

Vocabulary

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A

W: **ab ovo** || /æ'boʊ.vou /

P: [adv. – non-comparable]

D: from the beginning

E: “*Ab ovo* usque ad mala.” This phrase translates as “from the egg to the apples,” and it was penned by the Roman poet Horace. He was alluding to the Roman tradition of starting a meal with eggs and finishing it with apples. Horace also applied *ab ovo* in an account of the Trojan War that begins with the mythical egg of Leda from which Helen (whose beauty sparked the war) was born.

S: primitively

W: **aberrant** || /ə.'bɛ.ɹənt/

P: [adj.]

D: deviating from the usual or normal type

E: From Latin *aberrāns*, present active participle of *aberrō* (“go astray; err”); *ab* (“from”) + *errō* (“to wander”).

S: abnormal, atypical, exceptional, unusual

W: **abhorrent** || /æb'hɔɪ.ɹənt/

P: [adj.]

D: ¹ contrary to something; not agreeable

² causing or deserving strong dislike or hatred; being so repugnant as to stir up positive antagonism

E: Latin *abhorreō* (“shrink away from in horror”): *ab-* (“from”) + *horreō* (“stand aghast, bristle with fear”).

S: ¹ discordant, inconsistent

² abominable, foul

W: **abjection** || /æb'dʒɛk.jən /

P: [noun]

D: ¹ a low, downcast and degraded state

² (Mycology) the act of dispersing or casting off spores

E: From Middle English *abjeccioun*, from either Middle French *abjection* or Late Latin *abiectiōn-*, from Latin *abiectus* (“cast down”).

S: ¹ corruption, decadence, perversion

² N/s.

W: **abstruse** || /əb'struːs/

P: [adj.]

D: difficult or hard to understand/comprehend

E: 1590, from French *abstrus* (16c.) or directly from Latin *abstrusus* (“hidden, concealed, secret”), past participle of *abstrudere* (“conceal, hide,” literally “to thrust away”). From assimilated form of *ab-* (“off, away from”) + *trudere* (“to thrust, push”) from PIE root **treud-* (“to press, push, squeeze”). The term *obtuse* is often erroneously substituted for *abstruse* — a common malapropism, especially of American English speakers; such speakers are likely confusing *obtuse* & *oblique*, or mistakenly swapping the terms as a sequela of likeness in spelling/pronunciation.

S: arcane, cryptic, esoteric, obscure, recondite

W: **academic** || /ækə'demɪk/

P: [adj.]

D: having little practical use or value, as by being overly detailed and disengaging, or by being theoretical and speculative with no practical importance

E: From Ancient Greek ἀκαδημικός (*akadēmikós*), from Ἀκαδημία (*Akadēmía*) — the name of the place where Plato taught.

S: abstract, notional, speculative. Antonymous with *pragmatic*

W: **acquiesce** || /ækwi'ɛs/

P: [verb – intransitive]

D: to accept reluctantly but without protest; to comply passively

E: Essentially meaning “to comply quietly,” *acquiesce* has as its ultimate source the Latin verb *quiēscere* (“to be quiet”). *Quiēscere* can also mean “to repose,” “to fall asleep,” or “to rest,”—and when *acquiesce* arrived in English via French in the early 1600s, it did so with two senses: the familiar “to agree or comply” and the now-obsolete “to rest satisfied.” A passage from *Moby-Dick* popularized the use of the word in 19th century pop culture.

S: accede, assent

W: **acroterion** || /æk.rə'tɪər.i.ɒn/

P: [noun]

D: an architectural ornament placed on a flat pedestal called the acroter or plinth, and mounted at the apex or corner of the pediment of a building in the classical style

E: 1664, *acroterion*, *akroterion* from Greek *akrōtērion*, from *akros* (“topmost, extreme”; akin to Greek *akē* “point”); *acroterium* from Latin, from Greek *akrōtērion*; *acroter*, *akroter* from French *acroère*, from Latin *acroterium*.

S: N/s.

W: **acuate** || /'æk.ju.ət/

P: [adj.]

D: having a sharp point; shaped like a needle

E: From Medieval Latin *acuātus*, past participle of *acuāre*, variant of Classical Latin *acuere*, present active infinitive of *acuō* (“I sharpen”), from *acus* (“needle”).

S: sharpened

W: **acumen** || /ə'k.ju.mən/

P: [noun – uncountable]

D: quickness or sharpness of mental perception

E: Borrowed from Latin *acūmen* (“sharp point”).

S: acuity, discernment, shrewdness, wit

W: **ad absurdum** || /æd æb'sɜr.dəm/

P: [adv.]

D: to the point of absurdity

E: First recorded in 1650–60; from Latin *ad absurdum* (literally “to [the] absurd”).

S: N/s.

W: **ad hoc** || /æd 'hɒk/

P: [adj.]

D: for the special purpose or end presently under consideration

E: Borrowed from New Latin *ad hoc* (“for this”).

S: impromptu, provisional

W: **ad libitum** || /æd 'lɪb.ɪ.təm/

P: [adv. – non-comparable]

D: as much as desired, to one's fill, without restriction

E: Directly borrowed from Latin *ad libitum*.

S: freely, without restraint

W: **ad nauseam** || /æd 'nɔ:ziəm/

P: adv. – non-comparable

D: having been done or repeated so often that it has become annoying or tiresome

E: Unadapted borrowing from Latin *ad nauseam*, from *ad* (“to”) + *nauseam* (“sea-sickness, sickness, nausea”), form of *nausea*.

S: repeatedly, repetitively

W: **adage** || /'æ.dɪdʒ/

P: [noun]

D: a traditional saying expressing a common experience or observation

E: Borrowed from Middle French *adage*, from Latin *adāgium*.

S: aphorism, axiom, dictum, proverb

W: **adjudicate** || /ə'dʒu.dɪ.keɪt/

P: [verb – transitive ¹ | verb – intransitive ²]

D: ¹ to settle a legal case or other dispute
² to act as a judge

E: Borrowed from Latin *adiūdicō*, *adiūdicātus*, from *ad* + *iūdicō* (“to judge”). Doublet of *adjudge*.

S: ¹ arbitrate, determine, mediate, settle
² referee, umpire

W: **adobe** || /ə'doʊ.bɪ/

P: [noun – uncountable]

D: (Architecture) a brick made of sun-dried earth and straw

E: Mid 18th century; from Spanish, from *adobar* (“to plaster”), from Arabic *aṭ-ṭūb*, from *al* (“the”) + *ṭūb* (“bricks”). *Adobe* can also refer to a structure made out of *adobe* bricks (especially the buildings of the indigenous Pueblo people in the Southwestern United States) or the actual clay used to make the bricks. *Adobe* bricks have been used for thousands of years in myriad cultures across the globe, especially those in hot, arid climates.

S:

W: **adroit** || /ə'droɪt/

P:

D:

E:

S:

W:

P:

D:

E:

S:

W:

P:

D:

E:

S: