

A - F

ab·jure (b-jr) *tr.v.* **-jured, -jur·ing, -jures** **1.** To renounce under oath; forswear. **2.** To recant solemnly; repudiate: *abjure one's beliefs*. **3.** To give up (an action or practice, for example); abstain from. [Middle English *abjuren* < Old French *abjurer* < Latin *abirre* : *ab-*, away; see **ab-** 1 + *irre*, to swear.] —**abju·ration** *n.* —**ab·jurer** *n.*

ab·ro·gate (br-gt) *tr.v.* **-gat·ed, -gat·ing, -gates** To abolish, do away with, or annul. [Latin *abrogre, abrogt-* : *ab-*, away; see **ab-** 1 + *rogre*, to ask; see *reg-* in App.] —**abro·gation** *n.*

ab·ste·mi·ous (b-stm-s, b-) *adj.* **1.** Eating and drinking in moderation. **2a.** Sparingly used or consumed. **b.** Restricted to bare necessities. [From Latin *abstmius* : *abs-*, *ab-*, away; see **ab-** 1 + **tmum*, liquor variant of *tmtum*.] —**ab·stemi·ous·ly** *adv.* —**ab·stemi·ous·ness** *n.*

ac·u·men (ky-mn, -ky-) *n.* Quickness and keenness of judgment or insight. [Latin *acmen* < *acuere*, to sharpen < *acus*, needle; see *ak-* in App.]

The pronunciation (-kymn), with stress on the second syllable, is an older, traditional pronunciation reflecting the word's Latin origin. In recent years it has been supplanted as the most common pronunciation of the word by a variant with stress on the first syllable, (ky-mn). In a recent survey, 68 percent of the Usage Panelists chose this as their pronunciation, while 29 percent preferred the pronunciation with stress on the second syllable. The remaining 3 percent of the Panelists said they use both pronunciations.

an·te·bel·lum (nt-blm) *adj.* Belonging to the period before a war, esp. the American Civil War. [From Latin *ante bellum*, before the war : *ante*, before; see **ante** + *bellum*, war.]

aus·pi·cious (ô-spshts) *adj.* **1.** Attended by favorable circumstances; propitious. See *Syns* at **favorable**. **2.** Successful; prosperous. —**aus·picious·ly** *adv.* —**aus·picious·ness** *n.*

be·lie (b-l) *tr.v.* **-lied, -ly·ing, -lies** **1.** To picture falsely; misrepresent: "*He spoke roughly in order to belie his air of gentility*" (James Joyce) **2.** To show to be false: *His smile belied his ire*. **3.** To be counter to; contradict. [Middle English *bilien* < Old English *belogan*, to deceive with lies; see *leugh-* in App.] —**be·lier** *n.*

bel·li·cose (bl-ks) *adj.* Warlike in manner or temperament; pugnacious. [Middle English < Latin *bellicus* < *bellicus*, of war < *bellum*, war.] —**belli·cosely** *adv.* —**belli·cosi·ty** (-ks-t) *n.*

bowd·ler·ize (bdl-rz, boud-) *tr.v.* **-ized, -iz·ing, -iz·es** **1.** To expurgate (a book, for example) prudishly. **2.** To modify, as by shortening or simplifying or by skewing content. [After Thomas *Bowdler* (1754–1825), who expurgated Shakespeare.] —**bowdler·ism** *n.* —**bowdler·i·zation** (-lr--zshn) *n.* —**bowdler·izer** *n.*

chi·can·er·y (sh-kn-r, ch-) *n., pl. -ies* **1.** Deception by trickery or sophistry. **2.** A trick; a subterfuge.

chro·mo·some (krm-sm) *n.* **1.** A threadlike linear strand of DNA and associated proteins in the nucleus of eukaryotic cells that carries the genes and functions in the transmission of hereditary information. **2.** A circular strand of DNA in bacteria that contains the hereditary information necessary for cell life. —**chromo·somal** (-sml), **chromo·somic** (-smk) *adj.* <—**chromo·somal·ly** *adv.*

churl·ish (chûrlsh) *adj.* **1.** Of, like, or befitting a churl; boorish or vulgar. **2.** Having a bad disposition; surly. **3.** Difficult to work with, such as soil; intractable. —**churlish·ly** *adv.* —**churlish·ness** *n.*

cir·cum·lo·cu·tion (sûrkm-l-kyshn) *n.* **1.** The use of unnecessarily wordy and indirect language. **2.** Evasion in speech or writing. **3.** A roundabout expression. [Ultimately < Latin *circumlocti, circumloctin-* < *circumloctus*, past participle of *circumloqu*: *circum-*, *circum-* + *loqu*, to speak.] —**circum·locu·tori·ly** (-lky-tôr-l, -tr-) *adv.* —**circum·locu·tory** (-tôr, -tr) *adj.*

cir·cum·nav·i·gate (sûrkm-nv-gt) *tr.v.* **-gat·ed, -gat·ing, -gates** **1.** To proceed completely around: *circumnavigating the earth*. **2.** To go around; circumvent. —**circum·navi·gation** *n.* —**circum·navi·gator** *n.*

de·cid·u·ous (d-sj-s) *adj.* **1.** Falling off or shed at a specific season or stage of growth: *deciduous antlers*. **2.** Shedding or losing foliage at the end of the growing season: *deciduous trees*. **3.** Not lasting; ephemeral. [From Latin *dciduus* < *dcidere*, to fall off: *d-*, *de-* + *cadere*, to fall.] —**de·cidu·ous·ly** *adv.* —**de·cidu·ous·ness** *n.*

del·e·te·ri·ous (dl-tîr-s) *adj.* Having a harmful effect; injurious. [< Greek *dltrios* < *dltr*, destroyer < *dleisthai*, to harm.] —**dele·teri·ous·ly** *adv.* —**dele·teri·ous·ness** *n.*

dif·fi·dent (df-dnt, -dnt) *adj.* **1.** Lacking or marked by a lack of self-confidence; shy and timid. See Syns at **shy** **1.** **2.** Reserved in manner. [Middle English < Latin *diffdns, diffdent-*, present participle of *diffdere*, to mistrust: *dis-*, *dis-* + *fdere*, to trust; see *bheidh-* in App.] —**diffi·dent·ly** *adv.*

en·er·vate (nr-vt) *tr.v.* **-vat·ed, -vat·ing, -vates** **1.** To weaken or destroy the strength or vitality of. See Syns at **deplete**. **2. Medicine** To remove a nerve or part of a nerve. § *adj.* (-

nûrvt) Deprived of strength; debilitated. [Latin *nervre*, *nervt-* : -, *ex-*, *ex-* + *nervus*, sinew.]
 —**ener·vation** *n.* —**ener·vative** *adj.* —**ener·vator** *n.*

 Sometimes people mistakenly use *enervate* to mean "to invigorate" or "to excite" by assuming that it is a close cousin of *energize*. In fact, *enervate* means essentially the opposite. It comes < Latin *nervus*, "sinew," and thus means "to cause to become 'out of muscle'," that is, "to weaken or deplete of strength." It has no historical connection with *energize*.

en·fran·chise (n-frnchz) *tr.v.* **-chised, -chis·ing, -chis·es** **1.** To bestow a franchise on. **2.** To endow with the rights of citizenship, esp. the right to vote. **3.** To free, as from bondage. [Middle English *enfraunchisen* < Old French *enfranchir*, *enfranchiss-*, to set free : *en-*, intensive pref.; see **en-** **1** + *franchir* (< *franc*, free; see **frank** **1**.)]
 —**en·franchisement** *n.*

e·piph·a·ny (-pf-n) *n., pl. -nies* **1. Epiphany** A Christian feast celebrating the manifestation of the divine nature of Jesus to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi, traditionally observed on January 6. **2.** A revelatory manifestation of a divine being. **3a.** A sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of something. **b.** A comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization. [Middle English *epiphanie* < Old French < Late Latin *epiphania* < Greek *epiphaneia*, manifestation < *epiphainesthai*, to appear : *epi-*, forth; see **epi-** + *phainein*, *phan-*, to show.] —**epi·phanic** (p-fnk) *adj.*

e·qui·nox (kw-nks, kw-) *n.* **1.** Either of two points on the celestial sphere at which the ecliptic intersects the celestial equator. **2.** Either of the two times during a year when the sun crosses the celestial equator and when day and night are of approximately equal length. [Middle English < Old French *equinox* < Medieval Latin *aequinoxium* < Latin *aequinoctium* : *aequi-*, equi- + *nox*, *noct-*, night; see *nekw-t-* in App.]

eu·ro or **Eu·ro** (yr) *n., pl. -ros* or **-ro's** The basic unit of currency among members of the European Monetary Union. [After Europe.]

ev·a·nes·cent (v-nsnt) *adj.* Vanishing or likely to vanish like vapor. —**eva·nescent·ly** *adv.*

ex·pur·gate (kspr-gt) *tr.v.* **-gat·ed, -gat·ing, -gates** To remove erroneous, vulgar, obscene, or otherwise objectionable material from (a book, for example) before publication. [Latin *exprgre*, *exprgt-*, to purify : *ex-*, intensive pref.; see **ex-** + *prgre*, to cleanse.]
 —**expur·gation** *n.* —**expur·gator** *n.*

fa·ce·tious (f-sshs) *adj.* Playfully jocular; humorous. [French *facétieux* < *facétie*, jest < Latin *factia* < *factus*, witty.] —**fa·cetious·ly** *adv.* —**fa·cetious·ness** *n.*

fat·u·ous (fch-s) *adj.* **1.** Vacuously, smugly, and unconsciously foolish. **2.** Delusive; unreal. [From Latin *fatuus*.] —**fatu·ous·ly** *adv.* —**fatu·ous·ness** *n.*

feck·less (fkls) *adj.* **1.** Feeble or ineffective. **2.** Careless and irresponsible. [Scots *feck*, effect (alteration of effect) + -less.] —**feckless·ly** *adv.* —**feckless·ness** *n.*

fi·du·ci·ar·y (f-dsh-r, -sh-r, -dy-, f-) *adj.* **1a.** Of or relating to a holding of something in trust for another. **b.** Of or being a trustee or trusteeship. **c.** Held in trust. **2.** Of or consisting of fiat money. **3.** Of, relating to, or being a system of marking in the field of view of an optical instrument that is used as a reference point or measuring scale. § *n., pl. -ies* One, such as a company director, that has a special relation of trust or responsibility in certain obligations to others. [Latin *fdcirius* < *fdcia*, trust; see **fiducial**.]

fil·i·bus·ter (fl-bstr) *n.* **1a.** The use of obstructionist tactics, esp. prolonged speechmaking, in order to delay legislative action. **b.** An instance of the use of this delaying tactic. **2.** An adventurer who engages in a private military action in a foreign country. § *v. -tered, -ter·ing, -ters* — *intr.* **1.** To use obstructionist tactics in a legislative body. **2.** To take part in a private military action in a foreign country. — *tr.* To use a filibuster against (a legislative measure, for example). [< Spanish *filibustero*, freebooter < French *flibustier* < Dutch *vrijbouter*, pirate; see **freebooter**.] —**fili·buster·er** *n.*

G - L

gam·ete (gmt, g-mt) *n.* A reproductive cell having the haploid number of chromosomes, esp. a mature sperm or egg capable of fusing with a gamete of the opposite sex to produce the fertilized egg. [New Latin *gameta* < Greek *gamet*, wife and *gamets*, husband < *gamein*, to marry < *gamos*, marriage.] —**ga·metic** (-mtk) *adj.*

gauche (gsh) *adj.* Lacking social polish; tactless. [French awkward < Old French < *gauchir*, to turn aside, walk clumsily, of Germanic origin.] —**gauchely** *adv.* —**gaucheness** *n.*

ger·ry·man·der (jr-mndr, gr-) *tr.v. -dered, -der·ing, -ders* To divide (a geographic area) into voting districts so as to give unfair advantage to one party in elections. § *n.* **1.** The act, process, or an instance of gerrymandering. **2.** A district or configuration of districts differing widely in size or population because of gerrymandering. [After Elbridge Gerry + (sala)mander (< the shape of an election district created while Gerry was governor of MA).]

he·gem·o·ny (h-jm-n, hj-mn) *n., pl. -nies* The predominant influence, as of a state, region, or group, over another or others. [Greek *hgemoni* < *hgemn*, leader < *hgeisthai*, to lead.] —**hege·monic** (hj-mnk) *adj.* —**he·gemo·nism** *n.* —**he·gemo·nist** *adj. & n.*

Hegemony may be stressed on either the first or second syllable, though 72 percent of the Usage Panel prefers the latter.

he·mo·glo·bin (hm-glbn) *n.* The iron-containing respiratory pigment in red blood cells of vertebrates, consisting of about 6 percent heme and 94 percent globin. [Ultimately short for *hematinoglobulin* : hematin + globulin.]

ho·mo·ge·ne·ous (hm-jn-s, -jnys) *adj.* **1.** Of the same or similar nature or kind. **2.** Uniform in structure or composition. **3.** *Mathematics* Consisting of terms of the same degree or elements of the same dimension. [From Medieval Latin *homogeneous* < Greek *homogens* : *homo-*, homo- + *genos*, kind; see **heterogeneous**.] —**ho·mo·ge·ne·ous·ness** *n.*

hu·bris (hybrs) also **hy·bris** (h-) *n.* Overbearing pride or presumption; arrogance. [Greek excessive pride, wanton violence; see *ud-* in App.] —**hu·bristic** (-brstk) *adj.*
—**hu·bristic·al·ly** *adv.*

hy·pot·e·nuse (h-ptn-s, -ys) also **hy·poth·e·nuse** (-pth-ns, -nys) *n.* The side of a right triangle opposite the right angle. [Latin *hypotnsa* < Greek *hupoteinousa* < feminine present participle of *hupoteinein*, to stretch or extend under : *hupo-*, hypo- + *teinein*, to stretch; see *ten-* in App.]

im·peach (m-pch) *tr.v.* **-peached, -peach·ing, -peach·es** **1a.** To accuse. **b.** To charge (a public official) with improper conduct in office before a proper tribunal. **2.** To challenge the validity of; try to discredit: *impeach one's credibility*. [Middle English *empechen*, to impede, accuse < Anglo-Norman *empecher* < Late Latin *impedicre*, to entangle : Latin *in-*, in; see **in-** 2 + Latin *pedica*, fetter; see *ped-* in App.] —**im·peacher** *n.* —**im·peachment** *n.*

in·cog·ni·to (nkg-nt, n-kgn-t) *adv. & adj.* With one's identity disguised or concealed. § *n., pl. -tos* **1.** One whose identity is disguised or concealed. **2.** The condition of having a disguised or concealed identity. [Italian < Latin *incognitus*, unknown : *in-*, not; see **in-** 1 + *cognitus*, past participle of *cognoscere*, to learn, recognize; see **cognition**.]

in·con·tro·vert·i·ble (n-kntr-vûrt-bl, nkn-) *adj.* Impossible to dispute; unquestionable.
—**in·con·tro·verti·bili·ty** *n.* —**in·con·tro·verti·bly** *adv.*

in·cul·cate (n-klkt, nkl-) *tr.v.* **-cat·ed, -cat·ing, -cates** **1.** To impress (something) upon the mind of another by frequent instruction or repetition; instill: *inculcating sound principles*. **2.** To teach (others) by frequent instruction or repetition; indoctrinate. [Latin *inculcre*, *inculct-*, to force upon : *in-*, on; see **in-** 2 + *calcre*, to trample (< *calx*, *calc-*, heel).]
—**in·cul·cation** *n.* —**in·culcator** *n.*

in·fra·struc·ture (nfr-strkchr) *n.* **1.** An underlying base or foundation, esp. for an

organization or a system. **2.** The basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society, such as transportation and communications systems.

in·ter·po·late (n-tûrp-lt) *v.* **-lat·ed, -lat·ing, -lates** — *tr.* **1.** To insert or introduce between other elements or parts. **2a.** To insert (material) into a text. **b.** To insert into a conversation. **3.** To change or falsify (a text) with new or incorrect material. **4.**

Mathematics To estimate a value of (a function or series) between two known values. — *intr.* To make insertions or additions. [Latin *interpolre, interpolt-*, to touch up, refurbish < *interpolis*, refurbished; see *pel-* **2** in App.] — **in·terpo·lation** *n.* — **in·terpo·lative** *adj.* — **in·terpo·lator** *n.*

i·ro·ny (r-n, r-) *n., pl. -nies* **1a.** The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning. **b.** An expression or utterance marked by irony. **c.** A literary style employing irony for humorous or rhetorical effect. **2a.** Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs. **b.** An occurrence, result, or circumstance notable for such incongruity. See Usage Note at **ironic**. **3.** Dramatic irony. **4.** Socratic irony. [French *ironie* < Old French < Latin *rna* < Greek *eirneia*, feigned ignorance < *eirn*, dissembler probably < *eirein*, to say; see *wer-* **1** in App.]

je·june (j-jn) *adj.* **1.** Not interesting; dull. **2.** Lacking maturity; childish. **3.** Lacking in nutrition. [From Latin *iinus*, meager, dry, fasting.] — **je·junely** *adv.* — **je·juneness** *n.*

ki·net·ic (k-ntk, k-) *adj.* **1.** Of, relating to, or produced by motion. **2.** Relating to or exhibiting kinesis. [Greek *kntikos* < *kntos*, moving < *knein*, to move; see *kei-* **2** in App.] — **ki·neti·cal·ly** *adv.*

kow·tow (kou-tou, koutou) *intr.v.* **-towed, -tow·ing, -tows** **1.** To kneel and touch the forehead to the ground in expression of deep respect, worship, or submission, as formerly done in China. **2.** To show servile deference. § *n.* **1.** The act of kneeling and touching the forehead to the ground. **2.** An obsequious act. [From Chinese (Mandarin) *kòu tóu*, a kowtow : *kòu*, to knock + *tóu*, head.]

lais·sez faire also **lais·ser faire** (ls fâr, lz) *n.* **1.** An economic doctrine that opposes governmental regulation of or interference in commerce. **2.** Noninterference in the affairs of others. [French : *laissez*, let + *faire*, to do.] — **laissez-faire** *adj.*

lex·i·con (lks-kn) *n., pl. -cons or -ca* (-k) **1.** A dictionary. **2.** A stock of terms used in a particular profession, subject, or style; a vocabulary. **3.** *Linguistics* The morphemes of a language considered as a group. [Medieval Latin < Greek *lexikon* (*biblion*), word(book), neuter of *lexikos*, of words < *lexis*, word < *legein*, to speak; see *leg-* in App.]

lo·qua·cious (l-kwshs) *adj.* Very talkative; garrulous. [< Latin *loqux, loquc-* < *loqu*, to speak.] — **lo·quacious·ly** *adv.* — **lo·quacious·ness, lo·quaci·ty** (l-kws-t) *n.*

lu·gu·bri·ous (l-gbr-s, -gy-) *adj.* Mournful, dismal, or gloomy, esp. to an exaggerated or ludicrous degree. [From Latin *lgubris* < *lgre*, to mourn.] —**lu·gubri·ous·ly** *adv.*
—**lu·gubri·ous·ness** *n.*

M - R

met·a·mor·pho·sis (mt-môrf-ss) *n., pl. -ses (-sz)* **1.** A transformation, as by magic or sorcery. **2.** A marked change in appearance, character, condition, or function. **3.** *Biology* Change in the form and often habits of an animal during normal development after the embryonic stage. **4.** *Pathology* A usu. degenerative change in the structure of a particular body tissue. [Latin *metamorphosis* < Greek < *metamorphoun*, to transform : *meta-*, meta- + *morph*, form.]

mi·to·sis (m-tss) *n., pl. -ses (-sz)* *Biology* **1.** The process in cell division by which the nucleus divides, normally resulting in two new nuclei, each of which contains a complete copy of the parental chromosomes. **2.** The entire process of cell division including division of the nucleus and the cytoplasm. [Greek *mitos*, warp thread + *-osis*.] —**mi·totic** (-ttk) *adj.*
—**mi·toti·cal·ly** *adv.*

moi·e·ty (moi-t) *n., pl. -ties* **1.** A half. **2.** A part, portion, or share. **3.** Either of two kinship groups based on unilateral descent that together make up a tribe or society. [Middle English *moite* < Old French *meitiet*, *moitie* < Late Latin *mediets* < Latin middle < *medius*, middle; see *medhyo-* in App.]

nan·o·tech·nol·o·gy (nn-tk-nl-j) *n.* The science and technology of building electronic circuits and devices from individual atoms and molecules. —**nano·tech·nolo·gist** *n.*

ni·hil·ism (n-lzm, n-) *n.* **1.** *Philosophy* **a.** An extreme form of skepticism that denies all existence. **b.** A doctrine holding that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. **2.** Rejection of all distinctions in moral or religious value and a willingness to repudiate all previous theories of morality or religious belief. **3.** The belief that destruction of existing political or social institutions is necessary for future improvement. **4.** also >**Nihilism** A movement of mid 19th-century Russia that believed in radical societal and governmental change through terrorism and assassination. **5.** *Psychology* A delusion that the world or one's mind, body, or self does not exist. [Latin *nihil*, nothing; see *ne* in App. + *-ism*.] —**nihil·ist** *n.* —**nihil·istic** *adj.* —**nihil·isti·cal·ly** *adv.*

no·men·cla·ture (nmn-klchr, n-mnkl-) *n.* **1.** A system of names used in an art or science. **2.** The procedure of assigning names to organisms listed in a taxonomic classification. [Latin *nmencltra* < *nmencltor*, nomenclator; see **nomenclator**.]

non·sec·tar·i·an (nnsk-târ-n) *adj.* Not limited to or associated with a particular religious

denomination. —**nonsec·tari·an·ism** *n.*

no·ta·rize (nt-rz) *tr.v.* **-rized, -riz·ing, -riz·es** To certify or attest to (the validity of a signature on a document, for example) as a notary public. —**nota·ri·zation** (-r-zshn) *n.*

ob·se·qui·ous (b-skw-s, b-) *adj.* Full of or exhibiting servile compliance; fawning. [Middle English < Latin *obsequisus* < *obsequium*, compliance < *obsequ*, to comply : *ob-*, to; see **ob-** + *sequ*, to follow; see **sekw-** 1 in App.] —**ob·sequi·ous·ly** *adv.* —**ob·sequi·ous·ness** *n.*

ol·i·gar·chy (l-gärk, l-) *n., pl. -chies* **1a.** Government by a few, esp. by a small faction of persons or families. **b.** Those making up such a government. **2.** A state governed by an oligarchy. —**oli·garchic, oli·garchi·cal** *adj.*

om·nip·o·tent (m-np-tnt) *adj.* Having unlimited or universal power, authority, or force. See Usage Note at **infinite**.§ *n.* **1.** One who is omnipotent. **2. Omnipotent** God. Used with *the*. [Middle English < Old French < Latin *omnipotns, omnipotent-* : *omni-*, omni- + *potns*, present participle of *posse*, to be able; see **poti-** in App.] —**om·nipo·tence, om·nipo·ten·cy** *n.* —**om·nipo·tent·ly** *adv.*

or·thog·ra·phy (ôr-thgr-f) *n., pl. -phies* **1.** The art or study of standard spelling. **2.** The aspect of language study concerned with letters and spelling. **3.** A method of representing a language or the sounds of language by written symbols; spelling. —**or·thogra·pher, or·thogra·phist** *n.*

ox·i·dize (ks-dz) *v.* **-dized, -diz·ing, -diz·es** — *tr.* **1.** To combine with oxygen; make into an oxide. **2.** To increase the positive charge or valence of (an element) by removing electrons. **3.** To coat with oxide. — *intr.* To become oxidized. —**oxi·diza·ble** *adj.* —**oxi·di·zation** (-d-zshn) *n.*

pa·rab·o·la (p-rb-l) *n.* A plane curve formed by the intersection of a right circular cone and a plane parallel to an element of the cone or by the locus of points equidistant from a fixed line and a fixed point not on the line. [New Latin < Greek *parabol*, comparison, application, parabola (< the relationship between the line joining the vertices of a conic and the line through its focus and parallel to its directrix) < *paraballein*, to compare; see **parable**.]

par·a·digm (pr-dm, -dm) *n.* **1.** One that serves as pattern or model. **2.** A set or list of all the inflectional forms of a word or of one of its grammatical categories. **3.** A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, esp. in an intellectual discipline. [Middle English example < Late Latin *paradigma* < Greek *paradeigma* < *paradeiknunai*, to compare : *para-*, alongside; see **para-** 1 + *deiknunai*, to show; see **deik-** in App.]

pa·ram·e·ter (p-rm-tr) *n.* **1. Mathematics a.** A constant in an equation that varies in other equations of the same general form, esp. in the equation of a curve or surface that can be

varied to represent a family of curves or surfaces. **b.** One of a set of independent variables that express the coordinates of a point. **2a.** One of a set of measurable factors, such as temperature, that define a system and determine its behavior and are varied in an experiment. **b.** A factor that restricts what is possible or what results. **c.** A factor that determines a range of variations; a boundary. **3. Statistics** A quantity, such as a mean, that is calculated from data and describes a population. **4.** A distinguishing characteristic or feature. [New Latin *parametrum*, a line through the focus and parallel to the directrix of a conic : Greek *para-*, beside; see **para-** 1 + Greek *metron*, measure; see **-meter.**] —**para·metric** (pr-mtrk), **para·metri·cal** *adj.* —**para·metri·cal·ly** *adv.*

pe·cu·ni·ar·y (p-kyn-r) *adj.* **1.** Of or relating to money. **2.** Requiring payment of money. [Latin *pecnirius* < *pecnia*, wealth; see *peku-* in App.]

pho·to·syn·the·sis (ft-snth-ss) *n.* The process by which green plants and certain other organisms synthesize carbohydrates from carbon dioxide and water using light as an energy source and usu. releasing oxygen as a byproduct. —**photo·synthe·size** (-sz) *v.* —**photo·syn·thetic** (-sn-thtk) *adj.* —**photo·syn·theti·cal·ly** *adv.*

pla·gia·rize (plj-rz) *v.* **-rized, -riz·ing, -riz·es** — *tr.* **1.** To use and pass off (the ideas or writings of another) as one's own. **2.** To appropriate for use as one's own passages or ideas from (another). — *intr.* To plagiarize the ideas or words of another. —**plagia·rizer** *n.*

plas·ma (plzm) also **plasm** (plzm) *n.* **1a.** The clear yellowish fluid portion of blood, lymph, or intramuscular fluid in which cells are suspended. **b.** Blood plasma. **2. Medicine** Cell-free sterilized blood plasma, used in transfusions. **3.** Protoplasm or cytoplasm. **4.** The fluid portion of milk from which the curd is separated by coagulation; whey. **5. Physics** A highly ionized gas containing nearly equal numbers of positive ions and electrons. [New Latin < Late Latin image, figure < Greek < *plassein*, to mold; see *pel-* 2 in App.] —**plas·matic** (plz-mtk), **plasmic** (-mk) *adj.*

pol·y·mer (pl-mr) *n.* Any of numerous natural or synthetic compounds of usu. high molecular weight consisting of repeated linked units, each a relatively light and simple molecule. [Greek *polumers*, consisting of many parts : *polu-*, poly- + *meros*, part.]

pre·cipi·tous (pr-sp-ts) *adj.* **1.** Resembling a precipice; extremely steep. See Syns at **steep** 1. **2.** Having several precipices: *a precipitous bluff*. **3. Usage Problem** Extremely rapid or abrupt; precipitate. See Usage Note at **precipitate**. [Probably < obsolete *precipitious* < Latin *praecipitium*, precipice; see **precipice.**] —**pre·cipi·tous·ly** *adv.* —**pre·cipi·tous·ness** *n.*

qua·sar (kwzär, -sär, -zr, -sr) *n.* An extremely distant celestial object whose power output is thousands of times that of our entire galaxy. [*quas(i-stellar)* + (st)ar.]

quo·tid·i·an (kw-td-n) *adj.* **1.** Everyday; commonplace. **2.** Recurring daily. Used esp. of attacks of malaria. [Middle English *cotidien* < Old French < Latin *quotidinus* < *quodi*, each day

: *quot*, how many, as many as; see *kwo-* in App. + *di*, ablative of *dis*, day; see *dyeu-* in App.]

re·ca·pit·u·late (rk-pch-lt) *v.* **-lat·ed, -lat·ing, -lates** — *tr.* **1.** To repeat in concise form. **2.** *Biology* To appear to repeat (the evolutionary stages of the species) during the embryonic development of the individual organism. — *intr.* To make a summary. [Latin *recapitulre, recapitult-*: *re-*, *re-* + *capitulum*, main point, heading diminutive of *caput*, *capit-*, head; see *kaput-* in App.] — **re·ca·pitu·lative, re·ca·pitu·la·tory** (-l-tôr, -tr) *adj.*

re·cip·ro·cal (r-spr-kl) *adj.* **1.** Concerning each of two or more persons or things. **2.** Interchanged, given, or owed to each other: *a reciprocal invitation*. **3.** Performed, experienced, or felt by both sides: *reciprocal respect*. **4.** Interchangeable; complementary: *reciprocal electric outlets*. **5.** *Grammar* Expressing mutual action or relationship. Used of some verbs and compound pronouns. **6.** *Mathematics* Of or relating to the reciprocal of a quantity. **7.** *Physiology* Of or relating to a neuromuscular phenomenon in which the inhibition of one group of muscles accompanies the excitation of another. **8.** *Genetics* Of or being a pair of crosses in which the male or female parent in one cross is of the same genotype or phenotype as the complementary female or male parent in the other cross. § *n.* **1.** Something that is reciprocal to something else. **2.** *Mathematics* A number related to another so that when multiplied together their product is 1. For example, the reciprocal of 7 is 1/7. [From Latin *reciprocus*, alternating; see *per 1* in App.] — **re·cipro·cali·ty** (-kl-t), **re·cipro·cal·ness** (-kl-ns) *n.* — **re·cipro·cal·ly** *adv.*

rep·a·ra·tion (rp-rshn) *n.* **1.** The act or process of repairing or the condition of being repaired. **2.** The act or process of making amends; expiation. **3.** Something done or paid to compensate or make amends. **4. reparations** Compensation or remuneration required from a defeated nation as indemnity for damage or injury during a war. [Middle English *reparacion* < Old French < Late Latin *reparti, repartin-*, restoration < Latin *repartus*, past participle of *reparre*, to repair; see **repair 1**.]

res·pi·ra·tion (rsp-rshn) *n.* **1a.** The act or process of inhaling and exhaling; breathing. **b.** The act or process by which an organism without lungs, such as a plant, exchanges gases with its environment. **2a.** The oxidative process in living cells by which the chemical energy of organic molecules is released in metabolic steps involving the consumption of oxygen and the liberation of carbon dioxide and water. **b.** Any of various analogous metabolic processes by which certain organisms, such as fungi, obtain energy from organic molecules. — **respi·ration·al** *adj.*

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san·guine (snggwn) *adj.* **1a.** Of the color of blood; red. **b.** Of a healthy reddish color; ruddy: *a sanguine complexion*. **2. Archaic a.** In medieval physiology, having blood as the dominant humor. **b.** Having the temperament and ruddy complexion once thought to be

characteristic of this humor; passionate. **3.** Cheerfully confident; optimistic. [Middle English < Old French *sanguin* < Latin *sanguineus* < *sanguis*, *sanguin-*, blood.] —**sanguine·ly** *adv.* —**sanguine·ness**, **san·guini·ty** *n.*

so·lil·o·quy (s-ll-kw) *n.*, *pl.* **-quies** **1a.** A dramatic or literary form of discourse in which a character reveals his or her thoughts when alone or unaware of the presence of other characters. **b.** A specific speech or piece of writing in this form of discourse. **2.** The act of speaking to oneself. [Late Latin *sililoquium* : Latin *slus*, alone; see s(w)e- in App. + Latin *loqu*, to speak.] —**so·lilo·quist** (-kwst), **so·lilo·quizer** (-kwzr) *n.* —**so·lilo·quize** (-kwz) *v.*

sub·ju·gate (sbj-gt) *tr.v.* **-gat·ed**, **-gat·ing**, **-gates** **1.** To bring under control; conquer. See Syns at **defeat**. **2.** To make subservient; enslave. [Middle English *subjugaten* < Latin *subiugre*, *subiugt-* : *sub-*, sub- + *iugum*, yoke; see yeug- in App.] —**subju·gation** *n.* —**subju·gator** *n.*

suf·fra·gist (sfr-jst) *n.* An advocate of the extension of political voting rights, esp. to women. —**suffra·gism** *n.*

su·per·cil·i·ous (spr-sl-s) *adj.* Feeling or showing haughty disdain. See Syns at **proud**. [Latin *superciliosus* < *supercilium*, eyebrow, pride : *super-*, super- + *cilium*, lower eyelid; see kel- in App.] —**super·cili·ous·ly** *adv.* —**super·cili·ous·ness** *n.*

tau·tol·o·gy (tô-tl-j) *n.*, *pl.* **-gies** **1a.** Needless repetition of the same sense in different words; redundancy. **b.** An instance of such repetition. **2.** *Logic* An empty statement composed of simpler statements in a fashion that makes it logically true whether the simpler statements are factually true or false; for example, *Either we'll go or we'll stay*. [Late Latin *tautologia* < Greek *tautologi* < *tautologos*, redundant : *tauto-*, *tauto-* + *logos*, saying; see **-logy**.] —**tauto·logi·cal** (tôtl-j-kl), **tauto·logic** (-k) *adj.* —**tauto·logi·cal·ly** *adv.*

tax·on·o·my (tk-sn-m) *n.*, *pl.* **-mies** **1.** The classification of organisms in an ordered system that indicates natural relationships. **2.** The science, laws, or principles of classification; systematics. **3.** Division into ordered groups or categories. [French *taxonomie* : Greek *taxis*, arrangement; see **taxis** + *-nomie*, method (< Greek *-nomi*, ; see **-nomy**.)] —**tax·ono·mist** *n.*

tec·ton·ic (tk-tnk) *adj.* **1.** *Geology* Relating to, causing, or resulting from structural deformation of the earth's crust. **2a.** Relating to construction or building. **b.** Architectural. [Late Latin *tectonicus* < Greek *tektonikos* < *tektn*, builder.] —**tec·toni·cal·ly** *adv.*

tem·pes·tu·ous (tm-psch-s) *adj.* **1.** Of, relating to, or resembling a tempest. **2.** Tumultuous; stormy: *a tempestuous relationship*. [Middle English < Late Latin *tempestuosus* < *tempests*, tempest variant of *tempests*, ; see **tempest**.] —**tem·pestu·ous·ly** *adv.*

ther·mo·dy·nam·ics (thûrm-d-nmks) *n.* **1.** (*used with a sing. verb*) The branch of physics that deals with the relationships and conversions between heat and other forms of energy. **2.** (*used with a pl. verb*) Thermodynamic phenomena and processes.

to·tal·i·tar·i·an (t-tl-târ-n) *adj.* Of, being, or imposing a form of government in which the political authority exercises absolute and centralized control over all aspects of life. § *n.* A practitioner or supporter of such a government. [total + (author)itarian.]
—**to·tali·tari·an·ism** *n.*

unc·tu·ous (ngkch-s) *adj.* **1.** Characterized by affected, exaggerated, or insincere earnestness. **2.** Having the quality or characteristics of oil or ointment; slippery. **3.** Containing or composed of oil or fat. **4.** Abundant in organic materials; soft and rich: *unctuous soil*. [Middle English < Old French *unctueus* < Medieval Latin *nctusus* < Latin *nctum*, ointment < neuter past participle of *unguere*, to anoint.] —**unctu·ous·ly** *adv.*
—**unctu·ous·ness**, **unctu·osi·ty** (-s-t) *n.*

u·surp (y-sûrp, -zûrp) *v.* **-surped, -surp·ing, -surps** — *tr.* **1.** To seize and hold (the power or rights of another, for example) by force and without legal authority. **2.** To take over or occupy without right: *usurp land*. — *intr.* To seize another's place, authority, or possession wrongfully. [Middle English *usurpen* < Old French *usurper* < Latin *srpre*, to take into use, usurp; see reup- in App.] —**u·surper** *n.* —**u·surp·ing·ly** *adv.*

vac·u·ous (vky-s) *adj.* **1.** Devoid of matter; empty. **2a.** Lacking intelligence; stupid. **b.** Devoid of substance or meaning; inane: *a vacuous comment*. **c.** Devoid of expression; vacant. **3.** Lacking serious purpose or occupation; idle. [From Latin *vacuus*, empty; see **vacuum**.] —**vacu·ous·ly** *adv.* —**vacu·ous·ness** *n.*

ve·he·ment (v-mnt) *adj.* **1.** Forceful or intense in expression, emotion, or conviction; fervid. **2.** Vigorous or energetic; strong: *a vehement storm*. [Middle English < Old French < Latin *vehemns*, *vehement-*, perh. < *vehere*, to carry; see wegh- in App.] —**vehe·mence**, **vehe·men·cy** *n.* —**vehe·ment·ly** *adv.*

vor·tex (vôrtk) *n.*, *pl.* **-tex·es** or **-ti·ces** (-t-sz) **1.** A spiral motion of fluid within a limited area, esp. a whirling mass of water or air that sucks everything near it toward its center. **2.** A place or situation regarded as drawing into its center all that surrounds it. [Latin *vortex*, *vortic-* variant of *vertex* < *vertere*, to turn; see wer- 2 in App.]

win·now (wn) *v.* **-nowed, -now·ing, -nows** — *tr.* **1a.** To separate the chaff from (grain) by means of a current of air. **b.** To rid of undesirable parts. **2.** To blow (chaff) off or away. **3.** To blow away; scatter. **4.** To blow on; fan: *A breeze winnowed the grass*. **5.** To examine closely in order to separate the good from the bad; sift. **6a.** To separate or get rid of (an undesirable part); eliminate: *winnowing out errors*. **b.** To sort or select (a desirable part);

extract. — *intr.* **1.** To separate grain from chaff. **2.** To separate the good from the bad. § *n.* **1.** A device for winnowing grain. **2.** An act of winnowing. [Middle English *winnewen*, alteration of *windwen* < Old English *windwian* < *wind*, wind; see **wind 1.**] — **winnow·er** *n.*

wrought (rôt) *v.* A past tense and a past participle of **work**. § *adj.* **1.** Put together; created: *a carefully wrought plan*. **2.** Shaped by hammering with tools. Used chiefly of metals or metalwork. **3.** Made delicately or elaborately. [Middle English *wroght* < Old English *geworht*, past participle of *wyrcan*, to work; see *werg-* in App.]

xen·o·phobe (zn-fb, zn-) *n.* A person unduly fearful or contemptuous of that which is foreign, esp. of strangers or foreign peoples. — **xeno·phobi·a** *n.* — **xeno·phobic** *adj.*

yeo·man (ymn) *n.* **1a.** An attendant, servant, or lesser official in a royal or noble household. **b.** A yeoman of the guard. **2.** A petty officer performing chiefly clerical duties in the US Navy. **3.** An assistant or other subordinate, as of a sheriff. **4.** A diligent, dependable worker. **5.** A farmer who cultivates his own land, esp. a member of a former class of small freeholders in England. [Middle English *yoman*, perh. < Old English **gaman* < Old Frisian *gman*, villager : *g*, region, district *man*, man; see *man-* **1** in App.]

zig·gu·rat (zg-rt) *n.* A temple tower of the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians, having the form of a terraced pyramid of successively receding stories. [Akkadian *ziqurratu*, temple tower < *zaqru*, to build high.]