a meaning that is mysterious or obscure: he found his boss's utterances too cryptic. • (of a crossword) having difficult clues which indicate the solutions indirectly. 2 Zoology (of coloration or markings) serving to camouflage an animal in its natural environment: cryptic plumage is thought to minimize predation. DERIVATIVES cryptically | ˈkriptək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from late Latin crypticus, from Greek kruptikos, from kruptos ‘hidden’. cryptic (sense 2) dates from the late 19th century.

culmination | ˌkəlməˈnāSH(ə)n |
noun [in singular]
the highest or climactic point of something, especially as attained after a long time: the product was the culmination of 13 years of research. • Astronomy & Astrology the reaching of the meridian by a celestial body.

culpable | ˈkəlpəb(ə)l |
adjective
deserving blame: sometimes you're just as culpable when you watch something as when you actually participate. DERIVATIVES culpably | ˈkəlpəblē | adverb ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense ‘deserving punishment’): from Old French coupable, culpable, from Latin culpabilis, from culpare ‘to blame’, from culpa ‘fault, blame’.

cumulative | ˈkyo͞omyələdiv, ˈkyo͞omyəˌlādiv |
adjective

increasing or increased in quantity, degree, or force by successive additions: the cumulative effect of two years of drought. DERIVATIVES cumulativeness noun

cunning | ˈkəniNG |
adjective
1 having or showing skill in achieving one's ends by deceit or evasion: a cunning look came into his eyes. • ingenious: plants have evolved cunning defenses. 2 North American attractive or quaint: the baby will look cunning in that pink print. noun skill in achieving one's ends by deceit: a statesman to whom cunning had come as second nature. • ingenuity: what resources of energy and cunning it took just to survive. DERIVATIVES cunningness noun ORIGIN Middle English: perhaps from Old Norse kunnandi ‘knowledge’, from kunna ‘know’ (related to can1), or perhaps from Middle English cunne, an obsolete variant of can1. The original sense was ‘(possessing) erudition or skill’ and had no implication of deceit; the sense ‘deceitfulness’ dates from late Middle English.

cursory | ˈkərs(ə)rē |
adjective
hasty and therefore not thorough or detailed: a cursory glance at the figures. DERIVATIVES cursorily | ˈkərs(ə)rəlē | adverb cursoriness | ˈkərs(ə)rēnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin cursorius ‘of a runner’, from cursor (see cursor).

curtail | kərˈtāl |
verb [with object]
reduce in extent or quantity; impose a restriction on: civil liberties were further curtailed. • (curtail someone of) archaic deprive someone of (something): I that am curtailed of this fair proportion. ORIGIN late 15th century: from obsolete curtal ‘horse with a docked tail’, from French courtault, from court ‘short’, from Latin curtus. The change in the ending was due to association with tail1 and perhaps also with French tailler ‘to cut’.

cynosure | ˈsīnəˌSHo͝or |
noun [in singular]
a person or thing that is the center of attention or admiration: the Queen was the cynosure of all eyes. ORIGIN late 16th century: from French, or from Latin cynosura, from Greek kunosoura ‘dog's tail’ (also ‘Ursa Minor’), from kuōn, kun- ‘dog’ + oura ‘tail’. The term originally denoted the constellation Ursa Minor, or the pole star which it contains, long used as a guide by navigators.

daunting | ˈdôn(t)iNG, ˈdän(t)iNG |
adjective
seeming difficult to deal with in anticipation; intimidating: a daunting task. DERIVATIVES dauntingly adverb

debacle | dāˈbäk(ə)l, dəˈbäk(ə)l |
noun
a sudden and ignominious failure; a fiasco: the economic debacle that be-

came known as the Great Depression. ORIGIN early 19th century (in sense 'the breaking up of ice in a river'): from French débâcle, from débâcler 'unleash', from dé- 'un-' + bâcler 'to bar' (from Latin baculum 'staff').

debunk | ˌdēˈbəNGk |
verb [with object]
expose the falseness or hollowness of (a myth, idea, or belief): the magazine that debunks claims of the paranormal. • reduce the inflated reputation of (someone), especially by ridicule: comedy takes delight in debunking heroes.

deciduous | dəˈsijəwəs |
adjective
(of a tree or shrub) shedding its leaves annually: sun-loving deciduous trees like aspen. Often contrasted with evergreen. • informal (of a tree or shrub) broadleaved. • denoting the milk teeth of a mammal, which are shed after a time: this is the period when the deciduous teeth are being shed. DERIVATIVES deciduously adverb deciduousness noun ORIGIN late 17th century: from Latin deciduus (from decidere 'fall down or off') + -ous.

decimation | ˌdesəˈmāSH(ə)n |
noun
1 the killing or destruction of a large proportion of a group or species: our growing hunger for fish has resulted in the decimation of fish stocks | the decimation of our rainforests. • a drastic reduction in the strength or effectiveness of something: we need to halt the decimation of this country's manufacturing base | economic and financial decimation from two world wars. 2 historical the killing of one in every ten of a group of people as a punishment for the whole group (originally with reference to a mutinous Roman legion).

deduce | dəˈdo͞os |
verb [with object]
arrive at (a fact or a conclusion) by reasoning; draw as a logical conclusion: little can be safely deduced from these figures | [with clause] : they deduced that the fish died because of water pollution. • archaic trace the course or derivation of: he cannot deduce his descent wholly by heirs male. DERIVATIVES deducible | dəˈdo͞osəb(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'lead or convey'): from Latin deducere, from de- 'down' + ducere 'lead'.

defamation | ˌdefəˈmāSHən |
noun
the action of damaging the good reputation of someone; slander or libel: she sued him for defamation.

default | dəˈfôlt, dəˈfält |
noun
1 failure to fulfill an obligation, especially to repay a loan or appear in a court of law: it will have to restructure its debts to avoid default | the deteriorating economy pushed defaults to almost $20 billion. 2 a preselected option adopted by a computer program or other mechanism when no alternative is specified by the user or programmer: the default is fifty lines | [as modifier] : default settings. • [usually as modifier] something that is usual or standard: all my life, envy has been my default emotion | SSRIs have become the default for adults with depression. verb [no object] 1 fail to fulfill an obligation, especially to repay a loan or to appear in a court of law: some had defaulted on student loans. • [with object] declare (a party) in default and give judgment against that party: the possibility that cases would be defaulted and defendants released. 2 (default to) (of a device or computer program) revert automatically to (a preselected option): when you start a fresh letter the system will default to its own style. • adopt or revert to (something that is usual, customary, or standard, especially a behavior or course of action): when it comes to a crisis, he defaults to being a professional politician | I default to taking photos with my iPhone now. PHRASES by default because of a lack of opposition: they won the last election by default. • through lack of positive action rather than conscious choice: legislation dies by default if the governor fails to act on it. in default guilty of failing to repay a loan or appear in a court of law: the company is already in default on its loans. in default of in the absence of: in default of agreement the rent was to be determined by a surveyor. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French defaut, from defaillir 'to fail', based on Latin fallere 'disappoint, deceive'.

defect1 | ˈdēfek(t) |
noun
a shortcoming, imperfection, or lack: genetic defects | the property is free from defect. ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun, influenced by Old French defect 'deficiency'): from Latin defectus, past participle of deficere 'desert or fail', from de- (expressing reversal) + facere 'do'. defect2 | dəˈfek(t) | verb [no object] abandon one's country or cause in favor of an opposing one: he defected to the Soviet Union after the war. ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin defect- 'failed', from the verb deficere (see defect1).

deferential | ˌdefəˈren(t)SH(ə)l |
adjective
showing deference; respectful: people were always deferential to him. DERIVATIVES deferentially | ˌdefəˈren(t)SHəlē | adverb ORIGIN early 19th century: from deference, on the pattern of pairs such as prudence, prudential.

defunct | dəˈfəNG(k)t, dəˈfəNGk(t) |
adjective
no longer existing or functioning: a now defunct technology that only people over a certain age remember. ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense 'deceased'): from Latin defunctus 'dead', past participle of defungi 'carry out, finish', from de- (expressing reversal) + fungi 'perform'.

demagogue | ˈdemə͵gäg |
noun
a political leader who seeks support by appealing to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people rather than by using rational argument: a gifted demagogue with particular skill in manipulating the press. • (in ancient Greece and Rome) a leader or orator who espoused the cause of the common people: the Athenian demagogues had definite and valuable functions within the state. verb [with object] US rhetorically exploit (an issue) for political

purposes in a way calculated to appeal to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people: he seems more interested in demagoguing the issue in media interviews than in dialogue | [no object] : they routinely leap to conclusions that are not supported by any evidence and start demagoguing and fearmongering. DERIVATIVES demagogic | ˌdeməˈgäjik, ˌdeməˈgägik | adjective ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Greek dēmagōgos, from dēmos 'the people' + agōgos 'leading' (from agein 'to lead').

demure | dəˈmyo͝or |
adjective (demurer, demurest)
reserved, modest, and shy (typically used of a woman): a demure young lady | Antonia was pensive and demure. • (of clothing) giving a modest appearance: a demure knee-length skirt. DERIVATIVES demurely | dəˈmyo͝orlē | adverb demureness | dəˈmyo͝ornəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'sober, serious, reserved'): perhaps from Old French demoure, past participle of demourer 'remain' (see demur); influenced by Old French mur 'grave', from Latin maturus 'ripe or mature'. The sense 'reserved, shy' dates from the late 17th century.

denigrate | ˈdenəˌgrāt |
verb [with object]
criticize unfairly; disparage: there is a tendency to denigrate the poor. DERIVATIVES denigratory | ˈdenəgrəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'blacken, make dark'): from Latin denigrat- 'blackened', from the verb denigrare, from de- 'away, completely' + nigrare (from niger 'black').

denouement | ˌdānōōˈmäN |
noun
the final part of a play, movie, or narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved: the film's denouement was unsatisfying and ambiguous. • the climax of a chain of events, usually when something is decided or made clear: I waited by the eighteenth green to see the denouement. ORIGIN mid 18th century: French dénouement, from dénouer 'unknot'.

derelict | ˈderəˌlik(t) |
adjective
in a very poor condition as a result of disuse and neglect: the cities were derelict and dying. • mainly North American (of a person) shamefully negligent in not having done what one should have done: he was derelict in his duty to his country. noun a person without a home, job, or property: derelicts who could fit all their possessions in a paper bag. • a piece of property, especially a ship, abandoned by the owner and in poor condition. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin derelictus 'abandoned', past participle of derelinquere, from de- 'completely' + relinquere 'forsake'.

despot | ˈdespət, ˈdesˌpät |
noun
a ruler or other person who holds absolute power, typically one who exercises it in a cruel or oppressive way. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from French despote, via medieval Latin from Greek despotēs 'master, absolute ruler'. Originally (after the Turkish conquest of Constantinople) the term denoted a minor Christian ruler under the Turkish empire. The current sense dates from the late 18th century.

desuetude | ˈdeswəˌto͞od |
noun formal
a state of disuse: the docks fell into desuetude. ORIGIN early 17th century (in the sense 'cessation'): from French, from Latin desuetudo, from desuet- 'made unaccustomed', from the verb desuescere, from de- (expressing reversal) + suescere 'be accustomed'.

detrimental | ˌdetrəˈmen(t)l |
adjective
tending to cause harm: moving her could have a detrimental effect on her health | releasing the documents would be detrimental to national security. DERIVATIVES detrimentally | ˌdetrəˈmen(t)əlē | adverb

devout | dəˈvout |
adjective
having or showing deep religious feeling or commitment: she was a devout Catholic | a rabbi's devout prayers. • totally committed to a cause or belief: the most devout environmentalist. DERIVATIVES devoutness | dəˈvoutnəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French devot, from Latin devotus 'devoted', past participle of devovere (see devote).

dexterous | ˈdekst(ə)r |
adjective
showing or having skill, especially with the hands: dexterous accordion playing | power users are dexterous at using software, rather than creating it. DERIVATIVES dexterously | ˈdekst(ə)rəslē | (also dextrously) adverb dexterousness | ˈdekst(ə)rəsnəs | (also dextrousness) noun ORIGIN early 17th century (in the sense 'mentally adroit'): from Latin dexter 'on the right' + -ous.

diatribe | ˈdīəˌtrīb |
noun
a forceful and bitter verbal attack against someone or something: a diatribe against the Roman Catholic Church. ORIGIN late 16th century (denoting a disquisition): from French, via Latin from Greek diatribē 'spending of time, discourse', from dia 'through' + tribein 'rub'.

dichotomy | dīˈkädəmē |
noun (plural dichotomies) [usually in singular]
a division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different: a rigid dichotomy between science and mysticism. • Botany repeated branching into two equal parts. DERIVATIVES dichotomic adjective ORIGIN late 16th century: via modern Latin from Greek dikhotomia, from dikho- 'in two, apart' + -tomia (see -tomy).

diffidence | ˈdifəd(ə)ns |
noun

modesty or shyness resulting from a lack of self-confidence: I say this with some diffidence.

digress | dīˈgres |
verb [no object]
leave the main subject temporarily in speech or writing: I have digressed a little from my original plan. DERIVATIVES digresser noun ORIGIN early 16th century: from Latin digress- ‘stepped away’, from the verb digredi, from di- ‘aside’ + gradi ‘to walk’.

dilapidated | dəˈlapəˌdādəd |
adjective
(of a building or object) in a state of disrepair or ruin as a result of age or neglect: old, dilapidated buildings | the tank was now rather dilapidated.

dilatory | ˈdiləˌtôrē |
adjective
slow to act: he had been dilatory in appointing a solicitor. • intended to cause delay: they resorted to dilatory procedural tactics, forcing a postponement of peace talks. DERIVATIVES dilatorily | ˌdiləˈtôrəlē | adverb dilatoriness | ˈdiləˌtôrēnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin dilatorius ‘delaying’, from Latin dilator ‘delayer’, from dilat- ‘deferred’, from the verb differre.

diligent | ˈdiləj(ə)nt |
adjective
having or showing care and conscientiousness in one's work or duties: many caves are located only after a diligent search. ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from Latin diligens, diligent- ‘assiduous’, from diligere ‘love, take delight in’.

diminutive | dəˈminyədiv |
adjective
extremely or unusually small: a diminutive figure dressed in black. • (of a word, name, or suffix) implying smallness, either actual or imputed in token of affection, scorn, etc., (e.g., teeny, -let, -kins). noun a diminutive word or suffix. • a shortened form of a name, typically used informally: “Nick” is a diminutive of “Nicholas.”. • Heraldry a charge of the same form as an ordinary but of lesser size or width. DERIVATIVES diminutively adverb diminutiveness | dəˈminyədivnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (as a grammatical term): from Old French diminutif, -ive, from late Latin diminutivus, from Latin deminut- ‘diminished’, from the verb deminuere (see diminish).

disconcerting | ˌdiskənˈsərdiNG |
adjective
causing one to feel unsettled: he had a disconcerting habit of offering jobs to people he met at dinner parties. DERIVATIVES disconcertingly | ˌdiskənˈsərdiNGlē | adverb

disdain | disˈdān |
noun
the feeling that someone or something is unworthy of one's consideration or respect; contempt: her upper lip curled in disdain | an aristocratic disdain for manual labor. verb [with object] consider to be unworthy of one's consideration: gamblers disdain four-horse races. • refuse or reject (something) out of feelings of pride or superiority: she remained standing, pointedly disdaining his invitation to sit down | [with infinitive] : he disdained to discuss the matter further. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French desdeign (noun), desdeignier (verb), based on Latin dedignari, from de- (expressing reversal) + dignari ‘consider worthy’ (from dignus ‘worthy’).

disparate | ˈdispərət, dəˈsperət |
adjective
essentially different in kind; not allowing comparison: they inhabit disparate worlds of thought. • containing elements very different from one another: a culturally disparate country. noun (disparates) archaic things so unlike that there is no basis for comparison. DERIVATIVES disparately adverb disparateness noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin disparatus ‘separated’, from the verb disparare, from dis- ‘apart’ + parare ‘to prepare’; influenced in sense by Latin dispar ‘unequal’.

dispassionate | disˈpaSH(ə)nət |
adjective
not influenced by strong emotion, and so able to be rational and impartial: she dealt with life's disasters in a calm, dispassionate way. DERIVATIVES dispassionateness | disˈpaSH(ə)nətnəs | noun

disperse | dəˈspərs |
verb [with object]
distribute or spread over a wide area: storms can disperse seeds via high altitudes | camping sites could be dispersed among trees so as to be out of sight. • go or cause to go in different directions or to different destinations: [no object] : the crowd dispersed | [with object] : she disperses groups of teenagers if they are being rowdy. • (with reference to gas, smoke, mist, or cloud) thin out or cause to thin out and disappear: [no object] : the earlier mist had dispersed | [with object] : winds dispersed the bomb's radioactive cloud high in the atmosphere. • Physics divide (light) into constituents of different wavelengths: the ability of a material to disperse light by refraction. • Chemistry distribute (small particles) uniformly in a medium. adjective [attributive] Chemistry denoting a phase dispersed in another phase, as in a colloid: emulsions should be examined after storage for droplet size of the disperse phase. DERIVATIVES disperser noun dispersible adjective dispersive | dəˈspərsiv | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin dispers- ‘scattered’, from the verb dispergere, from dis- ‘widely’ + spargere ‘scatter, strew’.

disputatious | ˌdispyəˈtāSHəs |
adjective
fond of or causing heated arguments: a congenial hangout for disputatious academics | disputatious council meetings. DERIVATIVES disputatiously adverb disputatiousness noun

disseminate | dəˈsemәˌnāt |
verb [with object]
spread (something, especially information) widely: health authorities should foster good practice by disseminating information. • [no object] Medicine spread throughout an organ or the body: there is a subset of these low-grade tumors that can disseminate and migrate. DERIVATIVES disseminator | dəˈsemәˌnādər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin disseminat- 'scattered', from the verb disseminare, from dis- 'abroad' + semen, semin- 'seed'.

dissident | ˈdisədnt |
noun
a person who opposes official policy, especially that of an authoritarian state: a dissident who had been jailed by a military regime. adjective in opposition to official policy: there is only one explicitly dissident voice to be heard. ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense 'differing in opinion or character'): from Latin dissident- 'sitting apart, disagreeing', from dis- 'apart' + sedere 'sit'.

dissolution | ˌdisəˈlo͞oSH(ə)n, ˌdisəlˈyo͞oSH(ə)n |
noun
1 the closing down or dismissal of an assembly, partnership, or official body: the dissolution of their marriage | Henry VIII declared the abbey's dissolution in 1540. • technical the action or process of dissolving or being dissolved: minerals susceptible to dissolution. • disintegration; decomposition: the dissolution of the flesh. • archaic death. 2 debauched living; dissipation: an advanced state of dissolution. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin dissolutio(n-), from the verb dissolvere (see dissolve).

distraught | dəˈstrôt, dəˈsträt |
adjective
deeply upset and agitated: distraught parents looking for a runaway teenager | he appeared on television, grief-ravaged and distraught. ORIGIN late Middle English: alteration of the obsolete adjective distract (from Latin distractus 'pulled apart'), influenced by straught, archaic past participle of stretch.

divest | dīˈvest, dəˈvest |
verb [with object]
deprive (someone) of power, rights, or possessions: men are unlikely to be divested of power without a struggle. • deprive (something) of a particular quality: he has divested the original play of its charm. • [no object] rid oneself of something that one no longer wants or requires, such as a business interest or investment: the government's policy of divesting itself of state holdings | it appears easier to carry on in the business than to divest. • dated or humorous relieve (someone) of something being worn or carried: she divested him of his coat. ORIGIN early 17th century: alteration of devest, from Old French desvestir, from des- (expressing removal) + Latin vestire (from vestis 'garment').

divisive | dəˈvīsiv, diˈviziv |
adjective
tending to cause disagreement or hostility between people: the highly divisive issue of health care. DERIVATIVES divisively adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (as a noun denoting something that divides or separates): from late Latin divisivus, from Latin dividere (see divide).

dogged | ˈdôgәd, ˈdägәd |
adjective
having or showing tenacity and grim persistence: success required dogged determination. DERIVATIVES doggedness | ˈdôgәdnәs | noun

dogmatic | dôgˈmadik |
adjective
inclined to lay down principles as incontrovertibly true: he gives his opinion without trying to be dogmatic. DERIVATIVES dogmatically | dôgˈmadәk(ә)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century (as a noun denoting a philosopher or physician of a school based on a priori assumptions): via late Latin from Greek dogmatikos, from dogma, dogmat- (see dogma).

domicile | ˈdämәˌsīl, ˈdōmәˌsīl, ˈdämәsәl |
noun
formal or Law the country that a person treats as their permanent home, or lives in and has a substantial connection with: his wife has a domicile of origin in Germany. • mainly US a person's residence or home: the builder I've hired to renovate my new domicile. • the place at which a company or other body is registered, especially for tax purposes. verb [with adverbial of place] (be domiciled) formal or Law treat a specified country as a permanent home: the tenant is domiciled in the US. • mainly US reside or be based: he was domiciled in a frame house on the outskirts of town. ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from Latin domicilium 'dwelling', from domus 'home'.

dormant | ˈdôrm(ә)nt |
adjective
1 (of an animal) having normal physical functions suspended or slowed down for a period of time; in or as if in a deep sleep: dormant butterflies. • (of a plant or bud) alive but not actively growing. • (of a volcano) temporarily inactive. • (of a disease) causing no symptoms but not cured and liable to recur: the disease may remain dormant and undetected until transmitted to other fish. 2 temporarily inactive or inoperative: that dormant urge to write fiction has re-emerged | the successful consortium included a dormant company | the event evoked memories that she would rather had lain dormant. 3 [usually postpositive] Heraldry (of an animal) depicted lying with its head on its paws. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the senses 'fixed in position' and 'latent'): from Old French, 'sleeping', present participle of dormir, from Latin dormire 'to sleep'.

draconian | drәˈkōnēәn, drāˈkōnēәn |
adjective
(of laws or their application) excessively harsh and severe: the Nazis destroyed the independence of the press by a series of draconian laws. ORIGIN late 19th century: from the name of Draco (see Draco2) + -ian.

dubious | ˈd(y)o͞obēəs |
adjective
1 hesitating or doubting: Alex looked dubious, but complied. 2 not to be relied upon; suspect: extremely dubious assumptions. • morally suspect: time-sharing has been brought into disrepute by dubious sales methods. • of questionable value: she earned the dubious distinction of being the lowest-paid teacher in the nation. DERIVATIVES dubiousness | ˈd(y)o͞obēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (in dubious (sense 2)): from Latin dubiosus, from dubium ‘a doubt’, neuter of dubius ‘doubtful’.

duress | d(y)əˈres |
noun
threats, violence, constraints, or other action brought to bear on someone to do something against their will or better judgment: confessions extracted under duress. • Law constraint illegally exercised to force someone to perform an act. • archaic forcible restraint or imprisonment. ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense ‘harshness, severity, cruel treatment’): via Old French from Latin duritia, from durus ‘hard’.

eccentric | ikˈsentrik |
adjective
1 (of a person or their behavior) unconventional and slightly strange: my favorite aunt is very eccentric. 2 technical (of a thing) not placed centrally or not having its axis or other part placed centrally: a servo driving an eccentric cam. • (of a circle) not centered on the same point as another. • (of an orbit) not circular. noun 1 a person of unconventional and slightly strange views or behavior: he enjoys a colorful reputation as an engaging eccentric. 2 a disc or wheel mounted eccentrically on a revolving shaft in order to transform rotation into backward-and-forward motion, e.g. a cam in an internal combustion engine. DERIVATIVES eccentrically | ikˈsentrək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun denoting a circle or orbit not having the earth precisely at its center): via late Latin from Greek ekkentros, from ek ‘out of’ + kentron ‘center’.

eclectic | ēˈklektik |
adjective
1 deriving ideas, style, or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources: universities offering an eclectic mix of courses | her musical tastes are eclectic. 2 (Eclectic) Philosophy denoting or belonging to a class of ancient philosophers who did not belong to or found any recognized school of thought but selected doctrines from various schools of thought. noun a person who derives ideas, style, or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources. DERIVATIVES eclectically adverb ORIGIN late 17th century (as a term in philosophy): from Greek eklektikos, from eklegein ‘pick out’, from ek ‘out’ + legein ‘choose’.

egalitarian | ēˌgaləˈterēən |
adjective
relating to or believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities: a fairer, more egalitarian society. noun a person who advocates or supports egalitarian principles: he was a social and political egalitarian. ORIGIN late 19th century: from French égalitaire, from égal ‘equal’, from Latin aequalis (see equal).

egocentric | ˌēgōˈsentrik |
adjective
thinking only of oneself, without regard for the feelings or desires of others; self-centered: their egocentric tendency to think of themselves as invulnerable. • centered in or arising from a person's own existence or perspective: egocentric spatial perception. noun an egocentric person. DERIVATIVES egocentrically | -(ə)lē | adverb egocentricity | ˌēgōs(ə)nˈtrisədē | noun egocentrism | ˌēgōˈsenˌtrizəm | noun ORIGIN early 20th century: from ego, on the pattern of words such as geocentric.

egregious | iˈgrējəs |
adjective
1 outstandingly bad; shocking: egregious abuses of copyright. 2 archaic remarkably good. DERIVATIVES egregiousness noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (in egregious (sense 2)): from Latin egregius ‘illustrious’, literally ‘standing out from the flock’, from ex- ‘out’ + grex, greg- ‘flock’. Sense 1 (late 16th century) probably arose as an ironic use.

elicit | əˈlisət |
verb (elicits, eliciting, elicited) [with object]
evoke or draw out (a response, answer, or fact) from someone in reaction to one's own actions or questions: they invariably elicit exclamations of approval from guests. • archaic draw forth (something that is latent or potential) into existence: a corrupt heart elicits in an hour all that is bad in us. DERIVATIVES elicitation | əˌlisəˈtāSH(ə)n | noun elicitor | -tər | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin elicit- ‘drawn out by trickery or magic’, from the verb elicere, from e- (variant of ex-) ‘out’ + lacere ‘entice, deceive’.

elucidate | əˈlo͞osəˌdāt |
verb [with object]
make (something) clear; explain: work such as theirs will help to elucidate this matter | [with clause] : in what follows I shall try to elucidate what I believe the problems to be | [no object] : they would not elucidate further. DERIVATIVES elucidative | əˈlo͞osəˌdādiv | adjective elucidatory | əˈlo͞osədəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: from late Latin elucidat- ‘made clear’, from the verb elucidare, from e- (variant of ex-) ‘out’ + lucidus ‘lucid’.

emaciated | əˈmāSHēˌādəd |
adjective
abnormally thin or weak, especially because of illness or a lack of food: she was so emaciated she could hardly stand. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin emaciat- ‘made thin’, from the verb emaciare, from e- (variant of ex-, expressing a change of state) + macies ‘leanness’.

emanate | ˈeməˌnāt |
verb [no object] (emanate from)
(of something abstract but perceptible) issue or spread out from (a source): warmth emanated from the fireplace | she felt an undeniable charm emanat-

ing from him. • originate from; be produced by: the proposals emanated from a committee. • [with object] give out or emit (something abstract but perceptible): he emanated a powerful brooding air. DERIVATIVES emanative adjective emanator noun ORIGIN mid 18th century: from Latin emanat- 'flowed out', from the verb emanare, from e- (variant of ex-) 'out' + manare 'to flow'.

embellish | əmˈbeliSH |
verb [with object]
make (something) more attractive by the addition of decorative details or features: blue silk embellished with golden embroidery. • make (a statement or story) more interesting or entertaining by adding extra details, especially ones that are not true: she had real difficulty telling the truth because she liked to embellish things. DERIVATIVES embellisher noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French embelliss-, lengthened stem of embellir, based on bel 'handsome', from Latin bellus.

emulate | ˈemyəˌlāt |
verb [with object]
match or surpass (a person or achievement), typically by imitation: lesser men trying to emulate his greatness. • imitate: hers is not a hairstyle I wish to emulate. • Computing reproduce the function or action of (a different computer, software system, etc.): the adaptor is factory set to emulate a Hercules graphics board. DERIVATIVES emulative | ˈemyəˌlādiv | adjective emulator | ˈemyəˌlādər | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin aemulat- 'rivalled, equaled', from the verb aemulari, from aemulus 'rival'.

enamor | iˈnamər, eˈnam |
verb (be enamored of/with/by)
be filled with a feeling of love for: it is not difficult to see why Edward is enamored of her. • have a liking or admiration for: she was truly enamored of New York. ORIGIN Middle English (formerly also as inamour): from Old French enamourer, from en- 'in' + amour 'love'.

encumber | inˈkəmbər, enˈkəmbər |
verb [with object]
restrict or burden (someone or something) in such a way that free action or movement is difficult: she was encumbered by her heavy skirts | they had arrived encumbered with families. • saddle (a person or estate) with a debt or mortgage: an estate heavily encumbered with debt. • fill or block up (a place): we tripped over sticks and stones, which encumber most of the trail. ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'cause trouble to, entangle'; formerly also as incumber): from Old French encombrer 'block up', from en- 'in' + combre 'river barrage'.

engender | inˈjendər |
verb [with object]
cause or give rise to (a feeling, situation, or condition): the issue engendered continuing controversy. • archaic (of a father) beget (offspring). ORIGIN Middle English (formerly also as ingender): from Old French engendrer, from Latin ingenerare, from in- 'in' + generare 'beget' (see generate).

enigmatic | ˌenigˈmadik |
adjective
difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious: he took the money with an enigmatic smile. DERIVATIVES enigmatical adjective enigmatically | ˌenig ˈmadək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from French énigmatique or late Latin aenigmaticus, based on Greek ainigma 'riddle' (see enigma).

enrapture | inˈrapCHər, enˈrapCHər |
verb [with object] (usually be enraptured)
give intense pleasure or joy to: Ruth was enraptured by the child who was sleeping in her arms so peacefully.

enthrall | inˈTHrôl, enˈTHrôl, inˈTHräl, enˈTHr |
verb (enthralls, enthralling, enthralled) [with object]
capture the fascinated attention of: she had been so enthralled by the adventure that she had hardly noticed the cold. • (also inthrall) archaic enslave. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'enslave'; formerly also as inthrall): from en-1, in-2 (as an intensifier) + thrall.

enunciate | ēˈnənsēˌāt |
verb [with object]
say or pronounce clearly: she enunciated each word slowly. • express (a proposition, theory, etc.) in clear or definite terms: a written document enunciating this policy. • proclaim: a prophet enunciating the Lord's wisdom. DERIVATIVES enunciation | ēˌnənsēˈāSH(ə)n | noun enunciative | ēˈnənsēədiv, əˈnənsēədiv, ēˈnənsēˌādiv, əˈnənsēˌādiv | adjective enunciator | əˈnənsēˌādər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (as enunciation): from Latin enuntiat- 'announced clearly', from the verb enuntiare, from e- (variant of ex-) 'out' + nuntiare 'announce' (from nuntius 'messenger').

Epicurean | ˌepəkyəˈrēən, ˌepəˈkyo͝orēən |
noun
a disciple or student of the Greek philosopher Epicurus. • (epicurean) a person devoted to sensual enjoyment, especially that derived from fine food and drink. adjective of or concerning Epicurus or his ideas: Epicurean philosophers. • (epicurean) relating to or suitable for an epicure: epicurean feasts.

epiphany | əˈpifənē |
noun (plural epiphanies) (also Epiphany)
the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12). • the festival commemorating the Epiphany on January 6: many submerge themselves in ice water to celebrate Epiphany. • a manifestation of a divine or supernatural being: many believe this scene to represent an epiphany of the goddess. • a moment of sudden revelation or insight: a few years ago, I had an epiphany. DERIVATIVES epiphanic | ˌepəˈfanik | adjective ORIGIN Middle English: from Greek epiphainein 'reveal'. The sense relating to the Christian festival is via Old French epiphanie and ecclesiastical Latin epiphania.

epitome | əˈpidəmē |
noun

1 (the epitome of) a person or thing that is a perfect example of a particular quality or type: she looked the epitome of elegance and good taste. 2 a summary of a written work; an abstract. • archaic a thing representing something else in miniature. DERIVATIVES epitomic adjective epitomist | ə ˈpidəməst | noun ORIGIN early 16th century: via Latin from Greek epitomē, from epitemnein ‘abridge’, from epi ‘in addition’ + temnein ‘to cut’.

equanimity | ˌekwəˈnimədē, ˌēkwəˈnimədē |
noun
mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation: she accepted both the good and the bad with equanimity. ORIGIN early 17th century (also in the sense ‘fairness, impartiality’): from Latin aequanimitas, from aequus ‘equal’ + animus ‘mind’.

equivocal | əˈkwivək(ə)l |
adjective
open to more than one interpretation; ambiguous: the equivocal nature of her remarks. • uncertain or questionable in nature: the results of the investigation were equivocal. DERIVATIVES equivocality | əˌkwivəˈkalədē | noun equivocally | əˈkwivək(ə)lē | adverb equivocalness | əˈkwivəkəlnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from late Latin aequivocus, from Latin aequus ‘equally’ + vocare ‘to call’.

erudite | ˈer(y)əˌdīt |
adjective
having or showing great knowledge or learning: Ken could turn any conversation into an erudite discussion | she was very erudite. DERIVATIVES eruditely | ˈer(y)əˌdītlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin eruditus, past participle of erudire ‘instruct, train’ (based on rudis ‘rude, untrained’).

esoteric | ˌesəˈterik |
adjective
intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest: esoteric philosophical debates. DERIVATIVES esoterically | -(ə)lē | adverb esotericism | ˌesəˈterəˌsizəm | noun esotericist | -ˈterəsist | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Greek esōterikos, from esōterō, comparative of esō ‘within’, from es, eis ‘into’. Compare with exoteric.

espionage | ˈespēəˌnäZH |
noun
the practice of spying or of using spies, typically by governments to obtain political and military information: the camouflage and secrecy of espionage. ORIGIN late 18th century: from French espionnage, from espionner ‘to spy’, from espion ‘a spy’.

ethereal | iˈTHirēəl |
adjective
1 extremely delicate and light in a way that seems too perfect for this world: her ethereal beauty | a singer who has a weirdly ethereal voice. • heavenly or spiritual: ethereal, otherworldly visions. 2 Chemistry (of a solution) having diethyl ether as a solvent: sodium is dissolved in ethereal solutions of aromatic ketones. DERIVATIVES ethereality | iˌTHirēˈalədē, eˌTHirēˈalədē | noun ethereally adverb ORIGIN early 16th century: via Latin from Greek aitherios (from aithēr ‘ether’) + -al.

ethical | ˈeTHəkəl |
adjective
1 relating to moral principles or the branch of knowledge dealing with these: ethical issues in nursing | ethical churchgoing men. • morally good or correct: can a profitable business be ethical? • avoiding activities or organizations that do harm to people or the environment: an expert on ethical investment | switching to more ethical products | adopt ethical shopping habits | ethical holidays. 2 [attributive] (of a medicine) legally available only on a doctor's prescription and usually not advertised to the general public: all types of drugs, including ethical drugs and over-the-counter pharmaceuticals. DERIVATIVES ethicality | ˌeTHəˈkalədē | noun

eulogy | ˈyo͞oləjē |
noun (plural eulogies)
a speech or piece of writing that praises someone or something highly, typically someone who has just died: his good friend delivered a brief eulogy. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘high praise’): from medieval Latin eulogium, eulogia (from Greek eulogia ‘praise’), apparently influenced by Latin elogium ‘inscription on a tomb’ (from Greek elegia ‘elegy’). The current sense dates from the late 16th century.

evanescent | ˌevəˈnes(ə)nt |
adjective mainly literary
soon passing out of sight, memory, or existence; quickly fading or disappearing: a shimmering evanescent bubble. • Physics denoting a field or wave that extends into a region where it cannot propagate and whose amplitude therefore decreases with distance. DERIVATIVES evanescence | ˌevəˈnes(ə)ns | noun evanescently adverb ORIGIN early 18th century (in the sense ‘almost imperceptible’): from Latin evanescent- ‘disappearing’, from the verb evanescere (see evanesce).

exacerbate | igˈzasərˌbāt, egˈzasərˌbāt |
verb [with object]
make (a problem, bad situation, or negative feeling) worse: the exorbitant cost of land in urban areas only exacerbated the problem | the forest fire was exacerbated by the lack of rain. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin exacerbat- ‘made harsh’, from the verb exacerbare, from ex- (expressing inducement of a state) + acerbus ‘harsh, bitter’.

exaltation | ˌegˌzôlˈtāSH(ə)n, ˌegˌzälˈtāSH(ə)n |
noun
1 a feeling or state of extreme happiness: she beams with exaltation. 2 the action of elevating someone in rank, power, or character: the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. 3 the action of praising someone or something highly: the exaltation of the army as a place for brotherhood. ORIGIN late Middle

English (in the sense ‘the action of raising high’): from late Latin exaltatio(n-), from Latin exaltare ‘raise aloft’ (see exalt).

exculpate | ˈekskəlˌpāt |
verb [with object] formal
show or declare that (someone) is not guilty of wrongdoing: the article exculpated the mayor. DERIVATIVES exculpation | ˌekskəlˈpāSH(ə)n | noun exculpatory | ˌeksˈkəlpəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN mid 17th century: from medieval Latin exculpat- ‘freed from blame’, from the verb exculpare, from ex- ‘out, from’ + Latin culpa ‘blame’.

exemplar | igˈzempˌlär, igˈzemplər |
noun
a person or thing serving as a typical example or excellent model: he became the leading exemplar of conservative philosophy. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French exemplaire, from late Latin exemplarium, from Latin exemplum ‘sample, imitation’ (see example).

exhilaration | igˌzilәˈrāSH(ə)n, egˌzilәˈrāSH(ə)n |
noun
a feeling of excitement, happiness, or elation: they felt the exhilaration of victory.

exorbitant | igˈzôrbətnt, egˈzôrbətnt |
adjective
(of a price or amount charged) unreasonably high: the exorbitant price of tickets. DERIVATIVES exorbitance | igˈzôrbədəns, egˈzôrbədəns, igˈzôrbətns, egˈzôrbətns | noun exorbitantly | igˈzôrbədən(t)lē, egˈzôrbədən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (originally describing a legal case that is outside the scope of a law): from late Latin exorbitant- ‘going off the track’, from ex- orbitare, from ex- ‘out from’ + orbita ‘course, track’.

expedient | ikˈspēdēənt |
adjective
(of an action) convenient and practical although possibly improper or immoral: either side could break the agreement if it were expedient to do so. • (of an action) suitable or appropriate: holding a public inquiry into the scheme was not expedient. noun a means of attaining an end, especially one that is convenient but considered improper or immoral: the current policy is a political expedient. DERIVATIVES expedience | ikˈspēdēəns | noun expediently | ikˈspēdēən(t)lē, ekˈspēdēən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin expedient- ‘extricating, putting in order’, from the verb expedire (see expedite).

expeditious | ˌekspəˈdiSHəs |
adjective
done with speed and efficiency: an expeditious investigation. DERIVATIVES expeditiousness | ˌekspəˈdiSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 15th century: from expedition + -ous.

explicate | ˈeksplәˌkāt |
verb [with object]
analyze and develop (an idea or principle) in detail: attempting to explicate the relationship between crime and economic forces. • analyze (a literary work) in order to reveal its meaning: these essays seek to explicate and contextualize Kristeva's writings. DERIVATIVES explicative | ekˈsplikədiv, ˈeksplәˌkādiv | adjective explicatory | ikˈsplikәˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin explicat- ‘unfolded’, from the verb explicare, from ex- ‘out’ + plicare ‘to fold’.

extemporaneous | ikˌstempəˈrānēəs |
adjective
spoken or done without preparation: an extemporaneous speech. DERIVATIVES extemporaneously | ikˌstempəˈrānēəslē, ekˌstempəˈrānēəslē | adverb extemporaneousness | ikˌstempəˈrānēəsnəs | noun

extirpate | ˈekstərˌpāt |
verb [with object]
root out and destroy completely: the use of every legal measure to extirpate this horrible evil from the land. DERIVATIVES extirpation | ˌekstərˈpāSH(ə)n | noun extirpator | ˈekstərˌpādər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (as extirpation): from Latin exstirpare, from ex- ‘out’ + stirps ‘a stem’.

extol | ikˈstōl |
verb (extols, extolling, extolled) [with object]
praise enthusiastically: he extolled the virtues of the Russian peoples. DERIVATIVES extoller | ikˈstōlər | noun extolment | ikˈstōlm(ə)nt, ekˈstōlm(ə)nt | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin extollere, from ex- ‘out, upward’ + tollere ‘raise’.

extraneous | ikˈstrānēəs |
adjective
irrelevant or unrelated to the subject being dealt with: one is obliged to wade through many pages of extraneous material. • of external origin: when the transmitter pack is turned off, no extraneous noise is heard. • separate from the object to which it is attached: other insects attach extraneous objects or material to themselves. DERIVATIVES extraneously | ikˈstrānēəslē | adverb extraneousness | ikˈstrānēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin extraneus + -ous.

extrapolate | ikˈstrapәˌlāt |
verb [with object]
extend the application of (a method or conclusion, especially one based on statistics) to an unknown situation by assuming that existing trends will continue or similar methods will be applicable: the results cannot be extrapolated to other patient groups | [no object] : it is always dangerous to extrapolate from a sample. • estimate or conclude (something) by extrapolating: attempts to extrapolate likely human cancers from laboratory studies. • Mathematics extend (a graph, curve, or range of values) by inferring unknown values from trends in the known data: (as adjective extrapolated) : a set of extrapolated

values. DERIVATIVES extrapolative | -ˌlātiv | adjective extrapolator | -ˌlātər | noun ORIGIN late 19th century: from extra- ‘outside’ + a shortened form of interpolate.

extricate | ˈekstrəˌkāt |
verb [with object]
free (someone or something) from a constraint or difficulty: he was trying to extricate himself from official duties. DERIVATIVES extricable | ikˈstrikəbəl, ekˈstrikəbəl, ˈekstrikəbəl | adjective extrication | ˌekstrəˈkāSH(ə)n | noun ORIGIN early 17th century (in the sense ‘unravel, untangle’): from Latin extricat- ‘unravelled’, from the verb extricare, from ex- ‘out’ + tricae ‘perplexities’.

exultant | igˈzəltnt, egˈzəltnt |
adjective
triumphantly happy: she felt exultant and powerful. DERIVATIVES exultancy | -ˈzəltnsē | noun exultantly | igˈzəltn(t)lē, egˈzəltn(t)lē | adverb

facile | ˈfas(ə)l |
adjective
1 (especially of a theory or argument) appearing neat and comprehensive only by ignoring the true complexities of an issue; superficial: facile generalizations. • (of a person) having a superficial or simplistic knowledge or approach: a man of facile and shallow intellect. 2 (especially of success in sports) easily achieved; effortless: a facile victory | he was revealed to be a facile liar. DERIVATIVES facilely | ˈfasəl(l)ē | adverb facileness noun ORIGIN late 15th century (in the sense ‘easily accomplished’): from French, or from Latin facilis ‘easy’, from facere ‘do, make’.

fait | ˌfāt əˌkämˈplē, ˌfet əˌkämˈplē |
noun [in singular]
a thing that has already happened or been decided before those affected hear about it, leaving them with no option but to accept it: the results were presented to shareholders as a fait accompli. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from French, literally ‘accomplished fact’.

farcical | ˈfärsək(ə)l |
adjective
relating to or resembling farce, especially because of absurd or ridiculous aspects: a farcical tangle of events. DERIVATIVES farcicality | ˌfärsəˈkalədē | noun farcically | ˈfärsək(ə)lē | adverb

fastidious | faˈstidēəs |
adjective
very attentive to and concerned about accuracy and detail: he chooses his words with fastidious care. • very concerned about matters of cleanliness: the child seemed fastidious about getting her fingers sticky or dirty. DERIVATIVES fastidiously | faˈstidēəslē | adverb fastidiousness | faˈstidēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin fastidiosus, from fastidium ‘loathing’. The word originally meant ‘disagreeable’, later ‘disgusted’. Current senses date from the 17th century.

fatuous | ˈfaCH(əw)əs |
adjective
silly and pointless: a fatuous comment. DERIVATIVES fatuity | fəˈto͞oədē | noun (plural fatuities) fatuously | ˈfaCH(əw)əslē | adverb fatuousness | ˈfaCH͞o͞oəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin fatuus ‘foolish’+ -ous.

fawning | ˈfôniNG, ˈfäniNG |
adjective
displaying exaggerated flattery or affection; obsequious: fawning adoration | fawning interviews with Hollywood celebs. DERIVATIVES fawningly adverb

fecund | ˈfekənd, ˈfēkənd |
adjective
producing or capable of producing an abundance of offspring or new growth; fertile: a lush and fecund garden | figurative : her fecund imagination. • technical (of a woman or women) capable of becoming pregnant and giving birth. ORIGIN late Middle English: from French fécond or Latin fecundus.

felicitous | fəˈlisədəs |
adjective
well chosen or suited to the circumstances: a felicitous phrase. • pleasing and fortunate: the view was the room's only felicitous feature. DERIVATIVES felicitously | fəˈlisədəslē | adverb felicitousness noun

ferocity | fəˈräsədē |
noun (plural ferocities)
the state or quality of being ferocious: the ferocity of the storm caught them by surprise. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from French, or from Latin ferocitas, from ferox, feroc- ‘fierce’.

fervor | ˈfərv |
noun
intense and passionate feeling: he talked with all the fervor of a new convert. • archaic intense heat. ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from Latin fervor, from fervere ‘to boil’. Compare with fervent and fervid.

fiasco | fēˈaskō |
noun (plural fiascos)
a thing that is a complete failure, especially in a ludicrous or humiliating way: his plans turned into a fiasco. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from Italian, literally ‘bottle, flask’, in the phrase far fiasco, literally ‘make a bottle’, figuratively ‘fail in a performance’: the reason for the figurative sense is unexplained.

fickle | ˈfik(ə)l |
adjective
changing frequently, especially as regards one's loyalties, interests, or affection: Web patrons are a notoriously fickle lot, bouncing from one site to another on a whim | the weather is forever fickle. DERIVATIVES fickly | ˈfik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN Old English ficol ‘deceitful’, of Germanic origin.

filibuster | ˈfiləˌbəstər |
noun
1 an action such as a prolonged speech that obstructs progress in a legislative assembly while not technically contravening the required procedures: the bill was defeated by a Senate filibuster in June. 2 historical a person engaging in unauthorized warfare against a foreign country. verb [no object] act in an obstructive manner in a legislature, especially by speaking at inordinate length: she has filibustered against a budget that would have cut school funding. • [with object] obstruct (a measure) by filibustering. ORIGIN late 18th century: from French flibustier, first applied to pirates who pillaged the Spanish colonies in the West Indies. In the mid 19th century (via Spanish filibustero), the term denoted American adventurers who incited revolution in several Latin American states, whence filibuster (sense 2 of the noun). The verb was used to describe tactics intended to sabotage US congressional proceedings, whence filibuster (sense 1 of the noun).

finagle | fəˈnāg(ə)l |
verb [with object] informal, mainly US
obtain (something) by devious or dishonest means: Ted attended all the football games he could finagle tickets for. • [no object] act in a devious or dishonest manner: they wrangled and finagled over the fine points. DERIVATIVES finagler | fəˈnāg(ə)lər | noun ORIGIN 1920s (originally US): from dialect fainaigue ‘cheat’; perhaps from Old French fornier ‘deny’.

flair | fler |
noun
1 [in singular] a special or instinctive aptitude or ability for doing something well: she had a flair for languages | none of us had much artistic flair. 2 stylishness and originality: she dressed with flair. ORIGIN late 19th century: from French, from flairer ‘to smell’, based on Latin fragrare ‘smell sweet’. Compare with fragrant.

flamboyant1 | flamˈboi(y)ənt |
adjective
1 (of a person or their behavior) tending to attract attention because of their exuberance, confidence, and stylishness: a flamboyant display of aerobatics | she is outgoing and flamboyant, continuously talking and joking. • (especially of clothing) noticeable because brightly colored, highly patterned, or unusual in style: a flamboyant bow tie. 2 Architecture of or denoting a style of French Gothic architecture marked by wavy flame-like tracery and ornate decoration. DERIVATIVES flamboyantly | flamˈboi(y)ən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 19th century: from French, literally ‘flaming, blazing’, present participle of flamboyer, from flambe ‘a flame’. flamboyant2 | flamˈboi(y)ənt | noun another term for the royal poinciana (see poinciana). ORIGIN late 19th century: probably a noun use of the French adjective flamboyant ‘blazing’ (see flamboyant1).

flippant | ˈflipənt |
adjective
not showing a serious or respectful attitude: a flippant remark. DERIVATIVES flippantly | ˈflipən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from flip1 + -ant, perhaps on the pattern of heraldic terms such as couchant and rampant. Early senses included ‘nimble’ and ‘talkative’, hence ‘playful’, giving rise to the current use ‘lacking seriousness’.

florid | ˈflôrəd, ˈflärəd |
adjective
1 having a red or flushed complexion: a stout man with a florid face. 2 elaborately or excessively intricate or complicated: florid operatic-style music was out. • (of language) using unusual words or complicated rhetorical constructions: the florid prose of the nineteenth century. 3 Medicine (of a disease or its manifestations) occurring in a fully developed form: florid symptoms of psychiatric disorder. DERIVATIVES floridity | fləˈridədē | noun floridly adverb floridness noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin floridus, from flos, flor- ‘flower’.

fluctuate | ˈfləkCHəˌwāt |
verb [no object]
rise and fall irregularly in number or amount: trade with other countries tends to fluctuate from year to year. ORIGIN mid 17th century (earlier (late Middle English) as fluctuation): from Latin fluctuat- ‘undulated’, from the verb fluctuare, from fluctus ‘flow, current, wave’, from fluere ‘to flow’.

flummox | ˈfləməks |
verb [with object] (usually be flummoxed) informal
perplex (someone) greatly; bewilder: he was completely flummoxed by the question. ORIGIN mid 19th century: probably of dialect origin; flummock ‘to make untidy, confuse’ is recorded in western counties and the north Midlands.

foible | ˈfoib(ə)l |
noun
1 a minor weakness or eccentricity in someone's character: they have to tolerate each other's little foibles. 2 Fencing the weaker part of a sword blade, from the middle to the point. Compare with forte1. ORIGIN late 16th century (as an adjective in the sense ‘feeble’): from obsolete French, in Old French fieble (see feeble). Both noun senses also formerly occurred as senses of the word feeble and all date from the 17th century.

foment | fōˈment |
verb [with object]
1 instigate or stir up (an undesirable or violent sentiment or course of action): they accused him of fomenting political unrest. 2 archaic bathe (a part of the body) with warm or medicated lotions. DERIVATIVES fomenter | fōˈmen(t)ər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in foment (sense 2)): from French fomenter, from late Latin fomentare, from Latin fomentum ‘poultice, lotion’, from fovere ‘to heat, cherish’.

foolhardy | ˈfo͞olˌ(h)ärdē |
adjective (foolhardier, foolhardiest)
recklessly bold or rash: it would be foolhardy to go into the scheme without support. DERIVATIVES foolhardily | -ˌhärdl-ē | adverb foolhardiness | ˈfo͞ol

ˌ(h)ärdēnəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French folhardi, from fol ‘foolish’ + hardi ‘bold’ (see hardy).

foray | ˈfôˌrā, ˈfäˌrā |
noun
a sudden attack or incursion into enemy territory, especially to obtain something; a raid: the garrison made a foray against Richard's camp | figurative : he made another foray to the bar. • an attempt to become involved in a new activity or sphere: my first foray into journalism. verb [no object, with adverbial of direction] make or go on a foray: the place into which they were forbidden to foray. DERIVATIVES forayer noun ORIGIN Middle English: backformation from forayer ‘a person who forays’, from Old French forrier ‘forager’, from fuerre ‘straw’ (see forage).

forbearance | fərˈberəns, fôrˈberəns |
noun
patient self-control; restraint and tolerance: forbearance from taking action. • Law the action of refraining from exercising a legal right, especially enforcing the payment of a debt.

foreboding | fôrˈbōdiNG |
noun
fearful apprehension; a feeling that something bad will happen: with a sense of foreboding she read the note. adjective implying or seeming to imply that something bad is going to happen: when the Doctor spoke, his voice was dark and foreboding. DERIVATIVES forebodingly adverb forebode | fôrˈbōd | verb [with object] archaic (of a situation or occurrence) act as a warning of (something bad): this lull foreboded some new assault upon him. • have a presentiment of (something bad): I foreboded mischief the moment I heard.

foreclose | ˌfôrˈklōz |
verb
1 [no object] take possession of a mortgaged property as a result of the mortgagor's failure to keep up their mortgage payments: the bank was threatening to foreclose on his mortgage. • [with object] take away someone's power of redeeming (a mortgage) and take possession of the mortgaged property. 2 [with object] rule out or prevent (a course of action): the decision effectively foreclosed any possibility of his early rehabilitation. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French forclos, past participle of forclore, from for- ‘out’ (from Latin foras ‘outside’) + clore ‘to close’. The original sense was ‘bar from escaping’, in late Middle English ‘shut out’, and ‘bar from doing something’ (foreclose (sense 2)), hence specifically ‘bar someone from redeeming a mortgage’ (foreclose (sense 1), early 18th century).

forensic | fəˈrenzik |
adjective
1 relating to or denoting the application of scientific methods and techniques to the investigation of crime: they are looking for forensic evidence | forensic experts are still running tests on the phone | a forensic autopsy will be conducted. • showing great attention to detail; very precise: his earlier life is reconstructed with forensic care in the course of the book | he was forensic in his dissection of the matters facing the sport. 2 relating to courts of law: his forensic and intellectual acumen | these principles should be considered to be forensic best practice. noun (forensics) scientific tests or techniques used in connection with the detection of crime. • (also forensic) [treated as singular or plural] a laboratory or department responsible for tests used in detection of crime. DERIVATIVES forensically | -(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin forensis ‘in open court, public’, from forum (see forum).

forlorn | fərˈlôrn |
adjective
1 pitifully sad and abandoned or lonely: forlorn figures at bus stops. 2 (of an aim or endeavor) unlikely to succeed or be fulfilled; hopeless: a forlorn attempt to escape. PHRASES forlorn hope a persistent or desperate hope that is unlikely to be fulfilled: he urged them to stay in the forlorn hope of restoring peace. [mid 16th century: from Dutch verloren hoop ‘lost troop’, from verloren (past participle of verliezen ‘lose’) and hoop ‘company’. The phrase originally denoted a band of soldiers picked to begin an attack, many of whom would not survive; the current sense (mid 17th century), derives from a misunderstanding of the etymology.] DERIVATIVES forlornly | fərˈlôrnlē | adverb forlornness | fərˈlôrnˌnəs | noun ORIGIN Old English forloren ‘depraved, morally abandoned’, past participle of forlēosan ‘lose’, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch verliezen and German verlieren, and ultimately to for- and lose. forlorn (sense 1) dates from the 16th century.

formidable | ˈfôrmədəb(ə)l, fərˈmidəb(ə)l, fôrˈmidəb(ə)l |
adjective
inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, intense, or capable: a formidable opponent. DERIVATIVES formidableness noun formidably | ˈfôrmədəblē, fərˈmidəblē, fôrˈmidəblē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from French, or from Latin formidabilis, from formidare ‘to fear’. USAGE The preferred pronunciation of formidable is with the stress on for-, although the stress is sometimes heard on the second syllable (in Britain more than in the US).

fortuitous | fôrˈto͞oədəs |
adjective
happening by accident or chance rather than design: the similarity between the paintings may not be simply fortuitous. • happening by a lucky chance; fortunate: from a cash standpoint, the company's timing is fortuitous. DERIVATIVES fortuitousness | fôrˈto͞oədəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin fortuitus, from forte ‘by chance’, from fors ‘chance, luck’. USAGE The traditional, etymological meaning of fortuitous is ‘happening by chance’: a fortuitous meeting is a chance meeting, which might turn out to be either a good thing or a bad thing. In modern uses, however, fortuitous tends more often to be used to refer to fortunate outcomes, and the word has become more or less a synonym for ‘lucky’ or ‘fortunate.’ This use is frowned upon as being not etymologically correct and is best avoided except in informal contexts.

Foster, | ˈfôstər, ˈfästər |
(born 1962), US actress; born Alicia Christian Foster. Notable movies: Taxi

Driver (1976), The Accused (1988), Silence of the Lambs (1991), and Nell (1994).
Foster, Stephen | ˈfôstər, ˈfästər | (1826–64), US composer; full name Stephen Collins Foster. He wrote more than 200 songs and, although a Northerner, was best known for songs that purported to capture the Southern plantation spirit, such as "Oh! Susannah" (1848), "Camptown Races" (1850), and "Old Folks at Home" (1851). foster | ˈfôstər, ˈfästər | verb [with object] 1 encourage or promote the development of (something, typically something regarded as good): the teacher's task is to foster learning. • develop (a feeling or idea) in oneself: appropriate praise helps a child foster a sense of self-worth. 2 bring up (a child that is not one's own by birth): a person who would foster Holly was found. adjective denoting someone that has a specified family connection through fostering rather than birth: foster parent | foster child. • involving or concerned with fostering a child: foster care | foster home. DERIVATIVES fosterer noun ORIGIN Old English fōstrian 'feed, nourish', from fōster 'food, nourishment', of Germanic origin; related to food. The sense 'bring up another's (originally also one's own) child' dates from Middle English. See also foster-.

fractious | ˈfrakSHəs |
adjective
(typically of children) irritable and quarrelsome: they fight and squabble like fractious children. • (of a group or organization) difficult to control; unruly: the notoriously fractious resistance groups are declaring alliances to bolster their collective power. DERIVATIVES fractiously adverb fractiousness | ˈfrakSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 17th century: from fraction, probably on the pattern of the pair faction, factious.

fraternity | frəˈtərnədē |
noun (plural fraternities)
1 [treated as singular or plural] a group of people sharing a common profession or interests: members of the hunting fraternity. • North American a male students' society in a university or college. • a religious or Masonic society or guild. 2 the state or feeling of friendship and mutual support within a group: the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French fraternite, from Latin fraternitas, from fraternus (see fraternal).

frivolous | ˈfrivələs |
adjective
not having any serious purpose or value: rules to stop frivolous lawsuits. • (of a person) carefree and not serious: the frivolous, fun-loving flappers of the twenties. DERIVATIVES frivolously | ˈfrivələslē | adverb frivolousness | ˈfrivələsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin frivolus 'silly, trifling'+ -ous.

frugality | frōōˈgaləd ē |
noun
the quality of being economical with money or food; thriftiness: he scorned the finer things in life and valued frugality and simplicity.

furtive | ˈfərdiv |
adjective
attempting to avoid notice or attention, typically because of guilt or a belief that discovery would lead to trouble; secretive: they spent a furtive day together | he stole a furtive glance at her. • suggestive of guilty nervousness: the look in his eyes became furtive. DERIVATIVES furtiveness | ˈfərdivnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from French furtif, -ive or Latin furtivus, from furtum 'theft'.

galvanize | ˈgalvəˌn |
verb [with object]
1 shock or excite (someone) into taking action: the urgency of his voice galvanized them into action. 2 coat (iron or steel) with a protective layer of zinc: they promised they would galvanize the iron railings to prevent rusting. noun West Indian or dialect galvanized steel sheeting, as used for roofing or fencing: the rain was beating hard against Miss Orilie's galvanize. DERIVATIVES galvanization | ˌgalv(ə)nəˈzāSH(ə)n, ˌgalvəˌnīˈzāSH(ə)n | (British also galvanisation) noun galvanizer (British also galvaniser) noun ORIGIN early 19th century (in the sense 'stimulate by electricity'): from French galvaniser (see Galvani, Luigi).

garrulous | ˈgerələs |
adjective
excessively talkative, especially on trivial matters: Polonius is portrayed as a foolish, garrulous old man. DERIVATIVES garrulously | ˈgerələslē | adverb garrulousness | ˈger(y)ələsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin garrulus (from garrire 'to chatter, prattle') + -ous.

genteel | jenˈtēl |
adjective
polite, refined, or respectable, often in an affected or ostentatious way: her genteel upbringing. DERIVATIVES genteelly | jenˈtē(l)lē | adverb genteelness noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense 'fashionable, stylish'): from French gentil 'well-born'. From the 17th century to the 19th century the word was used in such senses as 'of good social position', 'having the manners of a well-born person', 'well bred'. The ironic or derogatory implication dates from the 19th century.

germane | jərˈmān |
adjective
relevant to a subject under consideration: that is not germane to our theme. DERIVATIVES germanely adverb germaneness noun ORIGIN early 17th century: variant of german, with which it was synonymous from Middle English. The current sense has arisen from a usage in Shakespeare's Hamlet.

gerrymander | ˈjerēˌmandər |
verb [with object]
manipulate the boundaries of (an electoral constituency) so as to favor one party or class. • achieve (a result) by manipulating the boundaries of an electoral constituency: a total freedom to gerrymander the results they want. noun an instance of gerrymandering. DERIVATIVES gerrymanderer | ˈjerēˌ-

mand(ə)rər | noun ORIGIN early 19th century: from the name of Governor Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts + salamander, from the supposed similarity between a salamander and the shape of a new voting district on a map drawn when he was in office (1812), the creation of which was felt to favor his party; the map (with claws, wings, and fangs added) was published in the Boston Weekly Messenger, with the title The Gerry-Mander.

gesticulate | jeˈstikyəˌlāt |
verb [no object]
use gestures, especially dramatic ones, instead of speaking or to emphasize one's words: they were shouting and gesticulating frantically at drivers who did not slow down. DERIVATIVES gesticulative | -ˌlātiv | adjective gesticulatory | ˌjeˈstikyələˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin gesticulat- 'gesticulated', from the verb gesticulari, from gesticulus, diminutive of gestus 'action'.

glacial | ˈglāSH(ə)l |
adjective
1 relating to, resulting from, or denoting the presence or agency of ice, especially in the form of glaciers: thick glacial deposits | a glacial lake. • very cold; icy: figurative : his glacial blue eyes | the glacial mountains of New Zealand. • extremely slow (like the movement of a glacier): an official described progress in the talks as glacial. 2 Chemistry denoting pure organic acids (especially acetic acid) which form ice-like crystals on freezing. noun Geology a glacial period. DERIVATIVES glacially adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French, or from Latin glacialis 'icy', from glacies 'ice'.

glean | glēn |
verb [with object]
extract (information) from various sources: the information is gleaned from press clippings. • collect gradually and bit by bit: objects gleaned from local markets. • historical gather (leftover grain or other produce) after a harvest: (as noun gleaning) : the conditions of farm workers in the 1890s made gleaning essential. DERIVATIVES gleaner | ˈglēnər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French glener, from late Latin glennare, probably of Celtic origin.

glib | glib |
adjective (glibber, glibbest)
(of words or the person speaking them) fluent and voluble but insincere and shallow: she was careful not to let the answer sound too glib. DERIVATIVES glibly | ˈgliblē | adverb glibness | ˈglibnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century (also in the sense 'smooth, unimpeded'): ultimately of Germanic origin; related to Dutch 'slippery' and German glibberig 'slimy'.

goad | gōd |
verb [with object]
1 provoke or annoy (someone) so as to stimulate some action or reaction: he goaded her on to more daring revelations. 2 drive or urge (an animal) on with a goad: the cowboys goaded their cattle across the meadows. noun a spiked stick used for driving cattle. • a thing that stimulates someone into action: for him the visit was a goad to renewed effort. ORIGIN Old English gād, of Germanic origin.

gossamer | ˈgäsəmər |
noun
a fine, filmy substance consisting of cobwebs spun by small spiders, seen especially in autumn. • used to refer to something very light, thin, and insubstantial or delicate: in the light from the table lamp, his hair was blond gossamer | [as modifier] : gossamer wings. DERIVATIVES gossamery | ˈgäsəmərē | adjective ORIGIN Middle English: apparently from goose + summer1, perhaps from the time of year around St Martin's summer, i.e. early November, when geese were eaten (gossamer being common then).

grandiloquent | granˈdiləkw(ə)nt |
adjective
pompous or extravagant in language, style, or manner, especially in a way that is intended to impress: a grandiloquent celebration of Spanish glory. DERIVATIVES grandiloquence | granˈdiləkw(ə)ns | noun grandiloquently | gran ˈdiləkwəntlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin grandiloquus, literally 'grand-speaking', from grandis 'grand' + loqui 'speak'. The ending was altered in English by association with eloquent.

grandiose | ˈgrandēˌōs, ˌgrandēˈōs |
adjective
impressive and imposing in appearance or style, especially pretentiously so: the court's grandiose facade. • excessively grand or ambitious: grandiose plans to reform the world. DERIVATIVES grandiosely adverb ORIGIN early 19th century: from French, via Italian from Spanish grandioso, from grande 'grand'.

gratuity | grəˈto͞oədē |
noun (plural gratuities) formal
a tip given to a waiter, taxicab driver, etc. ORIGIN late 15th century (denoting graciousness or favor): from Old French gratuité or medieval Latin gratuitas 'gift', from Latin gratus 'pleasing, thankful'.

gregarious | grəˈgerēəs |
adjective
(of a person) fond of company; sociable: he was a popular and gregarious man. • (of animals) living in flocks or loosely organized communities: gregarious species forage in flocks from colonies or roosts. • (of plants) growing in open clusters or in pure associations: in the wild, trees are usually gregarious plants. DERIVATIVES gregariously | grəˈgerēəslē | adverb gregariousness | grəˈgerēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin gregarius (from grex, greg- 'a flock') + -ous.

guffaw | gəˈfô |
noun
a loud and boisterous laugh. verb [no object] laugh in a loud or boisterous way: both men guffawed at the remark. ORIGIN early 18th century (originally Scots): imitative.

guileless | ˈgī(l)ləs |
adjective
devoid of guile; innocent and without deception: his face, once so open and guileless. DERIVATIVES guilelessly | ˈgī(l)ləslē | adverb guilelessness | ˈgīləsnəs | noun

gustatory | ˈgəstəˌtôrē |
adjective formal
concerned with tasting or the sense of taste: gustatory delights.

hackneyed | ˈhaknēd |
adjective
(of a phrase or idea) lacking significance through having been overused; unoriginal and trite: hackneyed old sayings. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from the archaic verb hackney (see hackney), meaning 'use (a horse) for ordinary riding', later 'make commonplace by overuse'.

halcyon | ˈhalsēən |
adjective
denoting a period of time in the past that was idyllically happy and peaceful: the halcyon days of the mid-1980s, when profits were soaring. noun 1 a tropical Asian and African kingfisher with brightly colored plumage. Genus Halcyon, family Alcedinidae: many species. 2 a mythical bird said by ancient writers to breed in a nest floating at sea at the winter solstice, charming the wind and waves into calm. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the mythological sense): via Latin from Greek alkuōn 'kingfisher' (also halkuōn, by association with hals 'sea' and kuōn 'conceiving').

hapless | ˈhapləs |
adjective
(especially of a person) unfortunate: if you're one of the many hapless car buyers who've been shafted. DERIVATIVES haplessly adverb haplessness noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from hap1 (in the early sense 'good fortune') + -less.

harangue | həˈraNG |
noun
a lengthy and aggressive speech: they were subjected to a ten-minute harangue by two border guards. verb [with object] lecture (someone) at length in an aggressive and critical manner: the kind of guy who harangued total strangers about PCB levels in whitefish. DERIVATIVES haranguer noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French arenge, from medieval Latin harenga, perhaps of Germanic origin. The spelling was later altered to conform with French harangue (noun), haranguer (verb).

harbinger | ˈhärbənjər |
noun
a person or thing that announces or signals the approach of another: witch hazels are the harbingers of spring. • a forerunner of something: these works were not yet opera but they were the most important harbinger of opera. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French herbergere, from herbergier 'provide lodging for', from herberge 'lodging', from Old Saxon heriberga 'shelter for an army, lodging' (from heri 'army' + a Germanic base meaning 'fortified place'), related to harbor. The term originally denoted a person who provided lodging, later one who went ahead to find lodgings for an army or for a nobleman and his retinue, hence, a herald (mid 16th century).

hedonist | ˈhēdənəst |
noun
a person who believes that the pursuit of pleasure is the most important thing in life; a pleasure-seeker: she was living the life of a committed hedonist.

hegemony | həˈjemənē, ˈhejəˌmōnē |
noun
leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group over others: Germany was united under Prussian hegemony after 1871. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Greek hēgemonia, from hēgemōn 'leader', from hēgeisthai 'to lead'.

hermetic | hərˈmedik |
adjective
1 (of a seal or closure) complete and airtight: a hermetic seal that ensures perfect waterproofing. • insulated or protected from outside influences: a hermetic society. 2 (also Hermetic) relating to an ancient occult tradition encompassing alchemy, astrology, and theosophy: some saw in the Hermetic texts an anticipation of Christianity. • esoteric; cryptic: obscure and hermetic poems. DERIVATIVES hermeticism | hərˈmetiˌsizəm | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century (in hermetic (sense 2)): from modern Latin hermeticus, from Hermes, identified with Thoth, regarded as the founder of alchemy and astrology.

histrionic | ˌhistrēˈänik |
adjective
1 overly theatrical or melodramatic in character or style: a histrionic outburst. • Psychiatry denoting a personality disorder marked by shallow volatile emotions and attention-seeking behavior. 2 formal of or concerning actors or acting: histrionic talents. noun 1 (histrionics) exaggerated dramatic behavior designed to attract attention: discussions around the issue have been based as much in histrionics as in history. 2 (histrionics) archaic dramatic performance; theater: he loved the theater and everything which savored of histrionics. 3 archaic an actor. DERIVATIVES histrionically | ˌhistrēˈänək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century (in the sense 'dramatically exaggerated, hypocritical'): from late Latin histrionicus, from Latin histrio(n-) 'actor'.

hobble | ˈhäb(ə)l |
verb
1 [no object, with adverbial of direction] walk in an awkward way, typically because of pain from an injury: he was hobbling around on crutches. 2 [with object] tie or strap together (the legs of a horse or other animal) to prevent it from straying. • cause (a person or animal) to limp: Johnson was still hobbled slightly by an ankle injury. • restrict the activity or development of: cotton farmers hobbled by low prices. noun 1 [in singular] an awkward way of walking, typically due to pain from an injury: he finished the game almost re-

duced to a hobble. 2 a rope or strap used for hobbling a horse or other animal. DERIVATIVES hobbler | ˈhäb(ə)lər | noun ORIGIN Middle English: probably of Dutch or Low German origin and related to Dutch hobbelen ‘rock from side to side’. hobble (sense 2 of the verb) is a variant of hopple.

homily | ˈhäməlē |
noun (plural homilies)
a religious discourse that is intended primarily for spiritual edification rather than doctrinal instruction; a sermon. • a tedious moralizing discourse: she delivered her homily about the need for patience. DERIVATIVES homilist | ˈhämələst | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from ecclesiastical Latin homilia, from Greek, ‘discourse, conversation’ (in ecclesiastical use, ‘sermon’), from homilos ‘crowd’.

homogeneous | ˌhōməˈjēnē |
adjective
of the same kind; alike: timbermen prefer to deal with homogeneous woods. • consisting of parts all of the same kind: culturally speaking the farmers constitute an extremely homogeneous group. • Mathematics containing terms all of the same degree. DERIVATIVES homogeneously | ˌhōməˈjēnēəslē | (also homogenously) adverb homogeneousness | ˌhōməˈjēnēəsnəs | (also homogenousness) noun ORIGIN early 17th century (as homogeneity): from medieval Latin homogeneus, from Greek homogenēs, from homos ‘same’ + genos ‘race, kind’. USAGE The usual spelling is homogeneous, and the spelling homogenous is traditionally regarded as an error. Homogenous is a different word, a specialized biological term meaning ‘having a common descent,’ which has been largely replaced by homologous. From the evidence of the Oxford English Corpus, the spelling homogeneous has become significantly less common since 2000, and around a third of citations for the word now use the form homogenous. This can now be regarded as an established variant.

hone | hōn |
verb
1 [with object] smooth and sharpen (a blade): he was carefully honing the curved blade. 2 [with object] refine or perfect (something) over a period of time: she has taken numerous workshops to hone her skills over the years. • give greater strength or firmness to (the body or a part of the body): she has been working hard to hone her physique | abdominal strength training will hone your abs. 3 [no object] (hone in on) another way of saying home in on (see home): the detectives honed in on the suspect | I started to hone in on the problem. noun a whetstone, especially one used to sharpen razors. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old English hān ‘rock’, of Germanic origin; related to Old Norse hein. USAGE See usage at home.

hubris | ˈ(h)yo͞obrəs |
noun
excessive pride or self-confidence: the self-assured hubris among economists was shaken in the late 1980s. • (in Greek tragedy) excessive pride toward or defiance of the gods, leading to nemesis. ORIGIN Greek.

humane | hyo͞oˈmān |
adjective
1 having or showing compassion or benevolence: regulations ensuring the humane treatment of animals. • inflicting the minimum of pain: humane methods of killing. 2 formal (of a branch of learning) intended to have a civilizing or refining effect on people: the center emphasizes economics as a humane discipline. DERIVATIVES humaneness | hyo͞oˈmā(n)nəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: the earlier form of human, restricted to the senses above in the 18th century.

husbandry | ˈhəzb(ə)ndrē |
noun
1 the care, cultivation, and breeding of crops and animals: crop husbandry. 2 management and conservation of resources: low borrowing demonstrates astute husbandry of resources. ORIGIN Middle English: from husband in the obsolete sense ‘farmer’ + -ry; compare with husbandman.

hyperbole | hīˈpərbəlē |
noun
exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally: he vowed revenge with oaths and hyperboles | [mass noun] : you can't accuse us of hyperbole. DERIVATIVES hyperbolical | ˌhīpərˈbälək(ə)l | adjective hyperbolically | ˌhīpərˈbälik(ə)lē | adverb hyperbolism | hīˈpərbəˌlizəm | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: via Latin from Greek huperbolē (see hyperbola).

iconoclastic | īˌkänəˈklastik |
adjective
characterized by attack on cherished beliefs or institutions: a fresh, even an iconoclastic, influence could work wonders. DERIVATIVES iconoclastically | īˌkänəˈklastik(ə)lē | adverb

idealist | īˈdē(ə)ləst |
noun
1 a person who is guided more by ideals than by practical considerations: they were idealists and visionaries, in love with the work they had undertaken. 2 Philosophy a person who believes in the theory of idealism: Hegel described himself as an absolute idealist.

idiosyncratic | ˌidēəsiNGˈkradik |
adjective
relating to idiosyncrasy; peculiar or individual: she emerged as one of the great, idiosyncratic talents of the nineties. DERIVATIVES idiosyncratically | ˌidēəsiNGˈkradək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 18th century: from idio- + Greek sunkratikos ‘mixed together’, after idiosyncrasy.

idyllic | īˈdilik |
adjective
(especially of a time or place) like an idyll; extremely happy, peaceful, or picturesque: an attractive hotel in an idyllic setting. DERIVATIVES idyllically | īˈdiləkəlē | adverb

ignominious | ˌignəˈminēəs |
adjective
deserving or causing public disgrace or shame: the party risked ignominious defeat. DERIVATIVES ignominiously | ˌignəˈminēəslē | adverb ignominiousness noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from French ignominieux, or Latin ignominiosus, from ignominia (see ignominy).

illicit | i(l)ˈlisət |
adjective
forbidden by law, rules, or custom: illicit drugs | illicit sex. DERIVATIVES illicitness noun ORIGIN early 16th century: from French, or from Latin illicitus, from in- 'not' + licitus (see licit).

illusory | iˈlo͞osə(ə)rē |
adjective
based on illusion; not real: she knew the safety of her room was illusory. DERIVATIVES illusorily | -rəlē | adverb illusoriness | iˈlo͞osə(ə)rēnəs, iˈlo͞ozə(ə)rēnəs | noun

imbibe | imˈbīb |
verb [with object] formal, often humorous
drink (alcohol): they were imbibing far too many pitchers of beer | [no object] : having imbibed too freely, he fell over. • absorb or assimilate (ideas or knowledge): she had imbibed the gospel of modernism from Kandinsky. • mainly Botany (especially of seeds) absorb (water) into ultramicroscopic spaces or pores. • Botany place (seeds) in water in order to absorb it. DERIVATIVES imbiber noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the senses 'absorb or cause to absorb moisture' and 'take into solution'): from Latin imbibere, from in- 'in' + bibere 'to drink'.

imbue | imˈby͞o |
verb (imbues, imbuing, imbued) [with object] (often be imbued with)
inspire or permeate with (a feeling or quality): the entire performance was imbued with sparkle and elan. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'saturate'): from French imbu 'moistened', from Latin imbutus, past participle of imbuere 'moisten'.

immaculate | iˈmakyələt |
adjective
(especially of a person or their clothes) perfectly clean, neat, or tidy: an immaculate white suit. • free from flaws or mistakes; perfect: an immaculate safety record. • Theology (in the Roman Catholic Church) free from sin. • Botany & Zoology uniformly colored without spots or other marks. DERIVATIVES immaculacy | -ləsē | noun immaculateness noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'free from moral stain'): from Latin immaculatus, from in- 'not' + maculatus 'stained' (from macula 'spot').

immutable | i(m)ˈmy͞odəb(ə)l, əˈmy͞odəb(ə)l |
adjective
unchanging over time or unable to be changed: an immutable fact. DERIVATIVES immutability | i(m)ˌmy͞odəˈbilədē, əˌmy͞odəˈbilədē | noun immutably | i(m)ˈmy͞odəblē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin immutabilis, from in- 'not' + mutabilis (see mutable).

impasse | ˈimˌpas, imˈpas |
noun
a situation in which no progress is possible, especially because of disagreement; a deadlock: the current political impasse. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from French, from im- (expressing negation) + the stem of passer 'to pass'.

impassioned | imˈpaSHənd |
adjective
filled with or showing great emotion: she made an impassioned plea for help.

impecunious | ˌimpəˈky͞onēəs |
adjective
having little or no money: a titled but impecunious family. DERIVATIVES impecuniosity | ˌimpəˌky͞onēˈäsədē | noun impecuniousness noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from in-1 'not' + obsolete pecunious 'having money, wealthy' (from Latin pecuniosus, from pecunia 'money').

impenitent | imˈpenədnt |
adjective
not feeling shame or regret about one's actions or attitudes: impenitent elitists. DERIVATIVES impenitence | imˈpenədəns, imˈpenətns | noun impenitency noun impenitently | imˈpenədəntlē, imˈpenətntlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from ecclesiastical Latin impaenitent- 'not repenting', from Latin in- 'not' + paenitere 'repent'.

imperious | imˈpirēəs |
adjective
assuming power or authority without justification; arrogant and domineering: his imperious demands. DERIVATIVES imperiously | imˈpirēəslē | adverb imperiousness | imˈpirēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin imperiosus, from imperium 'command, authority, empire'; related to imperare 'to command'. Compare with imperial.

impetuous | imˈpeCH(əw)əs |
adjective
acting or done quickly and without thought or care: her friend was headstrong and impetuous. • moving forcefully or rapidly: an impetuous but controlled flow of water. DERIVATIVES impetuosity | imˌpeCHəˈwäsədē | noun impetuously | imˈpeCH(əw)əslē | adverb impetuousness | imˈpeCH(o͞o)əsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French impetueux, from late Latin impetuosus, from impetere 'to attack'.

implacable | imˈplakəb(ə)l |
adjective
unable to be placated: he was an implacable enemy of Ted's. • relentless; unstoppable: the implacable advance of the enemy. DERIVATIVES implacability | imˌplakəˈbilədē | noun implacably | imˈplakəblē | adverb ORIGIN late

Middle English: from Latin implacabilis, from in- ‘not’ + placabilis (see placable).

implicit | imˈplisət |
adjective
1 implied though not plainly expressed: comments seen as implicit criticism of the policies. 2 (implicit in) essentially or very closely connected with; always to be found in: the values implicit in the school ethos. 3 with no qualification or question; absolute: an implicit faith in God. 4 Mathematics (of a function) not expressed directly in terms of independent variables. DERIVATIVES implicitness noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from French implicite or Latin implicitus, later form of implicatus ‘entwined’, past participle of implicare (see imply).

impugn | imˈpyo͞on |
verb [with object]
dispute the truth, validity, or honesty of (a statement or motive); call into question: the father does not impugn her capacity as a good mother. DERIVATIVES impugnable | imˈpyo͞onəb(ə)l | adjective impugnment | imˈpyo͞onmənt | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (also in the sense ‘assault, attack physically’): from Latin impugnare ‘assail’, from in- ‘towards’ + pugnare ‘fight’.

imputation | ˌimpyəˈtāSH(ə)n |
noun
1 a charge or claim that someone has done something undesirable; an accusation: there are grounds for inquiring into the imputations of misconduct against him. • Theology the action or process of ascribing righteousness, guilt, etc. to someone by virtue of a similar quality in another: the writings of the apostles tell us that imputation of the righteousness of Christ is given to us if we receive Christ. 2 Finance the assignment of a value to something by inference from the value of the products or processes to which it contributes: the imputation of interest will increase her taxable income.

inadvertent | ˌinədˈvərtnt |
adjective
not resulting from or achieved through deliberate planning: an inadvertent administrative error occurred that resulted in an overpayment. DERIVATIVES inadvertence | ˌinədˈvərtns, ˌiˌnadˈvərtns | noun inadvertency noun ORIGIN mid 17th century (earlier (late Middle English) as inadvertence): from in-1 ‘not’ + Latin advertent- ‘turning the mind to’ (from the verb advertere).

inane | iˈnān |
adjective
silly; stupid: don't constantly badger people with inane questions. DERIVATIVES inanely | iˈnānlē | adverb inaneness noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin inanis ‘empty, vain’.

incessant | inˈses(ə)nt |
adjective
(of something regarded as unpleasant) continuing without pause or interruption: the incessant beat of the music. DERIVATIVES incessancy noun incessantness | inˈses(ə)n(t)nəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from late Latin incessant-, from in- ‘not’ + Latin cessant- ‘ceasing’ (from the verb cessare).

incisive | inˈsīsiv |
adjective
(of a person or mental process) intelligently analytical and clear-thinking: she was an incisive critic. • (of an account) accurate and sharply focused: the songs offer incisive pictures of American ways. DERIVATIVES incisively | inˈsīsəvlē | adverb incisiveness | inˈsīsivnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘cutting, penetrating’): from medieval Latin incisivus, from Latin incidere ‘cut into’ (see incise).

incongruous | inˈkäNGgro͝oəs, iNGˈkäNGgro͝oəs |
adjective
not in harmony or keeping with the surroundings or other aspects of something: the duffel coat looked incongruous with the black dress she wore underneath. DERIVATIVES incongruousness noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin incongruus (from in- ‘not’ + congruus ‘agreeing, suitable’, from the verb congruere) + -ous.

incontrovertible | ˌinˌkäntrəˈvərdəb(ə)l, inˌkäntrəˈvərdəb(ə)l |
adjective
not able to be denied or disputed: incontrovertible proof. DERIVATIVES incontrovertibility | -ˌvərtəˈbilitē | noun incontrovertibly | ˈinˌkäntrəˌvərdəblē, ənˌkäntrəˌvərdəblē, ˈiNGˌkäntrəˌvərdəblē | adverb

incorrigible | ˌinˈkôrəjəb(ə)l |
adjective
(of a person or their tendencies) not able to be corrected, improved, or reformed: he's an incorrigible liar | I really was incorrigible, I didn't want to listen to anybody | it would help parents regain control of incorrigible children. noun an incorrigible person: all repeat offenders, but none of them real hard-case incorrigibles. DERIVATIVES incorrigibility | ˌinˌkôrəjəˈbilədē, ənˌkôrəjəˈbilədē, iNGˌkôrəjəˈbilədē | noun incorrigibleness noun incorrigibly | ˌinˈkôrəjəblē | adverb [as submodifier] : the incorrigibly macho character of news-gathering operations ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin incorrigibilis, from in- ‘not’ + corrigibilis (see corrigible).

indefatigable | ˌindəˈfadəgəb(ə)l |
adjective
(of a person or their efforts) persisting tirelessly: an indefatigable defender of human rights. DERIVATIVES indefatigability | ˌindəˌfadəgəˈbilədē | noun indefatigably | ˌindəˈfadəgəblē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from French, or from Latin indefatigabilis, from in- ‘not’ + de- ‘away, completely’ + fatigare ‘wear out’.

indelible | inˈdeləb(ə)l |
adjective
(of ink or a pen) making marks that cannot be removed: an indelible marker

pen. • not able to be forgotten or removed: his story made an indelible impression on me. DERIVATIVES indelibility | -ˌdelə'bilitē | noun ORIGIN late 15th century (as indeleble): from French, or from Latin indelebilis, from in- 'not' + delebilis (from delere 'efface, delete'). The ending was altered under the influence of -ible.

indigenous | in'dijənəs |
adjective
1 originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native: coriander is indigenous to southern Europe | the indigenous style of architecture. 2 (often Indigenous) (of people) inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists: she wants the territorial government to speak with Indigenous people before implementing a program | the project will bring high-speed internet access to remote Indigenous communities | we are marching for indigenous rights. DERIVATIVES indigenously adverb indigenousness noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin indigena 'a native' (see indigene) + -ous.

indignant | in'dignənt |
adjective
feeling or showing anger or annoyance at what is perceived as unfair treatment: he was indignant at being the object of suspicion. ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin indignant- 'regarding as unworthy', from the verb indignari, from in- 'not' + dignus 'worthy'.

indolent | 'indələnt |
adjective
1 wanting to avoid activity or exertion; lazy: they were indolent and addicted to a life of pleasure. 2 Medicine (of a disease or condition) causing little or no pain. • (especially of an ulcer) slow to develop, progress, or heal; persistent. DERIVATIVES indolently | 'indələntlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from late Latin indolent-, from in- 'not' + dolere 'suffer or give pain'. The sense 'idle' arose in the early 18th century.

indomitable | in'dämədəb(ə)l |
adjective
impossible to subdue or defeat: a woman of indomitable spirit. DERIVATIVES indomitability | inˌdämədə'bilədē | noun indomitableness noun indomitably | in'dämədəblē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century (in the sense 'untameable'): from late Latin indomitabilis, from in- 'not' + Latin domitare 'to tame'.

inductive | in'dəktiv |
adjective
1 characterized by the inference of general laws from particular instances: instinct rather than inductive reasoning marked her approach to life. 2 relating to or caused by electric or magnetic induction. • possessing inductance. DERIVATIVES inductively | in'dəktəvlē | adverb inductiveness | in'dəktivnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'leading to'): from Old French inductif, -ive or late Latin inductivus 'hypothetical' (later 'inducing, leading to'), from Latin inducere (see induce). inductive (sense 1) dates from the mid 18th century.

ineffable | in'efəb(ə)l |
adjective
too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words: the ineffable natural beauty of the Everglades. • not to be uttered: the ineffable Hebrew name that gentiles write as Jehovah. DERIVATIVES ineffability | inˌefə'bilədē | noun ineffably | in'efəblē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin ineffabilis, from in- 'not' + effabilis (see effable).

ineptitude | i'neptəˌto͞od |
noun
lack of skill or ability: the officials displayed remarkable ineptitude | the sheer ineptitude of their economic plan.

inevitable | in'evidəb(ə)l |
adjective
certain to happen; unavoidable: war was inevitable. • informal so frequently experienced or seen that it is completely predictable: the inevitable letter from the bank. noun (the inevitable) a situation that is unavoidable: by the morning he had accepted the inevitable. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin inevitabilis, from in- 'not' + evitabilis 'avoidable' (from evitare 'avoid').

inexplicable | ˌinek'splikəb(ə)l, ˌin'ekspləkəb(ə)l |
adjective
unable to be explained or accounted for: for some inexplicable reason her mind went completely blank. DERIVATIVES inexplicability | ˌinekˌsplikə'bilədē | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from French, or from Latin inexplicabilis 'that cannot be unfolded', from in- 'not' + explicabilis (see explicable).

inextricable | ˌinek'strikəb(ə)l, ˌinik'strikəb(ə)l, ˌin'ekstrəkəb(ə)l |
adjective
impossible to disentangle or separate: the past and the present are inextricable. • impossible to escape from: an inextricable situation. DERIVATIVES inextricability | ˌinəkˌstrikə'bilədē | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin inextricabilis, from in- 'not' + extricare 'unravel' (see extricate).

infallible | in'faləb(ə)l |
adjective
incapable of making mistakes or being wrong: doctors are not infallible. • never failing; always effective: infallible cures. • (in the Roman Catholic Church) credited with papal infallibility: for an encyclical to be infallible the Pope must speak ex cathedra. DERIVATIVES infallibly | in'faləblē | adverb ORIGIN late 15th century: from French infaillible or late Latin infallibilis, from in- 'not' + Latin fallere 'deceive'.

inflammatory | in'flamə ˌtôrē |
adjective
1 relating to or causing inflammation of a part of the body: inflammatory cells

| inflammatory diseases. 2 (especially of speech or writing) arousing or intended to arouse angry or violent feelings: inflammatory slogans.

infraction | inˈfrakSH(ə)n |
noun mainly Law
a violation or infringement of a law or agreement. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin infractio(n-), from the verb infringere (see infringe).

ingenious | inˈjēnyəs |
adjective
(of a person) clever, original, and inventive: he was ingenious enough to overcome the limited budget. • (of a machine or idea) cleverly and originally devised and well suited to its purpose: ingenious devices | his theory, while ingenious, is most assuredly incorrect. DERIVATIVES ingeniousness | inˈjēnyəsnəs | noun USAGE Ingenious and ingenuous are often confused. Ingenious means 'clever, skillful, resourceful' (an ingenious device), while ingenuous means 'artless, frank' (charmed by the ingenuous honesty of the child). ORIGIN late Middle English: from French ingénieux or Latin ingeniosus, from ingenium 'mind, intellect'; compare with engine.

ingrate | inˈgrāt, iNGˈgrāt |
noun
an ungrateful person: the ingrates find something wrong with everything | I hate to sound like an ingrate. adjective ungrateful. ORIGIN late Middle English (as an adjective): from Latin ingratus, from in- 'not' + gratus 'grateful'.

inimical | iˈnimək(ə)l |
adjective
tending to obstruct or harm: actions inimical to our interests. • unfriendly; hostile: an inimical alien power. DERIVATIVES inimically | -ik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 16th century: from late Latin inimicalis, from Latin inimicus (see enemy).

iniquitous | iˈnikwədəs |
adjective
grossly unfair and morally wrong: an iniquitous tax | these awards remain an iniquitous system. DERIVATIVES iniquitously | -witəslē | adverb iniquitousness | -witəsnəs | noun

innate | iˈnāt |
adjective
inborn; natural: her innate capacity for organization. • Philosophy originating in the mind. DERIVATIVES innateness | iˈnātnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin innatus, past participle of innasci, from in- 'into' + nasci 'be born'.

innocuous | iˈnäkyəwəs |
adjective
not harmful or offensive: it was an innocuous question. DERIVATIVES innocuously | iˈnäkyəwəslē | adverb innocuousness | iˈnäkyo͞oəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin innocuus, from in- 'not' + nocuus 'injurious' (see nocuous).

inordinate | inˈôrd(ə)nət |
adjective
unusually or disproportionately large; excessive: a case that had taken up an inordinate amount of time. • archaic (of a person) unrestrained in feelings or behavior; disorderly. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin inordinatus, from in- 'not' + ordinatus 'arranged, set in order' (past participle of ordinare).

insatiable | inˈsāSHəb(ə)l |
adjective
(of an appetite or desire) impossible to satisfy: an insatiable hunger for success. • (of a person) having an insatiable appetite or desire for something, especially sex: "You're insatiable!" she cried as she pushed him away | so insatiable a gourmand as myself. DERIVATIVES insatiability | ˌinˌsāSHəˈbilədē | noun insatiably | inˈsāSHəblē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French insaciable or Latin insatiabilis, from in- 'not' + satiare 'fill, satisfy' (see satiate).

insidious | inˈsidēəs |
adjective
proceeding in a gradual, subtle way, but with harmful effects: sexually transmitted diseases can be insidious and sometimes without symptoms. • treacherous; crafty: tangible proof of an insidious alliance. DERIVATIVES insidiousness | inˈsidēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin insidiosus 'cunning', from insidiae 'an ambush or trick', from insidere 'lie in wait for', from in- 'on' + sedere 'sit'.

insipid | inˈsipəd |
adjective
lacking flavor: mugs of insipid coffee. • lacking vigor or interest: many artists continued to churn out insipid, shallow works. DERIVATIVES insipidity | ˌinsəˈpidədē | noun insipidly | inˈsipidlē | adverb insipidness | inˈsipidnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from French insipide or late Latin insipidus, from in- 'not' + sapidus (see sapid).

insolent | ˈinsələnt |
adjective
showing a rude and arrogant lack of respect: she hated the insolent tone of his voice. DERIVATIVES insolently | ˈinsələntlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (also in the sense 'extravagant, going beyond acceptable limits'): from Latin insolent- 'immoderate, unaccustomed, arrogant', from in- 'not' + solent- 'being accustomed' (from the verb solere).

insufferable | inˈsəf(ə)rəb(ə)l |
adjective
too extreme to bear; intolerable: the heat would be insufferable by July. • having or showing unbearable arrogance or conceit: an insufferable bully | insufferable French chauvinism. DERIVATIVES insufferableness noun insuffer-

ably | inˈsəf(ə)rəblē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: perhaps via French (now dialect) insouffrable, based on Latin sufferre ‘endure’ (see suffer).

insular | ˈins(y)ələr |
adjective
1 ignorant of or uninterested in cultures, ideas, or peoples outside one's own experience: a stubbornly insular farming people. • lacking contact with other people: people living restricted and sometimes insular existences. 2 relating to or from an island: the movement of goods of insular origin. • relating to the art and craftwork of Britain and Ireland in the early Middle Ages, especially a form of Latin handwriting: insular illumination of the 6th century. • (of climate) equable because of the influence of the sea. 3 Anatomy relating to the insula of the brain. DERIVATIVES insularly | ˈins(y)ələrlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (as a noun denoting an islander): from late Latin insularis, from insula ‘island’.

integral | ˈin(t)əgrəl, inˈtegrəl |
adjective
1 necessary to make a whole complete; essential or fundamental: games are an integral part of the school's curriculum | systematic training should be integral to library management. • [attributive] included as part of a whole rather than supplied separately: the unit comes complete with integral pump and heater. • [attributive] having or containing all parts that are necessary to be complete: the first integral recording of the ten Mahler symphonies. 2 Mathematics of or denoted by an integer. • involving only integers, especially as coefficients of a function. noun | ˈin(t)əgrəl | Mathematics a function of which a given function is the derivative, i.e. which yields that function when differentiated, and which may express the area under the curve of a graph of the function. See also definite integral, indefinite integral. • a function satisfying a given differential equation. DERIVATIVES integrality | ˌin(t)əˈgralədē | noun integrally | ˈin(t)əgrəlē, inˈtegrəlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century: from late Latin integralis, from integer ‘whole’ (see integer). Compare with integrate and integrity.

intelligentsia | inˌtelәˈjen(t)sēə |
noun [treated as singular or plural] (usually the intelligentsia)
intellectuals or highly educated people as a group, especially when regarded as possessing culture and political influence: a distrust of the intelligentsia and of theoretical learning. ORIGIN late 19th century: from Russian intelligentsiya via Polish inteligencja from Latin intelligentia (see intelligence).

intemperate | inˈtemp(ə)rət |
adjective
having or showing a lack of self-control; immoderate: intemperate outbursts concerning global conspiracies. • given to or characterized by excessive indulgence, especially in alcohol: an intemperate social occasion. DERIVATIVES intemperately | inˈtemp(ə)rətlē | adverb intemperateness | inˈtemp(ə)rətnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘inclement’): from Latin intemperatus, from in- ‘not’ + temperatus (see temperate).

interpolate | inˈtərpəˌlāt |
verb [with object]
insert (something of a different nature) into something else: illustrations were interpolated in the text. • insert (words) in a book or other text, especially in order to give a false impression as to its date. • alter (a book or text) by insertion of new material. • interject (a remark) in a conversation: [with direct speech] : “I dare say,” interpolated her employer. • Mathematics insert (an intermediate value or term) into a series by estimating or calculating it from surrounding known values. DERIVATIVES interpolative | -ˌlātiv | adjective ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin interpolat- ‘refurbished, altered’, from the verb interpolare, from inter- ‘between’ + -polare (related to polire ‘to polish’).

inter | inˈtər |
verb (inters, interring, interred) [with object] (usually be interred)
place (a corpse) in a grave or tomb, typically with funeral rites: he was interred with the military honors due to him. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French enterrer, based on Latin in- ‘into’ + terra ‘earth’.

intimate1 | ˈin(t)əmət |
adjective
1 closely acquainted; familiar, close: intimate friends | they are on intimate terms. • (of a place or setting) having or creating an informal friendly atmosphere: an intimate little Italian restaurant. • involving very close connection: their intimate involvement with their community. • (of knowledge) detailed or thorough: an intimate knowledge of the software. 2 private and personal: intimate details of his sexual encounters | intimate correspondence. • [predicative] euphemistic used euphemistically to indicate that a couple is having a sexual relationship: they plan to wait before becoming intimate with one another. noun a very close friend: his circle of intimates. ORIGIN early 17th century (as a noun): from late Latin intimatus, past participle of Latin intimare ‘impress, make familiar’, from intimus ‘inmost’. intimate2 | ˈin(t)əˌmāt | verb [with object] imply or hint: [with clause] : he had already intimated that he might not be able to continue. • state or make known: Mr. Hutchison has intimated his decision to retire. ORIGIN early 16th century: (earlier (late Middle English) as intimation) from late Latin intimat- ‘made known’, from the verb intimare (see intimate1).

intractable | ˌinˈtraktəb(ə)l, inˈtraktəb(ə)l |
adjective
hard to control or deal with: intractable economic problems | intractable pain. • (of a person) difficult or stubborn. DERIVATIVES intractability | ˌinˌtraktəˈbilədē, inˌtraktəˈbilədē | noun intractableness | ˌinˈtraktəbəlnəs | noun intractably | ˌinˈtraktəblē | adverb ORIGIN late 15th century: from Latin intractabilis, from in- ‘not’ + tractabilis (see tractable).

intrepid | inˈtrepəd |
adjective
fearless; adventurous (often used for rhetorical or humorous effect): our intrepid reporter. DERIVATIVES intrepidity | ˌintrəˈpidədē | noun intrepidly | in-

ˈtrepədlē | adverb intrepidness noun ORIGIN late 17th century: from French intrépide or Latin intrepidus, from in- ‘not’ + trepidus ‘alarmed’.

intrinsic | inˈtrinzik |
adjective
belonging naturally; essential: access to the arts is intrinsic to a high quality of life. • (of a muscle) contained wholly within the organ on which it acts. ORIGIN late 15th century (in the general sense ‘interior, inner’): from French intrinsèque, from late Latin intrinsecus, from the earlier adverb intrinsecus ‘inwardly, inwards’.

introspection | ˌintrəˈspekSH(ə)n |
noun
the examination or observation of one's own mental and emotional processes: quiet introspection can be extremely valuable.

invective | inˈvektiv |
noun
insulting, abusive, or highly critical language: he let out a stream of invective. ORIGIN late Middle English (originally as an adjective meaning ‘reviling, abusive’): from Old French invectif, -ive, from late Latin invectivus ‘attacking’, from invehere (see inveigh). The noun is from late Latin invectiva (oratio) ‘abusive or censorious (language)’.

inveterate | inˈvedərət |
adjective [attributive]
having a particular habit, activity, or interest that is long-established and unlikely to change: he was an inveterate gambler. • (of a feeling or habit) long-established and unlikely to change: the inveterate hostility between the two countries was not easily eradicated. DERIVATIVES inveteracy | inˈved(ə)rəsē | noun inveterately adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (referring to disease, in the sense ‘of long standing, chronic’): from Latin inveteratus ‘made old’, past participle of inveterare (based on vetus, veter- ‘old’).

invidious | inˈvidēəs |
adjective
(of an action or situation) likely to arouse or incur resentment or anger in others: she'd put herself in an invidious position. • (of a comparison or distinction) unfairly discriminating; unjust: it seems invidious to make special mention of one aspect of his work. DERIVATIVES invidiously | inˈvidēəslē | adverb invidiousness | inˈvidēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin invidiosus, from invidia (see envy).

inviolable | inˈvīələb(ə)l |
adjective
never to be broken, infringed, or dishonored: an inviolable rule of chastity | the Polish–German border was inviolable. DERIVATIVES inviolability | ˌin ˌvīələˈbilədē, inˌvīələˈbilədē | noun inviolably | inˈvīələblē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from French, or from Latin inviolabilis, from in- ‘not’ + violabilis ‘able to be violated’ (from the verb violare).

irascible | iˈrasəbəl |
adjective
having or showing a tendency to be easily angered: an irascible man. DERIVATIVES irascibility | iˌrasəˈbilədē | noun irascibly | iˈrasəblē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: via French from late Latin irascibilis, from Latin irasci ‘grow angry’, from ira ‘anger’.

irreducible | ˌi(r)rəˈdo͞osəb(ə)l |
adjective
not able to be reduced or simplified: literature is often irreducible to normative ideas. • not able to be brought to a certain form or condition: the imagery remains irreducible to textual structures. DERIVATIVES irreducibility | ˌi(r)rəˌdo͞səˈbilədē | noun irreducibly | -blē | adverb

irrefutable | ˌi(r)rəˈfyo͞odəb(ə)l, ˌi(r)ˈrefyədəb(ə)l |
adjective
impossible to deny or disprove: irrefutable evidence. DERIVATIVES irrefutability | ˌi(r)rəˌfyo͞odəˈbilədē, ˌi(r)ˌrefyədəˈbilədē, iˌrefyədəˈbilədē | noun irrefutably | ˌi(r)rəˈfyo͞odəblē, ˌi(r)ˈrefyədəblē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from late Latin irrefutabilis, from in- ‘not’ + refutabilis (from refutare ‘repel, rebut’).

irreverent | ˌi(r)ˈrev(ə)rənt |
adjective
showing a lack of respect for people or things that are generally taken seriously: he had an irreverent sense of humor but could always be counted on for sage advice. DERIVATIVES irreverential | iˌrevəˈrenSHəl | adjective irreverently | ˌi(r)ˈrev(ə)rən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin irreverent- ‘not revering’, from in- ‘not’ + reverent- ‘revering’ (see reverent).

itinerant | īˈtinərənt |
adjective
traveling from place to place: itinerant traders. noun a person who travels from place to place. DERIVATIVES itineracy | -rəsē | noun itinerancy | īˈtin(ə)rənsē, əˈtin(ə)rənsē | noun itinerantly adverb ORIGIN late 16th century (used to describe a judge traveling on a circuit): from late Latin itinerant- ‘traveling’, from the verb itinerari, from Latin iter, itiner- ‘journey, road’.

jaded | ˈjādəd |
adjective
tired, bored, or lacking enthusiasm, typically after having had too much of something: meals to tempt the most jaded appetites. DERIVATIVES jadedly adverb jadedness noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense ‘disreputable’): from jade2.

jargon1 | ˈjärgən |
noun
special words or expressions that are used by a particular profession or group and are difficult for others to understand: legal jargon. • archaic a form of language regarded as barbarous, debased, or hybrid. DERIVATIVES jargonic adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (originally in the sense ‘twittering,

chattering', later 'gibberish'): from Old French jargoun, of unknown origin. The main sense dates from the mid 17th century. jargon2 | ˈjärgän | (also jargoon | järˈgo͞on |) noun a translucent, colorless, or smoky gem variety of zircon: rings set with jargons and pearls. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from French, from Italian giargone; probably ultimately related to zircon.

jaundiced | ˈjôndəst |
adjective
having or affected by jaundice, in particular unnaturally yellow in complexion. • affected by bitterness, resentment, or envy: they looked on politicians with a jaundiced eye.

jejune | jəˈjo͞on |
adjective
1 naive, simplistic, and superficial: their entirely predictable and usually jejune opinions. 2 (of ideas or writings) dry and uninteresting: the poem seems to me rather jejune. DERIVATIVES jejunely adverb jejuneness | jəˈjo͞o(n)nəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin jejunus 'fasting, barren'. The original sense was 'without food', hence 'not intellectually nourishing'.

jettison | ˈjedəs(ə)n |
verb [with object]
throw or drop (something) from an aircraft or ship: six aircraft jettisoned their loads in the sea. • abandon or discard (someone or something that is no longer wanted): individuals are often forced to jettison certain attitudes and behaviors. noun the action of jettisoning something: [as modifier] : the jettison lever. ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun denoting the throwing of goods overboard to lighten a ship in distress): from Old French getaison, from Latin jactatio(n-), from jactare 'to throw' (see jet1). The verb dates from the mid 19th century.

jocular | ˈjäkyələr |
adjective
fond of or characterized by joking; humorous or playful: she sounded in a jocular mood | his voice was jocular. DERIVATIVES jocularity | ˌjäkyəˈlerədē | noun jocularly | ˈjäkyələrlē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin jocularis, from joculus, diminutive of jocus (see joke).

juxtapose | ˈjəkstəˌpōz, ˌjəkstəˈpōz |
verb [with object]
place or deal with close together for contrasting effect: black-and-white photos of slums were starkly juxtaposed with color images. ORIGIN mid 19th century (earlier (Middle English) as juxtaposition): from French juxtaposer, from Latin juxta 'next' + French poser 'to place'.

kitsch | kiCH |
noun
art, objects, or design considered to be in poor taste because of excessive garishness or sentimentality, but sometimes appreciated in an ironic or knowing way: the lava lamp is an example of sixties kitsch. adjective considered to be in poor taste but appreciated in an ironic or knowing way: the front room is stuffed with kitsch knickknacks, little glass and gilt ornaments | she offers kitsch interpretations of classic British dress, including a range of tartan mini-kilts. ORIGIN 1920s: German.

knell | n |
noun
the sound of a bell, especially when rung solemnly for a death or funeral. • used in reference to an announcement, event, or sound that warns of the end of something: the decision will probably toll the knell for the facility. verb [no object] (of a bell) ring solemnly, especially for a death or funeral. • [with object] proclaim (something) by or as if by a knell. ORIGIN Old English cnyll (noun), cnyllan (verb), of West Germanic origin; related to Dutch knal (noun), knallen (verb) 'bang, pop, crack'. The current spelling (dating from the 16th century) is perhaps influenced by bell1.

labile | ˈlāˌbīl, ˈlāb(ə)l |
adjective technical
liable to change; easily altered: persons whose blood pressure is more labile will carry an enhanced risk of heart attack | we may be the most labile culture in all history. • of or characterized by emotions that are easily aroused or freely expressed, and that tend to alter quickly and spontaneously; emotionally unstable: mood seemed generally appropriate, but the patient was often labile. • Chemistry easily broken down or displaced: the breakage of labile bonds | [in combination] : a heat-labile protein. DERIVATIVES lability | lāˈbilədē, ləˈbilədē | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'liable to err or sin'): from late Latin labilis, from labi 'to fall'.

labyrinthine | ˌlab(ə)ˈrinˌTHēn, ˌlab(ə)ˈrinˌTHīn |
adjective
(of a network) like a labyrinth; irregular and twisting: labyrinthine streets and alleys. • (of a system) intricate and confusing: labyrinthine plots and counterplots.

lackluster | ˈlakˌləst |
adjective
lacking in vitality, force, or conviction; uninspired or uninspiring: no excuses were made for the team's lackluster performance. • (of the hair or the eyes) not shining; dull.

laconic | ləˈkänik |
adjective
(of a person, speech, or style of writing) using very few words: his laconic reply suggested a lack of interest in the topic. DERIVATIVES laconically | ləˈkänək(ə)lē | adverb laconicism | ləˈkänəˌsizəm | noun laconism | ˈläkəˌnizəm | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense 'Laconian'): via Latin from Greek Lakōnikos, from Lakōn 'Laconia, Sparta', the Spartans being known for their terse speech.

lament | ləˈment |
noun
a passionate expression of grief or sorrow: his mother's night-long laments for

his father | a song full of lament and sorrow. • a song, piece of music, or poem expressing sorrow. • an expression of regret or disappointment; a complaint: there were constant laments about the conditions of employment. verb [with object] mourn (a person's loss or death): he was lamenting the death of his infant daughter. • [no object] (lament for/over) express one's deep grief about. • [reporting verb] express regret or disappointment over something considered unsatisfactory, unreasonable, or unfair: [with object] : she lamented the lack of shops in the town | [with direct speech] : Thomas Jefferson later lamented, "Heaven remained silent.". DERIVATIVES lamenter noun ORIGIN late Middle English (as a verb): from French lamenter or Latin lamentari, from lamenta (plural) 'weeping, wailing'.

lampoon | lamˈpo͞on |
verb [with object]
publicly criticize (someone or something) by using ridicule, irony, or sarcasm: the actor was lampooned by the press. noun a speech or text lampooning someone or something: does this sound like a lampoon of student life? DERIVATIVES lampoonery noun lampoonist | lamˈpo͞onəst | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French lampon, said to be from lampons 'let us drink' (used as a refrain), from lamper 'gulp down', nasalized form of laper 'to lap (liquid)'.

languid | ˈlaNGgwəd |
adjective
1 (of a person, manner, or gesture) displaying or having a disinclination for physical exertion or effort; slow and relaxed: they turned with languid movements from back to front so as to tan evenly. • (of an occasion or period of time) pleasantly lazy and peaceful: the terrace was perfect for languid days in the Italian sun. 2 weak or faint from illness or fatigue: she was pale, languid, and weak, as if she had delivered a child. DERIVATIVES languidly | ˈlaNGgwədlē | adverb languidness noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in languid (sense 2)): from French languide or Latin languidus, from languere (see languish).

languor | ˈlaNG(g)ər |
noun
1 the state or feeling, often pleasant, of tiredness or inertia: he remembered the languor and warm happiness of those golden afternoons. 2 an oppressive stillness of the air: the afternoon was hot, quiet, and heavy with languor. ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from Latin, from languere (see languish). The original sense was 'illness, distress', later 'faintness, lassitude'; current senses date from the 18th century, when such lassitude became associated with a romantic yearning.

largesse | lärˈ(d)ZH |
noun
generosity in bestowing money or gifts upon others: dispensing his money with such largesse. • money or gifts given generously: the distribution of largesse to the local population. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, from Latin largus 'copious'.

lascivious | ləˈsivēəs |
adjective
(of a person, manner, or gesture) feeling or revealing an overt and often offensive sexual desire: he gave her a lascivious wink. DERIVATIVES lasciviously | ləˈsivēəslē | adverb lasciviousness | ləˈsivēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin lasciviosus, from Latin lascivia 'lustfulness', from lascivus 'lustful, wanton'.

latent | ˈlātnt |
adjective
(of a quality or state) existing but not yet developed or manifest; hidden or concealed: discovering her latent talent for diplomacy. • Biology (of a bud, resting stage, etc.) lying dormant or hidden until circumstances are suitable for development or manifestation: axillary buds or eyes in the leaf axils are latent growth buds. • (of a disease) in which the usual symptoms are not yet manifest: diabetes may be latent for some years before diagnosis | the latent stage of syphilis. • Physiology (of a microorganism, especially a virus) present in the body without causing disease, but capable of doing so at a later stage, or when transmitted to another body. DERIVATIVES latently adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin latent- 'being hidden', from the verb latere.

laudatory | ˈlôdəˌtôrē, ˈlädəˌtôrē |
adjective
(of speech or writing) expressing praise and commendation: enthusiastic and laudatory articles. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from late Latin laudatorius, from laudat- 'praised', from the verb laudare (see laud).

legerdemain | ˌlejərdəˈmān |
noun
skillful use of one's hands when performing conjuring tricks. • deception; trickery: a classic piece of management legerdemain. ORIGIN late Middle English: from French léger de main 'dexterous', literally 'light of hand'.

levity | ˈlevədē |
noun
humor or frivolity, especially the treatment of a serious matter with humor or in a manner lacking due respect: as an attempt to introduce a note of levity, the words were a disastrous flop. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin levitas, from levis 'light'.

libertine | ˈlibərˌtēn |
noun
1 a person, especially a man, who behaves without moral principles or a sense of responsibility, especially in sexual matters: his image as an unbridled libertine is a total myth. 2 a person who rejects accepted opinions in matters of religion; a freethinker. adjective 1 characterized by a disregard of morality, especially in sexual matters: his more libertine impulses. 2 freethinking in matters of religion. DERIVATIVES libertinage | ˈlibərˌtēnij | noun libertinism | ˈlibərˌtēˌniz(ə)m | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting a freed slave or the son of one): from Latin libertinus 'freedman', from liber 'free'. In the mid

16th century, imitating French libertin, the term denoted a member of any of various antinomian sects in France; hence libertine (sense 2 of the noun).

licentious | līˈsenSHəs |
adjective
1 promiscuous and unprincipled in sexual matters: the ruler's tyrannical and licentious behavior | unlike many of the artists who frequented the Soho scene of the 1960s, he did not lead a licentious life. 2 archaic disregarding accepted rules or conventions, especially in grammar or literary style. DERIVATIVES licentiously | līˈsenSHəslē | adverb licentiousness | līˈsenSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin licentiosus, from licentia 'freedom'.

Lilliputian | ˌlilәˈpyo͞oSHən |
adjective
trivial or very small: America's banks no longer look Lilliputian in comparison with Japan's. noun a trivial or very small person or thing. ORIGIN early 18th century: from the imaginary country of Lilliput in Swift's Gulliver's Travels, inhabited by people 6 inches (15 cm) high, + -ian.

limitless | ˈlimətləs |
adjective
without end, limit, or boundary: our resources are not limitless. DERIVATIVES limitlessly adverb limitlessness noun

litany | ˈlitənē |
noun (plural litanies)
a series of petitions for use in church services or processions, usually recited by the clergy and responded to in a recurring formula by the people. • a tedious recital or repetitive series: a litany of complaints. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French letanie, via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek litaneia 'prayer', from litē 'supplication'.

litigation | ˌlidəˈgāSHən |
noun
the process of taking legal action: the company wishes to avoid litigation. DERIVATIVES litigative | ˈlitəˌgātiv | adjective

loath | lō |
adjective [predicative, with infinitive]
reluctant; unwilling: I was loath to leave. DERIVATIVES loathness (also lothness) noun ORIGIN Old English lāth 'hostile, spiteful', of Germanic origin; related to Dutch leed, German Leid 'sorrow'. USAGE Although different in meaning, loath and loathe are often confused. Loath is an adjective (also spelled loth) meaning 'reluctant or unwilling', as in I was loath to leave, whereas loathe is a verb meaning 'feel intense dislike or disgust for', as in she loathed him on sight. The spelling loathe for the adjective is becoming very common, and is regarded by some as a legitimate variant.

lobotomy | ləˈbädəmē |
noun (plural lobotomies)
a surgical operation involving incision into the prefrontal lobe of the brain, formerly used to treat mental illness: there was talk of performing a lobotomy | [mass noun] : the revolt against the resurgence of lobotomy.

loquacious | lōˈkwāSHəs |
adjective
tending to talk a great deal; talkative: never loquacious, Sarah was now totally lost for words. DERIVATIVES loquaciously | ləˈkwāSHəslē | adverb loquaciousness | lōˈkwāSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin loquax, loquac- (from loqui 'talk') + -ious.

lucid | ˈlo͞osəd |
adjective
1 expressed clearly; easy to understand: a lucid account | write in a clear and lucid style. • showing ability to think clearly, especially in the intervals between periods of confusion or insanity: he has a few lucid moments every now and then. • Psychology (of a dream) experienced with the dreamer feeling awake, aware of dreaming, and able to control events consciously. 2 literary bright or luminous: birds dipped their wings in the lucid flow of air. DERIVATIVES lucidly | ˈlo͞osədlē | adverb lucidness noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in lucid (sense 2)): from Latin lucidus (perhaps via French lucide or Italian lucido) from lucere 'shine', from lux, luc- 'light'.

lugubrious | lo͞oˈgo͞obrēəs, ləˈgo͞obrēəs |
adjective
looking or sounding sad and dismal: his face looked even more lugubrious than usual. DERIVATIVES lugubriously | lo͞oˈgo͞obrēəslē | adverb lugubriousness | ləˈgo͞obrēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin lugubris (from lugere 'mourn') + -ous.

luminous | ˈlo͞omənəs |
adjective
full of or shedding light; bright or shining, especially in the dark: the luminous dial on his watch | a luminous glow | figurative : her eyes were luminous with joy. • (of a color) very bright; harsh to the eye: he wore luminous green socks. • Physics relating to light as it is perceived by the eye, rather than in terms of its actual energy: luminous intensity. DERIVATIVES luminously | ˈlo͞omənəslē | adverb luminousness | ˈlo͞omənəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French lumineux or Latin luminosus, from lumen, lumin- 'light'.

Machiavellian | ˌmäkēəˈvelēən |
adjective
cunning, scheming, and unscrupulous, especially in politics: a whole range of outrageous Machiavellian manoeuvres. noun a person who schemes in a Machiavellian way. DERIVATIVES Machiavellianism | ˌmäkēəˈvelēəˌnizəm | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from the name of Niccolò Machiavelli (see Machiavelli, Niccolò.

magnanimity | ˌmagnəˈniməd ē |
noun

the fact or condition of being magnanimous; generosity: both sides will have to show magnanimity.

magnate | ˈmagˌnāt, ˈmagnət |
noun
a wealthy and influential person, especially in business: a media magnate. ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin magnas, magnat- ‘great man’, from Latin magnus ‘great’.

maladroit | ˌmaləˈdroit |
adjective
ineffective or bungling; clumsy: both men are unhappy about the maladroit way the matter has been handled. DERIVATIVES maladroitly | ˌmaləˈdroitlē | adverb maladroitness | ˌmaləˈdroitnəs | noun ORIGIN late 17th century: French.

malaise | məˈlāz, məˈlez |
noun
a general feeling of discomfort, illness, or uneasiness whose exact cause is difficult to identify: a general air of malaise | a society afflicted by a deep cultural malaise. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from French, from Old French mal ‘bad’ (from Latin malus) + aise ‘ease’.

malfeasance | malˈfēzns |
noun Law
wrongdoing, especially by a public official. DERIVATIVES malfeasant | malˈfēznt | noun & adjective ORIGIN late 17th century: from Anglo-Norman French malfaisance, from mal- ‘evil’ + Old French faisance ‘activity’. Compare with misfeasance.

malicious | məˈliSHəs |
adjective
characterized by malice; intending or intended to do harm: the transmission of malicious software such as computer viruses | malicious destruction of property. DERIVATIVES maliciousness noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French malicios, from Latin malitiosus, from malitia (see malice).

malignant | məˈlignənt |
adjective
1 malevolent: in the hands of malignant fate. 2 (of a disease) very virulent or infectious. • (of a tumor) tending to invade normal tissue or to recur after removal; cancerous. Contrasted with benign. DERIVATIVES malignantly | məˈlignəntlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (also in the sense ‘likely to rebel against God or authority’): from late Latin malignant- ‘contriving maliciously’, from the verb malignare. The term was used in its early sense to describe Royalist sympathizers during the English Civil War.

malingerer | məˈliNGgərər |
noun
a person who malingers: the doctor said my son was a malingerer.

malpractice | ˌmalˈpraktəs |
noun
improper, illegal, or negligent professional activity or treatment, especially by a medical practitioner, lawyer, or public official: victims of medical malpractice | investigations into malpractices and abuses of power.

Mande | ˈmänˌdā, ˈmanˌdā |
noun (plural same or Mandes)
1 a member of any of a large group of peoples of West Africa. 2 the group of Niger–Congo languages spoken by the Mande, including Malinke, Mende, and Bambara. adjective relating to the Mande or the Mande group of languages. ORIGIN the name in Mande.

manifesto | ˌmanəˈfestō |
noun (plural manifestos)
a public declaration of policy and aims, especially one issued before an election by a political party or candidate: a manifesto for gay liberation | [as modifier] : manifesto commitments. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Italian, from manifestare, from Latin, ‘make public’, from manifestus ‘obvious’ (see manifest1).

manifold | ˈmanəfōld |
adjective formal or literary
many and various: the implications of this decision were manifold. • having many different forms or elements: the appeal of the crusade was manifold. noun 1 [often with modifier] a pipe or chamber branching into several openings: the pipeline manifold. • (in an internal combustion engine) the part conveying air and fuel from the carburetor to the cylinders or that leading from the cylinders to the exhaust pipe: the exhaust manifold. 2 Mathematics a collection of points forming a certain kind of set, such as those of a topologically closed surface or an analog of this in three or more dimensions. 3 (in Kantian philosophy) the sum of the particulars furnished by sense before they have been unified by the synthesis of the understanding. DERIVATIVES manifoldly adverb manifoldness noun ORIGIN Old English manigfeald; current noun senses date from the mid 19th century.

mannered | ˈmanərd |
adjective
1 [in combination] behaving in a specified way: pleasant-mannered. 2 (of a writer, artist, or artistic style) marked by idiosyncratic mannerisms; artificial, stilted, and overelaborate in delivery: inane dialogue and mannered acting.

manumission | ˌmanyəˈmiSHən |
noun historical
release from slavery: a leading advocate of manumission | [as modifier] : manumission documents from the Slavery Chancellery | negotiated manumissions of slaves by their masters.

marauder | məˈrôdər |
noun

a person who marauds; a raider: a band of English marauders were surprised and overcome.

maverick | ˈmav(ə)rik |
noun
1 an unorthodox or independent-minded person: he's the maverick of the fashion scene. 2 North American an unbranded calf or yearling. adjective unorthodox: a maverick detective. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from the name of Samuel A. Maverick (1803–70), a Texas rancher who did not brand his cattle.

maxim | ˈmaksəm |
noun
a short, pithy statement expressing a general truth or rule of conduct: the maxim that actions speak louder than words. ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting an axiom): from French maxime, from medieval Latin (propositio) maxima 'largest or most important (proposition)'.

meander | mēˈandər |
verb [no object, with adverbial of direction]
(of a river or road) follow a winding course: a river that meandered gently through a meadow. • (of a person) wander at random: kids meandered in and out. • (of a speaker or text) proceed aimlessly or with little purpose: a stylish offbeat thriller which occasionally meanders. noun (usually meanders) a winding curve or bend of a river or road: the river flows in sweeping meanders. • [in singular] a circuitous journey, especially an aimless one: a leisurely meander around the twisting coastline road. • an ornamental pattern of winding or interlocking lines, e.g., in a mosaic. ORIGIN late 16th century (as a noun): from Latin maeander, from Greek Maiandros, the name of a river (see Menderes).

medley | ˈmedlē |
noun (plural medleys)
a varied mixture of people or things; a miscellany: an interesting medley of flavors. • a collection of songs or other musical items performed as a continuous piece: a medley of Beatles songs. • a swimming race in which contestants swim sections in different strokes, either individually or in relay teams: the 400 m individual medley | [as modifier] : the junior 4x50 m medley relay. adjective archaic mixed; motley: a medley range of vague and variable impressions. verb (past and past participle medleyed or medlied) [with object] archaic make a medley of; intermix: (as adjective medleyed or medlied) : the medlied establishments of the native chiefs. ORIGIN Middle English (denoting hand-to-hand combat, also cloth made of variegated wool): from Old French medlee, variant of meslee 'melee', based on medieval Latin misculare 'to mix'; compare with meddle.

meek | mēk |
adjective
quiet, gentle, and easily imposed on; submissive: I used to call her Miss Mouse because she was so meek and mild | the meek compliance of our politicians. ORIGIN Middle English me(o)c (also in the sense 'courteous or indulgent'), from Old Norse mjúkr 'soft, gentle'.

melancholy | ˈmel(ə)nˌkälē |
noun
a feeling of pensive sadness, typically with no obvious cause: an air of melancholy surrounded him | he had an ability to convey a sense of deep melancholy and yearning through much of his work | at the center of his music lies a profound melancholy and nostalgia. • another term for melancholia (as a mental condition). • historical another term for black bile. adjective having a feeling of melancholy; sad and pensive: she felt a little melancholy | the dog has a melancholy expression. • causing or expressing sadness; depressing: the study makes melancholy if instructive reading. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French melancolie, via late Latin from Greek melankholia, from melas, melan- 'black' + kholē 'bile', an excess of which was formerly believed to cause depression.

mellifluous | məˈlifləwəs |
adjective
(of a voice or words) sweet or musical; pleasant to hear: the voice was mellifluous and smooth. DERIVATIVES mellifluously adverb mellifluousness noun ORIGIN late 15th century: from late Latin mellifluus (from mel 'honey' + fluere 'to flow') + -ous.

mendacious | menˈdāSHəs |
adjective
not telling the truth; lying: mendacious propaganda. DERIVATIVES mendaciously adverb mendaciousness noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin mendax, mendac- 'lying' (related to mendum 'fault') + -ious.

mendicant | ˈmendək(ə)nt |
adjective
given to begging. • of or denoting one of the religious orders that originally relied solely on alms: a mendicant friar. noun a beggar. • a member of a mendicant order. DERIVATIVES mendicancy | ˈmendəkənsē | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin mendicant- 'begging', from the verb mendicare, from mendicus 'beggar', from mendum 'fault'.

menial | ˈmēnēəl |
adjective
(of work) not requiring much skill and lacking prestige: menial factory jobs. • [attributive] dated (of a servant) domestic. noun a person with a menial job. • dated a domestic servant. DERIVATIVES menially adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'domestic'): from Old French, from mesnee 'household'.

mercenary | ˈmərsənˌerē |
adjective
primarily concerned with making money at the expense of ethics: the crime was committed out of mercenary motives | society today is often accused of being too mercenary. noun (plural mercenaries) a professional soldier hired to serve in a foreign army: he had planned to seize power with the aid of a

group of mercenaries. • a person primarily concerned with material reward at the expense of ethics: the sport's most infamous mercenary. DERIVATIVES mercenariness | ˈmərsənˌerēnəs, ˈmərsnˌerēnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun): from Latin mercenarius 'hireling', from merces, merced- 'reward'.

mercurial | mərˈkyo͝orēəl |
adjective
1 (of a person) subject to sudden or unpredictable changes of mood or mind: his mercurial temperament. • (of a person) sprightly; lively. 2 of or containing the element mercury: gels containing organic mercurial compounds. 3 (Mercurial) of the planet Mercury. noun (usually mercurials) a drug or other compound containing mercury: for twenty years organic mercurials were the most potent diuretics in clinical use. DERIVATIVES mercuriality | -ˌkyo͝orēˈalitē | noun mercurially adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in mercurial (sense 3 of the adjective)): from Latin mercurialis 'relating to the god Mercury', from Mercurius 'Mercury'. mercurial (sense 1 of the adjective) dates from the mid 17th century.

mesmerizing | ˈmezməˌrīzi |
adjective
capturing one's complete attention as if by magic: a mesmerizing stare. DERIVATIVES mesmerizingly | ˈmezməˌrīziNGlē | (British also mesmerisingly) adverb mesmerize | ˈmezməˌrīz | (British also mesmerise) verb [with object] hold the attention of (someone) to the exclusion of all else or so as to transfix them: she was mesmerized by the blue eyes that stared so intently into her own. • archaic hypnotize (someone): he was mesmerized when at the point of death. DERIVATIVES mesmerization | ˌmezmərəˈzāSHən | (British also mesmerisation) noun mesmerizer (British also mesmeriser) noun

metamorphose | ˌmedəˈmôrˌfōz |
verb [no object]
(of an insect or amphibian) undergo metamorphosis, especially into the adult form: feed the larvae to your fish before they metamorphose into adults. • change or cause to change completely in form or nature: a father seeing his daughter metamorphosing from girl into woman. • [with object] Geology subject (rock) to metamorphism: the extreme heat metamorphosed the sandstone, baking it white and producing a quartzite rock. ORIGIN late 16th century: from French métamorphoser, from métamorphose (see metamorphosis).

metaphysical | ˌmedəˈfizək(ə)l |
adjective
1 relating to metaphysics: the essentially metaphysical question of the nature of the mind. • based on abstract (typically, excessively abstract) reasoning: an empiricist rather than a metaphysical view of law. • transcending physical matter or the laws of nature: Good and Evil are inextricably linked in a metaphysical battle across space and time. 2 of or characteristic of the metaphysical poets. noun (the Metaphysicals) the metaphysical poets. DERIVATIVES metaphysically | -ik(ə)lē | adverb

metropolis | məˈträp(ə)ləs, meˈträp(ə)ləs |
noun
the capital or chief city of a country or region: he preferred the peaceful life of the countryside to the bustle of the metropolis. • a very large and densely populated industrial and commercial city: by the late eighteenth century Edo had grown to a metropolis with a population of nearly one million. ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting the see of a metropolitan bishop): via late Latin from Greek mētropolis 'mother state', from mētēr, mētr- 'mother' + polis 'city'.

metropolitan | ˌmetrəˈpälətn |
adjective
1 relating to or denoting a metropolis, often inclusive of its surrounding areas: the Boston metropolitan area. 2 relating to or denoting the parent state of a colony or dependency: metropolitan Spain. 3 Christian Church relating to or denoting a metropolitan or his see: a metropolitan bishop. noun 1 Christian Church a bishop having authority over the bishops of a province, in particular (in Orthodox Churches) one ranking above archbishop and below patriarch: the post of Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina | [as title] : Metropolitan Aleksei of Leningrad and Novgorod. 2 an inhabitant of a metropolis or large city: a sophisticated metropolitan. DERIVATIVES metropolitanism | -ˌpälətnˌizəm | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the ecclesiastical sense): from late Latin metropolitanus, from Greek mētropolitēs 'citizen of a mother state', from mētropolis (see metropolis).

microcosm | ˈmīkrōˌkäz |
noun
a community, place, or situation regarded as encapsulating in miniature the characteristic qualities or features of something much larger: Berlin is a microcosm of Germany, in unity as in division. • humankind regarded as the epitome of the universe: the belief in correspondences between the Universe and Man—between microcosm and macrocosm. PHRASES in microcosm in miniature. DERIVATIVES microcosmic | ˌmīkrōˈkäzmik | adjective microcosmically | -ˈkäzmik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French microcosme or medieval Latin microcosmus, from Greek mikros kosmos 'little world'.

militate | ˈmiləˌtāt |
verb [no object] (militate against)
(of a fact or circumstance) be a powerful or conclusive factor in preventing: these fundamental differences will militate against the two communities coming together. ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin militat- 'served as a soldier', from the verb militare, from miles, milit- 'soldier'. USAGE The verbs militate and mitigate are sometimes confused. See usage at mitigate.

minimize | ˈminəˌm |
verb [with object]
reduce (something, especially something unwanted or unpleasant) to the smallest possible amount or degree: the aim is to minimize costs. • represent or estimate at less than the true value or importance: they may minimize, or

even overlook, the importance of such beliefs. DERIVATIVES minimizer (British also minimiser) noun

minutiae | məˈnōōSHēˌē, məˈnōōSHē |
plural noun
the small, precise, or trivial details of something: the minutiae of everyday life. ORIGIN mid 18th century: Latin, literally 'trifles', from minutia 'smallness', from minutus (see minute2).

miscreant | ˈmiskrēənt |
noun
a person who behaves badly or in a way that breaks the law: the police are straining every nerve to bring the miscreants to justice. • archaic a heretic. adjective (of a person) behaving badly or in a way that breaks a law or rule: her miscreant husband. • archaic heretical. ORIGIN Middle English (as an adjective in the sense 'disbelieving'): from Old French mescreant, present participle of mescreire 'disbelieve', from mes- 'mis-' + creire 'believe' (from Latin credere).

misnomer | ˌmisˈnōmər |
noun
a wrong or inaccurate name or designation: morning sickness is a misnomer for many women, since the nausea can occur any time during the day. • a wrong or inaccurate use of a name or term: to call this "neighborhood policing" would be a misnomer. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French, from the Old French verb mesnommer, from mes- 'wrongly' + nommer 'to name' (based on Latin nomen 'name').

missive | ˈmisiv |
noun
often humorous a letter, especially a long or official one: he hastily banged out electronic missives. ORIGIN late Middle English (as an adjective, originally in the phrase letter missive): from medieval Latin missivus, from Latin mittere 'send'. The current sense dates from the early 16th century.

mitigate | ˈmidəˌgāt |
verb [with object]
make less severe, serious, or painful: he wanted to mitigate misery in the world. • lessen the gravity of (an offense or mistake): there had been a provocation that mitigated the offense to a degree. DERIVATIVES mitigable | -gibəl | adjective mitigative adjective mitigatory | ˈmidəgəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin mitigat- 'softened, alleviated', from the verb mitigare, from mitis 'mild'. USAGE The verbs mitigate and militate have a similarity in form but are quite different in meaning. Mitigate means 'make (something bad) less severe,' (he wanted to mitigate misery in the world), while militate is nearly always used in constructions with against to mean 'be a powerful factor in preventing' (laws that militate against personal freedoms).

modicum | ˈmädəkəm |
noun [in singular]
a small quantity of a particular thing, especially something considered desirable or valuable: his statement had more than a modicum of truth. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin, neuter of modicus 'moderate', from modus 'measure'.

momentous | mōˈmen(t)əs |
adjective
(of a decision, event, or change) of great importance or significance, especially in its bearing on the future: a period of momentous changes in East-West relations. DERIVATIVES momentously adverb momentousness | mōˈmen(t)əsnəs | noun

monolithic | ˌmänəˈliTHik |
adjective
1 formed of a single large block of stone: later Byzantine columns were monolithic and usually made of marble. • (of a building) very large and characterless. 2 (of an organization or system) large, powerful, and intractably indivisible and uniform: rejecting any move toward a monolithic European superstate. 3 Electronics (of a solid-state circuit) composed of active and passive components formed in a single chip: a video converter on a single monolithic chip.

monomania | ˌmänəˈmeinēə |
noun
exaggerated or obsessive enthusiasm for or preoccupation with one thing: she has an obsession with the drug that verges on monomania | [count noun] : at an early age he developed a monomania about Africa.

moot | mōōt |
adjective
1 subject to debate, dispute, or uncertainty: whether they had been successful or not was a moot point | it is a moot point whether such a controversial scheme would have succeeded. 2 having little or no practical relevance, typically because the subject is too uncertain to allow a decision: the whole matter is becoming increasingly moot. verb [with object] raise (a question or topic) for discussion; suggest (an idea or possibility): Sylvia needed a vacation, and a trip to Ireland had been mooted. noun 1 historical an assembly held for debate, especially in Anglo-Saxon and medieval times. • a regular gathering of people having a common interest. 2 Law a mock trial set up to examine a hypothetical case as an academic exercise: the object of a moot is to provide practice in developing an argument. ORIGIN Old English mōt 'assembly or meeting' and mōtian 'to converse', of Germanic origin; related to meet1. The adjective (originally an attributive noun use: see moot court) dates from the mid 16th century; the current verb sense dates from the mid 17th century. USAGE Note that a question subject to debate or dispute is a moot point, not a mute point. As moot is a relatively uncommon word, people sometimes mistakenly interpret it as the more familar word mute.

moratorium | ˌmôrəˈtôrēəm |
noun (plural moratoriums or moratoria | -ˈtôrēə |)
a temporary prohibition of an activity: an indefinite moratorium on the use of

drift nets. • Law a legal authorization to debtors to postpone payment: the debt was to be subject to a five-year moratorium. ORIGIN late 19th century: modern Latin, neuter (used as a noun) of late Latin moratorius 'delaying', from Latin morat- 'delayed', from the verb morari, from mora 'delay'.

mores | ˈmôrāz |
plural noun
the essential or characteristic customs and conventions of a community: an offense against social mores. ORIGIN late 19th century: from Latin, plural of mos, mor- 'custom'.

mortify | ˈmôrdəˌfī |
verb (mortifies, mortifying, mortified) [with object]
1 cause (someone) to feel embarrassed, ashamed, or humiliated: he was suitably mortified by his own idiocy | I'm mortified that an editorial error was introduced into the copy | (as adjective mortified) : if he could read my mind, I would be absolutely mortified. 2 subdue (the body or its needs and desires) by self-denial or discipline: they wish to return to heaven by mortifying the flesh. 3 [no object] (of flesh) be affected by gangrene or necrosis: the cut in Henry's arm had mortified. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the senses 'put to death', 'deaden', and 'subdue by self-denial'): from Old French mortifier, from ecclesiastical Latin mortificare 'kill, subdue', from mors, mort- 'death'.

muddle | ˈməd(ə)l |
verb [with object]
1 bring into a disordered or confusing state: I fear he may have muddled the message. • confuse (a person or their thoughts): Paul was hopelessly muddled by the rates of exchange. • [no object, with adverbial] busy oneself in an aimless or ineffective way: he was muddling about in the kitchen. 2 mix (a drink) or stir (an ingredient) into a drink: muddle the kiwi slices with the sugar. noun [usually in singular] an untidy and disorganized state or collection: the finances were in a muddle | a muddle of French, English, Ojibwa, and a dash of Gaelic. • a mistake arising from or resulting in confusion: a bureaucratic muddle. PHRASAL VERBS muddle through (British also muddle along) cope in a more or less satisfactory way despite lack of expertise, planning, or equipment: we don't have an ultimate ambition; we just muddle through. muddle up (muddle something up, muddle up something) bring something into a disordered or confusing state: they were muddling up the cards. • confuse two or more things with each other: at the time, archaeology was commonly muddled up with paleontology. DERIVATIVES muddly | ˈmədlē, ˈmədlē | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'wallow in mud'): perhaps from Middle Dutch moddelen, frequentative of modden 'dabble in mud'; compare with mud. The sense 'confuse' was initially associated with alcoholic drink (late 17th century), giving rise to 'busy oneself in a confused way' and 'jumble up' (mid 19th century).

multifarious | ˌməltēˈferēəs |
adjective
many and of various types: multifarious activities. • having many varied parts or aspects: a vast multifarious organization. DERIVATIVES multifariously adverb multifariousness noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin multifarius + -ous.

mundane | ˌmənˈdān |
adjective
1 lacking interest or excitement; dull: seeking a way out of his mundane, humdrum existence. 2 of this earthly world rather than a heavenly or spiritual one: the boundaries of the mundane world. • relating to or denoting the branch of astrology that deals with political, social, economic, and geophysical events and processes. DERIVATIVES mundanely | ˌmənˈdānlē | adverb mundaneness | ˌmənˈdā(n)nəs | noun mundanity | -ˈdānətē | noun (plural mundanities) ORIGIN late Middle English (in mundane (sense 2)): from Old French mondain, from late Latin mundanus, from Latin mundus 'world'. mundane (sense 1) dates from the late 19th century.

munificent | myo͞oˈnifəs(ə)nt |
adjective
(of a gift or sum of money) larger or more generous than is usual or necessary: a munificent gesture. • (of a person) very generous. DERIVATIVES munificently | myo͞oˈnifəs(ə)n(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin munificent- (stem of munificentior, comparative of munificus 'bountiful'), from munus 'gift'.

murky | ˈmərkē |
adjective (murkier, murkiest)
dark and gloomy, especially due to thick mist: the sky was murky and a thin drizzle was falling. • (of liquid) dark and dirty; not clear: the murky silt of a muddy pond. • not fully explained or understood, especially with concealed dishonesty or immorality: the murky world of espionage. DERIVATIVES murkily adverb murkiness | ˈmərkēnəs | noun

muse1 | myo͞oz |
noun
1 (Muse) (in Greek and Roman mythology) each of nine goddesses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, who preside over the arts and sciences. The Muses are generally listed as Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Euterpe (flute playing and lyric poetry), Terpsichore (choral dancing and song), Erato (lyre playing and lyric poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Thalia (comedy and light verse), Polyhymnia (hymns, and later mime), and Urania (astronomy). 2 a person or personified force who is the source of inspiration for a creative artist: Yeats' muse, Maud Gonne | the landscape was Gorky's primary muse. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin musa, from Greek mousa. muse2 | myo͞oz | verb [no object] be absorbed in thought: he was musing on the problems he faced. • say to oneself in a thoughtful manner: "I think I've seen him somewhere before," mused Rachel. • (muse on) gaze thoughtfully at: he sat on the edge of the bank, legs dangling, eyes musing on the water. noun an instance or period of reflection. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French muser 'meditate, waste time', perhaps from medieval Latin musum 'muzzle'.

muster | ˈməstər |
verb [with object]
1 assemble (troops), especially for inspection or in preparation for battle: 17,000 men had been mustered on Haldon Hill. • [no object] (of troops) come together for inspection or preparation: the cavalrymen mustered beside the other regiments. • [no object] (of a group of people) gather together: reporters mustered outside her house. 2 collect or assemble (a number or amount): the city council was unable to muster enough votes to pass the measure. • summon up (a particular feeling, attitude, or response): he replied with as much dignity as he could muster | I finally mustered up the courage to call them | mustering his strength, he made it across the finish line. noun 1 a formal gathering of troops, especially for inspection, display, or exercise: he attended the musters, which were called to train all able-bodied men | [mass noun] : a meeting was held to fix the times and places of muster. • short for muster roll. 2 rare a group of peacocks: the sound was like the cry of a muster of peacocks. PHRASES pass muster be accepted as adequate or satisfactory: a treaty that might pass muster with the voters. PHRASAL VERBS muster in (muster someone in, muster in someone) US enroll someone into military service: soon after my arrival I got mustered in. muster out (muster someone out, muster out someone) US discharge someone from military service. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French moustrer (verb), moustre (noun), from Latin monstrare ‘to show’.

myriad | ˈmirēəd |
noun
1 a countless or extremely great number: networks connecting a myriad of computers | myriads of insects danced around the light above my head. 2 (chiefly in classical history) a unit of ten thousand: the army was organized on a decimal system, up to divisions of 10,000 or myriads. adjective countless or extremely great in number: the myriad lights of the city. • having countless or very many elements or aspects: the myriad political scene. USAGE Myriad is derived from a Greek noun and adjective meaning ‘ten thousand.’ It was first used in English as a noun in reference to a great but indefinite number. The adjectival sense of ‘countless, innumerable’ appeared much later. In modern English, use of myriad as a noun and adjective are equally standard and correct, despite the fact that some traditionalists consider the adjective as the only acceptable use of the word. ORIGIN mid 16th century (in myriad (sense 2 of the noun)): via late Latin from Greek murias, muriad-, from murioi ‘10,000’.

nadir | ˈnādər, ˈnāˌdir |
noun [in singular]
the lowest point in the fortunes of a person or organization: they had reached the nadir of their sufferings. • Astronomy the point on the celestial sphere directly below an observer. The opposite of zenith. ORIGIN late Middle English (in nadir (sense 2 of the noun)): via French from Arabic naẓīr (as-samt) ‘opposite (to the zenith)’.

naive | nä' |
adjective
(of a person or action) showing a lack of experience, wisdom, or judgment: the rather naive young man had been totally misled | I was politically naive. • (of a person) natural and unaffected; innocent: Andy had a sweet, naive look when he smiled. • of or denoting art produced in a straightforward style that deliberately rejects sophisticated artistic techniques and has a bold directness resembling a child's work, typically in bright colors with little or no perspective. DERIVATIVES naiveness (also naïveness) noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French naïve, feminine of naïf, from Latin nativus ‘native, natural’.

narcissistic | ˌnärsəˈsistik |
adjective
having an excessive or erotic interest in oneself and one's physical appearance: a narcissistic actress. • relating to narcissism: narcissistic personality disorder. DERIVATIVES narcissistically | ˌnärsəˈsistik(ə)lē | adverb

nascent | ˈnās(ə)nt |
adjective
(especially of a process or organization) just coming into existence and beginning to display signs of future potential: the nascent space industry. • Chemistry (chiefly of hydrogen) freshly generated in a reactive form. DERIVATIVES nascence noun nascency noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin nascent- ‘being born’, from the verb nasci.

Natal | nəˈtäl |
1 a province on the eastern coast of South Africa that was renamed KwaZulu-Natal in 1994. [from Latin Terra Natalis ‘land of the day of birth’, a name given by Vasco da Gama in 1497, because he sighted the entrance to what is now Durban harbour on Christmas Day.]
2 a port on the Atlantic coast of northeastern Brazil, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Norte; population 774,230 (2007). natal1 | ˈnādl | adjective relating to the place or time of one's birth: her natal home. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin natalis, from nat- ‘born’, from the verb nasci. natal2 | ˈnādl | adjective Anatomy relating to the buttocks: the natal cleft. ORIGIN late 19th century: from nates + -al.

nationalistic | ˌnaSH(ə)nəˈlistik |
adjective
having or expressing strong identification with one's own nation and vigorous support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations: he was fiercely nationalistic | nationalistic pride. DERIVATIVES nationalistically | ˌnaSHənəˈlistik(ə)lē | adverb

natty1 | ˈnadē |
adjective (nattier, nattiest) informal
(of a person or an article of clothing) smart and fashionable: a natty blue blazer and designer jeans. DERIVATIVES nattily | ˈnadəlē | adverb nattiness | ˈnadēnəs | noun ORIGIN late 18th century (originally slang): perhaps related to neat1. natty2 | ˈnadē | adjective [attributive] (among Rastafarians) denoting hair that is unstraightened, uncombed, or matted, as in dreadlocks. ORIGIN 1970s: variant of knotty.

nauseous | ˈnôSHəs, ˈnôZHəs |
adjective
1 affected with nausea; inclined to vomit: a rancid, cloying odor that made him nauseous. 2 causing nausea; offensive to the taste or smell: the smell was nauseous. • disgusting, repellent, or offensive: this nauseous account of a court case. DERIVATIVES nauseously adverb nauseousness noun USAGE See usage at nauseate. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin nauseosus (from nausea ‘seasickness’).

navigable | ˈnavəgəb(ə)l |
adjective
1 (of a waterway or sea) able to be sailed on by ships or boats: a navigable channel | many of the rivers ceased to be navigable. • (of a track or road) suitable for vehicles: a good cart track, navigable by cars. 2 (of a website) easy to move around in: the use of white space can help make your mobile-optimized site clearer and more navigable. DERIVATIVES navigability | ˌnavəgəˈbilədē | noun ORIGIN early 16th century: from French navigable or Latin navigabilis, from the verb navigare ‘to sail’ (see navigate).

nebulous | ˈnebyələs |
adjective
in the form of a cloud or haze; hazy: a giant nebulous glow. • (of a concept or idea) unclear, vague, or ill-defined: nebulous concepts like quality of life. • another term for nebular. DERIVATIVES nebulosity | ˌnebyəˈläsədē | noun nebulously | ˈnebyələslē | adverb nebulousness | ˈnebyələsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘cloudy’): from French nébuleux or Latin nebulosus, from nebula ‘mist’. nebulous (sense 2 of the adjective) dates from the early 19th century.

nefarious | nəˈferēəs |
adjective
(typically of an action or activity) wicked or criminal: the nefarious activities of the organized-crime syndicates. DERIVATIVES nefariously | nəˈferēəslē | adverb nefariousness | nəˈferēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin nefarius (from nefas, nefar- ‘wrong’, from ne- ‘not’ + fas ‘divine law’) + -ous.

negligible | ˈnegləjəb(ə)l |
adjective
so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering; insignificant: sound could at last be recorded with incredible ease and at negligible cost. DERIVATIVES negligibility | ˌnegləjəˈbilədē | noun negligibly | -blē | adverb ORIGIN mid 19th century: from obsolete French, from négliger ‘to neglect’.

negotiable | nəˈgōSH(ē)əb(ə)l |
adjective
open to discussion or modification: the price was not negotiable. • (of a document) able to be transferred or assigned to the legal ownership of another person. • (of an obstacle or pathway) able to be traversed; passable: such walkways must be accessible and negotiable for all users. DERIVATIVES negotiability | nəˌgōSH(ē)əˈbilədē | noun

neighborly | ˈnābər |
adjective
characteristic of a good neighbor, especially helpful, friendly, or kind: shopping for the elderly is a regular feature of neighborly support. DERIVATIVES neighborliness | ˈnābərlēnəs | (British neighbourliness) noun

Nemesis | ˈneməs |
a goddess usually portrayed as the agent of divine punishment for wrongdoing or presumption (hubris).
nemesis | ˈneməsəs | noun (plural nemeses | -ˌsēz |) 1 the inescapable agent of someone's or something's downfall: the balance beam was the team's nemesis, as two gymnasts fell from the apparatus. • a downfall caused by an inescapable agent: one risks nemesis by uttering such words. • (often Nemesis) retributive justice: Nemesis is notoriously slow. 2 a long-standing rival; an archenemy: will Harry Potter finally defeat his nemesis, Voldemort? ORIGIN mid 16th century: Greek, literally ‘retribution’, also personified as Nemesis, the goddess of retribution, from nemein ‘give what is due’.

Neolithic | ˌnēəˈliTH |
adjective
relating to or denoting the later part of the Stone Age, when ground or polished stone weapons and implements prevailed. Compare with Mesolithic, Paleolithic: inside the fort is a fine Neolithic long barrow. noun (the Neolithic) the later part of the Stone Age, when ground or polished stone weapons and implements prevailed. Also called New Stone Age: the earliest occupation appears to have been in the Neolithic. In the Neolithic period farm animals were first domesticated, and agriculture was introduced. It began in the Near East by the 8th millennium bc and spread to northern Europe by the 4th millennium bc. Neolithic societies in northwestern Europe left such monuments as henges, long barrows, chamber tombs, and settlements inside concentric ditches spanned by causeways. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from neo- ‘new’ + Greek lithos ‘stone’ + -ic.

neophyte | ˈnēəˌfīt |
noun
a person who is new to a subject, skill, or belief: four-day cooking classes are offered to neophytes and experts. • a new convert to a religion. • a novice in a religious order, or a newly ordained priest. ORIGIN late Middle English: via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek neophutos, literally ‘newly planted’ but first used in the sense ‘new convert’ by St Paul (1 Tim. 3:6), from neos ‘new’ + phuton ‘plant’.

nervy | ˈnərvē |
adjective (nervier, nerviest)
1 North American informal bold or impudent: it was kind of nervy for Billy to be telling him how to play. 2 mainly British easily agitated or alarmed; nervous: he was nervy and on edge. • characterized or produced by apprehension or uncertainty: they made a nervy start. 3 archaic or literary sinewy or strong. DERIVATIVES nervily | ˈnərvəlē | adverb nerviness | ˈnərvēnəs | noun

nescient | ˈneSH(ē)ənt, ˈnesēənt |
adjective literary
lacking knowledge; ignorant: I ventured into the new Korean restaurant with some equally nescient companions. DERIVATIVES nescience | ˈneSHēəns, ˈneSH(ə)ns, ˈnesēəns | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin nescient- 'not knowing', from the verb nescire, from ne- 'not' + scire 'know'.

nettlesome | ˈnedlsəm |
adjective mainly US
causing annoyance or difficulty: complicated and nettlesome regional disputes.

neutral | ˈnōōtr(ə)l |
adjective
1 not helping or supporting either side in a conflict, disagreement, etc.; impartial: during the Second World War, Portugal was neutral. • belonging to an impartial party, country, or group: on neutral ground. 2 having no strongly marked or positive characteristics or features: the tone was neutral, devoid of sentiment | a fairly neutral background will make any small splash of color stand out. 3 Chemistry neither acid nor alkaline; having a pH of about 7: a neutral solution | neutral soil conditions. 4 electrically neither positive nor negative: live and neutral contacts on plugs. noun 1 an impartial or unbiased country or person: Sweden and its fellow neutrals | he acted as a neutral between the parties. 2 a neutral color or shade, especially light gray or beige: classic shades of navy, white, and neutral. 3 a disengaged position of gears in which the engine is disconnected from the driven parts: she slipped the gear into neutral. 4 an electrically neutral point, terminal, conductor, or wire. DERIVATIVES neutrally | ˈnōōtrəlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun): from Latin neutralis 'of neuter gender', from Latin neuter (see neuter).

nihilistic | ˌnīəˈlistik, ˌnēəˈlistik |
adjective
rejecting all religious and moral principles in the belief that life is meaningless: an embittered, nihilistic teenager.

nimble | ˈnimb(ə)l |
adjective (nimbler, nimblest)
quick and light in movement or action; agile: with a deft motion of her nimble fingers. • (of the mind) quick to comprehend: she is well-read and intellectually nimble. ORIGIN Old English næmel 'quick to seize or comprehend', related to niman 'take', of Germanic origin. The -b- was added for ease of pronunciation.

nip1 | nip |
verb (nips, nipping, nipped)
1 [with object] pinch, squeeze, or bite sharply: the dog nipped him on the leg. • (of the cold or frost) cause sharp pain or harm to: the vegetable garden, nipped now by frost. • (nip something off) remove something by pinching or squeezing sharply: he nipped off a length of wire with the cutters. 2 [with object] US informal steal or snatch (something): if I nipped a five-dollar bill I could slip it back the next day. 3 informal defeat by a narrow margin. noun a sharp pinch, squeeze, or bite: a strong beak which can deliver a serious nip. • a feeling of biting cold: there was a real winter nip in the air. PHRASES nip something in the bud suppress or destroy something at an early stage: the idea has been nipped in the bud at the local level. ORIGIN late Middle English: probably of Low German or Dutch origin. nip2 | nip | noun a small quantity or sip of liquor: a nip of brandy. verb (nips, nipping, nipped) [no object] take a sip or sips of liquor: the men nipped from the bottle. ORIGIN mid 18th century (originally denoting a half-pint of ale): probably an abbreviation of the rare term nipperkin 'small measure'; compare with Dutch nippen 'to sip'.

nirvana | nərˈvänə, nirˈvänə |
noun
(in Buddhism) a transcendent state in which there is neither suffering, desire, nor sense of self, and the subject is released from the effects of karma and the cycle of death and rebirth. It represents the final goal of Buddhism. • another term for moksha. • a state of perfect happiness; an ideal or idyllic place: Hollywood's dearest dream of small-town nirvana. ORIGIN from Sanskrit nirvāṇa, from nirvā 'be extinguished', from nis 'out' + vā- 'to blow'.

knit | nit |
verb (knits, knitting; past and past participle knitted or (especially in sense 2) knit)
1 [with object] make (a garment, blanket, etc.) by interlocking loops of wool or other yarn with knitting needles or on a machine: she was knitting a sweater. • make (a stitch or row of stitches) by interlocking loops of yarn: cast on and knit a few rows. • knit with a knit stitch: knit one, purl one. 2 unite or cause to unite: [no object] : disparate regions had begun to knit together under the king | [as adjective, with submodifier] (knit) : a closely knit family | [with object] : he knitted together a squad of players other clubs had disregarded. • [no object] (of parts of a broken bone) become joined during healing. 3 [with object] tighten (one's brow or eyebrows) in a frown of concentration, disapproval, or anxiety: Marcus knitted his brows. noun a knitted fabric: a machine-washable knit. • (knits) garment made of a knitted fabric: an array of casual knits. adjective denoting or relating to a type of knitting stitch produced by putting the needle through the front of each stitch from left to right. Also called plain1 (sense 6 of the adjective).Compare with purl1. DERIVATIVES knitter | ˈnidər | noun ORIGIN Old English cnyttan, of West Germanic origin; related to German dialect knütten, also to knot1. The original sense was 'tie in or with a knot', hence 'join, unite' (knit (sense 2 of the verb)); an obsolete Middle English sense 'knot string to make a net' gave rise to knit (sense 1 of the verb).

nocturnal | näkˈtərn(ə)l |
adjective
done, occurring, or active at night: most owls are nocturnal. DERIVATIVES nocturnally adverb ORIGIN late 15th century: from late Latin nocturnalis, from Latin nocturnus 'of the night', from nox, noct- 'night'.

nodose | ˈnōˌdōs |
adjective technical

having or characterized by hard or tight lumps; knotty. DERIVATIVES nodosity | nōˈdäsədē | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin nodosus, from nodus ‘knot’.

noetic | nōˈedik |
adjective formal
relating to mental activity or the intellect: the noetic quality of a mystical experience refers to the sense of revelation. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Greek noētikos, from noētos ‘intellectual’, from noein ‘perceive’.

nomadic | nōˈmadik |
adjective
living the life of a nomad; wandering: nomadic herdsmen. DERIVATIVES nomadically | nōˈmadək(ə)lē | adverb

nomenclature | ˈnōmənˌklāCH(ə)r |
noun
the devising or choosing of names for things, especially in a science or other discipline: the Linnean system of zoological nomenclature | the most important rule of nomenclature is that the name of a substance should be unambiguous. • the body or system of names in a particular field: the nomenclature of chemical compounds. • formal the term or terms applied to someone or something: “customers” was preferred to the original nomenclature “passengers.”. DERIVATIVES nomenclative adjective nomenclator noun nomenclatural | ˌnōmənˈklāCHərəl | adjective ORIGIN early 17th century: from French, from Latin nomenclatura, from nomen ‘name’ + clatura ‘calling, summoning’ (from calare ‘to call’).

nonchalant | ˌnänSHəˈlänt |
adjective
(of a person or manner) feeling or appearing casually calm and relaxed; not displaying anxiety, interest, or enthusiasm: she gave a nonchalant shrug. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from French, literally ‘not being concerned’, from the verb nonchaloir.

nonplussed | ˌnänˈplə |
adjective
1 (of a person) surprised and confused so much that they are unsure how to react: he would be completely nonplussed and embarrassed at the idea. 2 North American informal (of a person) not disconcerted; unperturbed: I remember students being nonplussed about the flooding in the city, as they had become accustomed to it over the years. USAGE In standard use, nonplussed means ‘surprised and confused’: the hostility of the new neighbor's refusal left Mrs. Walker nonplussed. In North American English, a new use has developed in recent years, meaning ‘unperturbed’—more or less the opposite of its traditional meaning: hoping to disguise his confusion, he tried to appear nonplussed. This new use probably arose on the assumption that non- was the normal negative prefix and must therefore have a negative meaning. It is not considered part of standard English.

nonsensical | nänˈsensək(ə)l |
adjective
1 having no meaning; making no sense: a nonsensical argument | he dismissed the claim as nonsensical. 2 ridiculously impractical or ill-advised: a tax that everyone recognizes was nonsensical. DERIVATIVES nonsensicality | ˌnänsensəˈkalitē | noun nonsensically | nänˈsensək(ə)lē | adverb

normative | ˈnôrmədiv |
adjective formal
establishing, relating to, or deriving from a standard or norm, especially of behavior: negative sanctions to enforce normative behavior. DERIVATIVES normatively adverb normativeness noun normativity noun ORIGIN mid 19th century: from Latin norma ‘carpenter's square’ (see norm).

noteworthy | ˈnōtˌwərTHē |
adjective
interesting, significant, or unusual: [with clause] : it is noteworthy that no one at the Bank has accepted responsibility for the failure. DERIVATIVES noteworthiness | ˈnōtˌwərTHēnəs | noun

notorious | nəˈtôrēəs |
adjective
famous or well known, typically for some bad quality or deed: Los Angeles is notorious for its smog | he was a notorious drinker and womanizer. ORIGIN late 15th century (in the sense ‘generally known’): from medieval Latin notorius (from Latin notus ‘known’) + -ous.

novel1 | ˈnäv(ə)l |
noun
a fictitious prose narrative of book length, typically representing character and action with some degree of realism: the novels of Jane Austen | she was reading a paperback novel. • (the novel) the literary genre represented or exemplified by novels: the novel is the most adaptable of all literary forms. ORIGIN early 16th century (denoting a short story or fable): from Italian novella (storia) ‘new (story)’, feminine of novello ‘new’, from Latin novellus, from novus ‘new’. The word is also found from late Middle English until the 18th century in the sense ‘a novelty, a piece of news’, from Old French nuvele (see novel2). novel2 | ˈnäv(ə)l | adjective new or unusual in an interesting way: he hit on a novel idea to solve his financial problems. DERIVATIVES novelly adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘recent’): from Old French, from Latin novellus, from novus ‘new’.

nubile | ˈnōōˌbīl, ˈnōōb(ə)l |
adjective
1 (of a young woman) sexually attractive: he employed a procession of nubile young secretaries. 2 (of a young woman) sexually mature; old enough for marriage. DERIVATIVES nubility | ˌnōōˈbilədē | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin nubilis ‘marriageable’, from nubere ‘cover or veil oneself for a bridegroom’ (from nubes ‘cloud’).

nuclear | ˈnōōklēər |
adjective
1 relating to the nucleus of an atom: nuclear chemistry. • denoting, relating to, or powered by the energy released in nuclear fission or fusion: nuclear submarines | nuclear energy. • denoting, possessing, or involving weapons using nuclear energy: nuclear nations | a nuclear bomb. 2 Biology relating to the nucleus of a cell: nuclear DNA. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from nucleus + -ar1.

nugatory | ˈnōōgəˌtôrē |
adjective
of no value or importance: a nugatory and pointless observation. • useless or futile: the teacher shortages will render nugatory the hopes of implementing the new curriculum. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin nugatorius, from nugari 'to trifle', from nugae 'jests'.

nullify | ˈnələˌfī |
verb (nullifies, nullifying, nullified) [with object]
make legally null and void; invalidate: it is at the discretion of the court to nullify the decision. • make of no use or value; cancel out: insulin can block the release of the hormone and thereby nullify the effects of training. DERIVATIVES nullification | ˌnələfəˈkāSH(ə)n | noun nullifier noun

numberless | ˈnəmbərləs |
adjective
too many to be counted; innumerable: there are numberless questions to be asked.

nurture | ˈnərCHər |
verb [with object]
care for and encourage the growth or development of: Jarrett was nurtured by his parents in a close-knit family. • help or encourage the development of: my father nurtured my love of art. • cherish (a hope, belief, or ambition): for a long time she had nurtured the dream of buying a shop. noun the process of caring for and encouraging the growth or development of someone or something: the nurture of ethics and integrity. • upbringing, education, and environment, contrasted with inborn characteristics as an influence on or determinant of personality: we are all what nature and nurture have made us. Often contrasted with nature. DERIVATIVES nurturer noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French noureture 'nourishment', based on Latin nutrire 'feed, cherish'.

nutrient | ˈnōōtrēənt |
noun
a substance that provides nourishment essential for growth and the maintenance of life: fish is a source of many important nutrients, including protein, vitamins, and minerals. ORIGIN mid 17th century (as an adjective, in the sense 'supplying nourishment'): from Latin nutrient- 'nourishing', from the verb nutrire.

nyctophobia | ˌniktəˈfōbēə |
noun
extreme or irrational fear of the night or of darkness. ORIGIN early 20th century: from Greek nux, nukt- 'night' + phobia.

nympholepsy | ˈnimfōˌlepsē |
noun literary
passion aroused in men by beautiful young girls. • wild frenzy caused by desire for an unattainable ideal. ORIGIN late 18th century: from Greek numpholēptos 'caught by nymphs', from numphē 'nymph' and lambanein 'take hold of', on the pattern of epilepsy.

obdurate | ˈäbd(y)ərət |
adjective
stubbornly refusing to change one's opinion or course of action: I argued this point with him, but he was obdurate. DERIVATIVES obduracy | ˈäbd(y)ərəsē | noun obdurately | ˈäbd(y)ərətlē | adverb obdurateness noun ORIGIN late Middle English (originally in the sense 'hardened in sin, impenitent'): from Latin obduratus, past participle of obdurare, from ob- 'in opposition' + durare 'harden' (from durus 'hard').

obeisance | ōˈbās(ə)ns, ōˈbēs(ə)ns |
noun
deferential respect: they paid obeisance to the Prince. • a gesture expressing deferential respect, such as a bow or curtsy: she made a deep obeisance. DERIVATIVES obeisant | ōˈbāsənt | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'obedience'): from Old French obeissance, from obeissant 'obeying', present participle of obeir.

obfuscate | ˈäbfəˌskāt |
verb [with object]
render obscure, unclear, or unintelligible: the spelling changes will deform some familiar words and obfuscate their etymological origins. • bewilder (someone): it is more likely to obfuscate people than enlighten them. DERIVATIVES obfuscatory | äbˈfəskəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (as adjective): from late Latin obfuscat- 'darkened', from the verb obfuscare, based on Latin fuscus 'dark'.

objective | əbˈjektiv |
adjective
1 (of a person or their judgment) not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts: historians try to be objective and impartial. Contrasted with subjective. • not dependent on the mind for existence; actual: a matter of objective fact. 2 [attributive] Grammar relating to or denoting a case of nouns and pronouns used as the object of a transitive verb or a preposition. noun 1 a thing aimed at or sought; a goal: the system has achieved its objective. 2 (the objective) Grammar the objective case. 3 (also objective lens) the lens in a telescope or microscope nearest to the object observed: examine with high power objective. DERIVATIVES objectiveness | əbˈjektivnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: via French from medieval Latin objectivus, from objectum (see object).

oblivious | əˈblivēəs |
adjective
not aware of or not concerned about what is happening around one: she became absorbed, oblivious to the passage of time | the women were oblivious of his presence. DERIVATIVES obliviously | əˈblivēəslē | adverb obliviousness | əˈblivēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin obliviosus, from oblivio(n-) (see oblivion).

obscure | əbˈskyo͝or |
adjective (obscurer, obscurest)
not discovered or known about; uncertain: his origins and parentage are obscure. • not clearly expressed or easily understood: obscure references to Proust. • not important or well known: an obscure religious sect. • hard to make out or define; vague: figurative : I feel an obscure resentment. • (of a color) not sharply defined; dim or dingy. verb [with object] keep from being seen; conceal: gray clouds obscure the sun. • make unclear and difficult to understand: the debate has become obscured by conflicting ideological perspectives. • overshadow: none of this should obscure the skill, experience, and perseverance of the workers. DERIVATIVES obscurely | əbˈskyo͝orlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French obscur, from Latin obscurus ‘dark’, from an Indo-European root meaning ‘cover’.

observant | əbˈzərv(ə)nt |
adjective
1 quick to notice things: her observant eye took in every detail. 2 adhering strictly to the rules of a particular religion, especially Judaism: an observant Jew. noun (Observant) historical a member of a branch of the Franciscan order that followed a strict rule. ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun): from French, literally ‘watching’, present participle of observer (see observe).

obsolete | ˌäbsəˈlēt |
adjective
1 no longer produced or used; out of date: the disposal of old and obsolete machinery | the phrase was obsolete after 1625. 2 Biology (of a part or characteristic of an organism) less developed than formerly or in a related species; rudimentary; vestigial. verb [with object] mainly US cause (a product or idea) to be or become obsolete by replacing it with something new: we're trying to stimulate the business by obsoleting last year's designs. DERIVATIVES obsoletely adverb obsoleteness | ˌäbsəˈlētnəs | noun obsoletism | -ˈlēˌtizəm | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin obsoletus ‘grown old, worn out’, past participle of obsolescere ‘fall into disuse’.

obstreperous | əbˈstrep(ə)rəs |
adjective
noisy and difficult to control: the boy is cocky and obstreperous. DERIVATIVES obstreperously | əbˈstrep(ə)rəslē | adverb obstreperousness | əbˈstrep(ə)rəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense ‘clamorous, vociferous’): from Latin obstreperus (from obstrepere, from ob- ‘against’ + strepere ‘make a noise’) + -ous.

obtrusive | əbˈtro͞osiv, äbˈtro͞osiv |
adjective
noticeable or prominent in an unwelcome or intrusive way: high-powered satellites can reach smaller and less obtrusive antennas. DERIVATIVES obtrusively | əbˈtro͞osəvlē, äbˈtro͞osəvlē | adverb obtrusiveness | əbˈtro͞osivnəs, äbˈtro͞osivnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin obtrus- ‘thrust forward’, from the verb obtrudere (see obtrude).

obviate | ˈäbvēˌāt |
verb [with object]
remove (a need or difficulty): the Venetian blinds obviated the need for curtains. • avoid; prevent: a parachute can be used to obviate disaster. DERIVATIVES obviation | äbvēˈāSHən | noun obviator | -ˌātər | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from late Latin obviat- ‘prevented’, from the verb obviare, based on Latin via ‘way’.

odious | ˈōdēəs |
adjective
extremely unpleasant; repulsive: a pretty odious character | odious hypocrisy. DERIVATIVES odiously | ˈōdēəslē | adverb odiousness | ˈōdēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French odieus, from Latin odiosus, from odium ‘hatred’.

officious | əˈfiSHəs |
adjective
assertive of authority in an annoyingly domineering way, especially with regard to petty or trivial matters: the security people were very officious. • intrusively enthusiastic in offering help or advice; interfering: an officious bystander. DERIVATIVES officiously | əˈfiSHəslē | adverb officiousness | əˈfiSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 15th century: from Latin officiosus ‘obliging’, from officium (see office). The original sense was ‘performing its function, efficacious’, whence ‘ready to help or please’ (mid 16th century), later becoming depreciatory (late 16th century).

ominous | ˈämənəs |
adjective
giving the impression that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen; threatening; inauspicious: there were ominous dark clouds gathering overhead. DERIVATIVES ominousness | ˈämənəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin ominosus, from omen, omin- ‘omen’.

onerous | ˈōnərəs, ˈänərəs |
adjective
(of a task, duty, or responsibility) involving an amount of effort and difficulty that is oppressively burdensome: he found his duties increasingly onerous. • Law involving heavy obligations: an onerous lease. DERIVATIVES onerously | ˈōnərəslē, ˈänərəslē | adverb onerousness | ˈōnərəsnəs, ˈänərəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French onereus, from Latin onerosus, from onus, oner- ‘burden’.

opaque | ōˈpāk |
adjective (opaquer, opaquest)
not able to be seen through; not transparent: the windows were opaque with steam. • (especially of language) hard or impossible to understand; unfathomable: technical jargon that was opaque to her. noun an opaque thing or substance. • Photography a substance for producing opaque areas on negatives. DERIVATIVES opaquely | ōˈpāklē | adverb opaqueness | ōˈpāknəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English opake, from Latin opacus ‘darkened’. The current spelling (rare before the 19th century) has been influenced by the French form.

opulent | ˈäpyəl(ə)nt, ˈōpyəl(ə)nt |
adjective
ostentatiously rich and luxurious or lavish: the opulent comfort of a limousine. • wealthy: his more opulent tenants. DERIVATIVES opulently | ˈäpyələn(t)lē, ˈōpyələn(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense ‘wealthy’): from Latin opulent- ‘wealthy, splendid’, from opes ‘wealth’.

oracular | ôˈrakyələr |
adjective
relating to an oracle: the oracular shrine. • (of an utterance, advice, etc.) hard to interpret; enigmatic: an ambiguous, oracular remark. • holding or claiming the authority of an oracle: he holds forth in oracular fashion. DERIVATIVES oracularity | ôˌrakyəˈlaritē | noun oracularly | ôˈrakyələrlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin oraculum (see oracle) + -ar1.

ostensible | əˈstensəb(ə)l |
adjective [attributive]
stated or appearing to be true, but not necessarily so: the delay may have a deeper cause than the ostensible reason. DERIVATIVES ostensibility | -ˌstensəˈbilitē | noun ORIGIN mid 18th century: from French, from medieval Latin ostensibilis from Latin ostens- ‘stretched out to view’, from the verb ostendere, from ob- ‘in view of’ + tendere ‘to stretch’.

ostentatious | ˌäst(ə)nˈtāSHəs |
adjective
characterized by vulgar or pretentious display; designed to impress or attract notice: books that people buy and display ostentatiously but never actually finish. DERIVATIVES ostentatiousness | ˌäst(ə)nˈtāSHəsnəs | noun

ostracism | ˈästrəˌsiz(ə)m |
noun
1 exclusion from a society or group: the family suffered social ostracism. 2 (in ancient Greece) temporary banishment from a city by popular vote.

ostrich | ˈästriCH |
noun
1 a flightless swift-running African bird with a long neck, long legs, and two toes on each foot. It is the largest living bird, with males reaching an average height of 8 feet (2.5 m). Struthio camelus, the only member of the family Struthionidae. 2 a person who refuses to face reality or accept facts: don't be an ostrich when it comes to security systems. [from the popular belief that ostriches bury their heads in the sand if pursued.] ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French ostriche, from Latin avis ‘bird’ + late Latin struthio (from Greek strouthiōn ‘ostrich’, from strouthos ‘sparrow or ostrich’).

ovation | ōˈvāSH(ə)n |
noun
1 a sustained and enthusiastic show of appreciation from an audience, especially by means of applause: the performance received a thundering ovation. 2 Roman History a processional entrance into Rome by a victorious commander, of lesser honor than a triumph. ORIGIN early 16th century (in ovation (sense 2)): from Latin ovatio(n-), from ovare ‘exult’. The word had the sense ‘exultation’ from the mid 17th to early 19th century.

overbearing | ˌōvərˈberiNG |
adjective
unpleasantly or arrogantly domineering: he can't wait to get away from his overbearing parents. DERIVATIVES overbearingly | ˌōvərˈberiNGlē | adverb overbearingness | ˌōvərˈberiNGnəs | noun

overture | ˈōvərˌCHo͝or, ˈōvərˌCHər |
noun
1 an orchestral piece at the beginning of an opera, suite, play, oratorio, or other extended composition: the overture to Mozart's “Don Giovanni” | Overture and Incidental Music for “A Midsummer Night's Dream”. • an independent orchestral composition in one movement: Tchaikovsky's “1812 Overture”. 2 an introduction to something more substantial: the talks were no more than an overture to a long debate. 3 (usually overtures) an approach or proposal made to someone with the aim of opening negotiations or establishing a relationship: Coleen listened to his overtures of love. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘aperture’): from Old French, from Latin apertura ‘aperture’.

overweening | ˌōvərˈwēniNG |
adjective
showing excessive confidence or pride: overweening ambition. DERIVATIVES overweeningly | ˌōvərˈwēniNGlē | adverb overweeningness noun

oxymoron | ˌäksəˈmôrˌän |
noun
a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction (e.g. faith unfaithful kept him falsely true): that fashionable rhetorical novelty, the humblebrag, is itself an oxymoron | the oxymoron forces together two terms which are seemingly incompatible. DERIVATIVES oxymoronic | -məˈränik | adjective ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Greek oxumōron, neuter (used as a noun) of oxumōros ‘pointedly foolish’, from oxus ‘sharp’ + mōros ‘foolish’.

pacifist | ˈpasəfəst |
noun
a person who believes that war and violence are unjustifiable: she was a

committed pacifist all her life. adjective holding the belief that war and violence are unjustifiable.

painstaking | ˈpānˌstākiNG |
adjective
done with or employing great care and thoroughness: painstaking attention to detail | he is a gentle, painstaking man. DERIVATIVES painstakingness noun

palatable | ˈpaləd͟əb(ə)l |
adjective
(of food or drink) pleasant to taste: a very palatable local red wine. • (of an action or proposal) acceptable or satisfactory: a device that made increased taxation more palatable. DERIVATIVES palatability | ˌpalətəˈbilətē | noun palatableness | ˈpalədəb(ə)lnəs | noun palatably | -blē | adverb

palaver | pəˈlavər, pəˈläv |
noun
1 unnecessarily elaborate or complex procedure: there's a lot of palaver involved | since I've started the whole palaver, I may as well carry it forward | [in singular] : getting into each building was a bit of a palaver | what a palaver! • lengthy and unproductive discussion: an hour of aimless palaver | we get endless palaver, sometimes in blank verse. 2 mainly historical an improvised conference between two groups, typically those without a shared language or culture. verb [no object] talk unproductively and at length: it's too hot for palavering. ORIGIN early 18th century (in West Africa, denoting a quarrel or misunderstanding): from Portuguese palavra ‘word’, from Latin parabola ‘comparison’ (see parable).

paleontology | ˌpālēˌänˈtäləjē |
noun
the branch of science concerned with fossil animals and plants. DERIVATIVES paleontological | ˈpālēˌäntəˈläjəkəl | (British palaeontological) adjective ORIGIN mid 19th century: from paleo- + Greek onta ‘beings’ (neuter plural of ōn, present participle of einai ‘be’) + -logy.

palliate | ˈpalēˌāt |
verb [with object]
make (a disease or its symptoms) less severe or unpleasant without removing the cause: treatment works by palliating symptoms. • allay or moderate (fears or suspicions): this eliminated, or at least palliated, suspicions aroused by German unity. • disguise the seriousness or gravity of (an offense): there is no way to excuse or palliate his dirty deed. DERIVATIVES palliation | ˌpalē ˈāSH(ə)n | noun palliator | -ˌātər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin palliat- ‘cloaked’, from the verb palliare, from pallium ‘cloak’.

pallid | ˈpaləd |
adjective
(of a person's face) pale, typically because of poor health. • feeble or insipid: an utterly pallid and charmless character. DERIVATIVES pallidity noun pallidly | ˈpalədlē | adverb pallidness | ˈpalədnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin pallidus ‘pale’ (related to pallere ‘be pale’).

panacea | ˌpanəˈsēə |
noun
a solution or remedy for all difficulties or diseases: the panacea for all corporate ills | the time-honored panacea, cod liver oil. DERIVATIVES panacean | -ˈsēən | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: via Latin from Greek panakeia, from panakēs ‘all-healing’, from pan ‘all’ + akos ‘remedy’.

panegyric | ˌpanəˈjirik |
noun
a public speech or published text in praise of someone or something: Vera's panegyric on friendship. DERIVATIVES panegyrical | ˌpanəˈjirək(ə)l | adjective panegyrically | ˌpanəˈjirək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from French panégyrique, via Latin from Greek panēgurikos ‘of public assembly’, from pan ‘all’ + aguris ‘agora, assembly’.

parable | ˈperəb(ə)l |
noun
a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels: the parable of the blind men and the elephant | a modern-day parable. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French parabole, from an ecclesiastical Latin sense ‘discourse, allegory’ of Latin parabola ‘comparison’, from Greek parabolē (see parabola).

paradigm | ˈperəˌdīm |
noun
1 a typical example or pattern of something; a model: there is a new paradigm for public art in this country. • a worldview underlying the theories and methodology of a particular scientific subject: the discovery of universal gravitation became the paradigm of successful science. 2 Linguistics a set of linguistic items that form mutually exclusive choices in particular syntactic roles: English determiners form a paradigm: we can say “a book” or “his book” but not “a his book.”. Often contrasted with syntagm. 3 (in the traditional grammar of Latin, Greek, and other inflected languages) a table of all the inflected forms of a particular verb, noun, or adjective, serving as a model for other words of the same conjugation or declension. ORIGIN late 15th century: via late Latin from Greek paradeigma, from paradeiknunai ‘show side by side’, from para- ‘beside’ + deiknunai ‘to show’.

paradox | ˈperəˌdäks |
noun
a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true: in a paradox, he has discovered that stepping back from his job has increased the rewards he gleans from it. • a statement or proposition that, despite sound (or apparently sound) reasoning from acceptable premises, leads to a conclusion that seems senseless, logically unacceptable, or self-contradictory: a potentially serious conflict between quantum mechanics and the general theory of relativity known as the information paradox. • a situation, person, or thing that combines contradictory features or qualities: the mingling of deciduous trees with elements of desert flora forms a fascinating ecological paradox. ORIGIN

mid 16th century (originally denoting a statement contrary to accepted opinion): via late Latin from Greek paradoxon 'contrary (opinion)', neuter adjective used as a noun, from para- 'distinct from' + doxa 'opinion'.

parallelism | ˈperəˌlelˌiz(ə)m |
noun
the state of being parallel or of corresponding in some way: Greek thinkers who believed in the parallelism of microcosm and macrocosm. • the use of successive verbal constructions in poetry or prose which correspond in grammatical structure, sound, meter, meaning, etc.: parallelism suggests a connection of meaning through an echo of form | [count noun] : the parallelisms are reinforced by frequent alliteration. • Computing the use of parallel processing in computer systems: massive parallelism gives neural networks a high degree of fault tolerance. DERIVATIVES parallelistic | ˌparəlel ˈistik | adjective

Paramount | ˈperəˌmount |
a city in southwestern California, southeast of Los Angeles; population 55,236 (est. 2008).
• a US film production and distribution company established in 1912. A major studio of the silent era, Paramount acted as an outlet for many of the films of Cecil B. de Mille and helped to create stars such as Mary Pickford and Rudolf Valentino. paramount | ˈperəˌmount | adjective more important than anything else; supreme: the interests of the child are of paramount importance. • [attributive] having supreme power: a paramount chief. DERIVATIVES paramountly adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense 'highest in jurisdiction' in the phrases lord paramount and paramount chief): from Anglo-Norman French paramont, from Old French par 'by' + amont 'above'.

paramour | ˈperəˌmo͝or |
noun archaic
a lover, especially the illicit partner of a married person. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French par amour 'by love'; in English the phrase was written from an early date as one word and came to be treated as a noun.

paraphernalia | ˌperəfə(r)ˈnālyə |
noun [treated as singular or plural]
miscellaneous articles, especially the equipment needed for a particular activity: drills, saws, and other paraphernalia necessary for home improvements | drugs and drug paraphernalia that had been discovered on the premises. • trappings associated with a particular institution or activity that are regarded as superfluous: the rituals and paraphernalia of government. ORIGIN mid 17th century (denoting property owned by a married woman): from medieval Latin, based on Greek parapherna 'property apart from a dowry', from para 'distinct from' + pherna (from phernē 'dower').

pariah | pəˈrīə |
noun
1 an outcast: they were treated as social pariahs. 2 historical a member of a low caste in southern India. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Tamil paṟaiyan, Malayalam paṟayan '(hereditary) drummer', from Tamil paṟai and Malayalam paṟa 'a drum'. USAGE In the sense 'an outcast' the word pariah is considered highly offensive in southern India.

parley | ˈpärlē |
noun (plural parleys)
a conference between opposing sides in a dispute, especially a discussion of terms for an armistice: a parley is in progress and the invaders may withdraw. verb (parleys, parleying, parleyed) [no object] hold a conference with the opposing side to discuss terms: they disagreed over whether to parley with the enemy. ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting speech or debate): perhaps from Old French parlee 'spoken', feminine past participle of the verb parler.

parochial | pəˈrōkēəl |
adjective
relating to a church parish: the parochial church council. • having a limited or narrow outlook or scope: this worldview seems incredibly naive and parochial. DERIVATIVES parochiality | -rōkēˈalitē | noun parochially adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, from ecclesiastical Latin parochialis 'relating to an ecclesiastical district', from parochia (see parish).

paroxysm | ˈperəkˌsiz(ə)m |
noun
a sudden attack or violent expression of a particular emotion or activity: a paroxysm of weeping. • Medicine a sudden recurrence or attack of a disease; a sudden worsening of symptoms: paroxysms of ataxia and shaking. DERIVATIVES paroxysmal | ˌperəkˈsizm(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: from French paroxysme, via medieval Latin from Greek paroxusmos, from paroxunein 'exasperate', from para- 'beyond' + oxunein 'sharpen' (from oxus 'sharp').

parsimonious | ˌpärsəˈmōnēəs |
adjective
unwilling to spend money or use resources; stingy or frugal: even the parsimonious Joe paid for drinks all round. DERIVATIVES parsimoniously | ˌpärsəˈmōnēəslē | adverb parsimoniousness | ˌpärsəˈmōnēəsnəs | noun

partisan | ˈpärdəz(ə)n |
noun
1 a strong supporter of a party, cause, or person: partisans of the exiled Stuarts. 2 a member of an armed group formed to fight secretly against an occupying force, in particular one operating in enemy-occupied Yugoslavia, Italy, and parts of eastern Europe in World War II: the partisans opened fire from the woods | [as modifier] : it is not in the nature of partisan warfare to produce victory in the field. adjective prejudiced in favor of a particular cause: we will need people to put partisan politics aside and work with us for the good of the country | his account was highly partisan. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from French, via Italian dialect from Italian partigiano, from parte 'part' (from Latin pars, part-).

pathetic | pəˈTHedik |
adjective

1 arousing pity, especially through vulnerability or sadness: she looked so pathetic that I bent down to comfort her | it was a pathetic sight. 2 miserably inadequate; of very low standard: he's a pathetic excuse for a man | his ball control was pathetic. 3 archaic relating to the emotions. ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense 'affecting the emotions'): via late Latin from Greek pathētikos 'sensitive', based on pathos 'suffering'.

pathologize | pəˈTHäləˌj |
verb [with object]
regard or treat (someone or something) as psychologically abnormal or unhealthy: most of the older theories pathologize same-sex attraction. DERIVATIVES pathologization | pəˌTHäləjəˈzāSHən | (British also pathologisation) noun

patina | pəˈtēnə |
noun
a green or brown film on the surface of bronze or similar metals, produced by oxidation over a long period: many bronzes have been overcleaned, their original patina removed and artificially replaced. • a gloss or sheen on a surface resulting from age or polishing: the dining table will acquire a warm patina with age. • the impression or appearance of something: he carries the patina of old money and good breeding. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from Italian, from Latin patina 'shallow dish'.

patronize | ˈpātrəˌnīz, ˈpatrəˌn |
verb [with object]
1 treat in a way that is apparently kind or helpful but that betrays a feeling of superiority: she was determined not to be put down or patronized. 2 frequent (a store, theater, restaurant, or other establishment) as a customer: restaurants remaining open in the evening were well patronized. • give encouragement and financial support to (a person, especially an artist, or a cause): local churches and voluntary organizations were patronized by the family. DERIVATIVES patronization | ˌpātrəniˈzāSHən, ˌpa- | (British also patronisation) noun patronizer | ˈpātrəˌnīzər, ˈpatrəˌnīzər | (British also patronisation) noun

paucity | ˈpôsədē |
noun [in singular]
the presence of something only in small or insufficient quantities or amounts; scarcity: a paucity of information. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French paucite or Latin paucitas, from paucus 'few'.

peccadillo | ˌpekəˈdilō |
noun (plural ˈ*peccadilloes or peccadillos)*
a small, relatively unimportant offense or sin: the sexual peccadilloes of celebrities aren't necessarily news. ORIGIN late 16th century: from Spanish pecadillo, diminutive of pecado 'sin', from Latin peccare 'to sin'.

pecuniary | pəˈkyo͞onēˌerē |
adjective formal
relating to or consisting of money: he admitted obtaining a pecuniary advantage by deception. DERIVATIVES pecuniarily | pəˌkyo͞onēˈe(ə)rəlē | adverb ORIGIN early 16th century: from Latin pecuniarius, from pecunia 'money', from pecu 'cattle, money'.

pedagogy | ˈpedəˌgäjē |
noun (plural pedagogies)
the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept: the relationship between applied linguistics and language pedagogy | [count noun] : subject-based pedagogies. ORIGIN late 16th century: from French pédagogie, from Greek paidagōgia 'office of a pedagogue', from paidagōgos (see pedagogue).

pedantic | pəˈdan(t)ik |
adjective
of or like a pedant: many of the essays are long, dense, and too pedantic to hold great appeal. DERIVATIVES pedantically | pəˈdan(t)ək(ə)lē | adverb

peerless | ˈpirləs |
adjective
unequaled; unrivaled: a peerless cartoonist. DERIVATIVES peerlessly | ˈpirləslē | adverb

pejorative | pəˈjôrədiv |
adjective
expressing contempt or disapproval: permissiveness is used almost universally as a pejorative term. noun a word expressing contempt or disapproval: most of what he said was inflammatory and filled with pejoratives. DERIVATIVES pejoratively | pəˈjôrədəvlē, ˈpejəˌrādəvlē | adverb ORIGIN late 19th century: from French péjoratif, -ive, from late Latin pejorare 'make worse', from Latin pejor 'worse'.

pellucid | pəˈlo͞osəd |
adjective literary
translucently clear: mountains reflected in the pellucid waters. • lucid in style or meaning; easily understood: he writes, as always, in pellucid prose. • (of music or other sound) clear and pure in tone: a smooth legato and pellucid singing tone are his calling cards. DERIVATIVES pellucidity | ˌpelyəˈsidədē | noun pellucidly adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin pellucidus, from per- per- + lucidus lucid.

penchant | ˈpen(t)SH(ə)nt |
noun [usually in singular]
a strong or habitual liking for something or tendency to do something: he has a penchant for adopting stray dogs. ORIGIN late 17th century: from French, 'leaning, inclining', present participle of the verb pencher.

penury | ˈpenyərē |
noun
extreme poverty; destitution: he died in a state of virtual penury. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin penuria 'need, scarcity'; perhaps related to paene 'almost'.

percipient | pərˈsipēənt |
adjective
(of a person) having a good understanding of things; perceptive: he is a percipient interpreter of the public mood. noun (especially in philosophy or with reference to psychic phenomena) a person who is able to perceive things. DERIVATIVES percipiently adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin percipient- 'seizing, understanding', from the verb percipere.

peremptory | pəˈrem(p)t(ə)rē |
adjective
(especially of a person's manner or actions) insisting on immediate attention or obedience, especially in a brusquely imperious way: "Just do it!" came the peremptory reply. • Law not open to appeal or challenge; final: there has been no disobedience of a peremptory order of the court. DERIVATIVES peremptorily | pəˈrem(p)t(ə)rəlē | adverb peremptoriness | pəˈrem(p)t(ə)rēnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (as a legal term): via Anglo-Norman French from Latin peremptorius 'deadly, decisive', from perempt- 'destroyed, cut off', from the verb perimere, from per- 'completely' + emere 'take, buy'.

perfidious | pərˈfidēəs |
adjective literary
deceitful and untrustworthy: a perfidious lover. DERIVATIVES perfidiously | pərˈfidēəslē | adverb perfidiousness | pərˈfidēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin perfidiosus, from perfidia 'treachery'.

perfunctory | pərˈfəNG(k)t(ə)rē |
adjective
(of an action or gesture) carried out with a minimum of effort or reflection: he gave a perfunctory nod. DERIVATIVES perfunctorily | pərˈfəNG(k)t(ə)rəlē | adverb perfunctoriness | pərˈfəNG(k)t(ə)rēnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from late Latin perfunctorius 'careless', from Latin perfunct- 'done with, discharged', from the verb perfungi.

perigee | ˈperəˌjē |
noun Astronomy
the point in the orbit of the moon or a satellite at which it is nearest to the earth. The opposite of apogee. DERIVATIVES perigean adjective ORIGIN late 16th century: from French périgée, via modern Latin from Greek perigeion 'close round the earth', from peri- 'around' + gē 'earth'.

permeate | ˈpərmēˌāt |
verb [with object]
spread throughout (something); pervade: the aroma of soup permeated the air | [no object] : his personality has begun to permeate through the whole organization. DERIVATIVES permeant adjective permeation | ˌpərmēˈāSH(ə)n | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin permeat- 'passed through', from the verb permeare, from per- 'through' + meare 'pass, go'.

pernicious | pərˈniSHəs |
adjective
having a harmful effect, especially in a gradual or subtle way: the pernicious effects of air pollution | he is one of the most pernicious influences in the party | this whole line of thinking is pernicious. DERIVATIVES perniciously | pərˈniSHəslē | adverb perniciousness | pərˈniSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin perniciosus 'destructive', from pernicies 'ruin', based on nex, nec- 'death'.

perpetrate | ˈpərpəˌtrāt |
verb [with object]
carry out or commit (a harmful, illegal, or immoral action): a crime has been perpetrated against a sovereign state. DERIVATIVES perpetration | ˌpərpəˈtrāSH(ə)n | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin perpetrat- 'performed', from the verb perpetrare, from per- 'to completion' + patrare 'bring about'. In Latin the act perpetrated might be good or bad; in English the verb was first used in the statutes referring to crime, hence the negative association. USAGE To perpetrate something is to commit it: the gang perpetrated outrages against several citizens. To perpetuate something is to cause it to continue or to keep happening: the stories only serve to perpetuate the legend that the house is haunted.

perquisite | ˈpərkwəzət |
noun formal
another term for perk2. • a thing regarded as a special right or privilege enjoyed as a result of one's position: the wife of a president has all the perquisites of stardom. • historical a thing that has served its primary use and is then given to a subordinate or employee as a customary right. USAGE Perquisite and prerequisite are sometimes confused. Perquisite usually means 'an extra allowance or privilege': he had all the perquisites of a movie star, including a stand-in. Prerequisite means 'something required as a condition': passing the examination was one of the prerequisites for a teaching position. ORIGIN late Middle English: from medieval Latin perquisitum 'acquisition', from Latin perquirere 'search diligently for', from per- 'thoroughly' + quaerere 'seek'.

persiflage | ˈpərsəˌfläZH |
noun formal
light and slightly contemptuous mockery or banter: an air of persiflage. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from French persifler 'to banter', based on siffler 'to whistle'.

perspicacious | ˌpərspəˈkāSHəs |
adjective
having a ready insight into and understanding of things: it offers quite a few facts to the perspicacious reporter. DERIVATIVES perspicaciously adverb perspicaciousness noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin perspicax, perspicac- 'seeing clearly'+ -acious.

pertinacious | ˌpərtnˈāSHəs |
adjective formal
holding firmly to an opinion or a course of action: he worked with a pertinacious resistance to interruptions. DERIVATIVES pertinaciously | ˌpərtnˈāSHəslē | adverb pertinaciousness | ˌpərdnˈāSHəsnəs | noun pertinacity | ˌpərt-

nˈasədē | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin pertinax, pertinac- ‘holding fast’+ -ous.

pertinent | ˈpərtənənt |
adjective
relevant or applicable to a particular matter; apposite: she asked me a lot of very pertinent questions | the unreleased section of tape was not pertinent to the investigation. DERIVATIVES pertinence | ˈpərtənəns | noun pertinency noun pertinently | ˈpərtənənən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin pertinent- ‘having reference to’, from the verb pertinere (see pertain).

pervasive | pərˈvāsiv |
adjective
(especially of an unwelcome influence or physical effect) spreading widely throughout an area or a group of people: ageism is pervasive and entrenched in our society. DERIVATIVES pervasively | pərˈvāsəvlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 18th century: from Latin pervas- ‘passed through’ (from the verb pervadere) + -ive.

petrichor | ˈpetrīˌkôr |
noun
a pleasant smell that frequently accompanies the first rain after a long period of warm, dry weather: other than the petrichor emanating from the rapidly drying grass, there was not a trace of evidence that it had rained at all. ORIGIN 1960s: blend of petro- ‘relating to rocks’ (the smell is believed to be caused by a liquid mixture of organic compounds which collects in the ground) and ichor.

petulant | ˈpeCHələnt |
adjective
(of a person or their manner) childishly sulky or bad-tempered: he was moody and petulant | a petulant shake of the head. DERIVATIVES petulantly | ˈpeCHələn(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense ‘immodest’): from French pétulant, from Latin petulant- ‘impudent’ (related to petere ‘aim at, seek’). The current sense (mid 18th century) is influenced by pettish.

Philistine | ˈfiləˌstēn, ˈfiləˌstīn |
noun
a member of a non-Semitic people of ancient southern Palestine, who came into conflict with the Israelites during the 12th and 11th centuries bc. According to the Bible, the Philistines, from whom the country of Palestine took its name, came from Crete and settled the southern coastal plain of Canaan in the 12th century bc. ORIGIN Old English Filistina (genitive plural), from late Latin Philistinus from Greek Philistinos, from Hebrew pĕlištī: compare with Palestine. See also philistine. philistine | ˈfiləˌstēn, ˈfiləˌstīn | noun a person who is hostile or indifferent to culture and the arts, or who has no understanding of them: I am a complete philistine when it comes to paintings. adjective hostile or indifferent to culture and the arts: there were displays to inspire even the most philistine of visitors. DERIVATIVES philistinism | ˈfiləˌstēˌniz(ə)m, ˈfiləˌstīˌniz(ə)m | noun ORIGIN early 19th century: from Philistine, originally with reference to a confrontation between university students and townspeople in Jena, Germany, in the late 17th century; a sermon on the conflict quoted ‘the Philistines are upon you’ (Judges 16), which led to an association between the townspeople and those hostile to culture.

phlegmatic | fleɡˈmadik |
adjective
(of a person) having an unemotional and stolidly calm disposition: the phlegmatic British character. DERIVATIVES phlegmatically | fleɡˈmadək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense ‘relating to the humor phlegm’): from Old French fleumatique, via Latin from Greek phlegmatikos, from phlegma ‘inflammation’ (see phlegm).

picaresque | ˌpikəˈresk |
adjective
relating to an episodic style of fiction dealing with the adventures of a rough and dishonest but appealing hero: a rowdy, picaresque "guys being guys" movie. ORIGIN early 19th century: from French, from Spanish picaresco, from pícaro ‘rogue’.

pied | pīd |
adjective
having two or more different colors: pied dogs from the Pyrenees. ORIGIN Middle English (originally in the sense ‘black and white like a magpie’): from pie2 + -ed1.

piety | ˈpīədē |
noun (plural pieties)
the quality of being religious or reverent: acts of piety and charity. • a belief or point of view that is accepted with unthinking conventional reverence: the accepted pieties of our time. ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense ‘pity’): from Old French piete, from Latin pietas ‘dutifulness’, from pius (see pious).

pinnacle | ˈpinək(ə)l |
noun
1 the most successful point; the culmination: he had reached the pinnacle of his career. 2 a high, pointed piece of rock. • a small pointed turret built as an ornament on a roof. verb [with object] literary 1 set on or as if on a pinnacle: a rustic cross was pinnacled upon the makeshift altar. 2 form the culminating point or example of. DERIVATIVES pinnacled adjective ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, from late Latin pinnaculum, diminutive of pinna ‘wing, point’.

piquant | ˈpēk(w)ənt |
adjective
having a pleasantly sharp taste or appetizing flavor: a piquant tartare sauce. • pleasantly stimulating or exciting to the mind. DERIVATIVES piquantly | ˈpēk(w)ən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 16th century (in the sense ‘severe, bitter’): from French, literally ‘stinging, pricking’, present participle of piquer.

pithy | ˈpiTHē |
adjective (pithier, pithiest)
1 (of language or style) concise and forcefully expressive. 2 (of a fruit or plant) containing much pith. DERIVATIVES pithily | ˈpiTHəlē | adverb pithiness | ˈpiTHēnəs | noun

placate | ˈplāˌkāt |
verb [with object]
make (someone) less angry or hostile: they attempted to placate the students with promises. DERIVATIVES placation | plāˈkāSHən | noun placater noun ORIGIN late 17th century: from Latin placat- 'appeased', from the verb placare.

planetary | ˈplanəˌterē |
adjective
relating to or belonging to a planet or planets: the laws of planetary motion. • relating to the earth as a planet: planetary air pollution and climatic change. ORIGIN late 16th century: from late Latin planetarius 'relating to the planets' (recorded only as a noun meaning 'astrologer'), from planeta 'planet'.

platitude | ˈpladəˌto͞od |
noun
a remark or statement, especially one with a moral content, that has been used too often to be interesting or thoughtful: he masks his disdain for her with platitudes about how she should believe in herself more. ORIGIN mid 18th century (in the sense 'dullness, banality'): from French, from plat 'flat'.

plebeian | pləˈbēən |
noun
(in ancient Rome) a commoner. • a member of the lower social classes: the feeling was shared by plebeians, gentry, and clergy. adjective of or belonging to the commoners of ancient Rome. • of or belonging to the lower social classes: two dancers, one royal and one plebeian. • lacking in refinement: he is a man of plebeian tastes. ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin plebeius (from plebs, pleb- 'the common people') + -an.

plunder | ˈpləndər |
verb [with object]
steal goods from (a place or person), typically using force and in a time of war or civil disorder: looters moved into the disaster area to plunder stores | [no object] : the invaders were back and ready to plunder. • steal (goods), typically using force and in a time of disorder: the contents of the abandoned houses were plundered by members of the new regime. • take material from (artistic or academic work) for one's own purposes: we shall plunder related sciences to assist our research. noun the violent and dishonest acquisition of property: the farmers suffered the inhumanity and indignities of pillage and plunder. • property acquired illegally and violently: the army sacked the city and carried off huge quantities of plunder. DERIVATIVES plunderer | ˈplənd(ə)rər | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from German plündern, literally 'rob of household goods', from Middle High German plunder 'household effects'. Early use of the verb was with reference to the Thirty Years War (reflecting German usage); on the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, the word and activity were associated with the forces under Prince Rupert.

plutocracy | plo͞oˈtäkrəsē |
noun (plural plutocracies)
government by the wealthy: the attack on the Bank of England was a gesture against the very symbol of plutocracy. • a country or society governed by the wealthy: no one can accept public policies which turn a democracy into a plutocracy. • an elite or ruling class of people whose power derives from their wealth: officials were drawn from the new plutocracy. USAGE See usage at aristocracy. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Greek ploutokratia, from ploutos 'wealth' + kratos 'strength, authority'.

pneumatic | no͞oˈmadik |
adjective
1 containing or operated by air or gas under pressure: the machines with pneumatic loading are more efficient. • Zoology (chiefly of cavities in the bones of birds) containing air. • informal (of a woman) having large breasts: a tattoo of a pneumatic girl. 2 (chiefly in the context of New Testament theology) relating to the spirit. noun (usually pneumatics) an item of pneumatic equipment: as with most conventional pneumatics, you have to cock the bolt and load a pellet into the breech by hand before each shot. DERIVATIVES pneumatically | no͞oˈmadək(ə)lē | adverb pneumaticity | ˌn(y)o͞oməˈtisətē | noun ORIGIN early 17th century (in pneumatic (sense 2 of the adjective): from French pneumatique or Latin pneumaticus, from Greek pneumatikos, from pneuma 'wind', from pnein 'breathe'.

polemical | pəˈlemək(ə)l |
adjective
expressing or constituting a strongly critical attack on or controversial opinion about someone or something: a polemical essay. DERIVATIVES polemically | pəˈlemək(ə)lē | adverb

polyglot | ˈpälēˌglät |
adjective
knowing or using several languages: New Orleans has always been a polyglot city | a language translation quiz for polyglot readers. • (of a book) having the text translated into several languages: polyglot and bilingual technical dictionaries. noun a person who knows and is able to use several languages: Slovenians, being surrounded by many countries, are mostly polyglots | already a polyglot, he started learning Japanese with great enthusiasm. DERIVATIVES polyglottal adjective polyglottic adjective polyglotism | -ˌglätˌizəm | | ˌpälēˈgläˌtiz(ə)m | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French polyglotte, from Greek poluglōttos, from polu- 'many' + glōtta 'tongue'.

polymath | ˈpälēˌmaTH |
noun
a person of wide-ranging knowledge or learning: a Renaissance polymath. DERIVATIVES polymathic | ˌpäliˈmaTHik | adjective polymathy | pəˈlimәTHē,

ˈpäliˌmaTHē | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Greek polumathēs ‘having learned much’, from polu- ‘much’ + the stem of manthanein ‘learn’.

pompous | ˈpämpəs |
adjective
affectedly and irritatingly grand, solemn, or self-important: a pompous ass who pretends he knows everything. • archaic characterized by pomp or splendor: there were many processions and other pompous shows. DERIVATIVES pompously | ˈpämpəslē | adverb pompousness | ˈpämpəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French pompeux ‘full of grandeur’, from late Latin pomposus, from pompa ‘pomp’.

ponderous | ˈpänd(ə)rəs |
adjective
slow and clumsy because of great weight: her footsteps were heavy and ponderous. • dull, laborious, or excessively solemn: Liz could hardly restrain herself from finishing all his ponderous sentences. DERIVATIVES ponderosity | ˌpändəˈräsətē | noun ponderously | ˈpänd(ə)rəslē | adverb ponderousness | ˈpänd(ə)rəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: via French from Latin ponderosus, from pondus, ponder- ‘weight’.

populist | ˈpäpyələst |
noun
a person, especially a politician, who strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups: he ran as a populist on an anticorruption platform. adjective relating to or characteristic of a political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups: party leaders plan to reprise the populist rhetoric that they used in the tax fight | a populist opposition leader | populist tabloid newspapers. • appealing to or aimed at ordinary people: it seems their efforts in creating a populist movement for chamber music are paying off. DERIVATIVES populistic | ˌpäpyəˈlistik | adjective ORIGIN late 19th century (originally referring to a US political party): from Latin populus ‘people’ + -ist.

porcine | ˈpôrˌsīn, ˈpôrˌsēn |
adjective
of, affecting, or resembling a pig or pigs: his flushed, porcine features. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French porcin or Latin porcinus, from porcus ‘pig’.

portent | ˈpôrˌtent |
noun
1 a sign or warning that something, especially something momentous or calamitous, is likely to happen: they believed that wild birds in the house were portents of death | JFK's political debut was a portent of the fame to come. • future significance: an omen of grave portent for the tribe. 2 literary an exceptional or wonderful person or thing: what portent can be greater than a pious notary? ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin portentum ‘omen, token’, from the verb portendere (see portend).

posit | ˈpäzət |
verb (posits, positing, posited)
1 [with object] assume as a fact; put forward as a basis of argument: the Confucian view posits a perfectible human nature | [with clause] : he posited that the world economy is a system with its own particular equilibrium. • (posit something on) base something on the truth of (a particular assumption): these plots are posited on a false premise about women's nature as inferior. 2 [with object and adverbial] put in position; place: the Professor posits Cohen in his second category of poets. noun Philosophy a statement which is made on the assumption that it will prove to be true. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin posit- ‘placed’, from the verb ponere.

poultice | ˈpōltəs |
noun
a soft, moist mass of material, typically of plant material or flour, applied to the body to relieve soreness and inflammation and kept in place with a cloth. verb [with object] apply a poultice to: he poulticed the wound. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin pultes (plural), from puls, pult- ‘pottage, pap’.

pragmatic | prag'madik |
adjective
dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations: a pragmatic approach to business ethics. • relating to philosophical or political pragmatism. • Linguistics relating to pragmatics. ORIGIN late 16th century (in the senses ‘busy, interfering, conceited’): via Latin from Greek pragmatikos ‘relating to fact’, from pragma ‘deed’ (from the stem of prattein ‘do’). The current senses date from the mid 19th century.

prate | prāt |
verb [no object]
talk foolishly or at tedious length about something: I heard him prate on for at least an hour and a half. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Middle Dutch, Middle Low German praten, probably of imitative origin.

precarious | prəˈkerēəs |
adjective
not securely held or in position; dangerously likely to fall or collapse: a precarious ladder. • dependent on chance; uncertain: he made a precarious living as a painter. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin precarius ‘obtained by entreaty’ (from prex, prec- ‘prayer’) + -ous.

precipitous | prēˈsipədəs |
adjective
1 dangerously high or steep: the precipitous cliffs of the North Atlantic coast. • (of a change to a worse situation or condition) sudden and dramatic: the end of the war led to a precipitous decline in exports. 2 (of an action) done suddenly and without careful consideration: precipitous intervention. DERIVATIVES precipitousness | prēˈsipədəsnəs | noun USAGE See usage at precipitate. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from obsolete French précipiteux, from Latin praeceps, praecip(it)- ‘steep, headlong’ (see precipitate).

preclude | prēˈklo͞od |
verb [with object]
prevent from happening; make impossible: the secret nature of his work precluded official recognition. • (preclude someone from) (of a situation or condition) prevent someone from doing something: his difficulties preclude him from leading a normal life. ORIGIN late 15th century (in the sense 'bar a route or passage'): from Latin praecludere, from prae 'before' + claudere 'to shut'.

predatory | ˈpredəˌtôrē |
adjective
1 relating to or denoting an animal or animals preying naturally on others: predatory birds | animals obey their predatory instincts. 2 seeking to exploit or oppress others: new laws have been passed designed to crack down on predatory lenders. DERIVATIVES predatorily | ˌpredəˈtôrəlē | adverb predatoriness | ˈpredəˌtôrēnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense 'relating to plundering'): from Latin praedatorius, from praedator 'plunderer' (see predator).

preeminence | prēˈemənəns |
noun
the fact of surpassing all others; superiority: the region has never regained the economic preeminence that it once enjoyed.

prefatory | ˈprefəˌtôrē |
adjective
serving as an introduction; introductory: the poet makes this clear in a prefatory note on the text.

prehensile | prēˈhens(ə)l |
adjective
(chiefly of an animal's limb or tail) capable of grasping: many monkeys have long, prehensile tails which they use in swinging through the trees. DERIVATIVES prehensility | ˌprēhenˈsilədē | noun ORIGIN late 18th century: from French préhensile, from Latin prehens- 'grasped', from the verb prehendere, from prae 'before' + hendere 'to grasp'.

preposterous | prəˈpäst(ə)rəs |
adjective
contrary to reason or common sense; utterly absurd or ridiculous: a preposterous suggestion. DERIVATIVES preposterously | prəˈpäst(ə)rəslē | adverb preposterousness | prəˈpäst(ə)rəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin praeposterus 'reversed, absurd' (from prae 'before' + posterus 'coming after') + -ous.

presage | prēˈsāj, ˈpresəj |
verb [with object]
(of an event) be a sign or warning that (something, typically something bad) will happen: the outcome of the game presaged the coming year. • archaic (of a person) predict: lands he could measure, terms and tides presage. noun a sign or warning that something, typically something bad, will happen; an omen or portent: the fever was a somber presage of his final illness. • archaic a feeling of presentiment or foreboding: he had a strong presage that he had only a very short time to live. DERIVATIVES presageful | prɪˈseɪdʒfʊl, -f(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun): via French from Latin praesagium, from praesagire 'forebode', from prae 'before' + sagire 'perceive keenly'.

prescience | ˈpreSH(ē)əns |
noun
the fact of knowing something before it takes place; foreknowledge: with extraordinary prescience, Jung actually predicted the Nazi eruption.

prescriptive | prēˈskriptiv, pərˈskriptiv |
adjective
1 relating to the imposition or enforcement of a rule or method: these guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive. • Linguistics attempting to impose rules of correct usage on the users of a language: a prescriptive grammar book. Often contrasted with descriptive. 2 (of a right, title, or institution) having become legally established or accepted by long usage or the passage of time: a prescriptive right of way. • archaic established by long-standing custom or usage: his regular score at the bar and his prescriptive corner at the winter's fireside. DERIVATIVES prescriptively adverb prescriptiveness noun prescriptivism | prēˈskriptəˌviz(ə)m, pərˈskriptəˌviz(ə)m | noun prescriptivist | -vist | noun & adjective ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin praescript- 'directed in writing', from the verb praescribere (see prescribe) + -ive.

presumptuous | prēˈzəm(p)(t)SH(əw)əs |
adjective
(of a person or their behavior) failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate: I hope I won't be considered presumptuous if I offer some advice. DERIVATIVES presumptuously | prēˈzəm(p)(t)SH(əw)əslē | adverb presumptuousness | prēˈzəm(p)(t)SH(əw)əsnəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French presumptueux, from late Latin praesumptuosus, variant of praesumptiosus 'full of boldness', from praesumptio (see presumption).

preternatural | ˌpredərˈnaCH(ə)rəl, ˌprēdərˈnaCH(ə)r |
adjective
beyond what is normal or natural: autumn had arrived with preternatural speed. DERIVATIVES preternaturalism | -ˈnaCH(ə)rəˌlizəm | (also praeternaturalism) noun preternaturally | ˌpredərˈnaCH(ə)rəlē, ˌprēdərˈnaCH(ə)rəlē | (also praeternaturally) adverb

probity | ˈprōbədē |
noun formal
the quality of having strong moral principles; honesty and decency: financial probity. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin probitas, from probus 'good'.

proclivity | prəˈklivədē |
noun (plural proclivities)
a tendency to choose or do something regularly; an inclination or predisposition toward a particular thing: a proclivity for hard work. ORIGIN late 16th

century: from Latin proclivitas, from proclivis ‘inclined’, from pro- ‘forward, down’ + clivus ‘slope’.

prodigal | ˈprädəg(ə)l |
adjective
1 spending money or resources freely and recklessly; wastefully extravagant: prodigal habits die hard. 2 having or giving something on a lavish scale: the dessert was crunchy with brown sugar and prodigal with whipped cream. noun a person who spends money in a recklessly extravagant way: he hated rich prodigals who lived useless, imprudent lives. • (also prodigal son or prodigal daughter) a person who leaves home and behaves recklessly, but later makes a repentant return. [with biblical allusion to the parable in Luke 15:11–32.] DERIVATIVES prodigality | ˌprädəˈgalədē | noun prodigally | ˈprädəgəlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin prodigalis, from Latin prodigus ‘lavish’.

profligate | ˈpräflәgət |
adjective
recklessly extravagant or wasteful in the use of resources: profligate consumers of energy. • licentious; dissolute: he succumbed to drink and a profligate lifestyle. noun a licentious, dissolute person: he is a drunkard and a profligate. DERIVATIVES profligately | ˈpräflәgətlē | adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense ‘overthrown, routed’): from Latin profligatus ‘dissolute’, past participle of profligare ‘overthrow, ruin’, from pro- ‘forward, down’ + fligere ‘strike down’.

profundity | prəˈfəndədē |
noun (plural profundities)
deep insight; great depth of knowledge or thought: the simplicity and profundity of the message. • great depth or intensity of a state, quality, or emotion: the profundity of her misery. • a statement or idea that shows great knowledge or insight: such well-articulated profundities as “You're some kinda woman.”.

proletariat | ˌprōlәˈterē |
noun [treated as singular or plural]
workers or working-class people, regarded collectively (often used with reference to Marxism): the growth of the industrial proletariat. • the lowest class of citizens in ancient Rome. ORIGIN mid 19th century: from French prolétariat, from Latin proletarius (see proletarian).

proliferate | prəˈlifəˌrāt |
verb [no object]
increase rapidly in numbers; multiply: the science fiction magazines that proliferated in the 1920s. • (of a cell, structure, or organism) reproduce rapidly: the Mediterranean faces an ecological disaster if the seaweed continues to proliferate at its present rate. • [with object] cause (cells, tissue, structures, etc.) to reproduce rapidly: electromagnetic radiation can only proliferate cancers already present. DERIVATIVES proliferative | -ˌrātiv | adjective proliferator | -ˌrātər | noun ORIGIN late 19th century: back-formation from proliferation.

propensity | prəˈpensədē |
noun (plural propensities)
an inclination or natural tendency to behave in a particular way: a propensity for violence | [with infinitive] : their innate propensity to attack one another. ORIGIN late 16th century: from archaic propense (from Latin propensus ‘inclined’, past participle of propendere, from pro- ‘forward, down’ + pendere ‘hang’) + -ity.

propinquity | prəˈpiNGkwədē |
noun
1 formal the state of being close to someone or something; proximity: he kept his distance as though afraid propinquity might lead him into temptation. 2 technical close kinship. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French propinquité, from Latin propinquitas, from propinquus ‘near’, from prope ‘near to’.

propitiate | prəˈpiSHēˌāt |
verb [with object]
win or regain the favor of (a god, spirit, or person) by doing something that pleases them: the pagans thought it was important to propitiate the gods with sacrifices. DERIVATIVES propitiatory | prəˈpiSHēәˌtôrē | adjective propitiatorily adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (as propitiation): from Latin propitiat- ‘made favorable’, from the verb propitiare, from propitius ‘favorable, gracious’ (see propitious).

propitious | prəˈpiSHəs |
adjective
giving or indicating a good chance of success; favorable: the timing for such a meeting seemed propitious. • archaic favorably disposed toward someone: there were points on which they did not agree, moments in which she did not seem propitious. DERIVATIVES propitiously | prəˈpiSHəslē, prōˈpiSHəslē | adverb propitiousness | prəˈpiSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French propicieus or Latin propitius ‘favorable, gracious’.

prosaic | prəˈzāik |
adjective
having the style or diction of prose; lacking poetic beauty: prosaic language can't convey the experience. • commonplace; unromantic: the masses were too preoccupied by prosaic day-to-day concerns. DERIVATIVES prosaically | prəˈzāәk(ə)lē | adverb prosaicness | prəˈzāәknәs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century (as a noun denoting a prose writer): via French from late Latin prosaicus, from Latin prosa ‘straightforward (discourse)’ (see prose). Current senses of the adjective date from the late 17th century.

proscribe | prōˈskrīb |
verb [with object]
forbid, especially by law: strikes remained proscribed in the armed forces. • denounce or condemn: certain practices that the Catholic Church proscribed, such as polygyny. • historical outlaw (someone): a plaque on which were the names of proscribed traitors. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘to outlaw’): from Latin proscribere, from pro- ‘in front of’ + scribere ‘write’. US-

AGE Proscribe does not have the same meaning as prescribe: see usage at prescribe.

proud | proud |
adjective
1 feeling deep pleasure or satisfaction as a result of one's own achievements, qualities, or possessions or those of someone with whom one is closely associated: a proud grandma of three boys | she got nine As and he was so proud of her. • (of an event, achievement, etc.) causing someone to feel proud: we have a proud history of innovation. 2 having or showing a high or excessively high opinion of oneself or one's importance: a proud, arrogant man. • having or showing a consciousness of one's own dignity: I was too proud to go home. • imposing; splendid: bulrushes emerge tall and proud from the middle of the pond. 3 [predicative] British slightly projecting from a surface: when the brake is engaged, the lever does not stand proud of the horizontal. PHRASES do someone proud informal act in a way that gives someone cause to feel pleased or satisfied: they did themselves proud in a game that sent the fans home happy. • treat someone very well, typically by lavishly feeding or entertaining them. DERIVATIVES proudness | ˈproudnəs | noun ORIGIN late Old English prūt, prūd 'having a high opinion of one's own worth', from Old French prud 'valiant', based on Latin prodesse 'be of value'. The phrase proud flesh dates back to late Middle English, but the sense 'slightly projecting' is first recorded in English dialect of the 19th century.

provenance | ˈprävən(ə)ns |
noun
the place of origin or earliest known history of something: an orange rug of Iranian provenance. • the beginning of something's existence; something's origin: they try to understand the whole universe, its provenance and fate. • a record of ownership of a work of art or an antique, used as a guide to authenticity or quality: the manuscript has a distinguished provenance. ORIGIN late 18th century: from French, from the verb provenir 'come or stem from', from Latin provenire, from pro- 'forth' + venire 'come'.

provincial | prəˈvin(t)SH(ə)l |
adjective
1 of or concerning a province of a country or empire: provincial elections | the provincial government. 2 of or concerning the regions outside the capital city of a country, especially when regarded as unsophisticated or narrow-minded: the whole exhibition struck me as being very provincial | provincial towns | a provincial backwater. noun 1 an inhabitant of a province of a country or empire. • (provincials) (in Canada) athletic contests held between teams representing the country's administrative divisions. 2 an inhabitant of the regions outside the capital city of a country, especially when regarded as unsophisticated or narrow-minded: a town populated by money-grubbers, philistines, and self-satisfied provincials. 3 Christian Church the head or chief of a province or of a religious order in a province. DERIVATIVES provinciality | prəˌvinSHēˈalətē | noun provincialization | prəˌvinSHələˈzāSHən | noun provincialize (British also provincialise) verb provincially | prəˈvin(t)SHəlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, from Latin provincialis 'belonging to a province' (see province).

prudence | ˈpro͞odns |
noun
the quality of being prudent; cautiousness: we need to exercise prudence in such important matters.

prude | pro͞od |
noun
a person who is or claims to be easily shocked by matters relating to sex or nudity: the sex was so ambiguous and romantic that none but a prude could find it objectionable. DERIVATIVES prudery | ˈpro͞odərē | noun ORIGIN late 17th century: from French, back-formation from prudefemme, feminine of prud'homme 'good man and true', from prod, prud 'courageous, good' (see proud).

prurient | ˈpro͝orēənt |
adjective
having or encouraging an excessive interest in sexual matters: she'd been the subject of much prurient curiosity. DERIVATIVES prurience | ˈpro͝orēəns | noun pruriency noun pruriently | ˈpro͝orēən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense 'having a mental itching'): from Latin prurient- 'itching, longing' and 'being wanton', from the verb prurire.

pseudonym | ˈso͞odənim |
noun
a fictitious name, especially one used by an author: I wrote under the pseudonym of Evelyn Hervey. DERIVATIVES pseudonymity noun ORIGIN early 19th century: from French pseudonyme, from Greek pseudōnymos, from pseudēs 'false' + onuma 'name'.

psychosomatic | ˌsīkōsəˈmadik |
adjective
(of a physical illness or other condition) caused or aggravated by a mental factor such as internal conflict or stress: her doctor was convinced that most of Edith's problems were psychosomatic. • relating to the interaction of mind and body. DERIVATIVES psychosomatically | -ik(ə)lē | adverb

puerile | ˈpyo͞orəl, ˈpyo͞oˌrīl |
adjective
childishly silly and trivial: you're making puerile excuses. DERIVATIVES puerilely adverb puerility | pyo͝oˈriləd ē | noun (plural puerilities) ORIGIN early 16th century (in the sense 'like a boy'): from French puéril or Latin puerilis, from puer 'boy'.

pulchritude | ˈpəlkrəˌto͞od |
noun literary
beauty: the irresistible pulchritude of her friend. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin pulchritudo, from pulcher, pulchr- 'beautiful'.

punctilious | ˌpəNG(k)ˈtilēəs |
adjective
showing great attention to detail or correct behavior: he was punctilious in providing every amenity for his guests. DERIVATIVES punctiliously | ˌpəNG(k)ˈtilēəslē | adverb punctiliousness | ˌpəNG(k)ˈtilēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French pointilleux, from pointille, from Italian puntiglio (see punctilio).

pundit | ˈpəndət |
noun
1 an expert in a particular subject or field who is frequently called on to give opinions about it to the public: a globe-trotting financial pundit. 2 variant spelling of pandit. ORIGIN mid 17th century (in pundit (sense 2)): from Sanskrit paṇḍita ‘learned man’, use as noun of paṇḍita ‘learned, skilled’. pundit (sense 1)is first recorded in the early 19th century.

pungent | ˈpənj(ə)nt |
adjective
having a sharply strong taste or smell: the pungent smell of frying onions. • (of comment, criticism, or humor) having a sharp and caustic quality: he has expressed some fairly pungent criticisms. DERIVATIVES pungency | ˈpənjənsē | noun pungently | ˈpənjən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense ‘very painful or distressing’): from Latin pungent- ‘pricking’, from the verb pungere.

purist | ˈpyo͝orəst |
noun
1 a person who insists on absolute adherence to traditional rules or structures, especially in language or style: the production has yet to offend Gilbert and Sullivan purists | [as modifier] : purist fans of the original comic strip. 2 (Purist) an adherent of Purism: [as modifier] : Purist painters. DERIVATIVES puristic | pyo͝oˈristik | adjective ORIGIN early 18th century: from French puriste, from pur ‘pure’.

purloin | pərˈloin |
verb [with object] formal or humorous
steal (something): he must have managed to purloin a copy of the key. DERIVATIVES purloiner | pərˈloinər | noun ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense ‘put at a distance’): from Anglo-Norman French purloigner ‘put away’, from pur- ‘forth’ + loign ‘far’.

putative | ˈpyo͞odədiv |
adjective [attributive]
generally considered or reputed to be: the putative author of the book. DERIVATIVES putatively | ˈpyo͞odədivlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French putatif, -ive or late Latin putativus, from Latin putat- ‘thought’, from the verb putare.

pyrrhic1 | ˈpir |
adjective
(of a victory) won at too great a cost to have been worthwhile for the victor: the best they can hope for is a pyrrhic victory | there is concern that this legal victory for the record labels may prove pyrrhic. ORIGIN late 17th century: from Greek Pyrrhikos, from the name of Pyrrhus, a Greek king who defeated the Romans in 279 bc but sustained heavy losses, + -ic. pyrrhic2 | ˈpirik | noun a metrical foot of two short or unaccented syllables. ORIGIN early 17th century: via Latin from Greek purrhikhios (pous) ‘pyrrhic (foot)’, the meter of a song accompanying a war dance, named after Purrhikhos, inventor of the dance.

quagmire | ˈkwagˌmī(ə)r |
noun
a soft boggy area of land that gives way underfoot: torrential rain turned the building site into a quagmire. • an awkward, complex, or hazardous situation: a legal quagmire. ORIGIN late 16th century: from quag + mire.

quaint | kwānt |
adjective
attractively unusual or old-fashioned: quaint country cottages | a quaint old custom. DERIVATIVES quaintness | ˈkwān(t)nəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French cointe, from Latin cognitus ‘ascertained’, past participle of cognoscere. The original sense was ‘wise, clever’, also ‘ingenious, cunningly devised’, hence ‘out of the ordinary’ and the current sense (late 18th century).

qualified | ˈkwäləˌfīd |
adjective
1 officially recognized as being trained to perform a particular job; certified: newly qualified nurses. • [with infinitive] competent or knowledgeable to do something; capable: I was less well qualified than almost anyone present to recollect the olden days. 2 not complete or absolute; limited: I could only judge this CD a qualified success. qualify | ˈkwäləˌfī | verb (qualifies, qualifying, qualified) 1 [no object] be entitled to a particular benefit or privilege by fulfilling a necessary condition: they do not qualify for compensation payments. • become eligible for a competition or its final rounds, by reaching a certain standard or defeating a competitor: he failed to qualify for the Olympic team. • be or make properly entitled to be classed in a particular way: he qualifies as a genuine political refugee. 2 [no object] become officially recognized as a practitioner of a particular profession or activity by satisfying the relevant conditions or requirements, typically by undertaking a course of study and passing examinations: I've only just qualified | after the war he qualified as a lawyer. • [with object] officially recognize or establish (someone) as a practitioner of a particular profession or activity: the courses qualify you as an instructor of the sport. • [with object and infinitive] make (someone) competent or knowledgeable enough to do something: I'm not qualified to write on the subject. 3 [with object] make (a statement or assertion) less absolute; add reservations to: she felt obliged to qualify her first short answer. • archaic make (something extreme or undesirable) less severe or extreme: his sincere piety and his large heart always qualify his errors. • archaic alter the strength or flavor of (something, especially a liquid): he qualified his mug of water with a plentiful infusion of the liquor. 4 [with object]

Grammar (of a word or phrase) attribute a quality to (another word, especially a preceding noun). • (qualify something as) archaic attribute a specified quality to something; describe something as: the propositions have been qualified as heretical. DERIVATIVES qualifiable | ˌkwälə'fīəb(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'describe in a particular way'): from French qualifier, from medieval Latin qualificare, from Latin qualis 'of what kind, of such a kind' (see quality).

qualitative | 'kwäləˌtādiv |
adjective
1 relating to, measuring, or measured by the quality of something rather than its quantity: a qualitative change in the undergraduate curriculum. Often contrasted with quantitative. • Grammar (of an adjective) describing the quality of something in size, appearance, value, etc. Such adjectives can be submodified by words such as very and have comparative and superlative forms. Contrasted with classifying. 2 Nigerian of high quality; excellent: he offered free and qualitative education to the children. ORIGIN early 17th century: from late Latin qualitativus, from Latin qualitas (see quality).

quandary | 'kwänd(ə)rē |
noun (plural quandaries)
a state of perplexity or uncertainty over what to do in a difficult situation: Kate is in a quandary. • a difficult situation; a practical dilemma: a legal quandary. ORIGIN late 16th century: perhaps partly from Latin quando 'when'.

quantitative | 'kwän(t)əˌtādiv |
adjective
relating to, measuring, or measured by the quantity of something rather than its quality: quantitative analysis. Often contrasted with qualitative. • denoting or relating to verse whose meter is based on the length of syllables, as in Latin, as opposed to the stress, as in English. ORIGIN early 16th century (in the sense 'having magnitude or spatial extent'): from medieval Latin quantitativus, from Latin quantitas (see quantity).

quarry1 | 'kwôrē |
noun (plural quarries)
a place, typically a large, deep pit, from which stone or other materials are or have been extracted: a limestone quarry. verb (quarries, quarrying, quarried) [with object] extract (stone or other materials) from a quarry: limestone is quarried for use in blast furnaces. • cut into (rock or ground) to obtain stone or other materials: the hillside had been quarried for many years | figurative : the papers have been extensively quarried by historians. DERIVATIVES quarrier noun ORIGIN Middle English: from a variant of medieval Latin quareria, from Old French quarriere, based on Latin quadrum 'a square'. The verb dates from the late 18th century. quarry2 | 'kwôrē | noun (plural quarries) an animal pursued by a hunter, hound, predatory mammal, or bird of prey: grouse are not an easy quarry for a hawk. • a thing or person that is chased or sought: the security police crossed the border in pursuit of their quarry. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French cuiree, alteration, influenced by cuir 'leather' and curer 'clean, disembowel', of couree, based on Latin cor 'heart'. Originally the term denoted the parts of a deer that were placed on the hide and given as a reward to the hounds. quarry3 | 'kwôrē | noun (plural quarries) 1 a diamond-shaped pane of glass as used in lattice windows: stained-glass quarries with floral motifs. 2 short for quarry tile. ORIGIN mid 16th century: alteration of quarrel2.

querulous | 'kwer(y)ələs |
adjective
complaining in a petulant or whining manner: she became querulous and demanding. DERIVATIVES querulously | 'kwerələslē | adverb querulousness | 'kwerələsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 15th century: from late Latin querulosus, from Latin querulus, from queri 'complain'.

quest | kwest |
noun
a long or arduous search for something: the quest for a reliable vaccine has intensified. • (in medieval romance) an expedition made by a knight to accomplish a prescribed task. verb [no object] search for something: he was a real scientist, questing after truth. • [with object] literary search for; seek out: they quest wisdom. DERIVATIVES quester (also questor) noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French queste (noun), quester (verb), based on Latin quaerere 'ask, seek'. See also inquest.

quibble | 'kwib(ə)l |
noun
1 a slight objection or criticism about a trivial matter: the only quibble about this book is the price. 2 archaic a play on words; a pun. verb [no object] argue or raise objections about a trivial matter: they are always quibbling about the amount they are prepared to pay. DERIVATIVES quibbler | 'kwib(ə)lər | noun ORIGIN early 17th century (in the sense 'play on words, pun'): diminutive of obsolete quib 'a petty objection', probably from Latin quibus, dative and ablative plural of qui, quae, quod 'who, what, which', frequently used in legal documents and so associated with subtle distinctions or verbal niceties.

quiescent | kwī'es(ə)nt, kwē'es(ə)nt |
adjective
in a state or period of inactivity or dormancy: strikes were headed by groups of workers who had previously been quiescent | quiescent ulcerative colitis. DERIVATIVES quiescently adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin quiescent- 'being still', from the verb quiescere, from quies 'quiet'.

quintessential | ˌkwin(t)ə'sen(t)SH(ə)l |
adjective
representing the most perfect or typical example of a quality or class: he was the quintessential tough guy—strong, silent, and self-contained.

quintuple | kwin'to͞op(ə)l, kwin'təp(ə)l |
adjective [attributive]
consisting of five parts or things: the microscope has a motorized revolving quintuple nosepiece. • five times as much or as many: special effects modes on these cameras include quintuple exposure. • (of time in music) having

five beats in a bar. verb increase or cause to increase fivefold: [no object] : the company's revenues would quintuple over the next decade | [with object] : Germany had quintupled her sulfuric acid production since 1880. noun a fivefold number or amount; a set of five. DERIVATIVES quintuply | -(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 16th century: via French from medieval Latin quintuplus, from Latin quintus 'fifth' + -plus as in duplus (see duple).

quip | kwip |
noun
a witty remark: Peter ate heartily with a quip about being a condemned man. • archaic a verbal equivocation: tricks of controversy and quips of law. verb (quips, quipping, quipped) [no object] make a witty remark: [with direct speech] : "Flattery will get you nowhere," she quipped. ORIGIN mid 16th century: perhaps from Latin quippe 'indeed, forsooth'.

quirky | ˈkwərkē |
adjective (quirkier, quirkiest)
characterized by peculiar or unexpected traits: her sense of humor was decidedly quirky. DERIVATIVES quirkily | -kəlē | adverb quirkiness | ˈkwərkēnəs | noun

quiver1 | ˈkwivər |
verb [no object]
tremble or shake with a slight rapid motion: the tree's branches stopped quivering. • [with object] cause (something) to make a slight rapid motion: the bird runs along in a zigzag path, quivering its wings. noun a slight trembling movement or sound, especially one caused by a sudden strong emotion: Meredith felt a quiver of fear. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old English cwifer 'nimble, quick'. The initial qu- is probably symbolic of quick movement (as in quaver and quick). quiver2 | ˈkwivər | noun an archer's portable case for holding arrows. • a set of surfboards of different lengths and shapes for use with different types of waves: he had created a whole new quiver of boards specifically for Hawaii. PHRASES an arrow in the quiver one of a number of resources or strategies that can be drawn on or followed: improving communication is another arrow in the quiver that prison officers and staff have. ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French quiveir, of West Germanic origin; related to Dutch koker and German Köcher.

quotidian | kwōˈtidēən |
adjective [attributive]
of or occurring every day; daily: the car sped noisily off through the quotidian traffic. • ordinary or everyday, especially when mundane: his story is an achingly human one, mired in quotidian details. • Medicine denoting the malignant form of malaria. ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from Latin quotidianus, earlier cotidianus, from cotidie 'daily'.

rabble | ˈrab(ə)l |
noun
a disorderly crowd; a mob: he was met by a rabble of noisy, angry youths. • (the rabble) derogatory ordinary people, especially when regarded as socially inferior or uncouth. ORIGIN late Middle English (in the senses 'string of meaningless words' and 'pack of animals'): perhaps related to dialect rabble 'to gabble'.

rancor | ˈraNGk |
noun
bitterness or resentfulness, especially when long-standing: he spoke without rancor. ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from late Latin rancor 'rankness' (in the Vulgate 'bitter grudge'), related to Latin rancidus 'stinking'.

rant | rant |
verb [no object]
speak or shout at length in a wild, impassioned way: she was still ranting on about the unfairness of it all. noun a spell of ranting; a tirade: his rants against organized religion. PHRASES rant and rave shout and complain angrily and at length: stop ranting and raving for a minute and start being honest with yourself. ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense 'behave boisterously'): from Dutch ranten 'talk nonsense, rave'.

rapacious | rəˈpāSHəs |
adjective
aggressively greedy or grasping: rapacious landlords. DERIVATIVES rapaciously | rəˈpāSHəslē | adverb rapaciousness | rəˈpāSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin rapax, rapacii- (from rapere 'to snatch') + -ous.

ratio | ˈrāSH(ē)ō |
noun (plural ratios)
the quantitative relation between two amounts showing the number of times one value contains or is contained within the other: the ratio of computers to students is now 2 to 1. • the relative value of silver and gold in a bimetallic system of currency. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin, literally 'reckoning', from rat- 'reckoned', from the verb reri.

raucous | ˈrôkəs |
adjective
making or constituting a disturbingly harsh and loud noise: raucous youths. DERIVATIVES raucously | ˈrôkəslē, ˈräkəslē | adverb raucousness | ˈrôkəsnəs, ˈräkəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin raucus 'hoarse'+ -ous.

ravenous | ˈrav(ə)nəs |
adjective
extremely hungry: I'd been out all day and was ravenous. • (of hunger or need) very great; voracious: a ravenous appetite. DERIVATIVES ravenously | ˈrav(ə)nəslē | adverb ravenousness noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French ravineus, from raviner 'to ravage' (see raven2).

rebuttal | rəˈbədl |
noun
a refutation or contradiction. • another term for rebutter.

recalcitrant | rəˈkalsətrənt |
adjective

having an obstinately uncooperative attitude toward authority or discipline: a class of recalcitrant fifteen-year-olds. noun a person with an obstinately uncooperative attitude: a stiff-necked recalcitrant and troublemaker. DERIVATIVES recalcitrance | rəˈkalsətr(ə)ns | noun recalcitrantly adverb ORIGIN late 18th century: from French récalcitrant or its source Latin recalcitrant- 'kicking out with the heels', from the verb recalcitrare, based on calx, calc- 'heel'.

recant | rəˈkant |
verb [no object]
say that one no longer holds an opinion or belief, especially one considered heretical: heretics were burned if they would not recant | [with object] : Galileo was forced to recant his assertion that the earth orbited the sun. DERIVATIVES recanter | rəˈkan(t)ər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin recantare 'revoke', from re- (expressing reversal) + cantare 'sing, chant'.

recluse | ˈreˌklo͞os, rəˈklo͞os |
noun
a person who lives a solitary life and tends to avoid other people: she has turned into a virtual recluse | he's a bit of a recluse. adjective archaic favoring a solitary life. DERIVATIVES reclusion | riˈklo͞oZHən | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French reclus, past participle of reclure, from Latin recludere 'enclose', from re- 'again' + claudere 'to shut'.

recompense | ˈrekəmˌpens |
verb [with object]
make amends to (someone) for loss or harm suffered; compensate: offenders should recompense their victims | he was recompensed for the wasted time. • pay or reward (someone) for effort or work: he was handsomely recompensed. • make amends to or reward someone for (loss, harm, or effort): he thought his loyalty had been inadequately recompensed. • archaic punish or reward (someone) appropriately for an action: according to their doings will he recompense them. noun compensation or reward given for loss or harm suffered or effort made: substantial damages were paid in recompense. • archaic restitution made or punishment inflicted for a wrong or injury. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, from the verb recompenser 'do a favor to requite a loss', from late Latin recompensare, from Latin re- 'again' (also expressing intensive force) + compensare 'weigh one thing against another'.

reconcile | ˈrekənˌsīl |
verb [with object]
restore friendly relations between: she wanted to be reconciled with her father | the news reconciled us. • cause to coexist in harmony; make or show to be compatible: a landscape in which inner and outer vision were reconciled | you may have to adjust your ideal to reconcile it with reality. • make (one account) consistent with another, especially by allowing for transactions begun but not yet completed: it is not necessary to reconcile the cost accounts to the financial accounts. • settle (a disagreement): advice on how to reconcile the conflict. • (reconcile someone to) make someone accept (a disagreeable or unwelcome thing): he could not reconcile himself to the thought of his mother stocking shelves | he was reconciled to leaving. DERIVATIVES reconcilement | ˈrekənˌsīlm(ə)nt | noun reconciler noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French reconcilier or Latin reconciliare, from Latin re- 'back' (also expressing intensive force) + conciliare 'bring together'.

recourse | ˈrēˌkôrs, rēˈkôrs |
noun [in singular]
a source of help in a difficult situation: surgery may be the only recourse. • (recourse to) the use of someone or something as a source of help in a difficult situation: a means of solving disputes without recourse to courts of law | all three countries had recourse to the IMF for standby loans. • the legal right to demand compensation or payment: the bank has recourse against the exporter for losses incurred. PHRASES without recourse Finance a formula used to disclaim responsibility for future nonpayment, especially of a negotiable financial instrument: the drawer of funds is not liable and can discount without recourse. ORIGIN late Middle English (also in the sense 'running or flowing back'): from Old French recours, from Latin recursus, from re- 'back, again' + cursus 'course, running'.

recusant | rəˈky͞oznt |
noun
a person who refuses to submit to an authority or to comply with a regulation. • historical a Roman Catholic in England who refused to attend services of the Church of England: support for the exiled King was greatest among Catholic recusants. adjective of or denoting a recusant. DERIVATIVES recusance | rəˈky͞ozns | noun recusancy | -zənsē | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin recusant- 'refusing', from the verb recusare (see recuse).

redact | rəˈdak(t) |
verb [with object]
edit (text) for publication: a confidential memo which has been redacted from 25 pages to just one paragraph. • censor or obscure (part of a text) for legal or security purposes. DERIVATIVES redactor | -tər | noun ORIGIN early 19th century: back-formation from redaction. Redact is found earlier in English (from late Middle English) in other senses (e.g. 'combine, arrange, reduce to a certain state'), derived from Latin redact-, redigere 'bring back'.

redolent | ˈredələnt |
adjective
1 (redolent of/with) strongly reminiscent or suggestive of: names redolent of history and tradition. • literary strongly smelling of: the church was old, dark, and redolent of incense. 2 archaic or literary fragrant or sweet-smelling: a rich, inky, redolent wine. DERIVATIVES redolence | ˈredələns | noun redolently adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'fragrant'): from Old French, or from Latin redolent- 'giving out a strong smell', from re(d)- 'back, again' + olere 'to smell'.

redoubtable | rəˈdoudəb(ə)l |
adjective often humorous
(of a person) formidable, especially as an opponent: he was a redoubtable debater. DERIVATIVES redoubtably | -blē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French redoutable, from redouter 'to fear', from re- (expressing intensive force) + douter 'to doubt'.

refine | rəˈfīn |
verb [with object]
remove impurities or unwanted elements from (a substance), typically as part of an industrial process: sugar was refined by boiling it in huge iron vats. • improve (something) by making small changes, in particular make (an idea, theory, or method) more subtle and accurate: ease of access to computers has refined analysis and presentation of data. DERIVATIVES refiner | rəˈfīnər | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from re- 'again' + the verb fine1, influenced by French raffiner.

refute | rəˈfyo͞ot |
verb [with object]
prove (a statement or theory) to be wrong or false; disprove: these claims have not been convincingly refuted. • prove that (someone) is wrong: his voice challenging his audience to rise and refute him. • deny or contradict (a statement or accusation): a spokesman totally refuted the allegation of bias. DERIVATIVES refutable | rəˈfyo͞odəb(ə)l, ˈrefyədəb(ə)l | adjective refuter | rəˈfyo͞odər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century : from Latin refutare 'repel, rebut'. USAGE The core meaning of refute is 'prove a statement or theory to be wrong,' as in attempts to refute Einstein's theory. In the second half of the 20th century, a more general sense developed, meaning simply 'deny,' as in I absolutely refute the charges made against me. Traditionalists object to this newer use as an unacceptable degradation of the language, but it is widely encountered.

regale | rəˈgāl |
verb [with object]
entertain or amuse (someone) with talk: he regaled her with a colorful account of that afternoon's meeting. • lavishly supply (someone) with food or drink: he was regaled with excellent home cooking. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French régaler, from re- (expressing intensive force) + Old French gale 'pleasure'.

regicide | ˈrejəˌsīd |
noun
the action of killing a king. • a person who kills or takes part in killing a king. DERIVATIVES regicidal | ˌrejəˈsīd(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin rex, reg- 'king'+ -cide, probably suggested by French régicide.

reiterate | rēˈidəˌrāt |
verb [reporting verb]
say something again or a number of times, typically for emphasis or clarity: [with clause] : she reiterated that the administration would remain steadfast in its support | [with direct speech] : "I just want to forget it all," he reiterated | [with object] : he reiterated the points made in his earlier speech. DERIVATIVES reiterative | rēˈidərədiv | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'do an action repeatedly'): from Latin reiterat- 'gone over again', from the verb reiterare, from re- 'again' + iterare 'do a second time'.

rejoinder | rəˈjoindər |
noun
a reply, especially a sharp or witty one: she would have made some cutting rejoinder but none came to mind. • Law, dated a defendant's answer to the plaintiff's reply or replication. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French rejoindre (infinitive used as a noun) (see rejoin2).

relinquish | rəˈliNGkwiSH |
verb [with object]
voluntarily cease to keep or claim; give up: he relinquished his managerial role to become chief executive. DERIVATIVES relinquishment | rəˈliNGkwiSHm(ə)nt | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French relinquiss-, lengthened stem of relinquir, from Latin relinquere, from re- (expressing intensive force) + linquere 'to leave'.

relish | ˈreliSH |
noun
1 great enjoyment: she swigged a mouthful of wine with relish. • liking for or pleasurable anticipation of something: I was appointed to a position for which I had little relish. 2 a condiment eaten with plain food to add flavor: use salsa as a relish with grilled meat or fish. 3 archaic an appetizing flavor: the tired glutton finds no relish in the sweetest meat. • a distinctive taste or tinge: the relish of wine. verb [with object] 1 enjoy greatly: he was relishing his moment of glory. • be pleased by or about: I don't relish the thought of waiting on an invalid for the next few months. 2 archaic make pleasant to the taste; add relish to: I have also a novel to relish my wine. DERIVATIVES relishable | ˈrelәSHәb(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: alteration of obsolete reles, from Old French reles 'remainder', from relaisser 'to release'. The early noun sense was 'odor, taste' giving rise to 'appetizing flavor, piquant taste' (late 16th century), and hence relish (sense 2 of the noun) (late 18th century).

remedial | rəˈmēdēəl |
adjective
giving or intended as a remedy or cure: remedial surgery. • provided or intended for school students who have not achieved the level of attainment necessary for them to be able to study with their contemporaries: remedial education. DERIVATIVES remedially adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from late Latin remedialis, from Latin remedium 'cure, medicine' (see remedy).

remiss | rəˈmis |
adjective [predicative]
lacking care or attention to duty; negligent: it would be very remiss of me not to pass on that information | they have been remiss in their duties. DERIVATIVES remissly adverb remissness | rəˈmisnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin remissus 'slackened', past participle of remittere. The early senses were 'weakened in color or consistency' and (in describing sound) 'faint, soft'.

remonstrate | rəˈmänˌstrāt, ˈremənˌstrāt |
verb [no object]
make a forcefully reproachful protest: he turned angrily to remonstrate with Tommy | [with direct speech] : "You don't mean that," she remonstrated. DE-

RIVATIVES remonstration | rəˌmänˈstrāSH(ə)n, ˌremənˈstrāSH(ə)n | noun remonstrative | rəˈmänstrədiv, ˈremənˌstrādiv | adjective remonstrator | rəˈmänˌstrādər, ˈremənˌstrādər | noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense 'make plain'): from medieval Latin remonstrat- 'demonstrated', from the verb remonstrare, from re- (expressing intensive force) + monstrare 'to show'.

rend | rend |
verb (past and past participle rent | rent |) [with object]
tear (something) into two or more pieces: snapping teeth that would rend human flesh to shreds | figurative : the speculation and confusion that was rending the civilized world. • archaic wrench (something) violently: he rent the branch out of the tree. • literary cause great emotional pain to (a person or their heart): you tell me this in order to make me able to betray you without rending my heart. PHRASES rend the air literary sound piercingly: a shrill scream rent the air. rend one's garments tear one's clothes as a sign of extreme grief or distress: the women began to wail and rend their garments. rend one's hair pull one's hair out as a sign of extreme grief or distress: men and women alike weep and rend their hair. ORIGIN Old English rendan; related to Middle Low German rende.

renegade | ˈrenəˌgād |
noun
a person who deserts and betrays an organization, country, or set of principles: an agent who later turns out to be a renegade. • archaic a person who abandons religion; an apostate: renegades and Deserters of Heaven, who renounce their God for the Favor of Man. • a person who behaves in a rebelliously unconventional manner: he was a renegade and social malcontent. adjective having treacherously changed allegiance: a renegade bodyguard. • archaic having abandoned one's religious beliefs: a renegade monk. ORIGIN late 16th century (as renegado): from Spanish renegado, past participle (used as a noun) of renegar, from medieval Latin renegare renege. Compare with the earlier form renegate (attested from Middle English onwards), from medieval Latin renegatus.

renounce | rəˈnouns |
verb [with object]
formally declare one's abandonment of (a claim, right, or possession): Isabella offered to renounce her son's claim to the French Crown. • reject and stop using or consuming: he renounced drugs and alcohol completely. • [no object] Law refuse or resign a right or position, especially one as an heir or trustee: there will be forms enabling the allottee to renounce. • refuse to recognize or abide by any longer: these agreements were renounced after the fall of the czarist regime. • declare that one will no longer engage in or support: they renounced the armed struggle. PHRASES renounce the world completely withdraw from society or material affairs in order to lead a life considered to be more spiritually fulfilling: she renounced the world and went to work in a leper colony. DERIVATIVES renounceable adjective renouncement | rəˈnounsm(ə)nt | noun renouncer | rəˈnounsər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French renoncer, from Latin renuntiare 'protest against', from re- (expressing reversal) + nuntiare 'announce'.

renown | rəˈnoun |
noun
the condition of being known or talked about by many people; fame: authors of great renown. ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French renoun, from Old French renomer 'make famous', from re- (expressing intensive force) + nomer 'to name', from Latin nominare.

repast | rəˈpast |
noun formal
a meal: a sumptuous repast. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, based on late Latin repascere, from re- (expressing intensive force) + pascere 'to feed'.

replete | rəˈplēt |
adjective [predicative]
filled or well-supplied with something: sensational popular fiction, replete with adultery and sudden death. • very full of or sated by food: I went out into the sun-drenched streets again, replete and relaxed. DERIVATIVES repleteness noun repletion | rəˈplēSH(ə)n | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French replet(e) or Latin repletus 'filled up', past participle of replere, from re- 'back, again' + plere 'fill'.

reprieve | rəˈprēv |
verb [with object]
cancel or postpone the punishment of (someone, especially someone condemned to death): under the new regime, prisoners under sentence of death were reprieved. • abandon or postpone plans to close or put an end to (something): the threatened pits could be reprieved. noun a cancellation or postponement of a punishment: he accepted the death sentence and refused to appeal for a reprieve. • a temporary escape from an undesirable fate or unpleasant situation: a mother who faced eviction has been given a reprieve. ORIGIN late 15th century (as the past participle repryed): from Anglo-Norman French repris, past participle of reprendre, from Latin re- 'back' + prehendere 'seize'. The insertion of -v- (16th century) remains unexplained. Sense development has undergone a reversal, from the early meaning 'send back to prison', via 'postpone a legal process', to the current sense 'rescue from impending punishment'.

reproach | rəˈprōCH |
verb [with object]
address (someone) in such a way as to express disapproval or disappointment: critics reproachedhim for his failure to tackle the deficiency | [with direct speech] : "You know that isn't true," he reproached her. • (reproach someone with) accuse someone of: his wife reproached him with cowardice. • archaic censure or rebuke (an offense). noun the expression of disapproval or disappointment: he gave her a look of reproach | a farrago of warnings and pained reproaches. • (a reproach to) a thing that makes the failings of (someone or something else) more apparent: his elegance is a living reproach to our slovenly habits. • (Reproaches) (in the Roman Catholic Church) a set of antiphons and responses for Good Friday representing the reproaches of Jesus Christ to his people. PHRASES beyond reproach (also above reproach) such

that no criticism can be made; perfect: his integrity is beyond reproach. DERIVATIVES reproachable | rəˈprōCHəb(ə)l | adjective reproacher noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French reprochier (verb), from a base meaning ‘bring back close’, based on Latin prope ‘near’.

reprobate | ˈreprəˌbāt |
noun
1 an unprincipled person (often used humorously or affectionately): he had to present himself as more of a lovable reprobate than a spirit of corruption. 2 archaic (in Calvinism) a sinner who is not of the elect and is predestined to damnation. adjective 1 unprincipled (often used as a humorous or affectionate reproach): a long-missed old reprobate drinking comrade. 2 archaic (in Calvinism) predestined to damnation. verb [with object] archaic express or feel disapproval of: his neighbors reprobated his method of proceeding. DERIVATIVES reprobation | ˌreprəˈbāSH(ə)n | noun reprobative adjective reprobatory adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (as a verb): from Latin reprobat- ‘disapproved’, from the verb reprobare, from re- (expressing reversal) + probare ‘approve’.

repudiate | rəˈpyo͞odēˌāt |
verb [with object]
refuse to accept or be associated with: she has repudiated policies associated with previous party leaders. • deny the truth or validity of: the minister repudiated allegations of human rights abuses. • mainly Law refuse to fulfill or discharge (an agreement, obligation, or debt): breach of a condition gives the other party the right to repudiate a contract. • (especially in the past or in non-Christian religions) divorce (one's wife). DERIVATIVES repudiator | rəˈpyo͞odēˌādər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (originally in the sense ‘cast off, disown’): from Latin repudiat- ‘divorced, rejected’, from repudium ‘divorce’.

repugnant | rəˈpəgnənt |
adjective
1 extremely distasteful; unacceptable: the thought of going back into the fog was repugnant to him. 2 [predicative] (repugnant to) in conflict with; incompatible with: a bylaw must not be repugnant to the general law of the country. • archaic given to stubborn resistance. DERIVATIVES repugnantly adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘offering resistance’): from Old French repugnant or Latin repugnant- ‘opposing’, from the verb repugnare (see repugnance).

reputed | rəˈpyo͞odəd |
adjective
1 generally believed to exist or be something specified, but not definitely the case: a reputed budget of $165 million | this area gave the lie to the reputed flatness of the country. 2 widely known and well thought of: a highly reputed company | intensive training with reputed coaches.

requisite | ˈrekwəzət |
adjective
made necessary by particular circumstances or regulations: the application will not be processed until the requisite fee is paid. noun a thing that is necessary for the achievement of a specified end: she believed privacy to be a requisite for a peaceful life. DERIVATIVES requisitely adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin requisitus ‘searched for, deemed necessary’, past participle of requirere (see require).

rescind | rəˈsind |
verb [with object]
revoke, cancel, or repeal (a law, order, or agreement): the government eventually rescinded the directive. DERIVATIVES rescindable adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin rescindere, from re- (expressing intensive force) + scindere ‘to divide, split’.

resilient | rəˈzilēənt |
adjective
1 (of a person or animal) able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions: babies are generally far more resilient than new parents realize | the fish are resilient to most infections. 2 (of a substance or object) able to recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching, or being compressed: a shoe with resilient cushioning. DERIVATIVES resiliently adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin resilient- ‘leaping back’, from the verb resilire (see resile).

resolute | ˈrezəˌlo͞ot |
adjective
admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering: she was resolute and unswerving. DERIVATIVES resoluteness | ˈrezəˌlo͞otnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘paid’, describing a rent): from Latin resolutus ‘loosened, released, paid’, past participle of resolvere (see resolve).

resolution | ˌrezəˈlo͞oSH(ə)n |
noun
1 a firm decision to do or not to do something: she kept her resolution not to see Anne any more | a New Year's resolution. • a formal expression of opinion or intention agreed on by a legislative body, committee, or other formal meeting, typically after taking a vote: the conference passed two resolutions. 2 the quality of being determined or resolute: he handled the last French actions of the war with resolution. 3 the action of solving a problem, dispute, or contentious matter: the peaceful resolution of all disputes | a successful resolution to the problem. • Music the passing of a discord into a concord during the course of changing harmony: tension is released by the resolution from the dominant to the tonic chord. • Medicine the disappearance of inflammation, or of any other symptom or condition: complete remission was defined as resolution of clinical evidence of disease. 4 mainly Chemistry the process of reducing or separating something into its components. • Physics the replacing of a single force or other vector quantity by two or more jointly equivalent to it. 5 the smallest interval measurable by a scientific (especially optical) instrument; the resolving power. • the degree of detail visible in a photographic or television image: a high-resolution monitor. 6 the conversion of something abstract into another form: the gradual resolution of an uncertain feeling into a named emotion. • Prosody the substitution of two short

syllables for one long one. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin resolutio(n-), from resolvere ‘loosen, release’ (see resolve).

resonant | ˈrezənənt |
adjective
1 (of sound) deep, clear, and continuing to sound or ring: a full-throated and resonant guffaw. • (resonant with) (of a place) filled or resounding with (a sound): alpine valleys resonant with the sound of church bells. • having the ability to evoke or suggest enduring images, memories, or emotions: the prints are resonant with traditions of Russian folk art and story. 2 (of a room, musical instrument, or hollow body) tending to reinforce or prolong sounds, especially by synchronous vibration: the sound of these instruments, played in a resonant room, is unforgettable | the sound is produced by striking resonant little metal bars. 3 technical relating to or bringing about resonance in a circuit, atom, or other object: resonant absorption of radiation. 4 (of a color) enhancing or enriching another color or colors by contrast: the resonant reds, greens, and browns typical of Ribera's palette. DERIVATIVES resonantly adverb ORIGIN late 16th century: from French résonnant or Latin resonant- ‘resounding’, from the verb resonare, from re- (expressing intensive force) + sonare ‘to sound’.

resourceful | rəˈsôrsf(ə)l |
adjective
having the ability to find quick and clever ways to overcome difficulties: he maintained her reputation for being a resourceful problem-solver | you will become stronger and more resourceful in the face of adversity. DERIVATIVES resourcefully | rəˈsôrsf(ə)lē | adverb

respite | ˈrespət |
noun
a short period of rest or relief from something difficult or unpleasant: the refugee encampments will provide some respite from the suffering | [in singular] : a brief respite from a dire food shortage. • a short delay permitted before an unpleasant obligation is met or a punishment is carried out. verb [with object] rare postpone (a sentence, obligation, etc.): the execution was only respited a few months. • archaic grant a delay or extension of time to; reprieve from death or execution: some poor criminal … from the gibbet or the wheel, respited for a day. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French respit, from Latin respectus ‘refuge, consideration’.

resplendent | rəˈsplend(ə)nt |
adjective
attractive and impressive through being richly colorful or sumptuous: she was resplendent in a sea-green dress. DERIVATIVES resplendence | rəˈsplend(ə)ns | noun resplendency noun resplendently | rəˈsplendən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin resplendent- ‘shining out’, from the verb resplendere, from re- (expressing intensive force) + splendere ‘to glitter’.

restive | ˈrestiv |
adjective
(of a person) unable to keep still or silent and becoming increasingly difficult to control, especially because of impatience, dissatisfaction, or boredom: the crowd had been waiting for hours and many were becoming restive | he reiterated his determination to hold the restive republics together. • (of a horse) refusing to advance, stubbornly standing still or moving backward or sideways: both their horses became restive at once. DERIVATIVES restively | ˈrestivlē | adverb restiveness | ˈrestivnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (as restif): from Old French restif, -ive, from Latin restare ‘remain’. The original sense, ‘inclined to remain still’, has undergone a reversal; the association with the stubborn behavior of a horse gave rise to the current sense ‘restless’.

retaliate | rəˈtalēˌāt |
verb [no object]
make an attack or assault in return for a similar attack: the blow stung and she retaliated immediately. • [with object] archaic repay (an injury or insult) in kind: they used their abilities to retaliate the injury. DERIVATIVES retaliative | riˈtalēˌātiv, -ēətiv | adjective retaliator | -ˌātər | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin retaliat- ‘returned in kind’, from the verb retaliare, from re- ‘back’ + talis ‘such’.

retrench | rəˈtren(t)SH |
verb [no object]
(of a company, government, or individual) reduce costs or spending in response to economic difficulty: as a result of the recession the company retrenched | [with object] : if people are forced to retrench their expenditure trade will suffer. • [with object] formal reduce or diminish (something) in extent or quantity: withering household incomes have caused families to retrench their spending. ORIGIN late 16th century (in the now formal usage): from obsolete French retrencher, variant of retrancher, from re- (expressing reversal) + trancher ‘to cut, slice’.

retribution | ˌretrəˈbyo͞oSH(ə)n |
noun
punishment inflicted on someone as vengeance for a wrong or criminal act: employees asked not to be named, saying they feared retribution | Minos threatened war against Athens in retribution for his son's death | divine retribution. DERIVATIVES retributive | rəˈtribyədiv | adjective retributory | riˈtribyəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (also in the sense ‘recompense for merit or a service’): from late Latin retributio(n-), from retribut- ‘assigned again’, from the verb retribuere, from re- ‘back’ + tribuere ‘assign’.

reverberate | rəˈvərbəˌrāt |
verb [no object]
(of a loud noise) be repeated several times as an echo: her deep booming laugh reverberated around the room. • (of a place) appear to vibrate or be disturbed because of a loud noise: the hall reverberated with gaiety and laughter. • [with object] archaic return or re-echo (a sound): oft did the cliffs reverberate the sound. • have continuing and serious effects: the statements by the professor reverberated through the capitol. DERIVATIVES reverberative | -rətiv | adjective reverberator | rəˈvərbəˌrādər | noun reverberatory | rəˈvərb(ə)rəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN late 15th century (in the sense ‘drive or

beat back'): from Latin reverberat- 'struck again', from the verb reverberare, from re- 'back' + verberare 'to lash' (from verbera (plural) 'scourge').

reverie | ˈrev(ə)rē |
noun
a state of being pleasantly lost in one's thoughts; a daydream: a knock on the door broke her reverie | I slipped into reverie. • Music an instrumental piece suggesting a dreamy or musing state: his own compositions can move from impressionist reveries to an orchestral chordal approach. • archaic a fanciful or impractical idea or theory: he defended and explained all the reveries of astrology. ORIGIN late 15th century: from French reverie, (obsolete) resverie, from Old French reverie, resverie 'madness, revelry', from rever 'be delirious', of unknown ultimate origin.

revisionist | rəˈviZH(ə)nəst |
noun
a supporter of a policy of revision or modification: the revisionists who sought to replace it were long denied. • a person with a revised attitude to a previously accepted situation or point of view: revisionists have argued that the battle was crucial. adjective advocating a policy of revision or modification: in the first phase of Progressive reform, the revisionist agenda focused on populist political and social legislation. • promoting a revised attitude to a previously accepted situation or point of view: he is unimpressed by the arguments of revisionist historians | a revisionist view of the media's role in politics.

revulsion | rəˈvəlSHən |
noun
1 a sense of disgust and loathing: news of the attack will be met with sorrow and revulsion. 2 Medicine, mainly historical the drawing of disease or blood congestion from one part of the body to another, e.g. by counterirritation. DERIVATIVES revulsive adjective & noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (in revulsion (sense 2)): from French, or from Latin revulsio(n-), from revuls- 'torn out', from the verb revellere (from re- 'back' + vellere 'pull'). revulsion (sense 1) dates from the early 19th century.

rhapsodize | ˈrapsəˌd |
verb [no object]
speak or write about someone or something with great enthusiasm and delight: he began to rhapsodize about Gaby's beauty and charm.

rhetoric | ˈredərik |
noun
the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques: he is using a common figure of rhetoric, hyperbole. • language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience, but often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content: all we have from the Opposition is empty rhetoric. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French rethorique, via Latin from Greek rhētorikē (tekhnē) '(art) of rhetoric', from rhētōr 'rhetor'.

ribald | ˈribəld, ˈrīˌbôld |
adjective
referring to sexual matters in an amusingly coarse or irreverent way: a ribald comment | he was delighted at the ribald laughter that greeted his witticism. ORIGIN Middle English (as a noun denoting a lowly retainer or a licentious or irreverent person): from Old French ribauld, from riber 'indulge in licentious pleasures', from a Germanic base meaning 'prostitute'.

rife | rīf |
adjective [predicative]
(especially of something undesirable or harmful) of common occurrence; widespread: male chauvinism was rife in medicine in those days. • (rife with) full of: the streets were rife with rumor and fear. adverb in an unchecked or widespread manner: speculation ran rife that he was an arms dealer. DERIVATIVES rifeness noun ORIGIN late Old English rȳfe, probably from Old Norse rīfr 'acceptable'.

roughshod | ˈrəfˌSHäd |
adjective archaic
(of a horse) having shoes with nailheads projecting to prevent slipping.

rudimentary | ˌro͞odəˈmen(t)ərē |
adjective
involving or limited to basic principles: he received a rudimentary education. • relating to an immature, undeveloped, or basic form: a rudimentary stage of evolution. DERIVATIVES rudimentarily | ˌro͞odəmənˈterəlē | adverb rudimentariness | ˌro͞odəˈmen(t)ərēnəs | noun

rueful | ˈro͞ofə)l |
adjective
expressing sorrow or regret, especially when in a slightly humorous way: she gave a rueful grin. DERIVATIVES ruefulness noun ORIGIN Middle English (also in the sense 'pitiable'): from the noun rue1 + -ful.

Ruse | ˈro͞o |
an industrial city and the principal port of Bulgaria, on the Danube River; population 156,959 (2008).
ruse | ro͞oz | noun an action intended to deceive someone; a trick: Eleanor tried to think of a ruse to get Paul out of the house. ORIGIN late Middle English (as a hunting term): from Old French, from ruser 'use trickery', earlier 'drive back', perhaps based on Latin rursus 'backwards'.

sacrilege | ˈsakrəlij |
noun
violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred: putting ecclesiastical vestments to secular use was considered sacrilege. ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from Latin sacrilegium, from sacrilegus 'stealer of sacred things', from sacer, sacr- 'sacred' + legere 'take possession of'.

salacious | səˈlāSHəs |
adjective

having or conveying undue or inappropriate interest in sexual matters: salacious stories. DERIVATIVES salaciously | səˈlāSHəslē | adverb salaciousness | səˈlāSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin salax, salac- (from salire ‘to leap’) + -ious.

salient | ˈsālyənt |
adjective
1 most noticeable or important: it succinctly covered all the salient points of the case. • prominent; conspicuous: it was always the salient object in my view. 2 (of an angle) pointing outward. The opposite of re-entrant. 3 [postpositive] Heraldry (of an animal) standing on its hind legs with the forepaws raised, as if leaping. noun a piece of land or section of fortification that juts out to form an angle. • an outward bulge in a line of military attack or defense: this decisive battle broke the Germans' ability to attack any further into the Kursk salient. DERIVATIVES saliency noun saliently adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century (as a heraldic term): from Latin salient- ‘leaping’, from the verb salire. The noun dates from the early 19th century.

salubrious | səˈlo͞obrēəs |
adjective
health-giving; healthy: salubrious weather. • (of a place) pleasant; not run-down. DERIVATIVES salubriously adverb salubriousness | səˈlo͞obrēəsnəs | noun salubrity | səˈlo͞obrədē | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin salubris (from salus ‘health’) + -ous.

salutary | ˈsalyəˌterē |
adjective
(especially with reference to something unwelcome or unpleasant) producing good effects; beneficial: a salutary reminder of where we came from. • archaic health-giving: the salutary Atlantic air. ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun in the sense ‘remedy’): from French salutaire or Latin salutaris, from salus, salut- ‘health’.

salvage | ˈsalvij |
verb [with object]
1 rescue (a wrecked or disabled ship or its cargo) from loss at sea: an emerald and gold cross was salvaged from the wreck. • retrieve or preserve (something) from potential loss or adverse circumstances: it was the only crumb of comfort he could salvage from the ordeal. 2 Philippines apprehend and execute (a suspected criminal) without trial: those who are salvaged simply disappear from their homes or workplaces. noun the rescue of a wrecked or disabled ship or its cargo from loss at sea: [as modifier] : a salvage operation was under way. • the cargo saved from a wrecked or sunken ship: salvage taken from a ship that had sunk in the river. • the rescue of property or material from potential loss or destruction: surgery resulted in the salvage of damaged myocardium. • Law payment made or due to a person who has saved a ship or its cargo. DERIVATIVES salvageable adjective salvager noun ORIGIN mid 17th century (as a noun denoting payment for saving a ship or its cargo): from French, from medieval Latin salvagium, from Latin salvare ‘to save’. The verb dates from the late 19th century.

sanguine | ˈsaNGgwən |
adjective
1 optimistic or positive, especially in an apparently bad or difficult situation: he is sanguine about prospects for the global economy | the committee takes a more sanguine view. • (in medieval science and medicine) of or having the constitution associated with the predominance of blood among the bodily humors, supposedly marked by a ruddy complexion and an optimistic disposition. • archaic (of the complexion) florid or ruddy. 2 literary or Heraldry blood-red. 3 archaic bloody or bloodthirsty. noun a blood-red color. • a deep red-brown crayon or pencil containing iron oxide. • Heraldry a blood-red stain used in blazoning. DERIVATIVES sanguinely | ˈsaNGgwənlē | adverb sanguineness | ˈsaNGgwə(n)nəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French sanguin(e) ‘blood red’, from Latin sanguineus ‘of blood’, from sanguis, sanguin- ‘blood’.

sardonic | särˈdänik |
adjective
grimly mocking or cynical: Starkey attempted a sardonic smile. DERIVATIVES sardonically | särˈdänək(ə)lē | adverb sardonicism | -ˈdänəˌsizəm | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French sardonique, earlier sardonien, via Latin from Greek sardonios ‘of Sardinia’, alteration of sardanios, used by Homer to describe bitter or scornful laughter.

sartorial | särˈtôrēəl |
adjective [attributive]
relating to tailoring, clothes, or style of dress: sartorial elegance. DERIVATIVES sartorially adverb ORIGIN early 19th century: from Latin sartor ‘tailor’ (from sarcire ‘to patch’) + -ial.

satiate | ˈsāSHēˌāt |
verb
another term for sate: he folded up his newspaper, his curiosity satiated. adjective archaic satisfied to the full; satiated: satiate with power, of fame and wealth possess'd. DERIVATIVES satiation | ˌsāSHēˈāSHən | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin satiatus, past participle of satiare, from satis ‘enough’.

saturnine | ˈsadərˌnīn |
adjective
(of a person or their manner) slow and gloomy: a saturnine temperament. • (of a person or their features) dark in coloring and moody or mysterious: his saturnine face and dark, watchful eyes. • (of a place or an occasion) gloomy: a saturnine setting. DERIVATIVES saturninely adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (as a term in astrology): from Old French saturnin, from medieval Latin Saturninus ‘of Saturn’ (identified with lead by the alchemists and associated with slowness and gloom by astrologers).

savant | saˈvän(t), säˈvänt |
noun
1 a very learned or talented person, especially one distinguished in a particular field of science or the arts: he portrayed himself as a savant and a genius.

2 a person who has an exceptional aptitude in one particular field, such as music or mathematics, despite having significant impairment in other areas of intellectual or social functioning. See also idiot savant: Sam has trouble interpreting social cues and facial expressions, yet he is a savant when it comes to music. ORIGIN early 18th century: French, literally 'knowing (person)', present participle (used as a noun) of savoir.

savor | ˈsāv |
verb
1 [with object] taste (good food or drink) and enjoy it completely: gourmets will want to savor our game specialties. • enjoy or appreciate (something pleasant) completely, especially by dwelling on it: I wanted to savor every moment. 2 [no object] (savor of) have a suggestion or trace of (something, especially something bad): their genuflections savored of superstition and popery. noun a characteristic taste, flavor, or smell, especially a pleasant one: the subtle savor of wood smoke. • a suggestion or trace, typically of something bad. DERIVATIVES savorless | ˈsāvərləs | (British savourless) adjective ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, from Latin sapor, from sapere 'to taste'.

scanty | ˈskan(t)ē |
adjective (scantier, scantiest)
small or insufficient in quantity or amount: scanty wages. • (of clothing) revealing; skimpy: the women looked cold in their scanty gowns. plural noun (scanties) informal brief underpants. ORIGIN late 16th century: from scant + -y1.

scathing | ˈskāTHiNG |
adjective
witheringly scornful; severely critical: he unleashed a scathing attack on his former boss . DERIVATIVES scathingly | ˈskāTHiNGlē | adverb scathe | skāTH | archaic verb [with object and usually with negative] (usually be scathed) harm; injure: he was barely scathed. • literary damage or destroy by fire or lightning: the pine tree scathed by lightning-fire. noun harm; injury: it was cheering to hear that you had got through winter and diphtheria without scathe. DERIVATIVES scatheless adjective ORIGIN Middle English: from Old Norse skathi (noun), skatha (verb); related to Dutch and German schaden (verb).

schematic | skəˈmadik |
adjective
(of a diagram or other representation) symbolic and simplified: schematic diagrams | this concept is shown in schematic form in Figure 1. • (of thought, ideas, etc.) simplistic or formulaic in character, usually to an extent inappropriate to the complexities of the subject matter: a highly schematic reading of the play. noun (in technical contexts) a schematic diagram, in particular of an electric or electronic circuit: only a few manufacturers provide schematics with their gear. DERIVATIVES schematically | skəˈmadək(ə)lē | adverb

schism | ˈs(k)izəm |
noun
a split or division between strongly opposed sections or parties, caused by differences in opinion or belief: the widening schism between Church leaders and politicians | [mass noun] : the persistence of this group could produce schism within society. • the formal separation of a Church into two Churches or the secession of a group owing to doctrinal and other differences. See also Great Schism. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French scisme, via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek skhisma 'cleft', from skhizein 'to split'.

schooled | skōōld |
adjective [often in combination]
educated or trained in a specified activity or in a particular way: a man well schooled in making money.

scoff1 | skôf, skäf |
verb [no object]
speak to someone or about something in a scornfully derisive or mocking way: [with direct speech] : "You, a scientist?" he scoffed | department officials scoffed at the allegations. noun an expression of scornful derision: scoffs of disbelief. • archaic an object of ridicule: his army was the scoff of all Europe. DERIVATIVES scoffer | ˈskôfər, ˈskäfər | noun ORIGIN Middle English (first used as a noun in the sense 'mockery, scorn'): perhaps of Scandinavian origin. scoff2 | skôf, skäf | informal verb [with object] eat (something) quickly and greedily: she scoffed down several chops | a lizard scoffing up insects. Compare with scarf3. noun food. ORIGIN late 18th century (as a verb): originally a variant of Scots and dialect scaff. The noun is via Afrikaans from Dutch schoft 'quarter of a day, work shift', (by extension) 'meal'.

scrupulous | ˈskrōōpyələs |
adjective
(of a person or process) diligent, thorough, and extremely attentive to details: the research has been carried out with scrupulous attention to detail. • very concerned to avoid doing wrong: she's too scrupulous to have an affair with a married man. DERIVATIVES scrupulosity | ˌskrōōpyəˈläsədē | noun scrupulousness | ˈskrōōpyələsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'troubled with doubts'): from French scrupuleux or Latin scrupulosus, from scrupulus (see scruple).

scurrilous | ˈskərələs |
adjective
making or spreading scandalous claims about someone with the intention of damaging their reputation: a scurrilous attack on his integrity. • humorously insulting: a very funny collection of bawdy and scurrilous writings. DERIVATIVES scurrilously | ˈskərələslē | adverb scurrilousness noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from French scurrile or Latin scurrilus (from scurra 'buffoon') + -ous.

secrete1 | səˈkrēt |
verb [with object]
(of a cell, gland, or organ) produce and discharge (a substance): insulin is secreted in response to rising levels of glucose in the blood. DERIVATIVES secretory | səˈkrēd(ə)rē, ˈsēkrəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN early 18th century:

back-formation from secretion. secrete2 | sə'krēt | verb [with object] conceal; hide: the assets had been secreted in Swiss bank accounts. ORIGIN mid 18th century: alteration of the obsolete verb secret 'keep secret'.

sedate1 | sə'dāt |
adjective
calm, dignified, and unhurried: in the old days, business was carried on at a rather more sedate pace. • quiet and rather dull: sedate suburban domesticity. DERIVATIVES sedately | sə'dātlē | adverb sedateness | sə'dātnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (originally as a medical term meaning 'not sore or painful', also 'calm, tranquil'): from Latin sedatus, past participle of sedare 'settle', from sedere 'sit'. sedate2 | sə'dāt | verb [with object] calm (someone) or make them sleep by administering a sedative drug: she was heavily sedated. ORIGIN 1960s: back-formation from sedation.

seditious | sə'diSHəs |
adjective
inciting or causing people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch: the letter was declared seditious. DERIVATIVES seditiously | sə'diSHəslē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French seditieux or Latin seditiosus, from seditio 'mutinous separation' (see sedition).

sedulous | 'sejələs |
adjective
(of a person or action) showing dedication and diligence: he watched himself with the most sedulous care. DERIVATIVES sedulity | sə'jo͞oləd ē | noun sedulously | 'sejələslē | adverb sedulousness | 'sejələsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin sedulus 'zealous'+ -ous.

seemly | 'sēmlē |
adjective
conforming to accepted notions of propriety or good taste; decorous: I felt it was not seemly to observe too closely. DERIVATIVES seemliness | 'sēmlēnəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old Norse sœmiligr, from soemr 'fitting' (see seem).

seminal | 'semən(ə)l |
adjective
1 (of a work, event, moment, or figure) strongly influencing later developments: his seminal work on chaos theory. 2 relating to or denoting semen: the spermatozoa are washed to separate them from the seminal plasma. • Botany relating to or derived from the seed of a plant: the seminal root system. DERIVATIVES seminally adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in seminal (sense 2)): from Old French seminal or Latin seminalis, from semen 'seed'. seminal (sense 1) dates from the mid 17th century.

senescence | sə'nes(ə)ns |
noun Biology
the condition or process of deterioration with age. • loss of a cell's power of division and growth. DERIVATIVES senescent | sə'nes(ə)nt | adjective

sententious | sen'ten(t)SHəs |
adjective
given to moralizing in a pompous or affected manner: he tried to encourage his men with sententious rhetoric. DERIVATIVES sententiously | sen 'ten(t)SHəslē | adverb sententiousness | sen'ten(t)SHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin sententiosus, from sententia 'opinion' (see sentence). The original sense was 'full of meaning or wisdom', later becoming depreciatory.

sepulchral | sə'pəlkrəl, se'pəlkrəl |
adjective
relating to a tomb or interment: sepulchral monuments. • gloomy; dismal: a speech delivered in sepulchral tones. DERIVATIVES sepulchrally adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from French sépulchral or Latin sepulchralis, from sepulcrum (see sepulcher).

serrated | sə'rādəd |
adjective
having or denoting a jagged edge; sawlike: a knife with a serrated edge.

servile | 'sərv(ə)l, 'sər,vīl |
adjective
1 having or showing an excessive willingness to serve or please others: he bowed his head in a servile manner. 2 of or characteristic of a slave or slaves: the servile condition of the peasants. DERIVATIVES servilely | 'sərvə(l)lē, 'sər ,vī(l)lē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'suitable for a slave or for the working class'): from Latin servilis, from servus 'slave'.

sever | 'sevər |
verb [with object]
divide by cutting or slicing, especially suddenly and forcibly: the head was severed from the body. • put an end to (a connection or relationship); break off: he severed his relations with Lawrence. DERIVATIVES severable | 'sev(ə)rəb(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French severer, from Latin separare 'disjoin, divide'.

shackle | 'SHak(ə)l |
noun
1 (shackles) a pair of fetters connected together by a chain, used to fasten a prisoner's wrists or ankles together. • used in reference to something that restrains or impedes: society is going to throw off the shackles of racism and colonialism. 2 a metal link, typically U-shaped, closed by a bolt, used to secure a chain or rope to something. • a pivoted link connecting a spring in a vehicle's suspension to the body of the vehicle. verb [with object] chain with shackles: the prisoner was shackled to the heavy steel chair in the center of the room. • restrain; limit: they seek to shackle the oil and gas companies by imposing new controls. ORIGIN Old English sc(e)acul 'fetter', of Germanic origin; related to Dutch schakel 'link, coupling'.

shallow | 'SHalō |
adjective

of little depth: serve the noodles in a shallow bowl | being fairly shallow, the water was warm. • situated at no great depth: the shallow bed of the North Sea. • varying only slightly from a specified or understood line or direction, especially the horizontal: a shallow roof. • not exhibiting, requiring, or capable of serious thought: a shallow analysis of contemporary society. • (of breathing) taking in little air. noun (shallows) an area of the sea, a lake, or a river where the water is not very deep. verb [no object] (of the sea, a lake, or a river) become less deep over time or in a particular place: the boat ground to a halt where the water shallowed. DERIVATIVES shallowly | ˈSHalōlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: obscurely related to shoal2.

shard | SHärd |
noun
a piece of broken ceramic, metal, glass, or rock, typically having sharp edges: shards of glass flew in all directions. ORIGIN Old English sceard ‘gap, notch, potsherd’, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch schaarde ‘notch’, also to shear.

sheen | SHēn |
noun [in singular]
a soft luster on a surface: black crushed velvet with a slight sheen | figurative : he seemed to shine with that unmistakable showbiz sheen. verb literary shine or cause to shine softly: [with object] : men entered with rain sheening their steel helms | [no object] : her black hair sheened in the sun. ORIGIN early 17th century: from obsolete sheen ‘beautiful, resplendent’; apparently related to the verb shine.

shirk | SHərk |
verb [with object]
avoid or neglect (a duty or responsibility): their sole motive is to shirk responsibility and rip off the company. • [no object, usually with negative] (shirk from) be unwilling to do (something difficult): we will not shirk from closing a school if the evidence should justify it. noun archaic a person who shirks. DERIVATIVES shirker | ˈSHərkər | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century (in the sense ‘practice fraud or trickery’): from obsolete shirk ‘sponger’, perhaps from German Schurke ‘scoundrel’.

shoddy | ˈSHädē |
adjective (shoddier, shoddiest)
badly made or done: we're not paying good money for shoddy goods. • lacking moral principle; sordid: a shoddy misuse of the honor system. noun an inferior quality yarn or fabric made from the shredded fiber of waste woolen cloth or clippings: the production of shoddy and mattress stuffing. DERIVATIVES shoddily | ˈSHädəlē | adverb shoddiness | ˈSHädēnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 19th century: of unknown origin.

sibilant | ˈsibələnt |
adjective
1 making or characterized by a hissing sound: his sibilant whisper. 2 Phonetics (of a speech sound) sounded with a hissing effect, for example s, sh. noun Phonetics a sibilant speech sound. DERIVATIVES sibilance | ˈsibələns | noun sibilancy noun sibilantly adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin sibilant- ‘hissing’, from the verb sibilare.

sic1 | sik |
adverb
used in brackets after a copied or quoted word that appears odd or erroneous to show that the word is quoted exactly as it stands in the original, as in a story must hold a child's interest and “enrich his [sic] life” or a hero of antient [sic] Rome. ORIGIN Latin, literally ‘so, thus’. sic2 | sik | (also sick) verb (sics, siccing, sicced or sics, sicking, sicked) [with object] (sic something on) set a dog or other animal on (someone): the plan was to surprise the heck out of the grizzly by sicking the dog on him. • (sic someone on) informal set someone to pursue, keep watch on, or accompany (another). ORIGIN mid 19th century: dialect variant of seek.

sidereal | sīˈdirēəl |
adjective
of or with respect to the distant stars (i.e. the constellations or fixed stars, not the sun or planets). ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the form sydereal): partly from obsolete French sidereal, and partly from Latin sidereus (from sidus, sider- ‘star’) + -al.

similitude | səˈmilə͵to͞od |
noun
the quality or state of being similar to something: Conrad uses a range of constructions which express or imply similitude | [count noun] : there is a striking similitude between the brother and sister. • archaic a comparison between two things. • archaic a person or thing resembling someone or something else. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, from Latin similitudo, from similis ‘like’.

sinecure | ˈsinə͵ky͝or |
noun
a position requiring little or no work but giving the holder status or financial benefit: political sinecures for the supporters of ministers. DERIVATIVES sinecurism | ˈsīnəky͝orizəm, si- | noun sinecurist | ˈsinə͵ky͝orəst | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin sine cura ‘without care’.

sinister | ˈsinəstər |
adjective
1 giving the impression that something harmful or evil is happening or will happen: there was something sinister about that murmuring voice. • evil or criminal: there might be a more sinister motive behind the government's actions. 2 archaic or Heraldry of, on, or toward the left-hand side (in a coat of arms, from the bearer's point of view, i.e., the right as it is depicted). The opposite of dexter1. DERIVATIVES sinisterly | ˈsinəstərlē | adverb sinisterness noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘malicious, underhand’): from Old French sinistre or Latin sinister ‘left’.

skeptical | ˈskeptək(ə |
adjective

1 not easily convinced; having doubts or reservations: the public were deeply skeptical about some of the proposals. 2 Philosophy relating to the theory that certain knowledge is impossible.

slake | slāk |
verb [with object]
1 quench or satisfy (one's thirst): slake your thirst with some lemonade. • satisfy (desires): restaurants worked to slake the Italian obsession with food. 2 combine (quicklime) with water to produce calcium hydroxide: slake the lime within a day or two of purchase. ORIGIN Old English slacian 'become less eager', also 'slacken', from the adjective slæc 'slack'; compare with Dutch slaken 'diminish, relax'.

slothful | ˈslôTHf(ə)l, ˈslōTHf(ə)l, ˈsläTHf(ə)l |
adjective
lazy: fatigue made him slothful. DERIVATIVES slothfully | ˈsläTHfəlē | adverb slothfulness | ˈsläTHfəlnəs | noun

sluggish | ˈsləgiSH |
adjective
slow-moving or inactive: a sluggish stream. • lacking energy or alertness: Alex woke late feeling tired and sluggish. • slow to respond or make progress: the car had been sluggish all morning. DERIVATIVES sluggishly | ˈsləgəSHlē | adverb sluggishness | ˈsləgəSHnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from the noun slug1 or the verb slug (see sluggard) + -ish1.

Stallone, | stəˈlōn |
(born 1946), US actor, writer, and director; full name Sylvester Enzio Stallone; nickname Sly. He is best known for writing and starring in five Rocky movies (1976, 1979 1982, 1985, 1990) and three Rambo movies (1982, 1985, 1988). He also directed Rocky II, Rocky III, and Rocky IV.
sly | slī | adjective (slyer, slyest) having or showing a cunning and deceitful nature: she had a sly personality. • (of a remark, glance, or facial expression) showing in an insinuating way that one has some secret knowledge that may be harmful or embarrassing: he gave a sly grin. • (of an action) surreptitious: a sly sip of water. PHRASES on the sly in a secretive fashion: she was drinking on the sly. DERIVATIVES slyness | ˈslīnəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English (also in the sense 'dexterous'): from Old Norse slœgr 'cunning', originally 'able to strike' from the verb slá; compare with sleight.

smolder | ˈsmōldər |
verb [no object]
burn slowly with smoke but no flame: the bonfire still smoldered, the smoke drifting over the paddock. • show or feel barely suppressed anger, hatred, or another powerful emotion: Anna smoldered with indignation. • exist in a suppressed or concealed state: the controversy smoldered on for several years. noun smoke coming from a fire that is burning slowly without a flame: the last acrid smolder of his cigarette. ORIGIN late Middle English: related to Dutch smeulen.

snide | snīd |
adjective
1 derogatory or mocking in an indirect way: snide remarks about my mother. 2 mainly North American (of a person) devious and underhanded: a snide divorce lawyer. 3 informal, mainly British counterfeit; inferior: snide Rolex watches. noun informal an unpleasant or underhanded person or remark: he's not a snide, he's better than most. DERIVATIVES snidely adverb snideness noun snidey adjective ORIGIN mid 19th century (in snide (sense 3 of the adjective)): of unknown origin.

snub | snəb |
verb (snubs, snubbing, snubbed) [with object]
1 rebuff, ignore, or spurn disdainfully: he snubbed faculty members and students alike | he snubbed her request to wind up the debate. 2 check the movement of (a horse or boat), especially by a rope wound around a post: a horse snubbed to a tree. noun an act of showing disdain or a lack of cordiality by rebuffing or ignoring someone or something: he couldn't help thinking that the whole thing was meant to be taken as a snub. adjective (of a person's or animal's nose) short and turned up at the end: [in combination] : snub-nosed. ORIGIN Middle English (as a verb, originally in the sense 'rebuke with sharp words'): from Old Norse snubba 'chide, check the growth of'. The adjective dates from the early 18th century.

sodden | ˈsäd(ə)n |
adjective
saturated with liquid, especially water; soaked through: his clothes were sodden. • [in combination] having drunk an excessive amount of a particular alcoholic drink: a whiskey-sodden criminal. verb [with object] archaic saturate (something) with water: the rains have soddened the earth. DERIVATIVES soddenly adverb soddenness noun ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'boiled, cooked by boiling'): archaic past participle of seethe.

solecism | ˈsäləˌsiz(ə)m, ˈsōləˌsiz(ə)m |
noun
a grammatical mistake in speech or writing. • a breach of good manners; a piece of incorrect behavior. DERIVATIVES solecistic | ˌsäləˈsistik, ˌsō- | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: from French solécisme, or via Latin from Greek soloikismos, from soloikos 'speaking incorrectly'.

solicitous | səˈlisədəs |
adjective
characterized by or showing interest or concern: she was always solicitous about the welfare of her students | a solicitous inquiry. • archaic eager or anxious to do something: he was solicitous to cultivate her mamma's good opinion. DERIVATIVES solicitously | səˈlisədəslē | adverb solicitousness | səˈlisədəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin sollicitus (see solicit) + -ous.

solitude | ˈsäləˌt(y)o͞od |
noun
the state or situation of being alone: she savored her few hours of freedom

and solitude. • a lonely or uninhabited place. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin solitudo, from solus ‘alone’.

somatic | səˈmadik |
adjective
relating to the body, especially as distinct from the mind: patients completed a questionnaire about their somatic and psychological symptoms. • Biology relating to the soma. DERIVATIVES somatically adverb ORIGIN late 18th century: from Greek sōmatikos, from sōma ‘body’.

somnolent | ˈsämnələnt |
adjective
sleepy; drowsy. • causing or suggestive of drowsiness: a somnolent summer day. • Medicine abnormally drowsy. DERIVATIVES somnolence | ˈsämnələns | noun somnolency noun somnolently adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘causing sleepiness’): from Old French sompnolent or Latin somnolentus, from somnus ‘sleep’.

soporific | ˌsäpəˈrifik |
adjective
tending to induce drowsiness or sleep: the motion of the train had a somewhat soporific effect. • sleepy or drowsy: some medicine made her soporific. • tediously boring or monotonous: a libel trial is in large parts intensely soporific. noun a drug or other agent that induces sleep. DERIVATIVES soporifically | -ik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin sopor ‘sleep’ + -fic.

sordid | ˈsôrdəd |
adjective
involving ignoble actions and motives; arousing moral distaste and contempt: the story paints a sordid picture of bribes and scams. • dirty or squalid: the overcrowded housing conditions were sordid and degrading. DERIVATIVES sordidly | ˈsôrdədlē | adverb sordidness | ˈsôrdədnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (as a medical term in the sense ‘purulent’): from French sordide or Latin sordidus, from sordere ‘be dirty’. The current senses date from the early 17th century.

Spartan1 | ˈspärtn |
adjective
relating to Sparta in ancient Greece. noun a citizen of Sparta. Spartan2 | ˈspärtn | noun a Canadian dessert apple of a variety with crisp white flesh and maroon-flushed yellow skin. spartan | ˈspärtn | adjective showing the indifference to comfort or luxury traditionally associated with ancient Sparta: spartan but adequate rooms. DERIVATIVES spartanly adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Spartan1, because the inhabitants of Sparta were traditionally held to be indifferent to comfort or luxury.

spat1 | spat |
verb [past and past participle]
past and past participle of spit1. spat2 | spat | noun 1 (usually spats) historical a short cloth gaiter covering the instep and ankle: he would stand outside in his bowler hat and spats | an old fellow dressed in spats and dinner suit. 2 a cover for the upper part of an aircraft wheel: new wheel spats were constructed and the large tires were replaced by much smaller units. ORIGIN early 19th century: abbreviation of spatterdash. spat3 | spat | informal noun a petty quarrel: when we had our little spats, he had only to smile to get back on the right side of me. verb (spats, spatting, spatted) [no object] quarrel pettily: people expected him and his wife to spat continually. • [with object] US slap lightly: I spatted your hands when you were naughty. ORIGIN early 19th century (originally a US colloquial usage): probably imitative. spat4 | spat | noun the spawn or larvae of shellfish, especially oysters: oyster larvae attach themselves as spat to old shells. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Anglo-Norman French, of unknown ultimate origin. spit1 | spit | verb (spits, spitting; past and past participle spat | spat | or spit) [no object] 1 eject saliva forcibly from one's mouth, sometimes as a gesture of contempt or anger: Todd spit in Hugh's face. • [with object] forcibly eject (food or liquid) from one's mouth: he spits out his piece of coconut | figurative : ATMs that spit out $20 bills. • [with object] utter in a hostile or aggressive way: she spat abuse at the jury | [with direct speech] : “Go to hell!” she spat. • be extremely angry or frustrated: he was spitting with sudden fury. • (of a cat) make a hissing noise as a sign of anger or hostility: the cat arched his back and spat at her. 2 (of a fire or something being cooked) emit small bursts of sparks or hot fat with a series of short, explosive noises: the bonfire crackled and spat. 3 (it spits, it is spitting, etc.) British light rain falls: it began to spit. noun 1 saliva, typically that which has been ejected from a person's mouth. 2 an act of spitting. PHRASES spit in the face of (also spit in the eye of) show contempt or scorn for: the company spat in the face of its best customers. spit it out informal used to urge someone to say or confess something quickly: spit it out, man, I haven't got all day. PHRASAL VERBS spit up mainly North American (especially of a baby) vomit or regurgitate food: their infants fretted, mewled, and spat up over their jeans. DERIVATIVES spitty adjective ORIGIN Old English spittan, of imitative origin.

spawn | spôn |
verb
1 [no object] (of a fish, frog, mollusk, crustacean, etc.) release or deposit eggs: the fish spawn among fine-leaved plants | [with object] : a large brood is spawned. • (be spawned) (of a fish, frog, etc.) be laid as eggs: the fish can locate the precise stream in which they were spawned. • (of a character or object in a video game) appear at a certain point in the game: then they enter the undead land where defenders will spawn to fight against them | [with object] : players can spawn a ghost ship to confuse foes. 2 [with object] often derogatory (of a person) produce (offspring): why had she married a man who could spawn a boy like that? • [with object] produce or generate, especially in large numbers: the decade spawned a bewildering variety of books on the forces. • [with object] Computing generate (a dependent or subordinate computer process). noun 1 the eggs of fish, frogs, etc.: the fish covers its spawn with gravel. • the process of producing spawn: lax regulations, especially during the spawn, are responsible for the declining populations. 2 mainly derogatory the product or offspring of a person or place (used to express distaste or disgust): the spawn of chaos: demons and sorcerers. 3 the

mycelium of a fungus, especially a cultivated mushroom: a supplier of spawn for shiitake mushrooms. DERIVATIVES spawner noun ORIGIN late Middle English: shortening of Anglo-Norman French espaundre ‘to shed roe’, variant of Old French espandre ‘pour out’, from Latin expandere ‘expand’.

speckled | ˈspekəld |
adjective
covered or marked with a large number of small spots or patches of color: a large speckled brown egg | its body is gray speckled with dark spots.

spendthrift | ˈspen(d)ˌTHrift |
noun
a person who spends money in an extravagant, irresponsible way: Putt was a spendthrift and a heavy gambler | [as modifier] : a spendthrift uncle.

spontaneity | ˌspän(t)əˈnēədē |
noun
the condition of being spontaneous; spontaneous behavior or action: she occasionally tore up her usual schedule in favor of spontaneity.

sporadic | spəˈradik |
adjective
occurring at irregular intervals or only in a few places; scattered or isolated: sporadic fighting broke out. ORIGIN late 17th century: via medieval Latin from Greek sporadikos, from sporas, sporad- ‘scattered’; related to speirein ‘to sow’.

spurious | ˈspyo͝orēəs |
adjective
not being what it purports to be; false or fake: separating authentic and spurious claims. • (of a line of reasoning) apparently but not actually valid: this spurious reasoning results in nonsense. • archaic (of offspring) illegitimate. DERIVATIVES spuriously | ˈspyo͝orēəslē | adverb spuriousness | ˈspo͝orēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense ‘born out of wedlock’): from Latin spurius ‘false’ + -ous.

spyglass | ˈspīˌglas |
noun
a small handheld telescope.

squalor | ˈskwälər |
noun
the state of being extremely dirty and unpleasant, especially as a result of poverty or neglect: they lived in squalor and disease. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin, from squalere ‘be dirty’.

stagnate | ˈstagˌnāt |
verb [no object]
(of water or air) cease to flow or move; become stagnant. • cease developing; become inactive or dull: teaching can easily stagnate into a set of routines. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin stagnat- ‘settled as a still pool’, from the verb stagnare, from stagnum ‘pool’.

staid | stād |
adjective
sedate, respectable, and unadventurous: staid law firms. DERIVATIVES staidly | ˈstādlē | adverb staidness | ˈstādnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: archaic past participle of stay1.

stalemate | ˈstālˌmāt |
noun
1 a situation in which further action or progress by opposing or competing parties seems impossible: the war had again reached stalemate. 2 Chess a position counting as a draw, in which a player is not in check but cannot move except into check: last time I played him it ended up in stalemate. verb [with object] bring to or cause to reach stalemate: the group played a key role in stalemating the negotiations. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from obsolete stale (from Anglo-Norman French estale ‘position’, from estaler ‘be placed’) + mate2.

stalwart | ˈstôlwərt |
adjective
loyal, reliable, and hardworking: he remained a stalwart supporter of the cause. • dated strongly built and sturdy: he was of stalwart build. noun a loyal, reliable, and hardworking supporter or participant in an organization or team: the stalwarts of the Ladies' Auxiliary. DERIVATIVES stalwartly adverb stalwartness noun ORIGIN late Middle English: Scots variant of obsolete stalworth, from Old English stǣl ‘place’ + weorth ‘worth’.

standoffish | ˌstandˈôfiSH |
adjective informal
distant and cold in manner; unfriendly: he was an arrogant, standoffish prig. DERIVATIVES standoffishly | ˌstandˈôfiSHlē | adverb standoffishness | ˌstandˈôfiSHnəs | noun

stanza | ˈstanzə |
noun
a group of lines forming the basic recurring metrical unit in a poem; a verse. • a group of four lines in some Greek and Latin meters. DERIVATIVES stanzaed (also stanza'd) adjective stanzaic | stanˈzā-ik | adjective ORIGIN late 16th century: from Italian, literally ‘standing place’, also ‘stanza’.

stark | stärk |
adjective
1 severe or bare in appearance or outline: the ridge formed a stark silhouette against the sky. • unpleasantly or sharply clear; impossible to avoid: his position is in stark contrast to that of his opponent | the stark reality of life for millions of young people. 2 [attributive] complete; sheer: he came running back in stark terror. • rare completely naked. 3 archaic or literary stiff, rigid, or incapable of movement: a human body lying stiff and stark by the stream. • physically strong or powerful: the dragoons were stark fellows. PHRASES stark naked completely naked. stark raving mad (British also stark staring mad) informal completely crazy: for heaven's sake Bruce, have you gone stark raving mad? DERIVATIVES starkness | ˈstärknəs | noun ORIGIN Old Eng-

lish stearc ‘unyielding, severe’, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch sterk and German stark ‘strong’.

start | stärt |
verb [no object]
1 begin or be reckoned from a particular point in time or space: the season starts in September | we ate before the show started | below Roaring Springs the real desert starts. • [with infinitive or present participle] embark on a continuing action or a new venture: I started to chat to him | we plan to start building in the fall. • use a particular point, action, or circumstance as an opening for a course of action: the teacher can start by capitalizing on children's curiosity | I shall start with the case you mention first. • begin to move or travel: we started out into the snow | he started for the door. • [with object] begin to attend (an educational establishment) or engage in (an occupation, especially a profession): she will start school today | he started work at a travel agency | [no object] : he started as a typesetter. • cost at least a specified amount: fees start at around $300 | it's quite expensive, starting from $800 for the most basic model. 2 (of event or process) happen or come into being: the fire started in the building's upper floor | Townsend's troubles started before the incident. • [with object] cause (an event or process) to happen: two men started the blaze that caused the explosion | those women started all the trouble | I'm starting a campaign to get the law changed. • (of a machine or device) begin operating or being used: what should I do if the engine won't start again? | there was a moment of silence before the organ started. • [with object] cause (a machine) to begin to work: we had trouble starting the car. • [with object] cause or enable (someone or something) to begin doing or pursuing something: his father started him in business | what he said started me thinking. • [with object] give a signal to (competitors) to start in a race. 3 give a small jump or make a sudden jerking movement from surprise or alarm: “Oh my!” she said, starting. • literary move or appear suddenly: she had seen Meg start suddenly from a thicket. • (of eyes) bulge so as to appear to burst out of their sockets: his eyes started out of his head like a hare's. • be displaced or displace by pressure or shrinkage: the mortar in the joints had started. • [with object] rouse (game) from its lair. noun [usually in singular] 1 the point in time or space at which something has its origin; the beginning: he takes over as chief executive at the start of next year | the event was a shambles from start to finish | his bicycle was found close to the start of a forest trail. • the point or moment at which a race begins: make sure you are not over the line at the start. • an act of beginning to do or deal with something: I can make a start on cleaning up | an early start enabled us to avoid the traffic. • used to indicate that a useful initial contribution has been made but that more remains to be done: if he would tell her who had put him up to it, it would be a start. • a person's position or circumstances at the beginning of their life, especially a position of advantage: she's anxious to give her baby the best start in life. • an advantage consisting in having set out in a race or on journey earlier than one's rivals or opponents: he would have a ninety-minute start on them. 2 a sudden movement of surprise or alarm: she awoke with a start | the woman gave a nervous start. PHRASES don't start (also don't you start) informal used to tell someone not to grumble or criticize: don't start—I do my fair share. for a start informal used to introduce or emphasize the first or most important of a number of considerations: this side is at an advantage—for a start, there are more of them. get started begin a task, endeavor, or process: for an art gallery owner, Naples was a good place to get started. get the start of dated gain an advantage over: I laughed to think how I had got the start of them. start a family conceive one's first child. start something informal cause trouble: you needn't worry about having started something. to start with at the beginning of a series of events or period of time: she wasn't very keen on the idea to start with. • as the first thing to be taken into account: to start with, I was feeling down. PHRASAL VERBS start again abandon what one is doing and make a new beginning: while I was writing this essay my computer froze and I had to start again. start in informal begin doing something, especially talking: people groan when she starts in about her acting ambitions. • (start in on something) North American begin to do or deal with something: you vacuum the stairs and I'll start in on the laundry. • (start in on someone) North American attack someone verbally; begin to criticize someone: before you start in on me, let me explain. start off begin to travel or move: we started off on our journey. • begin to operate or do something or to happen: treatment should start off with attention to diet | she started off as a general practitioner. • (start someone or something off) cause someone or something to begin to operate or do something: what started you off on this search? start on 1 (start on something) begin to work on or deal with something: I'm starting on a new book. 2 (start on someone) informal begin to criticize someone: the minute I mentioned it she started on me. start out embark on a venture or undertaking, especially a commercial one: the company will start out with a hundred employees | when you start out in business, your first job is to get the attention of customers | when he was starting out as a young actor, he never seemed to have enough money. • begin to move, act, or happen: they were to start out on the four-hour journey at 9:00 am | May 4th started out as a normal day. start over mainly North American make a new beginning: could you face going back to school and starting over? start up 1 (of a machine or device) begin operating or being used: he heard the sound of a car starting up. • (start something up, start up something) cause a machine or device to begin operating or being used: he started up the boat's engine. 2 embark on a venture or undertaking, especially a commercial one: I can't start up on my own without capital. • (start something up, start up something) establish a company or other enterprise: when we started up the business, we could only afford second-hand machines. ORIGIN Old English styrtan ‘to caper, leap’, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch storten ‘push’ and German stürzen ‘fall headlong, fling’. From the sense ‘sudden movement’ arose the sense ‘initiation of movement, setting out on a journey’ and hence ‘beginning of a process, etc.’. START | stärt | abbreviation Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, an agreement between the US and the Soviet Union to limit and reduce strategic nuclear weapons, first signed in 1991. Strategic Arms Reduction Talks | strəˈtējik ärmz rəˈdəkSHən, rēˈdək-SHən tôks | (abbreviation START) a series of arms-reduction negotiations between the US and the Soviet Union begun in 1983. The Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty was signed in 1987 and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in 1991.

steadfast | ˈsted͵fast |
adjective
resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering: steadfast loyalty. ORIGIN Old English stedefæst ‘standing firm’(see stead, fast1).

stentorian | stenˈtôrēən |
adjective
(of a person's voice) loud and powerful: he introduced me to the staff with a stentorian announcement.

stigma | ˈstigmə |
noun (plural stigmas or especially in sense 2 stigmata | stiɡˈmätə, ˈstiɡmətə |)
1 a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person: the stigma of having gone to prison will always be with me | debt has lost its stigma and is now a part of everyday life. 2 (stigmata) (in Christian tradition) marks corresponding to those left on Jesus’ body by the Crucifixion, said to have been impressed by divine favor on the bodies of St. Francis of Assisi and others. 3 Medicine a visible sign or characteristic of a disease: knee deformities or other stigmata of childhood rickets. • a mark or spot on the skin. 4 Botany (in a flower) the part of a pistil that receives the pollen during pollination. ORIGIN late 16th century (denoting a mark made by pricking or branding): via Latin from Greek stigma ‘a mark made by a pointed instrument, a dot’; related to stick1.

stilted | ˈstiltəd |
adjective
1 (of a manner of talking or writing) stiff and self-conscious or unnatural: we made stilted conversation. 2 standing on stilts: villages of stilted houses. • Architecture (of an arch) with pieces of upright masonry between the imposts and the springers. DERIVATIVES stiltedly | ˈstiltədlē | adverb stiltedness | ˈstiltədnəs | noun

stint1 | stint |
verb [with object, often with negative]
supply an ungenerous or inadequate amount of (something): stowage room hasn't been stinted. • restrict (someone) in the amount of something, especially money, given or permitted: to avoid having to stint yourself, budget in advance. • [no object] be economical or frugal about spending or providing something: he doesn't stint on wining and dining. noun 1 a person's fixed or allotted period of work: his varied career included a stint as a magician. 2 limitation of supply or effort: a collector with an eye for quality and the means to indulge it without stint. ORIGIN Old English styntan ‘make blunt’, of Germanic origin; related to stunt1. stint2 | stint | noun a small short-legged sandpiper of northern Eurasia and Alaska, with a brownish back and white underparts. Genus Calidris, family Scolopacidae: four species. ORIGIN Middle English: of unknown origin.

stipulate1 | ˈstipyə͵lāt |
verb [with object]
demand or specify (a requirement), typically as part of a bargain or agreement: he stipulated certain conditions before their marriage. DERIVATIVES stipulator | ˈstipyəlādər | noun stipulatory adjective ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin stipulat- ‘demanded as a formal promise’, from the verb stipulari. stipulate2 | ˈstipyə͵lāt | adjective Botany (of a leaf or plant) having stipules. ORIGIN late 18th century: from Latin stipula (see stipule) + -ate2.

stoic | ˈstōik |
noun
1 a person who can endure pain or hardship without showing their feelings or complaining. 2 (Stoic) a member of the ancient philosophical school of Stoicism. adjective 1 another term for stoical: a look of stoic resignation. 2 (Stoic) of or belonging to the Stoics or their school of philosophy: the Stoic philosophers | Seneca preached Stoic abstinence. ORIGIN late Middle English: via Latin from Greek stōïkos, from stoa (with reference to Zeno's teaching in the Stoa Poikilē or Painted Porch, at Athens).

stoke | stōk |
verb [with object]
add coal or other solid fuel to (a fire, furnace, boiler, etc.): he stoked up the barbecue. • encourage or incite (a strong emotion or tendency): his composure had the effect of stoking her anger. • [no object] informal consume a large quantity of food or drink to give one energy: Carol was at the coffee machine, stoking up for the day. ORIGIN mid 17th century: back-formation from stoker.

stolid | ˈstäləd |
adjective
(of a person) calm, dependable, and showing little emotion or animation: a stolid bourgeois gent. DERIVATIVES stolidity | stəˈlidədē | noun stolidly | ˈstälədlē | adverb stolidness | ˈstälədnəs | noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from obsolete French stolide or Latin stolidus (perhaps related to stultus ‘foolish’).

stratum | ˈstrādəm, ˈstradəm |
noun (plural strata | ˈstrādə, ˈstradə |)
1 a layer or a series of layers of rock in the ground: a stratum of flint. • a thin layer within any structure: thin strata of air. 2 a level or class to which people are assigned according to their social status, education, or income: members of other social strata. • Statistics a group into which members of a population are divided in stratified sampling: allocation of sample units to strata. ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense ‘layer or coat of a substance’): modern Latin, from Latin, literally ‘something spread or laid down’, neuter past participle of sternere ‘strew’. USAGE In Latin, the word stratum is singular and its plural form is strata. In English, this distinction is maintained. It is therefore incorrect to use strata as a singular: a new stratum was uncovered (not a new strata was uncovered). It is also wrong to create the form stratums or stratas as the plural: a series of overlying strata (not overlying stratums or overlying stratas).

strenuous | ˈstrenyəwəs |
adjective
requiring or using great exertion: all your muscles need more oxygen during

strenuous exercise. DERIVATIVES strenuousness | ˈstrenyo͞oəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin strenuus ‘brisk’+ -ous.

strife | strīf |
noun
angry or bitter disagreement over fundamental issues; conflict: strife within the community | ethnic and civil strife. ORIGIN Middle English: shortening of Old French estrif (related to Old French estriver ‘strive’).

strut | strət |
noun
1 a rod or bar forming part of a framework and designed to resist compression: a supporting strut | a spindly framework of long, slender struts, girders, and bracing wire. 2 [in singular] a stiff, erect, and apparently arrogant or conceited gait: that old confident strut and swagger has returned. verb (struts, strutting, strutted) 1 [no object, with adverbial] walk with a stiff, erect, and apparently arrogant or conceited gait: peacocks strut through the grounds. 2 [with object] brace (something) with a strut or struts: the holes were close-boarded and strutted. PHRASES strut one's stuff informal dance or behave in a confident and expressive way: tonight you'll be strutting your funky stuff on the dance floor | next season he'll be strutting his stuff in Europe. DERIVATIVES strutter noun ORIGIN Old English strūtian ‘protrude stiffly’, of Germanic origin. Current senses date from the late 16th century.

stultify | ˈstəltəˌfī |
verb (stultifies, stultifying, stultified) [with object]
1 cause to lose enthusiasm and initiative, especially as a result of a tedious or restrictive routine. 2 dated cause (someone) to appear foolish or absurd: Counsel is not expected to stultify himself in an attempt to advance his client's interests. DERIVATIVES stultification | ˌstəltəfəˈkāSH(ə)n | noun stultifier noun ORIGIN mid 18th century: from late Latin stultificare, from Latin stultus ‘foolish’.

stupefy | ˈsto͞opəˌfī |
verb (stupefies, stupefying, stupefied) [with object]
make (someone) unable to think or feel properly: the offense of administering drugs to a woman with intent to stupefy her. • astonish and shock: the amount they spend on clothes would appall their parents and stupefy their grandparents. DERIVATIVES stupefier noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from French stupéfier, from Latin stupefacere, from stupere ‘be struck senseless’.

stupor | ˈsto͞opər |
noun [in singular]
a state of near-unconsciousness or insensibility: a drunken stupor. DERIVATIVES stuporous | ˈsto͞opərəs | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin, from stupere ‘be amazed or stunned’.

Stygian | ˈstij(ē)ən |
adjective
relating to the Styx River. • literary very dark: the Stygian crypt.

stymie | ˈstīmē |
verb (stymies, stymieing, stymied) [with object] informal
prevent or hinder the progress of: the changes must not be allowed to stymie new medical treatments. ORIGIN mid 19th century (originally a golfing term, denoting a situation on the green where a ball obstructs the shot of another player): of unknown origin.

subjugate | ˈsəbjəˌgāt |
verb [with object]
bring under domination or control, especially by conquest: the invaders had soon subjugated most of the native population. • (subjugate someone/something to) make someone or something subordinate to: the new ruler firmly subjugated the Church to the state. DERIVATIVES subjugable adjective subjugator | ˈsəbjəˌgādər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin subjugat- ‘brought under a yoke’, from the verb subjugare, based on jugum ‘yoke’.

sublime | səˈblīm |
adjective (sublimer, sublimest)
of such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe: Mozart's sublime piano concertos | (as noun the sublime) : experiences that ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. • used to denote the extreme or unparalleled nature of a person's attitude or behavior: he had the sublime confidence of youth. verb 1 [no object] Chemistry (of a solid substance) change directly into vapor when heated, typically forming a solid deposit again on cooling: the ice sublimed away, leaving the books dry and undamaged. • [with object] cause (a substance) to sublime: these crystals could be sublimed under a vacuum. 2 [with object] archaic elevate to a high degree of moral or spiritual purity or excellence: let your thoughts be sublimed by the spirit of God. DERIVATIVES sublimely | səˈblīmlē | adverb sublimity | səˈblimədē | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense ‘high up’): partly via French from Latin sublimis, probably from sub- ‘up to’ + limis, limus ‘oblique’.

suborn | səˈbôrn |
verb [with object]
bribe or otherwise induce (someone) to commit an unlawful act such as perjury: he was accused of conspiring to suborn witnesses. DERIVATIVES subornation | ˌsəbôrˈnāSHən | noun suborner | səˈbôrnər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin subornare ‘incite secretly’, from sub- ‘secretly’ + ornare ‘equip’.

subpoena | səˈpē |
noun (in full subpoena ad testificandum)
a writ ordering a person to attend a court: a subpoena may be issued to compel their attendance | they were all under subpoena to appear. verb (subpoenas, subpoenaing, subpoenaed | -nəd |) [with object] summon (someone) with a subpoena: the Queen is above the law and cannot be subpoenaed. • require (a document or other evidence) to be submitted to a court of law: the decision to subpoena government records. ORIGIN late Middle English (as a

noun): from Latin sub poena ‘under penalty’ (the first words of the writ). Use as a verb dates from the mid 17th century.

subsequent | ˈsəbsəkwənt |
adjective
coming after something in time; following: the theory was developed subsequent to the earthquake of 1906. • Geology (of a stream or valley) having a direction or character determined by the resistance to erosion of the underlying rock, and typically following the strike of the strata. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin subsequent- ‘following after’ (from the verb subsequi).

subside | səbˈsīd |
verb [no object]
1 become less intense, violent, or severe: I'll wait a few minutes until the storm subsides. • lapse into silence or inactivity: Fred opened his mouth to protest again, then subsided. 2 (of water) go down to a lower or the normal level: the floods subside almost as quickly as they arise. • (of the ground) cave in; sink: the island is subsiding. • (of a swelling) reduce until gone: it took seven days for the swelling to subside completely. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin subsidere, from sub- ‘below’ + sidere ‘settle’ (related to sedere ‘sit’).

substantiate | səbˈstan(t)SHēˌāt |
verb [with object]
provide evidence to support or prove the truth of: they had found nothing to substantiate the allegations. DERIVATIVES substantiation | səbˌstan(t)SHēˈāSHən | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from medieval Latin substantiat- ‘given substance’, from the verb substantiare, from Latin substantia substance.

subterfuge | ˈsəbtərˌfyo͞oj |
noun
deceit used in order to achieve one's goal: he had to use subterfuge and bluff on many occasions | [count noun] : I hated all the subterfuges, I hated lying to you. ORIGIN late 16th century: from French, or from late Latin subterfugium, from Latin subterfugere ‘escape secretly’, from subter- ‘beneath’ + fugere ‘flee’.

succor | ˈsək |
noun
assistance and support in times of hardship and distress: the wounded had little chance of succor. • (succors) archaic reinforcements of troops. verb [with object] give assistance or aid to: prisoners of war were liberated and succored. DERIVATIVES succorless (British succourless) adjective ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from medieval Latin succursus, from Latin succurrere ‘run to the help of’, from sub- ‘from below’ + currere ‘run’.

succumb | səˈkəm |
verb [no object]
fail to resist pressure, temptation, or some other negative force: he has become the latest to succumb to the strain. • die from the effect of a disease or injury: after a few blows there, the porcupine succumbs. ORIGIN late 15th century (in the sense ‘bring low, overwhelm’): from Old French succomber or Latin succumbere, from sub- ‘under’ + a verb related to cubare ‘to lie’.

suffragist | ˈsəfrəjəst |
noun mainly historical
a person advocating that the right to vote be extended to more people, especially to women. DERIVATIVES suffragism | -ˌjizəm | noun ORIGIN early 19th century: from suffrage + -ist.

sullen | ˈsələn |
adjective
bad-tempered and sulky; gloomy: a sullen pout. • (of the sky) full of dark clouds: a sullen sunless sky. noun (the sullens) archaic a sulky or depressed mood. DERIVATIVES sullenly | ˈsələnlē | adverb sullenness | ˈsələ(n)nəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English (in the senses ‘solitary, averse to company’, and ‘unusual’): from Anglo-Norman French sulein, from sol ‘sole’.

sumptuous | ˈsəm(p)(t)SH(əw)əs |
adjective
splendid and expensive-looking: the banquet was a sumptuous, luxurious meal. DERIVATIVES sumptuosity | ˌsəm(p)CHo͞oˈäsitē | noun sumptuously | ˈsəm(p)(t)SH(əw)əslē | adverb sumptuousness | ˈsəm(p)(t)SH(əw)əsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘made or produced at great cost’): from Old French somptueux, from Latin sumptuosus, from sumptus ‘expenditure’ (see sumptuary).

sunder | ˈsəndər |
verb [with object] literary
split apart: the crunch of bone when it is sundered. PHRASES in sunder apart or into pieces: hew their bones in sunder! ORIGIN late Old English sundrian; related to German sondern.

supercilious | ˌso͞opərˈsilēəs |
adjective
behaving or looking as though one thinks one is superior to others: a supercilious lady's maid. DERIVATIVES superciliously | ˌso͞opərˈsilēəslē | adverb superciliousness | ˌso͞opərˈsilēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 16th century: from Latin superciliosus ‘haughty’, from supercilium ‘eyebrow’.

superfluous | so͞oˈpərfləwəs |
adjective
unnecessary, especially through being more than enough: the purchaser should avoid asking for superfluous information. DERIVATIVES superfluously | so͞oˈpərfləwəslē | adverb superfluousness | so͞oˈpərfləwəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin superfluus, from super- ‘over’ + fluere ‘to flow’.

supernal | səˈpərnəl |
adjective mainly literary
relating to the sky or the heavens; celestial. • of exceptional quality or extent:

he is the supernal poet of our age | supernal erudition. DERIVATIVES supernally adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from medieval Latin supernalis, from Latin supernus, from super 'above'.

supersede | ˌso͞opərˈsēd |
verb [with object]
take the place of (a person or thing previously in authority or use); supplant: the older models have now been superseded. DERIVATIVES supersedence noun supersedure noun ORIGIN late 15th century (in the sense 'postpone, defer'): from Old French superseder, from Latin supersedere 'be superior to', from super- 'above' + sedere 'sit'. The current sense dates from the mid 17th century. USAGE See usage at supercede.

supine | ˈso͞oˌpīn |
adjective
1 (of a person) lying face upward. • technical having the front or ventral part upward. • (of the hand) with the palm upward. 2 failing to act or protest as a result of moral weakness or indolence: they remained supine in the face of terrible wrongdoing. noun Grammar a Latin verbal noun used only in the accusative and ablative cases, especially to denote purpose (e.g., dictu in mirabile dictu "wonderful to relate"). DERIVATIVES supinely adverb supineness | ˈso͞oˌpī(n)nəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: the adjective from Latin supinus 'bent backwards' (related to super 'above'); the noun from late Latin supinum, neuter of supinus.

supple | ˈsəp(ə)l |
adjective (suppler, supplest)
bending and moving easily and gracefully; flexible: her supple fingers | figurative : my mind is becoming more supple. • not stiff or hard; easily manipulated: this body oil leaves your skin feeling deliciously supple. verb [with object] make more flexible. DERIVATIVES supplely | ˈsəp(ə)lē | (also supply) adverb suppleness | ˈsəpəlnəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French souple, from Latin supplex, supplic- 'submissive', from sub- 'under' + placere 'propitiate'.

supplicate | ˈsəpləˌkāt |
verb [no object]
ask or beg for something earnestly or humbly: [with infinitive] : the plutocracy supplicated to be made peers. DERIVATIVES supplicatory | ˈsəpləkəˌtôrē | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin supplicat- 'implored', from the verb supplicare, from sub- 'from below' + placere 'propitiate'.

surcharge | ˈsərˌCHärj |
noun
1 an additional charge or payment: we guarantee that no surcharges will be added to the cost of your trip. • a charge made by assessors as a penalty for false returns of taxable property. • the showing of an omission in an account for which credit should have been given. 2 a mark printed on a postage stamp changing its value. verb [with object] 1 exact an additional charge or payment from: retailers will be able to surcharge credit-card users. 2 mark (a postage stamp) with a surcharge. ORIGIN late Middle English (as a verb): from Old French surcharger (see sur-1, charge). The early sense of the noun (late 15th century) was 'excessive load'.

surreal | səˈrēəl |
adjective
having the qualities of surrealism; bizarre: a surreal mix of fact and fantasy. DERIVATIVES surreality | ˌsərēˈalitē | noun surreally adverb ORIGIN 1930s: back-formation from surrealism.

surreptitious | ˌsərəpˈtiSHəs |
adjective
kept secret, especially because it would not be approved of: they carried on a surreptitious affair. DERIVATIVES surreptitiousness noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'obtained by suppression of the truth'): from Latin surreptitius (from the verb surripere, from sub- 'secretly' + rapere 'seize') + -ous.

surrogate | ˈsərəgət, ˈsərəˌgāt |
noun
a substitute, especially a person deputizing for another in a specific role or office: she served as a surrogate for the President on a trip to South America. • short for surrogate mother: the guidelines clearly mention the rights of surrogates and prospective parents | their daughter was born via surrogate on March 25th. • (in the Christian Church) a bishop's deputy who grants marriage licenses. • a judge in charge of probate, inheritance, and guardianship. adjective [attributive] relating to the birth of a child or children by means of surrogacy: paperwork that will allow them to move forward with the surrogate process. • denoting a child to whom a woman gives birth as a surrogate mother: she has given birth to three surrogate babies. DERIVATIVES surrogateship noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin surrogatus, past participle of surrogare 'elect as a substitute', from super- 'over' + rogare 'ask'.

susceptibility | səˌseptəˈbilədē |
noun (plural susceptibilities)
1 the state or fact of being likely or liable to be influenced or harmed by a particular thing: lack of exercise increases susceptibility to disease. 2 (susceptibilities) a person's feelings, typically considered as being easily hurt: I was so careful not to offend their susceptibilities. 3 Physics the ratio of magnetization to a magnetizing force.

sustain | səˈstān |
verb [with object]
1 strengthen or support physically or mentally: this thought had sustained him throughout the years. • bear (the weight of an object) without breaking or falling: he sagged against her so that she could barely sustain his weight | figurative : his health will no longer enable him to sustain the heavy burdens of office. 2 undergo or suffer (something unpleasant, especially an injury): he died after sustaining severe head injuries. 3 cause to continue or be prolonged for an extended period or without interruption: he cannot sustain a normal conversation. • (of a performer) represent (a part or character) convincingly: he sustained the role with burly resilience. 4 uphold, affirm, or confirm the justice or validity of: the allegations of discrimination were sus-

tained. noun Music an effect or facility on a keyboard or electronic instrument whereby a note can be sustained after the key is released. DERIVATIVES sustainer noun ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French soustenir, from Latin sustinere, from sub- ‘from below’ + tenere ‘hold’.

sycophant | ˈsikəfənt, ˈsikəˌfant |
noun
a person who acts obsequiously toward someone important in order to gain advantage: because he is high-ranking, he's surrounded by sycophants. ORIGIN mid 16th century (denoting an informer): from French sycophante, or via Latin from Greek sukophantēs ‘informer’, from sukon ‘fig’ + phainein ‘to show’, perhaps with reference to making the insulting gesture of the ‘fig’ (sticking the thumb between two fingers) to informers.

synoptic | səˈnäptik |
adjective
1 of or forming a general summary or synopsis: a synoptic outline of the contents. • taking or involving a comprehensive mental view: a synoptic model of higher education. 2 relating to the Synoptic Gospels. noun (Synoptics) the Synoptic Gospels. DERIVATIVES synoptical adjective synoptically | -ik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from Greek sunoptikos, from sunopsis (see synopsis).

tacit | ˈtasət |
adjective
understood or implied without being stated: your silence may be taken to mean tacit agreement. ORIGIN early 17th century (in the sense ‘wordless, noiseless’): from Latin tacitus, past participle of tacere ‘be silent’.

tactless | ˈtak(t)ləs |
adjective
having or showing a lack of adroitness and sensitivity in dealing with others or with difficult issues: a tactless remark. DERIVATIVES tactlessly | ˈtak(t)ləslē | adverb tactlessness | ˈtak(t)ləsnəs | noun

talisman | ˈtaləsmən |
noun (plural talismans)
an object, typically an inscribed ring or stone, that is thought to have magic powers and to bring good luck: those rings, so fresh and gleaming, were their talismans | a dolphin talisman would ensure a safe journey on land or at sea. • a person regarded as representing and inspiring a particular group: he's a quiet man off the field, but on it he's our talisman. ORIGIN mid 17th century: based on Arabic ṭilsam, apparently from an alteration of late Greek telesma ‘completion, religious rite’, from telein ‘complete, perform a rite’, from telos ‘result, end’.

tangential | tanˈjen(t)SH(ə)l |
adjective
relating to or along a tangent: a tangential line. • diverging from a previous course or line; erratic: tangential thoughts. • hardly touching a matter; peripheral: the reforms were tangential to efforts to maintain a basic standard of life.

tantamount | ˈtan(t)əˌmount |
adjective [predicative] (tantamount to)
equivalent in seriousness to; virtually the same as: the resignations were tantamount to an admission of guilt. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from the earlier verb tantamount ‘amount to as much’, from Italian tanto montare.

tarnish | ˈtärniSH |
verb
lose or cause to lose luster, especially as a result of exposure to air or moisture: [no object] : silver tarnishes too easily | [with object] : lemon juice would tarnish the gilded metal. • make or become less valuable or respected: [with object] : his regime had not been tarnished by human rights abuses. noun dullness of color; loss of brightness. • a film or stain formed on an exposed surface of a mineral or metal: he was removing tarnish from the candlesticks. • damage or harm done to something: the tarnish on Alan's personal reputation. DERIVATIVES tarnishable | ˈtärnəSHəb(ə)l | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (as a verb): from French terniss-, lengthened stem of ternir, from terne ‘dark, dull’.

tautology | tôˈtäləjē |
noun (plural tautologies)
the saying of the same thing twice in different words, generally considered to be a fault of style (e.g., they arrived one after the other in succession): there was also a lot of tautology: there's no need to say ‘return back to’. • a phrase or expression in which the same thing is said twice in different words: all of the ‘evidence’ in support of these claims boils down to tautologies and circular reasoning. • Logic a statement that is true by necessity or by virtue of its logical form: all logical propositions are reducible to either tautologies or contradictions. DERIVATIVES tautologist | -jist | noun tautologous | -gəs | adjective ORIGIN mid 16th century: via late Latin from Greek, from tautologos ‘repeating what has been said’, from tauto- ‘same’ + -logos (see -logy).

tawdry | ˈtôdrē |
adjective (tawdrier, tawdriest)
showy but cheap and of poor quality: tawdry jewelry. • sordid or unpleasant: the tawdry business of politics. noun archaic cheap and gaudy finery. DERIVATIVES tawdrily | -drəlē | adverb tawdriness | ˈtôdrēnəs, ˈtädrēnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: short for tawdry lace, a fine silk lace or ribbon worn as a necklace in the 16th–17th centuries, contraction of St Audrey's lace: Audrey was a later form of Etheldrida (died 679), patron saint of Ely where tawdry laces, along with cheap imitations and other cheap finery, were traditionally sold at a fair.

taxing | ˈtaksiNG |
adjective
physically or mentally demanding: they find the work too taxing.

tedious | ˈtēdēəs |
adjective
too long, slow, or dull; tiresome or monotonous: a tedious journey. DERIVATIVES tediously | ˈtēdēəslē | adverb tediousness | ˈtēdēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French tedieus or late Latin taediosus, from Latin taedium (see tedium).

teetotaler | ˈtēˌtōdl |
noun
a person who never drinks alcohol: he was for most of his life a nonsmoker and teetotaler.

temerity | təˈmerədē |
noun
excessive confidence or boldness; audacity: no one had the temerity to question his conclusions. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin temeritas, from temere 'rashly'.

temperance | ˈtemp(ə)rəns |
noun
1 abstinence from alcoholic drink: Davies was a strict advocate of temperance | more than two-thirds of the people there had publicly taken the pledge of temperance | [as modifier] : the temperance movement. 2 the quality of moderation or self-restraint: the whole multitude of men lack temperance in their lives, either from ignorance or from want of self-control | a story of the struggle to achieve temperance. ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French temperaunce, from Latin temperantia 'moderation', from temperare 'restrain'.

tempestuous | temˈpesCH(əw)əs |
adjective
1 characterized by strong and turbulent or conflicting emotion: he had a reckless and tempestuous streak. 2 very stormy: a tempestuous wind. DERIVATIVES tempestuously | temˈpesCH(o͞o)əslē | adverb tempestuousness | temˈpesCH(o͞o)əsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin tempestuosus, from Latin tempestas (see tempest).

temporal1 | ˈtemp(ə)rəl |
adjective
1 relating to worldly as opposed to spiritual affairs; secular: the Church did not imitate the secular rulers who thought only of temporal gain. 2 relating to time: the spatial and temporal dimensions of human interference in complex ecosystems. • Grammar relating to or denoting time or tense. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French temporel or Latin temporalis, from tempus, tempor- 'time'. temporal2 | ˈtemp(ə)rəl | adjective Anatomy of or situated in the temples of the head: arterial biopsy usually confirms the diagnosis of temporal arteritis. ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin temporalis, from tempora 'the temples' (see temple2).

tenacious | təˈnāSHəs |
adjective
tending to keep a firm hold of something; clinging or adhering closely: a tenacious grip. • not readily relinquishing a position, principle, or course of action; determined: you're tenacious and you get at the truth | the most tenacious politician. • persisting in existence; not easily dispelled: a tenacious local legend. DERIVATIVES tenaciousness | təˈnāSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin tenax, tenac- (from tenere 'to hold') + -ious.

tenebrous | ˈtenəbrəs |
adjective literary
dark; shadowy or obscure: the tenebrous spiral staircase of the self. ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from Latin tenebrosus, from tenebrae 'darkness'.

tenet | ˈtenət |
noun
a principle or belief, especially one of the main principles of a religion or philosophy: the tenets of a democratic society. ORIGIN late 16th century (superseding earlier tenent): from Latin, literally 'he holds', from the verb tenere.

terrible | ˈterəb(ə)l |
adjective
1 extremely or distressingly bad or serious: a terrible crime | the terrible conditions in which the ordinary people lived | terrible pain. • extremely unpleasant or disagreeable: the weather was terrible. • extremely incompetent or unskillful: she is terrible at managing her money. • [attributive] informal used to emphasize the extent of something unpleasant or bad: what a terrible mess. • [as complement] extremely unwell or troubled: I was sick all night and felt terrible for two solid days | Maria felt terrible because she had forgotten the woman's name. 2 causing or likely to cause terror; sinister: the stranger gave a terrible smile. PHRASES terrible twos informal a period in a child's early social development (typically around the age of two years) that is associated with defiant or unruly behavior. DERIVATIVES terribleness | ˈterəbəlnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'causing terror'): via French from Latin terribilis, from terrere 'frighten'.

terrify | ˈterəˌfī |
verb (terrifies, terrifying, terrified) [with object]
cause to feel extreme fear: the thought terrifies me | (as adjective terrified) : he is terrified of spiders | [with clause] : she was terrified he would drop her. DERIVATIVES terrifier noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin terrificare, from terrificus 'frightening' (see terrific).

testy | ˈtestē |
adjective
easily irritated; impatient and somewhat bad-tempered: his testy, disapproving father | she could see him growing quite testy beneath that polished urbanity. DERIVATIVES testily | ˈtestəlē | adverb testiness | ˈtestēnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'headstrong, impetuous'): from Anglo-Norman French testif, from Old French teste 'head', from Latin testa 'shell'.

therapeutic | ˌTHerəˈpyo͞odik |
adjective
relating to the healing of disease: diagnostic and therapeutic facilities. • administered or applied for reasons of health: a therapeutic shampoo. • having a good effect on the body or mind; contributing to a sense of well-being: a therapeutic silence. noun 1 (therapeutics) the branch of medicine concerned with the treatment of disease and the action of remedial agents. 2 a treatment, therapy, or drug: current therapeutics for asthma. DERIVATIVES therapeutical adjective therapeutically | ˌTHerəˈpyo͞odək(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century: via modern Latin from Greek therapeutikos, from therapeuein 'minister to, treat medically'.

thwart | THwôrt |
verb [with object]
prevent (someone) from accomplishing something: he never did anything to thwart his father | he was thwarted in his desire to punish Uncle Fred. • oppose (a plan, attempt, or ambition) successfully: the government had been able to thwart all attempts by opposition leaders to form new parties. noun a structural crosspiece sometimes forming a seat for a rower in a boat. preposition archaic or literary from one side to another side of (an area); across: a pink-tinged cloud spread thwart the shore. adverb archaic or literary from one side to another side of an area. ORIGIN Middle English thwerte, from the adjective thwert 'perverse, obstinate, adverse', from Old Norse thvert, neuter of thverr 'transverse', from an Indo-European root shared by Latin torquere 'to twist'.

tirade | ˈtīˌrād |
noun
a long, angry speech of criticism or accusation: a tirade of abuse. ORIGIN early 19th century: from French, literally 'long speech', from Italian tirata 'volley', from tirare 'to pull'.

Titanic | tīˈtanik |
a British passenger liner, the largest ship in the world when it was built and supposedly unsinkable, that struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic on its maiden voyage in April 1912 and sank with the loss of 1,490 lives.
PHRASES rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic make superficial and ineffective changes that fail to address or resolve a serious and urgent problem: any distraction from producing gigantic amounts of clean electricity is merely rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. titanic1 | tīˈtanik | adjective of exceptional strength, size, or power: a series of titanic explosions. DERIVATIVES titanically | -ik(ə)lē | adverb ORIGIN mid 17th century (in the sense 'relating to the sun'): from Greek titanikos, from Titan (see Titan). titanic2 | tīˈtanik | adjective Chemistry of titanium with a valence of four; of titanium(IV). Compare with titanous. ORIGIN early 19th century: from titanium + -ic.

toady | ˈtōdē |
noun (plural toadies)
a person who behaves obsequiously to someone important. verb (toadies, toadying, toadied) [no object] act in an obsequious way: she imagined him toadying to his rich clients. DERIVATIVES toadyish adjective toadyism | ˈtōdēˌizəm | noun ORIGIN early 19th century: said to be a contraction of toad-eater, a charlatan's assistant who ate toads; toads were regarded as poisonous, and the assistant's survival was thought to be due to the efficacy of the charlatan's remedy.

tocsin | ˈtäksən |
noun archaic
an alarm bell or signal: he used his resignation as a tocsin to warn of the danger of dictatorship. ORIGIN late 16th century: from Old French toquassen, from Provençal tocasenh, from tocar 'to touch' + senh 'signal bell'.

tolerate | ˈtäləˌrāt |
verb [with object]
allow the existence, occurrence, or practice of (something that one does not necessarily like or agree with) without interference: a regime unwilling to tolerate dissent. • accept or endure (someone or something unpleasant or disliked) with forbearance: how was it that she could tolerate such noise? • be capable of continued subjection to (a drug, toxin, or environmental condition) without adverse reaction: lichens grow in conditions that no other plants tolerate. DERIVATIVES tolerator | -ˌrātər | noun ORIGIN early 16th century (in the sense 'endure pain'): from Latin tolerat- 'endured', from the verb tolerare.

torpor | ˈtôrpər |
noun
a state of physical or mental inactivity; lethargy: they veered between apathetic torpor and hysterical fanaticism. DERIVATIVES torporific | -ˈrɪfɪk | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin, from torpere 'be numb or sluggish'.

tout1 | tout |
verb
1 [with object] attempt to sell (something), typically by pestering people in an aggressive or bold manner: Jim was touting his wares. • attempt to persuade people of the merits of (someone or something): the headquarters facility was touted as the best in the country. • British scalp (a ticket): he made his fortune touting tickets. 2 [no object] North American offer racing tips for a share of any resulting winnings. • [with object] mainly British spy out the movements and condition of (a racehorse in training) in order to gain information to be used when betting. noun 1 a person soliciting custom or business, typically in an aggressive or bold manner. • British a person who buys tickets for an event to resell them at a profit; a scalper. 2 North American a person who offers racing tips for a share of any resulting winnings. 3 Northern Irish & Scottish informal an informer. DERIVATIVES touter noun ORIGIN Middle English tute 'look out', of Germanic origin; related to Dutch tuit 'spout, nozzle'. Later senses were 'watch, spy on' (late 17th century) and 'solicit custom' (mid 18th century). The noun was first recorded (early 18th century) in the slang use 'thieves' lookout'. tout2 | to͞o | determiner (often le tout) used before the name of a city to refer to its high society or people of importance: le

tout Washington adored him. ORIGIN French, suggested by le tout Paris ‘all (of) Paris’, used to refer to Parisian high society.

traduce | trəˈdo͞os |
verb [with object]
speak badly of or tell lies about (someone) so as to damage their reputation: it was regarded as respectable political tactics to traduce him. DERIVATIVES traducement | trəˈdo͞osmənt | noun traducer | trəˈdo͞osər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense ‘transport, transmit’): from Latin traducere ‘lead in front of others, expose to ridicule’, from trans- ‘over, across’ + ducere ‘to lead’.

tragedy | ˈtrajədē |
noun (plural tragedies)
1 an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe: a tragedy that killed 95 people | his life had been plagued by tragedy. 2 a play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character: Shakespeare's tragedies. • the dramatic genre represented by tragedy: Greek tragedy. Compare with comedy. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French tragedie, via Latin from Greek tragōidia, apparently from tragos ‘goat’ (the reason remains unexplained) + ōidē ‘song, ode’. Compare with tragic.

tranquility | ˌtraNGˈkwilə |
noun
the quality or state of being tranquil; calm: passing cars are the only noise that disturbs the tranquility of rural life.

transcend | tran(t)ˈsend |
verb [with object]
be or go beyond the range or limits of (something abstract, typically a conceptual field or division): this was an issue transcending the tech space and reaching other corners of society. • surpass (a person or achievement): he doubts that he will ever transcend Shakespeare. ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French transcendre or Latin transcendere, from trans- ‘across’ + scandere ‘climb’.

transcribe | tran(t)ˈskrīb |
verb [with object]
put (thoughts, speech, or data) into written or printed form: each interview was taped and transcribed. • transliterate (foreign characters) or write or type out (shorthand, notes, or other abbreviated forms) into ordinary characters or full sentences. • arrange (a piece of music) for a different instrument, voice, or group of these: his largest early work was transcribed for organ. • Biochemistry synthesize (a nucleic acid, typically RNA) using an existing nucleic acid, typically DNA, as a template, thus copying the genetic information in the latter. DERIVATIVES transcriber | tran(t)ˈskrībər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense ‘make a copy in writing’): from Latin transcribere, from trans- ‘across’ + scribere ‘write’.

transgress | tranzˈgres, tran(t)sˈgres |
verb [with object]
infringe or go beyond the bounds of (a moral principle or other established standard of behavior): she had transgressed an unwritten social law | [no object] : they must control the impulses that lead them to transgress. • Geology (of the sea) spread over (an area of land). DERIVATIVES transgressor | tranz ˈgresər, tran(t)sˈgresər | noun ORIGIN late 15th century (earlier (late Middle English) as transgression): from Old French transgresser or Latin transgress- ‘stepped across’, from the verb transgredi, from trans- ‘across’ + gradi ‘go’.

transient | ˈtran(t)SHənt, ˈtranZHənt |
adjective
lasting only for a short time; impermanent: a transient cold spell. • staying or working in a place for only a short time: the transient nature of the labor force in catering. noun 1 a person who is staying or working in a place for only a short time. 2 a momentary variation in current, voltage, or frequency. DERIVATIVES transiently | ˈtran(t)SHən(t)lē, ˈtranZHən(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin transient- ‘going across’, from the verb transire, from trans- ‘across’ + ire ‘go’.

transmute | tranzˈmyo͞ot, tran(t)sˈmyo͞ot |
verb
change in form, nature, or substance: [with object] : the raw material of his experience was transmuted into stories | [no object] : the discovery that elements can transmute by radioactivity. • [with object] subject (base metals) to alchemical transmutation: the quest to transmute lead into gold. DERIVATIVES transmutability | tranzˌmyo͞odəˈbilədē, tran(t)sˌmyo͞odəˈbilədē | noun transmutable | tranzˈmyo͞odəbəl, tran(t)sˈmyo͞odəbəl | adjective transmutative | -ˈmyo͞otətiv | adjective transmuter noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin transmutare, from trans- ‘across’ + mutare ‘to change’.

transparent | tran(t)ˈsperənt |
adjective
(of a material or article) allowing light to pass through so that objects behind can be distinctly seen: transparent blue water. • easy to perceive or detect: the residents will see through any transparent attempt to buy their votes | the meaning of the poem is by no means transparent. • having thoughts, feelings, or motives that are easily perceived: you'd be no good at poker—you're too transparent. • (of an organization or its activities) open to public scrutiny: if you had transparent government procurement, corruption would go away. • Physics transmitting heat or other electromagnetic rays without distortion. • Computing (of a process or interface) functioning without the user being aware of its presence. DERIVATIVES transparentness noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, from medieval Latin transparent- ‘shining through’, from Latin transparere, from trans- ‘through’ + parere ‘appear’.

transpire | tran(t)ˈspī(ə)r |
verb [no object]
1 occur; happen: I'm going to find out exactly what transpired. • prove to be the case: as it transpired, he was right. • [with clause] (usually it transpires) (of a secret or something unknown) come to be known; be revealed: Yaddo, it

transpired, had been under FBI surveillance for some time. 2 Botany (of a plant or leaf) give off water vapor through the stomata. DERIVATIVES transpirable adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'emit as vapor through the surface'): from French transpirer or medieval Latin transpirare, from Latin trans- 'through' + spirare 'breathe'. Sense 1 (mid 18th century) is a figurative use comparable with 'leak out'. USAGE The common use of transpire to mean 'occur, happen' (I'm going to find out exactly what transpired) is a loose extension of an earlier meaning, 'come to be known' (it transpired that Mark had been baptized a Catholic). This loose sense of 'happen,' which is now more common in American usage than the sense of 'come to be known,' was first recorded in US English toward the end of the 18th century and has been listed in US dictionaries from the 19th century. It is often criticized as jargon, an unnecessarily long word used where occur or happen would do just as well.

travesty | ˈtravəstē |
noun (plural travesties)
a false, absurd, or distorted representation of something: the absurdly lenient sentence is a travesty of justice. verb (travesties, travestying, travestied) [with object] represent in a false or distorted way: Michael has betrayed the family by travestying them in his plays. ORIGIN mid 17th century (as an adjective in the sense 'dressed to appear ridiculous'): from French travesti 'disguised', past participle of travestir, from Italian travestire, from trans- 'across' + vestire 'clothe'.

trenchant | ˈtren(t)SH(ə)nt |
adjective
1 vigorous or incisive in expression or style: she heard angry voices, not loud, yet certainly trenchant. 2 archaic or literary (of a weapon or tool) having a sharp edge: a trenchant blade. ORIGIN Middle English (in trenchant (sense 2)): from Old French, literally 'cutting', present participle of trenchier (see trench).

trepidation | ˌtrepəˈdāSH(ə)n |
noun
1 a feeling of fear or agitation about something that may happen: the men set off in fear and trepidation. 2 archaic trembling motion. ORIGIN late 15th century: from Latin trepidatio(n-), from trepidare 'be agitated, tremble', from trepidus 'alarmed'.

tribune1 | ˈtribyo͞on |
noun
(also tribune of the people) an official in ancient Rome chosen by the plebeians to protect their interests. • (also military tribune) a Roman legionary officer. • a popular leader; a champion of the people. DERIVATIVES tribunate | ˈtribyənət, ˈtribyəˌnāt | noun tribuneship | ˈtribyo͞onˌSHip | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin tribunus, literally 'head of a tribe', from tribus 'tribe'. tribune2 | ˈtribyo͞on | noun 1 an apse in a basilica. 2 a dais or rostrum, especially in a church. • a raised area or gallery with seats, especially in a church. ORIGIN mid 17th century (denoting the principal room in an Italian mansion): via French from Italian, from medieval Latin tribuna, alteration of Latin tribunal (see tribunal).

trite | trīt |
adjective
(of a remark, opinion, or idea) overused and consequently of little import; lacking originality or freshness: this point may now seem obvious and trite. DERIVATIVES tritely | ˈtrītlē | adverb triteness | ˈtrītnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin tritus, past participle of terere 'to rub'.

trivial | ˈtrivēəl |
adjective
of little value or importance: huge fines were imposed for trivial offenses | trivial details. • (of a person) concerned only with trifling or unimportant things. • Mathematics denoting a subgroup that either contains only the identity element or is identical with the given group. DERIVATIVES trivially | ˈtrivēəlē | adverb trivialness noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'belonging to the trivium'): from medieval Latin trivialis, from Latin trivium (see trivium).

truncate | ˈtrəNGˌkāt |
verb [with object]
1 shorten the duration or extent of: he was a sensational player whose career was truncated by injuries | like many women of her generation who were at school just before the war, she was obliged to truncate her education | the novel has been truncated. • shorten by cutting off the top or end: the torso has been truncated just below the neck line. 2 Crystallography replace (an edge or an angle) by a plane, typically so as to make equal angles with the adjacent faces. adjective Botany & Zoology (of a leaf, feather, or other part) ending abruptly as if cut off across the base or tip. DERIVATIVES truncately adverb ORIGIN late 15th century: from Latin truncat- 'maimed', from the verb truncare.

tryst | tri |
noun
a private romantic rendezvous between lovers: a moonlight tryst. verb [no object] keep a private, romantic rendezvous. DERIVATIVES tryster noun ORIGIN late Middle English (originally Scots): variant of obsolete trist 'an appointed place in hunting', from French triste or medieval Latin trista.

tumult | ˈto͞oˌməlt |
noun [usually in singular]
a loud, confused noise, especially one caused by a large mass of people: a tumult of shouting and screaming broke out. • confusion or disorder: the whole neighborhood was in a state of fear and tumult | his personal tumult ended when he began writing songs. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French tumulte or Latin tumultus.

tumultuous | to͞oˈməlCH(əw)əs, təˈməlCH(əw)əs |
adjective
making a loud, confused noise; uproarious: tumultuous applause. • excited,

confused, or disorderly: a tumultuous crowd | a tumultuous personal life. DERIVATIVES tumultuously | təˈməlCHo͞oəslē | adverb tumultuousness | təˈməlCHo͞oəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Old French tumultuous or Latin tumultuosus, from tumultus (see tumult).

turpitude | ˈtərpəˌto͞od |
noun formal
depravity; wickedness: acts of moral turpitude. ORIGIN late 15th century: from French, or from Latin turpitudo, from turpis ‘disgraceful, base’.

tutelage | ˈto͞odəlij |
noun
protection of or authority over someone or something; guardianship: the organizations remained under firm government tutelage. • instruction; tuition: he felt privileged to be under the tutelage of an experienced actor. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin tutela ‘keeping’, (from tut- ‘watched’, from the verb tueri) + -age.

ubiquitous | yo͞oˈbikwədəs |
adjective
present, appearing, or found everywhere: his ubiquitous influence was felt by all the family | cowboy hats are ubiquitous among the male singers. DERIVATIVES ubiquitously adverb ubiquitousness | yo͞oˈbikwədəsnəs | noun ORIGIN late 18th century: from ubiquity + -ous.

ultrasonic | ˌəltrəˈsänik |
adjective
of or involving sound waves with a frequency above the upper limit of human hearing. DERIVATIVES ultrasonically | ˌəltrəˈsänək(ə)lē | adverb

umbrage | ˈəmbrij |
noun
1 offense or annoyance: she took umbrage at his remarks. 2 archaic shade or shadow, especially as cast by trees. DERIVATIVES umbrageous | ˌəmˈbrājəs, ˈəmbrəjəs | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English (in umbrage (sense 2)): from Old French, from Latin umbra ‘shadow’. An early sense was ‘shadowy outline’, giving rise to ‘ground for suspicion’, whence the current notion of ‘offense’.

unanimity | ˌyo͞onəˈnimədē |
noun
agreement by all people involved; consensus: there is almost complete unanimity on this issue.

unassailable | ˌənəˈsāləb(ə)l |
adjective
unable to be attacked, questioned, or defeated: an unassailable lead. DERIVATIVES unassailability | -ˌsāləˈbilətē | noun unassailably | -blē | adverb unassailableness noun

unassuming | ˌənəˈso͞omiNG |
adjective
not pretentious or arrogant; modest: he was an unassuming and kindly man. DERIVATIVES unassumingly | ˌənəˈso͞omiNGlē | adverb unassumingness noun

unbridled | ˌənˈbrīd(ə)ld |
adjective
uncontrolled; unconstrained: a moment of unbridled ambition | unbridled lust.

unctuous | ˈəNG(k)(t)SH(əw)əs |
adjective
1 (of a person) excessively or ingratiatingly flattering; oily: he seemed anxious to please but not in an unctuous way. 2 (chiefly of minerals) having a greasy or soapy feel. DERIVATIVES unctuously | ˈəNG(k)(t)SH(əw)əslē | adverb unctuousness | ˈəNG(k)(t)SH(əw)əsnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘greasy’): from medieval Latin unctuosus, from Latin unctus ‘anointing’, from unguere ‘anoint’.

undermine | ˌəndərˈmīn |
verb [with object]
1 erode the base or foundation of (a rock formation): the flow of water had undermined pillars supporting the roof. • dig or excavate beneath (a building or fortification) so as to make it collapse: the demolition engineers did eventually undermine two of the tower's six sides. 2 lessen the effectiveness, power, or ability of, especially gradually or insidiously: this could undermine years of hard work. DERIVATIVES underminer noun ORIGIN Middle English: from under- + the verb mine2, probably suggested by Middle Dutch ondermineren.

understate | ˌəndərˈstāt |
verb [with object]
describe or represent (something) as being smaller, worse, or less important than it actually is: the press has understated the extent of the problem. DERIVATIVES understater | ˈəndərˌstātər | noun

understated | ˌəndərˈstādəd |
adjective
presented or expressed in a subtle and effective way: understated elegance. DERIVATIVES understatedly adverb

unenlightened | ˌənənˈlītnd, ˌənenˈlītnd |
adjective
not having or showing an enlightened outlook: unenlightened thinking.

unfathomable | ˌənˈfaTH(ə)məb(ə)l |
adjective
1 incapable of being fully explored or understood: her gray eyes were dark with some unfathomable emotion. 2 (of water or a natural feature) impossible

to measure the extent of. DERIVATIVES unfathomableness noun unfathomably adverb

unfrock | ˌənˈfräk |
verb
another term for defrock.

unprecedented | ˌənˈpresədən(t)əd |
adjective
never done or known before: the emphasis has been on shaping bold solutions to save lives and livelihoods in these unprecedented times | the company took the unprecedented step of paying six-figure bonuses to keep some of its most valuable talent from defecting | the scale of change is unprecedented. DERIVATIVES unprecedentedly | ˌənˈpresəˌden(t)ədlē | adverb [as submodifier] : a period of unprecedentedly high prices

unprepossessing | ˌənprēpəˈzesiNG |
adjective
not particularly attractive or appealing to the eye: despite his unprepossessing appearance he had an animal magnetism.

unrequited | ˌənrəˈkwītəd |
adjective
(of a feeling, especially love) not returned or rewarded: he's been pining with unrequited love. DERIVATIVES unrequitedly adverb unrequitedness noun

unruly | ˌənˈro͞olē |
adjective (unrulier, unruliest)
disorderly and disruptive and not amenable to discipline or control: figurative : Kate tried to control her unruly emotions | complaints about unruly behavior. DERIVATIVES unruliness | ˌənˈro͞olēnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from un-1 ‘not’ + archaic ruly ‘amenable to discipline or order’ (from rule).

unsavory | ˌənˈsāv(ə) |
adjective
disagreeable to taste, smell, or look at: they looked at the scanty, unsavory portions of food doled out to them. • disagreeable and unpleasant because morally disreputable: an unsavory reputation. DERIVATIVES unsavorily | -rəlē | (British unsavourily) adverb unsavoriness (British unsavouriness) noun

unscrupulous | ˌənˈskro͞opyələs |
adjective
having or showing no moral principles; not honest or fair: unscrupulous landlords might be tempted to harass existing tenants. DERIVATIVES unscrupulously | ˌənˈskro͞opyələslē | adverb unscrupulousness | ˌənˈskro͞opyələsnəs | noun

unseemly | ˌənˈsēmlē |
adjective
(of behavior or actions) not proper or appropriate: an unseemly squabble. DERIVATIVES unseemliness | ˌənˈsēmlēnəs | noun

unsullied | ˌənˈsəlēd |
adjective
not spoiled or made impure: an unsullied reputation.

untoward | ˌənˈtôrd |
adjective
unexpected and inappropriate or inconvenient: both tried to behave as if nothing untoward had happened | untoward jokes and racial remarks. DERIVATIVES untowardly adverb untowardness noun

unwarranted | ˌənˈwôrən(t)əd |
adjective
not justified or authorized: I am sure your fears are unwarranted. DERIVATIVES unwarrantedly adverb

usury | ˈyo͞oZH(ə)rē |
noun
the illegal action or practice of lending money at unreasonably high rates of interest: the medieval prohibition on usury. • archaic interest at unreasonably high rates. ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French usurie, or from medieval Latin usuria, from Latin usura, from usus ‘a use’ (see use).

vacillate | ˈvasəˌlāt |
verb [no object]
alternate or waver between different opinions or actions; be indecisive: I had for a time vacillated between teaching and journalism. DERIVATIVES vacillator | -ˌlātər | noun ORIGIN late 16th century (in the sense ‘sway unsteadily’): from Latin vacillat- ‘swayed’, from the verb vacillare.

vagary | ˈvāgərē, vəˈgerē |
noun (plural vagaries) (usually vagaries)
an unexpected and inexplicable change in a situation or in someone's behavior: the vagaries of the weather. ORIGIN late 16th century (also as a verb in the sense ‘roam’): from Latin vagari ‘wander’.

vagrant | ˈvāgrənt |
noun
a person without a settled home or regular work who wanders from place to place and lives by begging. • archaic a wanderer. • Ornithology a bird that has strayed or been blown from its usual range or migratory route: most birders are hoping to find the wind-blown vagrants of migration. Also called accidental. adjective [attributive] characteristic relating to or living the life of a vagrant: vagrant beggars. • moving from place to place; wandering: vagrant whales. • literary moving or occurring unpredictably; inconstant: the vagrant heart of my mother. DERIVATIVES vagrantly adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French vagarant ‘wandering about’, from the verb vagrer.

valedictory | ˌvaləˈdikt(ə)rē |
adjective
serving as a farewell: a valedictory wave. noun (plural valedictories) a farewell address: this book of memoirs reads like his valedictory.

vapid | ˈvapəd |
adjective
offering nothing that is stimulating or challenging: tuneful but vapid musical comedies. DERIVATIVES vapidity | vəˈpidədē | noun vapidly | ˈvapədlē | adverb vapidness noun ORIGIN mid 17th century (used originally in description of drinks as 'lacking in flavor'): from Latin vapidus.

vaporize | ˈvāpəˌr |
verb
convert or be converted into vapor: [with object] : there is a large current that is sufficient to vaporize carbon | [no object] : cold gasoline does not vaporize readily. DERIVATIVES vaporable | ˈvāp(ə)rəb(ə)l | adjective vaporizable (British also vaporisable) adjective vaporization | ˌvāpərəˈzāSHən, ˌvāpəˌrīˈzāSHən | (British also vaporisation) noun

variegated | ˈver(ē)əˌgādəd |
adjective
exhibiting different colors, especially as irregular patches or streaks: variegated yellow bricks. • Botany (of a plant or foliage) having or consisting of leaves that are edged or patterned in a second color, especially white as well as green: the variegated form of philadelphus | variegated foliage. • marked by variety: his variegated and amusing observations. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin variegat- 'made varied' (from the verb variegare, from varius 'diverse') + -ed2.

vaunt | vônt, vänt |
verb [with object]
boast about or praise (something), especially excessively: he was initially vaunted by the West for his leadership of the country | an autobiographer is simultaneously vaunted and castigated for revealing more than is deemed proper. noun archaic a boast. DERIVATIVES vaunter | ˈvôn(t)ər | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: the noun a shortening of obsolete avaunt 'boasting, a boast'; the verb (originally in the sense 'use boastful language') from Old French vanter, from late Latin vantare, based on Latin vanus 'vain, empty'.

veil | vāl |
noun
1 a piece of fine material worn by women to protect or conceal the face: a white bridal veil. • a piece of fabric forming part of a nun's headdress, resting on the head and shoulders. • (in Jewish antiquity) the piece of precious cloth separating the sanctuary from the body of the Temple or the Tabernacle. 2 a thing that serves to cover, conceal, or disguise: a veil of mist and snow lay over the landscape | the venture is shrouded in a veil of secrecy. 3 Botany a membrane that is attached to the immature fruiting body of some toadstools and ruptures in the course of development, either (universal veil) enclosing the whole fruiting body or (partial veil) joining the edges of the cap to the stalk. verb [with object] 1 cover with a veil: she veiled her face. 2 cover, conceal, or disguise: cold mists veiled the mountain peaks | he wasn't able to veil his disappointment | the development of these technologies has been veiled in secrecy. PHRASES beyond the veil in a mysterious or hidden place or state, especially the unknown state of life after death: Billy realized that his father had passed irrevocably beyond the veil. draw a veil over avoid discussing or calling attention to (something), especially because it is embarrassing or unpleasant: I will draw a veil over the cheerless days that followed. take the veil become a nun. DERIVATIVES veilless adjective ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French veil(e), from Latin vela, plural of velum (see velum).

venerable | ˈvenər(ə)b(ə)l, ˈvenrəb(ə)l |
adjective
accorded a great deal of respect, especially because of age, wisdom, or character: a venerable statesman. • (in the Anglican Church) a title given to an archdeacon. • (in the Roman Catholic Church) a title given to a deceased person who has attained a certain degree of sanctity but has not been fully beatified or canonized. DERIVATIVES venerability | ˌvenərəˈbilətē | noun venerableness noun venerably | -blē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin venerabilis, from the verb venerari (see venerate).

venerate | ˈvenəˌrāt |
verb [with object]
regard with great respect; revere: Mother Teresa is venerated as a saint. DERIVATIVES venerator | ˈvenəˌrādər | noun ORIGIN early 17th century (earlier (Middle English) as veneration): from Latin venerat- 'adored, revered', from the verb venerari.

venial | ˈvēnēəl |
adjective Christian Theology
denoting a sin that is not regarded as depriving the soul of divine grace: we cannot prevent ourselves sometimes from dreaming of performing venial if not mortal sins | everything I've disclosed up to now can be seen as venial. Often contrasted with mortal. • (of a fault or offense) slight and pardonable. DERIVATIVES veniality | ˌvēnēˈalədē | noun venially adverb ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from late Latin venialis, from venia 'forgiveness'. USAGE See usage at venal.

veracity | vəˈrasədē |
noun
conformity to facts; accuracy: officials expressed doubts concerning the veracity of the story. • habitual truthfulness: voters should be concerned about his veracity and character. ORIGIN early 17th century: from French véracité or medieval Latin veracitas, from verax 'speaking truly' (see veracious).

verbose | vərˈbōs |
adjective
using or expressed in more words than are needed: much academic language is obscure and verbose. DERIVATIVES verbosely | vərˈbōslē | adverb verbose-

ness noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin verbosus, from verbum ‘word’.

vernal | ˈvərn(ə)l |
adjective
of, in, or appropriate to spring: the vernal freshness of the land. DERIVATIVES vernally adverb ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin vernalis, from vernus ‘of the spring’, from ver ‘spring’.

vestige | ˈvestij |
noun
a trace of something that is disappearing or no longer exists: the last vestiges of colonialism. • [usually with negative] the smallest amount (used to emphasize the absence of something): he waited patiently, but without a vestige of sympathy. • Biology a part or organ of an organism that has become reduced or functionless in the course of evolution. ORIGIN late Middle English: from French, from Latin vestigium ‘footprint’.

vexatious | vekˈsāSHəs |
adjective
causing or tending to cause annoyance, frustration, or worry: the vexatious questions posed by software copyrights. • Law denoting an action or the bringer of an action that is brought without sufficient grounds for winning, purely to cause annoyance to the defendant: a frivolous or vexatious litigant. DERIVATIVES vexatiously | vekˈsāSHəslē | adverb vexatiousness noun

viand | ˈvīənd |
noun
1 (usually viands) archaic an item of food: an unlimited assortment of viands. 2 Philippines a meat, seafood, or vegetable dish that accompanies rice in a typical Filipino meal: a sumptuous lunch of rice and two viands | [mass noun] : Filipinos on a tight budget prioritize rice over viand. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French viande ‘food’, from an alteration of Latin vivenda, neuter plural gerundive of vivere ‘to live’; viand (sense 2) has been adopted in Philippine English as a translation of the Tagalog word ulam.

vicarious | vəˈkerēəs, vīˈkerēəs |
adjective
experienced in the imagination through the feelings or actions of another person: I could glean vicarious pleasure from the struggles of my imaginary film friends. • acting or done for another: a vicarious atonement. • Physiology of or pertaining to the performance by one organ of the functions normally discharged by another. DERIVATIVES vicariousness | vəˈkerēəsnəs, vīˈkerēəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin vicarius ‘substitute’ (see vicar) + -ous.

vicegerent | ˌvīsˈjirənt |
noun formal
a person exercising delegated power on behalf of a sovereign or ruler. • a person regarded as an earthly representative of God or a god, especially the Pope. DERIVATIVES vicegerency | ˌvīsˈjirənsē | noun (plural vicegerencies) ORIGIN mid 16th century: from medieval Latin vicegerent- ‘(person) holding office’, from Latin vic- ‘office, place, turn’ + gerere ‘carry on, hold’.

victimize | ˈviktəˌm |
verb [with object]
single (someone) out for cruel or unjust treatment: scam artists who victimize senior citizens. DERIVATIVES victimizer (British also victimiser) noun

vie | vī |
verb (vies, vying, vied) [no object]
compete eagerly with someone in order to do or achieve something: rival mobs vying for control of the liquor business. ORIGIN mid 16th century: probably a shortening of obsolete envy, via Old French from Latin invitare ‘challenge’.

vigilant | ˈvijələnt |
adjective
keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties: the burglar was spotted by vigilant neighbors. DERIVATIVES vigilantly | ˈvijələn(t)lē | adverb ORIGIN late 15th century: from Latin vigilant- ‘keeping awake’, from the verb vigilare, from vigil (see vigil).

vignette | vinˈyet |
noun
1 a brief evocative description, account, or episode: a classic vignette of embassy life. 2 a small illustration or portrait photograph which fades into its background without a definite border. 3 a small ornamental design filling a space in a book or carving, typically based on foliage. verb [with object] portray (someone) in the style of a vignette. • produce (a photograph) in the style of a vignette by softening or shading away the edges of the subject: (as adjective vignetted) : instructions had been sent to the shop to make a cropped, oval, vignetted copy of a family group portrait. DERIVATIVES vignettist | -ˈyetist | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in vignette (sense 3 of the noun); also as an architectural term denoting a carved representation of a vine): from French, diminutive of vigne ‘vine’.

vilify | ˈvilәˌfī |
verb (vilifies, vilifying, vilified) [with object]
speak or write about in an abusively disparaging manner: he has been vilified in the press. DERIVATIVES vilifier | ˈvilәˌfīәr | noun ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense ‘lower in value’): from late Latin vilificare, from Latin vilis ‘of low value’ (see vile).

vindictive | vinˈdiktiv |
adjective
having or showing a strong or unreasoning desire for revenge: the criticism was both vindictive and personalized. DERIVATIVES vindictively | vinˈdiktəvlē | adverb vindictiveness | vinˈdiktivnəs | noun ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin vindicta ‘vengeance’+ -ive.

virtuoso | ˌvərCHo͞oˈōsō |
noun (plural virtuosi | -sē | or virtuosos)
a person highly skilled in music or another artistic pursuit: a celebrated clarinet virtuoso | [as modifier] : virtuoso guitar playing. • a person with a special knowledge of or interest in works of art or curios. ORIGIN early 17th century: from Italian, literally 'learned, skillful', from late Latin virtuosus (see virtuous).

virulent | ˈvir(y)ələnt |
adjective
1 (of a disease or poison) extremely severe or harmful in its effects: a virulent strain of influenza | the poison is so virulent that it kills a fish instantly. • (of a pathogen, especially a virus) highly infective: Staphylococcus aureus is a common organism whose virulent strains are causing problems. 2 bitterly hostile: his involvement with the temperance movement led to his virulent attack on the drink trade. DERIVATIVES virulently | ˈvir(y)ələntlē | adverb ORIGIN late Middle English (originally describing a poisoned wound): from Latin virulentus, from virus 'poison' (see virus).

visceral | ˈvis(ə)rəl |
adjective
relating to the viscera: the visceral nervous system. • relating to deep inward feelings rather than to the intellect: the voters' visceral fear of change. DERIVATIVES viscerally adverb

viscid | ˈvisəd |
adjective
glutinous; sticky: the viscid mucus lining of the intestine. DERIVATIVES viscidity | vəˈsidədē | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from late Latin viscidus, from Latin viscum 'birdlime'.

viscosity | vəˈskäsədē |
noun (plural viscosities)
the state of being thick, sticky, and semifluid in consistency, due to internal friction: cooling the fluid raises its viscosity. • a quantity expressing the magnitude of internal friction, as measured by the force per unit area resisting a flow in which parallel layers unit distance apart have unit speed relative to one another: silicone oils can be obtained with different viscosities. ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French viscosite or medieval Latin viscositas, from late Latin viscosus (see viscous).

visionary | ˈviZHəˌnerē |
adjective
1 (especially of a person) thinking about or planning the future with imagination or wisdom: a visionary leader. • archaic (of a plan or idea) not practical. 2 relating to or able to see visions in a dream or trance, or as a supernatural apparition: a visionary experience. • archaic existing only in a vision or in the imagination. noun (plural visionaries) a person with original ideas about what the future will or could be like: he is a visionary keen on policy-making. DERIVATIVES visionariness noun

vitiate | ˈviSHēˌāt |
verb [with object] formal
spoil or impair the quality or efficiency of: development programs have been vitiated by the rise in population. • destroy or impair the legal validity of: the insurance is vitiated because of foolish acts on the part of the tenant. DERIVATIVES vitiation | ˌviSHēˈāSHən | noun vitiator | -ˌātər | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin vitiat- 'impaired', from the verb vitiare, from vitium (see vice1).

vitriolic | ˌvitrēˈälik |
adjective
filled with bitter criticism or malice: vitriolic attacks on the politicians | vitriolic outbursts. DERIVATIVES vitriolically adverb

vivacious | vəˈvāSHəs, vīˈvāSHəs |
adjective
attractively lively and animated (typically used of a woman): her vivacious and elegant mother | she was dark-haired and vivacious. DERIVATIVES vivaciously | vəˈvāSHəslē | adverb vivaciousness | vəˈvāSHəsnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin vivax, vivac- 'lively, vigorous' (from vivere 'to live') + -ious.

vivid | ˈvivəd |
adjective
1 producing powerful feelings or strong, clear images in the mind: memories of that evening were still vivid | a vivid description. 2 (of a color) intensely deep or bright: the rhododendron bush provides a vivid splash of mauve. 3 archaic (of a person or animal) lively and vigorous. DERIVATIVES vividness | ˈvivədnəs | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin vividus, from vivere 'to live'.

vivisection | ˌvivəˈsekSHən, ˈvivəˌsekSHən |
noun
the practice of performing operations on live animals for the purpose of experimentation or scientific research (used only by people who are opposed to such work): the abolition of vivisection. • ruthlessly sharp and detailed criticism or analysis: the vivisection of America's seamy underbelly. DERIVATIVES vivisectional adjective vivisectionist | ˌvivəˈsekSH(ə)nəst | noun & adjective ORIGIN early 18th century: from Latin vivus 'living', on the pattern of dissection.

vociferous | vōˈsifərəs |
adjective
(especially of a person or speech) vehement or clamorous: he was a vociferous opponent of the takeover. DERIVATIVES vociferousness | vōˈsifərəsnəs | noun

volatile | ˈväləd l |
adjective
1 (of a substance) easily evaporated at normal temperatures: volatile solvents such as petroleum ether, hexane, and benzene. 2 liable to change rapidly

and unpredictably, especially for the worse: the political situation was becoming more volatile. • (of a person) liable to display rapid changes of emotion: a passionate, volatile young man. 3 (of a computer's memory) retaining data only as long as there is a power supply connected. noun (usually volatiles) a volatile substance. DERIVATIVES volatileness noun ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'creature that flies', also, as a collective, 'birds'): from Old French volatil or Latin volatilis, from volare 'to fly'.

volition | vōˈliSHən |
noun
the faculty or power of using one's will: without conscious volition she backed into her office. PHRASES of one's own volition (also by one's own volition or on one's own volition) voluntarily: they choose to leave early of their own volition. ORIGIN early 17th century (denoting a decision or choice made after deliberation): from French, or from medieval Latin volitio(n-), from volo 'I wish'.

volubility | ˌvälyəˈbilədē |
noun
the quality of talking fluently, readily, or incessantly; talkativeness: her legendary volubility deserted her.

voluntary | ˈvälənˌterē |
adjective
done, given, or acting of one's own free will: we are funded by voluntary contributions. • working, done, or maintained without payment: a voluntary helper. • supported by contributions rather than taxes or fees: voluntary hospitals. • Physiology under the conscious control of the brain. • Law (of a conveyance or disposition) made without return in money or other consideration. noun (plural voluntaries) an organ solo played before, during, or after a church service. • historical a piece of music performed extempore, especially as a prelude to other music, or composed in a free style. DERIVATIVES voluntariness | ˈvälənˌterēnəs | noun ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French volontaire or Latin voluntarius, from voluntas 'will'.

voracious | vəˈrāSHəs |
adjective
wanting or devouring great quantities of food: he had a voracious appetite. • having a very eager approach to an activity: his voracious reading of literature. DERIVATIVES voraciously | vəˈrāSHəslē | adverb voraciousness | vəˈrāSHəsnəs | noun voracity | vəˈrasədē | noun ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin vorax, vorac- (from vorare 'devour') + -ious.

vortex | ˈvôrˌteks |
noun (plural vortexes or vortices | -təˌsēz |)
a mass of whirling fluid or air, especially a whirlpool or whirlwind: we were caught in a vortex of water | figurative : a swirling vortex of emotions. DERIVATIVES vorticose | ˈvôrdəˌkōs | adjective vorticular | vôrˈtikyələr | adjective ORIGIN mid 17th century: from Latin vortex, vortic-, literally 'eddy', variant of vertex.

votary | ˈvōdərē |
noun (plural votaries)
a person, such as a monk or nun, who has made vows of dedication to religious service. • a devoted follower, adherent, or advocate of someone or something: he was a votary of John Keats. DERIVATIVES votarist | -rist | noun ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin vot- 'vowed' (from the verb vovere) + -ary1.

vouchsafe | vouCHˈsāf, ˈvouCHˌsāf |
verb [with two objects]
give or grant (something) to (someone) in a gracious or condescending manner: it is a blessing vouchsafed him by heaven. • [with object] reveal or disclose (information): you'd never vouchsafed that interesting tidbit before. ORIGIN Middle English: originally as the phrase vouch something safe on someone, i.e. 'warrant the secure conferment of (something on someone)'.

vulnerable | ˈvəlnər(ə)bəl |
adjective
susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm: we were in a vulnerable position | small fish are vulnerable to predators. • (of a person) in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect: employees must be better trained in how to deal with vulnerable young people. • Bridge (of a partnership) liable to higher penalties, either by convention or through having won one game toward a rubber: the authors advise a variable no-trump opening bid which means weak non-vulnerable and strong vulnerable. DERIVATIVES vulnerableness | ˈvəlnər(ə)bəlnəs | noun vulnerably | -blē | adverb ORIGIN early 17th century: from late Latin vulnerabilis, from Latin vulnerare 'to wound', from vulnus 'wound'.

waffle1 | ˈwäfəl, ˈwôfəl |
verb [no object]
1 North American fail to make up one's mind: Joseph had been waffling over where to go. 2 British speak or write, especially at great length, without saying anything important or useful: he waffled on about everything that didn't matter. noun 1 North American a failure to make up one's mind: saying "maybe" leaves us squandering our lives in indecisive waffle. 2 mainly British lengthy but trivial or useless talk or writing. DERIVATIVES waffler | ˈwäf(ə)lər | noun waffly | ˈwäf(ə)lē | adjective ORIGIN late 17th century (originally in the sense 'yap, yelp'): frequentative of dialect waff 'yelp', of imitative origin. waffle2 | ˈwäfəl, ˈwôfəl | noun a small crisp batter cake, baked in a waffle iron and eaten hot with butter or syrup. adjective denoting a style of fine honeycomb weaving or a fabric woven to give a honeycomb effect. ORIGIN mid 18th century: from Dutch wafel; compare with wafer and goffer.

wanderlust | ˈwändərˌləst |
noun
a strong desire to travel: a man consumed by wanderlust. ORIGIN early 20th century: from German Wanderlust.

wanton | ˈwäntən |
adjective

1 (of a cruel or violent action) deliberate and unprovoked: sheer wanton vandalism. 2 dated sexually unrestrained or having many casual sexual relationships (typically used of a woman): her cheeks burned as she recalled how forward she had been, how wanton. 3 archaic growing profusely; luxuriant: where wanton ivy twines. • lively; playful: a wanton fawn. noun archaic a sexually unrestrained woman: she'd behaved like a wanton. verb [no object] archaic or literary 1 play; frolic: they sat gazing at the white-flecked pure blue sea and the various gulls that wantoned in the wake. 2 behave in a sexually unrestrained way: women who have wantoned with suitors. DERIVATIVES wantonness | ˈwänt(n)nəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English wantowen 'rebellious, lacking discipline', from wan- 'badly'+ Old English togen 'trained'(related to team and tow1).

warrant | ˈwôrənt |
noun
1 a document issued by a legal or government official authorizing the police or some other body to make an arrest, search premises, or carry out some other action relating to the administration of justice: magistrates issued a warrant for his arrest | an extradition warrant. • a document that entitles the holder to receive goods, money, or services: we'll issue you with a travel warrant. • Finance a negotiable security allowing the holder to buy shares at a specified price at or before some future date: [as modifier] : warrant bonds. 2 [usually with negative] justification or authority for an action, belief, or feeling: there is no warrant for this assumption. 3 an official certificate of appointment issued to an officer of lower rank than a commissioned officer. verb [with object] justify or necessitate (a certain course of action): that offense is serious enough to warrant a court martial. • officially affirm or guarantee: the vendor warrants the accuracy of the report. PHRASES I warrant (also I'll warrant) dated used to express the speaker's certainty about something: I'll warrant you'll thank me for it in years to come. DERIVATIVES warranter | ˈwôrən(t)ər | noun ORIGIN Middle English (in the senses 'protector' and 'safeguard', also, as a verb, 'keep safe from danger'): from variants of Old French guarant (noun), guarantir (verb), of Germanic origin; compare with guarantee.

weary | ˈwirē |
adjective (wearier, weariest)
feeling or showing tiredness, especially as a result of excessive exertion or lack of sleep: he gave a long, weary sigh. • reluctant to see or experience any more of; tired of: she was weary of their constant arguments | [in combination] : war-weary Americans. • calling for a great amount of energy or endurance; tiring and tedious: the weary journey began again. verb (wearies, wearying, wearied) [with object] cause to become tired: she was wearied by her persistent cough. • [no object] (weary of) grow tired of or bored with: she wearied of the sameness of her life. PHRASES no rest for the weary humorous used as a wry observation on the heavy workload or absence of relaxation that seem to characterize a person's situation. [with biblical allusion to Isa. 48:22, 57:21.] DERIVATIVES weariless adjective ORIGIN Old English wērig, wærig, of West Germanic origin.

weird | wird |
adjective
suggesting something supernatural; uncanny: the weird crying of a seal. • informal very strange; bizarre: a weird coincidence | all sorts of weird and wonderful characters. • archaic connected with fate. noun archaic, mainly Scottish a person's destiny. verb [with object] (weird someone out) North American informal induce a sense of disbelief or alienation in someone: blue eyes weirded him out, and Ivan's were especially creepy. ORIGIN Old English wyrd 'destiny', of Germanic origin. The adjective (late Middle English) originally meant 'having the power to control destiny', and was used especially in the Weird Sisters, originally referring to the Fates, later the witches in Shakespeare's Macbeth; the latter use gave rise to the sense 'unearthly' (early 19th century).

whet | (h)wet |
verb (whets, whetting, whetted) [with object]
sharpen the blade of (a tool or weapon): she took out her dagger and began to whet its blade in even, rhythmic strokes. • excite or stimulate (someone's desire, interest, or appetite): here's an extract to whet your appetite. noun archaic a thing that stimulates appetite or desire: he swallowed his two dozen oysters as a whet. DERIVATIVES whetter noun ORIGIN Old English hwettan, of Germanic origin; related to German wetzen, based on an adjective meaning 'sharp'.

whimsical | ˈ(h)wimzək(ə)l |
adjective
1 playfully quaint or fanciful, especially in an appealing and amusing way: a whimsical sense of humor. 2 acting or behaving in a capricious manner: the whimsical arbitrariness of autocracy. DERIVATIVES whimsicality | ˌ(h)wimzə ˈkalədē | noun whimsically | ˈ(h)wimzək(ə)lē | adverb

wholesome | ˈhōlsəm |
adjective
conducive to or suggestive of good health and physical well-being: the food is plentiful and very wholesome. • conducive to or promoting moral well-being: good wholesome fun. DERIVATIVES wholesomely | ˈhōlsəmlē | adverb wholesomeness | ˈhōlsəmnəs | noun ORIGIN Middle English: probably already in Old English (see whole, -some1).

wily | ˈwīlē |
adjective (wilier, wiliest)
skilled at gaining an advantage, especially deceitfully: his wily opponents. DERIVATIVES wilily | ˈwīləlē | adverb wiliness | ˈwīlēnəs | noun

wither | ˈwiTHər |
verb
1 [no object] (of a plant) become dry and shriveled: the grass had withered to an unappealing brown. • (of a person, limb, or the skin) become shrunken or wrinkled from age or disease: the flesh had withered away. 2 cease to flourish; fall into decay or decline: programs would wither away if they did not command local support. • [with object] cause to decline or deteriorate;

weaken: a business that can wither the hardiest ego. 3 mortify (someone) with a scornful look or manner: she withered me with a look. PHRASES wither on the vine fail to be implemented or dealt with because of neglect or inaction: that resolution clearly withered on the vine. ORIGIN late Middle English: apparently a variant of weather, ultimately differentiated for certain senses.

wizened | ˈwizənd |
adjective
shriveled or wrinkled with age: a wizened, weather-beaten old man. ORIGIN early 16th century: past participle of archaic wizen ‘shrivel’, of Germanic origin.

wont | wôNt, wänt, wōnt |
noun (one's wont) formal or humorous
one's customary behavior in a particular situation: Constance, as was her wont, had paid her little attention. adjective [with infinitive] literary (of a person) in the habit of doing something; accustomed: he was wont to arise at 5:30 every morning. verb (third singular present wonts or wont; past and past participle wont or wonted) archaic make or be or become accustomed: [with object] : wont thy heart to thoughts hereof | [no object, with infinitive] : sons wont to nurse their Parents in old age. ORIGIN Old English gewunod, past participle of wunian, ‘dwell, be accustomed’, of Germanic origin.

wraith | rāTH |
noun
a ghost or ghostlike image of someone, especially one seen shortly before or after their death. • used in reference to a pale, thin, or insubstantial person or thing: heart attacks had reduced his mother to a wraith. • literary a wisp or faint trace of something: a sea breeze was sending a gray wraith of smoke up the slopes. DERIVATIVES wraithlike | ˈrāTHˌlīk | adjective ORIGIN early 16th century (originally Scots): of unknown origin.

wrangle | ˈraNGg(ə)l |
noun
a dispute or argument, typically one that is long and complicated: an insurance wrangle is holding up compensation payments. verb 1 [no object] have a long and complicated dispute: the bureaucrats continue wrangling over the fine print. 2 [with object] North American round up, herd, or take charge of (livestock): the horses were wrangled early. 3 another term for wangle. ORIGIN late Middle English: compare with Low German wrangeln, frequentative of wrangen ‘to struggle’; related to wring.

wrathful | ˈraTHfəl |
adjective literary
full of or characterized by intense anger: natural calamities seemed to be the work of a wrathful deity. DERIVATIVES wrathfully | ˈraTHfəlē | adverb wrathfulness | ˈraTHfəlnəs | noun

wry | rī |
adjective (wryer, wryest or wrier, wriest)
1 using or expressing dry, especially mocking, humor: a wry smile | wry comments. 2 (of a person's face or features) twisted into an expression of disgust, disappointment, or annoyance. 3 archaic (of the neck or features) distorted or turned to one side: a remedy for wry necks. DERIVATIVES wryness | ˈrīnəs | noun ORIGIN early 16th century (in the sense ‘contorted’): from Old English wrīgian ‘tend, incline’, in Middle English ‘deviate, swerve, contort’.

xenophobia | ˌzenəˈfōbēə, ˌzēnəˈfōbēə |
noun
dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries: the resurgence of racism and xenophobia.

yarn | yärn |
noun
1 spun thread used for knitting, weaving, or sewing: hanks of pale green yarn | [count noun] : a fine yarn for a lightweight garment. 2 informal a long or rambling story, especially one that is implausible: he never let reality get in the way of a good yarn. verb [no object] informal tell a long or implausible story: they were yarning about local legends and superstitions. ORIGIN Old English gearn; of Germanic origin, related to Dutch garen.

yearn | yərn |
verb [no object]
have an intense feeling of longing for something, typically something that one has lost or been separated from: she yearned for a glimpse of him | [with infinitive] : they yearned to go home | some people yearn for a return to monarchy. • archaic be filled with compassion or warm feeling: no fellow spirit yearned toward her. DERIVATIVES yearner noun ORIGIN Old English giernan, from a Germanic base meaning ‘eager’.

yoke1 | yōk |
noun
1 a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull. • used of something that is regarded as oppressive or burdensome: the yoke of imperialism. • (in ancient Rome) an arch of three spears under which a defeated army was made to march. • (plural same or yokes) a pair of animals coupled together with a yoke: a yoke of oxen. • archaic the amount of land that one pair of oxen could plow in a day. 2 a part of a garment that fits over the shoulders and to which the main part of the garment is attached, typically in gathers or pleats: the pinafore fell amply from a short yoke. 3 a frame fitting over the neck and shoulders of a person, used for carrying pails or baskets. 4 the crossbar at the head of a rudder, to whose ends ropes are fastened. • a bar of soft iron between the poles of an electromagnet. 5 mainly North American a control lever in an aircraft. verb [with object] 1 put a yoke on (a pair of animals); couple or attach with or to a yoke: a plough drawn by a camel and donkey yoked together. • cause (two people or things) to be joined in a close relationship: Hong Kong's dollar has been yoked to America's. 2 US informal attack, especially by strangling: two crackheads yoked this girl. ORIGIN Old English geoc (noun), geocian (verb), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch juk, German Joch, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin jugum and Greek

zugon, also by Latin jungere ‘to join’. yoke2 | yōk | noun Irish informal a thing whose name one cannot recall, does not know, or does not wish to specify: how much did that yoke set you back? ORIGIN early 20th century: of unknown origin.

zany | ˈzānē |
adjective (zanier, zaniest)
amusingly unconventional and idiosyncratic: zany humor. noun an erratic or eccentric person. • historical a comic performer partnering a clown, whom he imitated in an amusing way. DERIVATIVES zanily | -nəlē | adverb zaniness noun ORIGIN late 16th century: from French zani or Italian zan(n)i, Venetian form of Gianni, Giovanni ‘John’, stock name of the servants acting as clowns in the commedia dell'arte.

zeal | zēl |
noun
great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective: his zeal for privatization | Laura brought a missionary zeal to her work. ORIGIN late Middle English: via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek zēlos.

zealot | ˈzelət |
noun
1 a person who is fanatical and uncompromising in pursuit of their religious, political, or other ideals. 2 (Zealot) historical a member of an ancient Jewish sect that aimed at a world Jewish theocracy and resisted the Romans until ad 70. ORIGIN late Middle English (as an epithet of the apostle Simon): via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek zēlōtēs, from zēloun ‘be zealous’, from zēlos (see zeal).

zenith | ˈzēnəTH |
noun [in singular]
1 the time at which something is most powerful or successful: under Justinian, the Byzantine Empire reached its zenith of influence. 2 Astronomy the point in the sky or celestial sphere directly above an observer. The opposite of nadir. • the highest point reached by a celestial or other object: the sun was well past the zenith | the missile reached its zenith and fell. DERIVATIVES zenithal | ˈzēnəTHəl | adjective ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French or medieval Latin cenit, based on Arabic samt (ar-ra's) ‘path (over the head)’.

zephyr | ˈzefər |
noun
1 literary a soft gentle breeze. 2 historical a fine cotton gingham. • a very light article of clothing. ORIGIN late Old English zefferus, denoting a personification of the west wind, via Latin from Greek zephuros ‘(god of the) west wind’. Sense 1 dates from the late 17th century.

zest | zest |
noun
1 great enthusiasm and energy: they campaigned with zest and intelligence | [in singular] : she had a great zest for life. • a quality of excitement and piquancy: I used to try to beat past records to add zest to my monotonous job. 2 the outer colored part of the peel of citrus fruit, used as flavoring: add 3 tablespoons of lemon zest. verb [with object] scrape off the outer colored part of the peel of (a piece of citrus fruit) for use as flavoring: zest the orange and lemon, taking care to discard all of the white pith. DERIVATIVES zesty | ˈzestē | adjective ORIGIN late 17th century (in sense zest (sense 2 of the noun)): from French zeste ‘orange or lemon peel’, from obsolete zec ‘membrane around walnut kernel’, ‘object of no importance’.

zigzag | ˈzigˌzag |
noun
a line or course having abrupt alternate right and left turns: she traced a zigzag on the metal with her finger. • a turn on a zigzag course: the road descends in a series of sharp zigzags. adjective having the form of a zigzag; veering alternately to right and left: when chased by a predator, some animals take a zigzag course. adverb so as to move right and left alternately: she drives zigzag across the city. verb (zigzags, zigzagging, zigzagged) [no object] have or move along in a zigzag course: the path zigzagged between dry rises in the land. ORIGIN early 18th century: from French, from German Zickzack, symbolic of alternation of direction, first applied to fortifications.

zippy | ˈzipē |
adjective (zippier, zippiest) informal
bright, fresh, or lively: a zippy, zingy, almost citrusy tang. • fast or speedy: zippy new sedans. DERIVATIVES zippily | ˈzipəlē | adverb zippiness noun

zone | zōn |
noun
1 [usually with modifier] an area or stretch of land having a particular characteristic, purpose, or use, or subject to particular restrictions: a pedestrian zone | a no-smoking zone. • Geography a well-defined region extending around the earth between definite limits, especially between two parallels of latitude: a zone of easterly winds. See also frigid zone, temperate zone, torrid zone. • (also time zone) a range of longitudes where a common standard time is used. • (the zone) informal (especially in sport) a state of such concentration that one is able to perform at the peak of one's physical or mental capabilities: I was in the zone, completing the first nine holes in one under par. • US (in basketball, football, and hockey) a specific area of the court, field, or rink, especially one to be defended by a particular player. 2 Botany & Zoology an encircling band or stripe of distinctive color, texture, or character. 3 archaic a belt or girdle worn around a person's body. verb [with object] 1 divide into or assign to zones: the park has been zoned into four distinct bioregions, each with its own ecological identity. • divide (a town or piece of land) into areas subject to particular restrictions on development and use: towns and cities must have the latitude to zone real property in the best interest of all. • designate (a specific area) for use or development as a particular zone in planning: the land is zoned for housing. 2 archaic encircle as or with a band or stripe. PHRASAL VERBS zone out North American informal fall asleep or lose concentration or consciousness: I just zoned out for a mo-

ment. ORIGIN late Middle English: from French, or from Latin zona ‘girdle’, from Greek zōnē.

zoology | zo͞oˈäləjē, zōˈäləjē |
noun
the scientific study of the behavior, structure, physiology, classification, and distribution of animals. • the animal life of a particular area or time: the zoology of Russia's vast interior. ORIGIN mid 17th century: from modern Latin zoologia (see zoo-, -logy).