

# Go Down in History

Let bingos with **INTERESTING WORD HISTORIES** go down on your board. Etymologies adapted from etymonline.com compiled by Jacob Cohen, Asheville Scrabble Club

## Etymology 7s

**ACREAGE**    **AACEEGR**    area in acres [n -S]

**ACRE**- Old English *æcer* "tilled field, open land," from Proto-Germanic *\*akraz* "field, pasture" (source also of Old Norse *akr*, Old Saxon *akkar*, Old Frisian *ekker*, Middle Dutch *acker*, Dutch *akker*, Old High German *achar*, German *acker*, Gothic *akrs* "field").

"[O]riginally 'open country, untenanted land, forest'; ... then, with advance in the agricultural state, pasture land, tilled land, an enclosed or defined piece of land" [OED]. In English at first without reference to dimension; in late Old English the amount of land a yoke of oxen could plow in a day, afterward defined by statute 13c. and later as a piece 40 poles by 4, or an equivalent shape [OED cites 5 Edw. I, 31 Edw. III, 24 Hen. VIII]. The older sense is retained in *God's acre* "churchyard." Adopted early in Old French and Medieval Latin, hence the Modern English spelling, which by normal development would be *\*aker* (compare *baker* from Old English *bæcere*).

**AGONIZE**    **AEGINOZ**    to suffer [v -D, -ZING, -S] ~ also **AGONISE** / -D, -SING, -S

1580s, "to torture" (trans.), from Middle French *agoniser* (14c.) or directly from Medieval Latin *agonizare* "to labor, strive, contend," also "be at the point of death," from Greek *agonizesthai* "contend in the struggle, contend for victory or a prize" (in reference to physical combat, stage competitions, lawsuits), from *agonia* "a struggle for victory," originally "a struggle for victory in the games". Intransitive sense of "suffer extreme physical pain" is recorded from 1660s; mental sense of "to worry intensely" is from 1853.

**ALLERGY**    **AEGLLRY**    state of hypersensitive reaction to certain things [n -GIES]

1911, from German *Allergie*, coined 1906 by Austrian pediatrician Clemens E. von Pirquet (1874-1929) as an abstract noun from Greek *allos* "other, different, strange" "beyond") + *ergon* "activity."

**ALMSMAN**    **AALMMNS**    one who receives alms (money or goods given to poor) [n -MEN]

"charitable relief of the poor," especially as a religious duty, also "that which is given to relieve the poor or needy," Old English *ælmesse* "almsgiving, act of relieving the needy," from Proto-Germanic *\*alamosna* (source also of Old Saxon *alamosna*, Old High German *alamuosan*, Old Norse *ölmusa*), an early borrowing of Vulgar Latin *\*alimosyna* (source of Old Spanish *almosna*, Old French *almosne*, Italian *limosina*).

This was a variant of Church Latin *eleemosyna* (Tertullian, 3c.), from Greek *eleemosyne* "pity, mercy," in Ecclesiastical Greek "charity, alms," from *eleemon* "compassionate," from *eleos* "pity, mercy," which is of unknown origin and perhaps imitates cries of pleading. Spelling perversion in Vulgar Latin is perhaps by influence of *alimonia*.

**AMALGAM**    **AAAGLMM**    alloy of mercury with another metal [n -S]

c. 1400, "a blend of mercury with another metal; soft mass formed by chemical manipulation," from Old French *amalgame* or directly from Medieval Latin *amalgama*, "alloy of mercury (especially with gold or silver)," c. 1300, an alchemists' word, probably from Arabic *al-malgham* "an emollient poultice or unguent for sores (especially warm)" [Francis Johnson, "A Dictionary of Persian, Arabic, and English"], which is itself perhaps from Greek *malagma* "softening substance," from *malassein* "to soften," from *malakos* "soft". Figurative meaning "compound of different things" is from 1790.

**AMMONIA**    **AAIMMNO**    pungent gas [n -S]

volatile alkali, colorless gas with a strong pungent smell, 1799, coined in scientific Latin 1782 by Swedish chemist Torbern Bergman as a name for the gas obtained from *sal ammoniac*, salt deposits containing ammonium chloride found near temple of Jupiter *Ammon* (from Egyptian God *Amun*) in Libya. The shrine was ancient already in Augustus' day, and the salts were prepared "from the sands where the camels waited while their masters prayed for good omens" [Shipley], hence the mineral deposits. Also known as *spirit of hartshorn* and *volatile alkali* or *animal alkali*.

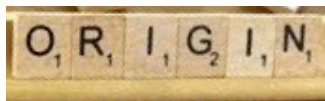
**ANALOGY**    **AAGLNOY**    resemblance in some respects between things otherwise unlike [n -GIES]

early 15c., "correspondence, proportion," from Old French *analogie* or directly from Latin *analogia*, from Greek *analogia* "proportion," from *ana* "upon, according to" + *logos* "ratio," also "word, speech, reckoning," with derivatives meaning "to speak (to 'pick out words')."

A mathematical term given a wider sense by Plato. Meaning "partial agreement, likeness or proportion between things" is from 1540s. In logic, "an argument from the similarity of things in some ways inferring their similarity in others," c. 1600.

**ANDROID**    **ADDINOR**    synthetic man [n -S]

"automaton resembling a human being in form and movement," 1837, in early use often in reference to automated chess players, from Modern Latin *androides* (itself attested as a Latin word in English from 1727), from Greek *andro-* "man" + *-eides* "form, shape". Greek *andros* meant "like a man, manly;" compare also Greek *andrias* "image of a man, statue." Listed as "rare" in OED 1st edition (1879), popularized from c. 1950 by science fiction writers.



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**ANSWERS** AENRSSW **ANSWER**, to say, act, or write in return [v -ED, -ING, -S]

Old English *andswaru* "a response, a reply to a question," from *and-* "against" (from PIE root \*ant- "front, forehead," with derivatives meaning "in front of, before") + *-swaru* "affirmation," from *swerian* "to swear" suggesting an original sense of "sworn statement rebutting a charge." Meaning "solution of a problem" is from c. 1300.

It is remarkable that the Latin expression for answer is formed in exactly the same way from a verb *spondere*, signifying to engage for, to assure. [Wedgwood]

A common Germanic compound (cognates: Old Saxon *antswor*, Old Norse *andsvar*, Old Frisian *ondser*, Danish and Swedish *ansvar*), implying a Proto-Germanic \**andswara-*. The simpler idea of "a word in reply" is expressed in Gothic *andavaurd*, German *Antwort*.

**ANTHEMS** AEHMNST **ANTHEM**, to praise in song [v -ED, -ING, -S]

Old English *ontemn*, *antefn*, "a composition (in prose or verse) sung in alternate parts," from Late Latin *antefana*, from Greek *antiphona* "verse response".

The sense evolved to "a composition (usually from Scripture) set to sacred music" (late 14c.), then "song of praise or gladness" (1590s). It came to be used in reference to the English national song (technically, as OED points out, a hymn) and extended to those of other nations. Modern spelling is from late 16c., perhaps an attempt to make the word look more Greek.

**APOLOGY** AGLOOPY **expression of regret of some error or offense** [n -GIES]

early 15c., "defense, justification," from Late Latin *apologia*, from Greek *apologia* "a speech in defense," from *apologeisthai* "to speak in one's defense," from *apologos* "an account, story," from *apo* "away from, off" + *logos* "speech".

In classical Greek, "a well-reasoned reply; a 'thought-out response' to the accusations made," as that of Socrates. The original English sense of "self-justification" yielded a meaning "frank expression of regret for wrong done," first recorded 1590s, but this was not the main sense until 18c. Johnson's dictionary defines it as "Defence; excuse," and adds, "*Apology* generally signifies rather excuse than vindication, and tends rather to extenuate the fault, than prove innocence," which might indicate the path of the sense shift. The old sense has tended to shift to the Latin form *apologia* (1784), known from early Christian writings in defense of the faith.

**APROPOS** AOOPPRS **relevant** [adj]

1660s, "opportunely," from French *à propos* "to the purpose," from *propos* "thing said in conversation, talk; purpose, plan," from Latin *propositium* "purpose," past participle of *proponere* "to set forth, propose" Meaning "as regards, with reference to" (with *of*) is 1761, from French. As an adjective, "to the point or purpose," from 1690s.

**ARSENAL** AAELNRS **collection or supply of weapons** [n -S]

c. 1500, "dockyard, dock with naval stores," from Italian *arsenale*, from Arabic *dar as-sina'ah* "workshop," literally "house of manufacture," from *dar* "house" + *sina'ah* "art, craft, skill," from *sana'a* "he made."

Applied by the Venetians to a large wharf in their city, which was the earliest reference of the English word. Sense of "public place for making or storing weapons and ammunition" is from 1570s. The London football club (1886) was named for the *Royal Arsenal*, Woolwich, where the original players worked.

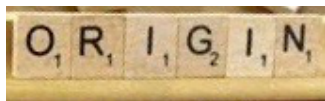
**ASPIRIN** AIINPRS **pain reliever** [n -S]

coined 1899 in German as a trademark name by German chemist Heinrich Dreser, from Latin *Spiraea* (*ulmaria*) "meadow-sweet," the plant in whose flowers or leaves the processed acid in the medicine is naturally found, + common chemical ending *-in Spiraea* (Tournefort, 1700) is from Latinized form of Greek *speiraia* "meadow-sweet," so called from the shape of its follicles. The initial *-a-* is to acknowledge acetylation; Dreser said the word was a contraction of *acetylierte spirsäure*, the German name of the acid, which now is obsolete, replaced by *salicylic acid*.

**ASTOUND** ADNOSTU **to amaze** [v -ED, -ING, -S]

mid-15c., from Middle English *astounded*, *astoned* (c. 1300), past participle of *astonen*, *astonien* "to stun", with more of the original sense of Vulgar Latin \**extonare*. The unusual form is perhaps because the past participle was so much more common it came to be taken for the infinitive, or/and by the same pattern which produced *round* (v.) from *round* (adj.), or by the intrusion of an unetymological *-d* as in *sound* (n.1).

**ATHLETE** AEEHLTT **one skilled in feats of physical strength and agility** [n -S]



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early 15c., from Latin *athleta* "a wrestler, athlete, combatant in public games," from Greek *athletes* "prizefighter, contestant in the games," agent noun from *athlein* "to contest for a prize," related to *athlos* "a contest" and *athlon* "a prize," which is of unknown origin.

Until mid-18c. usually in Latin form. In this sense, Old English had *plegmann* "play-man." Meaning "Anyone trained in exercises of agility and strength" is from 1827. *Athlete's foot* first recorded 1928, for an ailment that has been around much longer.

**AVATARS**    **AAARSTV**    **AVARAR**, incarnation of Hindu deity [n]

1784, "descent of a Hindu deity to earth in an incarnate or tangible form," from Sanskrit *avatarana* "descent" (of a deity to the earth in incarnate form), from *ava-* "off, down" + base of *tarati* "(he) crosses over," "cross over, pass through, overcome."

Meaning "concrete embodiment of something abstract" is from 1815. In computer use, it seems to trace to the novel "Snowcrash" (1992) by Neal Stephenson.

**BALANCE**    **AABCELN**    to weigh (to determine weight of) [v -D, -CING, -S]

early 13c., "scales, apparatus for weighing by comparison of mass," from Old French *balance* "balance, scales for weighing" (12c.), also in figurative sense; from Medieval Latin *bilancia*, from Late Latin *bilanx*, from Latin (*libra*) *bilanx* "(scale) having two pans," possibly from Latin *bis* "twice" + *lanx* "dish, plate, scale of a balance," which is of uncertain origin.

The accounting sense "arithmetical difference between the two sides of an account" is from 1580s; meaning "sum necessary to balance the two sides of an account" is from 1620s. Meaning "what remains or is left over" is by 1788, originally in commercial slang. Sense of "physical equipoise" is from 1660s; the meaning "general harmony between parts" is from 1732.

Many figurative uses are from Middle English image of the scales in the hands of personified Justice, Fortune, Fate, etc.; thus *in (the) balance* "at risk, in jeopardy or danger" (c. 1300). *Balance of power* in the geopolitical sense "distribution of forces among nations so that one may not dominate another" is from 1701. *Balance of trade* "difference between the value of exports from a country and the value of imports into it" is from 1660s.

**BARBERS**    **ABBERRS**    **BARBER**, to cut hair [v -ED, -ING, -S]

"one whose occupation is to shave the beard and cut and dress the hair," c. 1300, from Anglo-French *barbour* (attested as a surname from early 13c.), from Old French *barbeor*, *barbieor* (13c., Modern French *barbier*, which has a more restricted sense than the English word), from Vulgar Latin *\*barbatorem*, from Latin *barba* "beard". Originally, also regular practitioners of minor surgery, they were restricted to hair-cutting, blood-letting, and dentistry under Henry VIII. The *barber's pole* (1680s) is in imitation of the ribbon used to bind the arm of one who has been bled.

**BASKETS**    **ABEKSST**    **BASKET**, wooden container [n]

early 13c., from Anglo-French *bascat*; of obscure origin despite much speculation. On one theory, it is from Latin *bascauda* "kettle, table-vessel," said by the Roman poet Martial to be from Celtic British and perhaps cognate with Latin *fascis* "bundle, faggot," in which case it probably originally meant "wicker basket." But OED frowns on this, and there is no evidence of such a word in Celtic unless later words in Irish and Welsh, sometimes counted as borrowings from English, are original. As "a goal in the game of basketball," 1892; as "a score in basketball," by 1898.

**BAYONET**    **ABENOTY**    to stab with dagger-like weapon [v -ED, -ING, -S or -TTED, -TTING, -S]

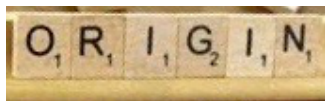
1610s, originally a type of flat dagger; as a soldiers' steel stabbing weapon fitted to the muzzle of a firearm, from 1670s, from French *baionnette* (16c.), said to be from *Bayonne*, city in Gascony where supposedly they first were made; or perhaps it is a diminutive of Old French *bayon* "crossbow bolt." The city name is from Late Latin *baia* "bay" (which was borrowed into Basque from Spanish) + Basque *on* "good." As a verb from c. 1700.

**BAZOOKA**    **AABKOOZ**    small rocket launcher [n -S]

"metal tube rocket launcher," 1942, from name of a junkyard musical instrument used (c. 1935) as a prop by U.S. comedian Bob Burns (1896-1956); the word is an extension of *bazoo*, a slang term for "mouth" or "boastful talk" (1877), which is probably from Dutch *bazuin* "trumpet."

**BLABBER**    **ABBELR**    to blab (to talk idly) [v -ED, -ING, -S]

mid-14c., "to speak as an infant speaks," frequentative of *blabben*, of echoic origin (compare Old Norse *blabbra*, Danish *blabbre* "babble," German *plappern* "to babble"). Meaning "to talk excessively" is from late 14c.



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**BLOSSOM**    **BLMOOSS**    to bloom [v -ED, -ING, -S]

c. 1200, from Old English *blostm*, *blostma* "a flower of a plant," from Proto-Germanic *\*blo-s-* (source also of Middle Low German *blosom*, Dutch *bloesem*, German *Blust*.) This is the native word, now largely superseded by bloom (n.1) from Old Norse and flower (n.) from French.

**BLUNDER**    **BDELNRU**    to make mistake [v -ED, -ING, -S]

mid-14c., "to stumble about blindly," from a Scandinavian source akin to Old Norse *blundra* "shut one's eyes," perhaps from Proto-Germanic *\*blinda-* "blind". Meaning "make a stupid mistake" is first recorded 1711.

**BROTHER**    **BEHORRT**    male sibling [n -S]

Old English *broþor*, from Proto-Germanic *\*brothar* (source also of Old Norse *broðir*, Danish *broder*, Old Frisian *brother*, Dutch *broeder*, Old High German *bruodar*, German *Bruder*, Gothic *bróþar*), from PIE root *\*bhrater-*.

A stable word across the Indo-European languages (Sanskrit *bhrátár-*, Greek *phratér*, Latin *frater*, etc.). Hungarian *barát* is from Slavic; Turkish *birader* is from Persian.

In the few cases where other words provide the sense, it is where the cognate of *brother* had been applied widely to "member of a fraternity," or as an appellation of a monk (Italian *fra*, Portuguese *frade*, Old French *frere*), or where there was need to distinguish "son of the same mother" from "son of the same father." For example Greek *adelphos*, which probably originally was an adjective with *phrater* and meant, specifically, "brother of the womb" or "brother by blood," and became the main word as *phrater* became "one of the same tribe." Spanish *hermano* "brother" is from Latin *germanus* "full brother" (on both the father's and mother's side); Middle English also had *brother-german* in this sense.

Meaning "male person in relation to any other person of the same ancestry" in English is from late 14c. Sense of "member of a mendicant order" is from c. 1500. As a familiar term of address from one man to another, it is attested from 1912 in U.S. slang; the specific use among blacks is recorded from 1973.

**BUGABOO**    **ABBGOUU**    bugbear (object or source of dread) [n -S]

"something to frighten a child, fancied object of terror," 1843, earlier *buggybow* (1740), probably an alteration of bugbear (also see bug (n.)), but connected by Chapman ["Dictionary of American Slang"] with *Bugibu*, demon in the Old French poem "*Aliscans*" from 1141, which is perhaps of Celtic origin (compare Cornish *bucca-boo*, from *bucca* "bogle, goblin").

**BULWARK**    **ABKLRUW**    to fortify with defensive wall [v -ED, -ING, -S]

early 15c., "a fortification outside a city wall or gate; a rampart, barricade," from Middle Dutch *bulwerke* or Middle High German *bolwerc*, probably [Skeat] from *bole* "plank, tree trunk" (from Proto-Germanic *\*bul-* + *werc* "work", Thus "bole-work," a construction of logs. Figurative sense "means of defense or security" is from mid-15c. A doublet of boulevard.

**CARAMEL**    **AACELMR**    chewy candy [n -S]

1725, "burnt sugar," from French *caramel* "burnt sugar" (17c.), from Old Spanish *caramel* (modern *caramelo*), which is of uncertain origin, probably ultimately from Medieval Latin *cannamellis*, which is traditionally from Latin *canna* + *mellis*, genitive of *mel* "honey". But some give the Medieval Latin word an Arabic origin, or trace it to Latin *calamus* "reed, cane."

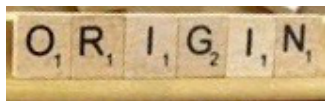
The word was being used by 1884 of a dark-colored creamy candy and by 1909 as a color-name.

**CHARADE**    **AACDEHR**    word represented by pantomime [n -S]

1776, from French *charade* (18c.), probably from Provençal *charrado* "long talk, chatter," which is of obscure origin, perhaps from *charrar* "to chatter, gossip," of echoic origin. Compare Italian *ciarlare*, Spanish *charlar* "to talk, prattle." The thing itself was originally a verse word-play based on enigmatic descriptions of the words or syllables according to particular rules.

As we have ever made it a Rule to shew our Attention to the Reader, by 'catching the Manners living, as they rise,' as Mr. Pope expresses it, we think ourselves obliged to give Place to the following Specimens of a new Kind of SMALL WIT, which, for some Weeks past, has been the Subject of Conversation in almost every Society, from the Court to the Cottage. The CHARADE is, in fact, a near Relation of the old Rebus. It is usually formed from a Word of two Syllables; the first Syllable is described by the Writer; then the second; they are afterwards united and the whole Word marked out .... [supplement to "The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure," volumes 58-59, 1776]

The silent charade, the main modern form of the game, was at first a variant known as *dumb charades* that adhered to the old pattern, and the performing team acted out all the parts in order before the audience team began to guess.



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There is one species of charade which is performed solely by "dumb motions," somewhat resembling the child's game of "trades and professions"; but the acting charade is a much more amusing, and more difficult matter. ["Goldoni, and Modern Italian Comedy," in "The Foreign And Colonial Quarterly Review," Volume 6, 1846]

An 1850 book, "Acting Charades," reports that *Charades en Action* were all the rage in French society, and that "Lately, the game has been introduced into the drawing-rooms of a few mirth-loving Englishmen. Its success has been tremendous." Welsh *siarad* obviously is a loan-word from French or English, but its meaning of "speak, a talk" is closer to the Provençal original.

## COCKNEY CCEKNOY resident of East End of London [n -S]

"native or permanent resident of London," specifically the City of London, more precisely one born or living "within the sound of Bow-Bell". c. 1600, usually said to be from Middle English *cokenei*, *cokeney* "spoiled child, milksop" (late 14c.), originally *cokene-ey* "cock's egg" (mid-14c.). The most likely disentangling of the etymology is to start from Old English *cocena* "cock's egg" -- genitive plural of *coc* "cock" + *æg* "egg" -- medieval term for "runt of a clutch" (as though "egg laid by a cock"), extended derisively c. 1520s to "town dweller," gradually narrowing thereafter to residents of a particular neighborhood in the East End of London. Liberman, however, disagrees: *Cockney*, 'cock's egg,' a rare and seemingly obsolete word in Middle English, was, in all likelihood, not the etymon of ME *cokeney* 'milksop, simpleton; effeminate man; Londoner,' which is rather a reshaping of [Old French] *acoquiné* 'spoiled' (participle). However, this derivation poses some phonetic problems that have not been resolved.

The characteristic accent so called from 1890, but the speech peculiarities were noted from 17c. As an adjective in this sense, from 1630s.

## CRIPPLE CEILPPR to disable or impair [v -D, -LING, -S]

Old English *crýpel*, "one who creeps, halts, or limps, one partly or wholly deprived of the use of one or more limbs," related to *crýppan* "to crook, bend," from Proto-Germanic *\*krupilaz* (source also of Old Frisian *kreppel*, Middle Dutch *cropele*, German *krüppel*, Old Norse *kryppill*). Possibly also related to Old English *creopan* "to creep" (*creopere*, literally "creeper," was another Old English word for "crippled person").

In place-names in Middle English, *cripple* meant "a low opening, a burrow, a den" (such as one must bend or creep to enter), a sense perhaps preserved in the U.S. use of *cripple* for "a dense thicket or swampy low-land" (1670s).

## CRYPTIC CCIPTY mysterious [adj]

1630s, "hidden, occult, mystical," from Late Latin *crypticus*, from Greek *kryptikos* "fit for concealing," from *kryptos* "hidden". Meaning "mysterious, enigmatic" is attested by 1920.

## DEMAGOG ADEGGMO to behave like demagog (leader who appeals to emotions and prejudices) [v -ED, -ING, -S]

1640s, "an unprincipled popular orator or leader; one who seeks to obtain political power by pandering to the prejudices, wishes, ignorance, and passions of the people or a part of them," ultimately from Greek *demagogos* "popular leader," also "leader of the mob," from *dēmos* "people, common people," from root *\*da-* "to divide") + *agogos* "leader," from *agein* "to lead" (from PIE root *\*ag-* "to drive, draw out or forth, move").

In a historical sense from 1650s, "a leader of the masses in an ancient city or state, one who sways the people by oratory or persuasion." Often a term of disparagement since the time of its first use (in Athens, 5c. B.C.E.). Form perhaps influenced by French *démagogue* (mid-14c.).

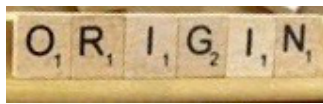
Indeed, since the term *demagogos* explicitly denotes someone who leads or shepherds the demos, the eventual use of this word as the primary epithet for a political panderer represents a virtual reversal of its original meaning. The word *demagogos* in fact implies that the people need someone to lead them and that political power, at least in part, is exercised appropriately through this leadership. [Loren J. Samons II, "What's Wrong With Democracy," University of California Press, 2004]

## DENIZEN DEEINNZ to make citizen of [v -ED, -ING, -S]

early 15c., "a citizen, a dweller, an inhabitant," especially "legally established inhabitant of a city or borough, a citizen as distinguished from a non-resident native or a foreigner," from Anglo-French *deinzein*, *denzein*, (Old French *deinzein*) "one within" (the privileges of a city franchise; opposed to *forein* "one without"), from *deinz* "within, inside," from Late Latin *deintus*, from *de-* "from" + *intus* "within".

Historically, an alien admitted to certain rights of citizenship in a country; a naturalized citizen (but ineligible to public office). Formerly also an adjective, "within the city franchise, having certain rights and privileges of citizenship" (late 15c.).





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**DESSERT**    **DEERSST**    something served as last course of meal [n -S]

"a service of fruits and sweets at the close of a meal," c. 1600, from Middle French *dessert* (mid-16c.) "last course," literally "removal of what has been served," from *desservir* "clear the table," literally "un-serve," from *des-* "remove, undo" + Old French *servir* "to serve". *Dessert-wine* is from 1733; *dessert-spoon* from 1776.

**DÉTENTE**    **DEEENTT**    easing of international tensions [n -S]

1908 as a political term, "an easing of hostility or tensions between countries," a borrowing of French *détente* "loosening, slackening" (used in the Middle Ages for the catch of a crossbow), from Vulgar Latin *\*detendita*, fem. past participle of Latin *detendere* "loosen, release," from *de* "from, away" + *tendere* "stretch." The reference is to a "relaxing" in a political situation.

Treated as a French word in English until mid-20c. The French word was earlier borrowed as *detent* (1680s) "catch which regulates the strike in a clock" (a French extended use of the word in its secondary sense "catch of a crossbow," which releases the tension in the string and discharges the bolt).

**ECSTASY**    **ACESSTY**    state of exaltation [n -SIES]

late 14c., *extasie* "elation," from Old French *estaise* "ecstasy, rapture," from Late Latin *extasis*, from Greek *ekstasis* "entrancement, astonishment, insanity; any displacement or removal from the proper place," in New Testament "a trance," from *existanai* "displace, put out of place," also "drive out of one's mind" (*existanai phrenon*), from *ek* "out" + *histanai* "to place, cause to stand."

Used by 17c. mystical writers for "a state of rapture that stupefied the body while the soul contemplated divine things," which probably helped the meaning shift to "exalted state of good feeling" (1610s). Slang use for the drug 3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine dates from 1985. Formerly also spelled *ecstasie*, *extacy*, *extasy*, etc. Attempts to coin a verb to go with it include *ecstasy* (1620s), *ecstatize* (1650s), *ecstasiate* (1823), *ecstasize* (1830).

**EDUCATE**    **ACDEETU**    to teach [v -D, -TING, -S]

mid-15c., *educaten*, "bring up (children), to train," from Latin *educatus*, past participle of *educare* "bring up, rear, educate" (source also of Italian *educare*, Spanish *educar*, French *éduquer*), which is a frequentative of or otherwise related to *educere* "bring out, lead forth," from *ex-* "out" + *ducere* "to lead." Meaning "provide schooling" is first attested 1580s.

According to "Century Dictionary," *educere*, of a child, is "usually with reference to bodily nurture or support, while *educare* refers more frequently to the mind," and, "There is no authority for the common statement that the primary sense of *education* is to 'draw out or unfold the powers of the mind.'"

**EPITOME**    **EEIMOPT**    typical or ideal example [n -S]

1520s, "an abstract; brief statement of the chief points of some writing," from Middle French *épitomé* (16c.), from Latin *epitome* "an abridgment," from Greek *epitome* "an abridgment, a cutting on the surface; brief summary," from *epitemnein* "cut short, abridge," from *epi* "into" + *temnein* "to cut". Sense of "person or thing that typifies something" is first recorded c. 1600.

**ESCROWS**    **CEROSW**    ESCROW, to place in custody of third party [v -ED, -ING, -S]

1590s, from Anglo-French *escrowe*, from Old French *escroe* "scrap, small piece, rag, tatter, single parchment," from a Germanic source akin to Old High German *scrot* "a scrap, shred, a piece cut off". Originally a deed delivered to a third person until a future condition is satisfied, which led to sense of "deposit held in trust or security" (1888).

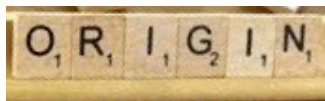
**FANFARE**    **AAEFFNR**    short, lively musical flourish [n -S]

c. 1600, "a flourish sounded on a trumpet or bugle," from French *fanfare* "a sounding of trumpets" (16c.), from *fanfarer* "blow a fanfare" (16c.), perhaps echoic, or perhaps borrowed (with Spanish *fanfarron* "braggart," and Italian *fanfano* "babbler") from Arabic *farfar* "chatterer," of imitative origin. French *fanfaron* also came into English 1670s with a sense "boastful."

**FANTASY**    **AAFNSTY**    to imagine [v -SIED, -ING, -SIES]

early 14c., "illusory appearance," from Old French *fantaisie*, *phantasie* "vision, imagination" (14c.), from Latin *phantasia*, from Greek *phantasia* "power of imagination; appearance, image, perception," from *phantazesthai* "picture to oneself," from *phantos* "visible," from *phainesthai* "appear," in late Greek "to imagine, have visions," related to *phaos*, *phos* "light," *phainein* "to show, to bring to light".

Sense of "whimsical notion, illusion" is pre-1400, followed by that of "fantastic imagination," which is first attested 1530s. Sense of "day-dream based on desires" is from 1926. In early use in English also *fantasie*, *phantasy*, etc. As the name of a fiction genre, from 1949.



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## FATHERS AEFHRST FATHER, to cause to exist [v]

Old English *fæder* "he who begets a child, nearest male ancestor;" also "any lineal male ancestor; the Supreme Being," and by late Old English, "one who exercises parental care over another," from Proto-Germanic *\*fader* (source also of Old Saxon *fadar*, Old Frisian *feder*, Dutch *vader*, Old Norse *faðir*, Old High German *fatar*, German *vater*; in Gothic usually expressed by *atta*), from PIE *\*pāter-* "father" (source also of Sanskrit *pitar-*, Greek *pater*, Latin *pater*, Old Persian *pita*, Old Irish *athir* "father"), presumably from baby-speak sound "pa." The ending formerly was regarded as an agent-noun affix. My heart leaps up when I behold

The classic example of Grimm's Law reflects widespread phonetic shift in Middle English that turned *-der* to *-ther* in many words, perhaps reinforced in this case by Old Norse forms; spelling caught up to pronunciation in 1500s (compare mother (n.), weather (n.), hither, gather). As a title of various Church dignitaries from c. 1300; meaning "creator, inventor, author" is from mid-14c.; that of "anything that gives rise to something else" is from late 14c. As a respectful title for an older man, recorded from 1550s. *Father-figure* is from 1954. *Fathers* "leading men, elders" is from 1580s.

## FATHOMS AFHMOST FATHOM, to understand [v]

Old English *fæðmian* "to embrace, surround, envelop," from a Proto-Germanic verb derived from the source of fathom (n.); cognates: Old High German *fademon*, Old Norse *faþma*. The meaning "take soundings" is from c. 1600; its figurative sense of "get to the bottom of, penetrate with the mind, understand" is from 1620s.

## FLANNEL AEFLLNN to cover with flannel (softy fabric) [v -ED, -ING, -S or -LLED, -LLING, -S]

"warm, loosely woven woolen stuff," c. 1300, *flanneol*, probably related to Middle English *flanen* "sackcloth" (c. 1400); by Skeat and others traced to Welsh *gwlanen* "woolen cloth," from *gwlan* "wool," from Celtic *\*wlana*, from PIE *\*wele-* (1) "wool". "As flannel was already in the 16th c. a well-known production of Wales, a Welsh origin for the word seems antecedently likely" [OED].

The Welsh origin is not a universally accepted etymology, due to the sound changes involved; Barnhart, Gamillscheg, Diez suggest the English word is from an Anglo-French diminutive of Old French *flaine* "a kind of coarse wool." Modern French *flanelle* is a 17c. borrowing from English.

## FRANTIC ACFINRT wildly excited [adj]

mid-14c., "insane," unexplained variant of Middle English *frentik*. Compare, *franzy*, dialectal form of *frenzy*. Transferred meaning "affected by wild excitement" is from late 15c. Of the adverbial forms, *frantically* (1749) is later than *frantically* (1540s).

## GAINSAY AAGINSY to deny [v -SAID, -ING, -S]

"contradict, deny, dispute," c. 1300, literally "say against," from *gain-* (Old English *gegn-* "against;" + *say* (v.). In Middle English it translates Latin *contradicere*. "Solitary survival of a once common prefix" [Weekley]. It also figured in such now-obsolete compounds as *gain-taking* "taking back again," *gainclap* "a counterstroke," *gainbuy* "redeem," *Gaincoming* "Second Advent," and *gainstand* "to oppose."

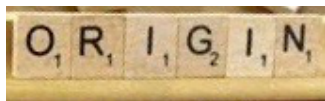
## GERUNDS DEGNRSU GERUND, verbal noun [n]

1510s, from Late Latin *gerundium* (also *gerundivus modus*), from Latin *gerundum* "to be carried out," gerundive of *gerere* "to bear, carry". In Latin, a verbal noun used for all cases of the infinitive but the nominative; applied in English to verbal nouns in *-ing*. "So called because according to the old grammarians, the gerund prop[erly] expressed the doing or the necessity of doing something" [Century Dictionary]. *Gerund-grinder* "instructor in Latin grammar," also "pedant," is from 1710.

## GIGOLOS GGILOOS GIGOLO, man supportedly financially by woman [n]

"professional male escort or dancing partner, young man supported financially by an older woman in exchange for his attentions," 1922, from French *gigolo*, formed as a masc. of *gigole* "tall, thin woman; dancing girl; prostitute," perhaps from verb *gigoter* "to move the shanks, hop," from *gigue* "shank" (12c.), also "fiddle," Old French *giga* from Frankish *\*giga-* or some other Germanic word (compare German *Geige* "fiddle"). This is perhaps the same word that was borrowed earlier as Middle English *giglot* (early 14c.) "lewd, wanton girl," which was later applied to males (mid-15c.) with the sense "villainous man." It is perhaps related to a number of words in Germanic meaning "dance, gambol," and "fiddle," perhaps connected by the notion of "rapid, whirling motion". Middle English *giglety* meant "lasciviousness, harlotry" (late 14c.). Naturally, no decent French girl would have been allowed for a single moment to dance with a gigolo. But America, touring Europe like mad after years of enforced absence, outnumbered all other nations at travel ten to one. [Edna Ferber, "Gigolo," 1922]

## GIMMICK CGIKMM provide with gimmick (novel or tricky feature) [v -ED, -ING, -S]



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1910, American English, perhaps an alteration of *gimcrack*, or an anagram of *magic*.

In a hotel at Muscatine, Iowa, the other day I twisted the gimmick attached to the radiator, with the intention of having some heat in my Nova Zemlan booth. ["Domestic Engineering," January 8, 1910]

**GIZZARD**    **ADGIRZZ**    digestive organ [n -S]

"stomach of a bird," late 14c., from Old French *gisier* "entrails, giblets (of a bird)" (13c., Modern French *gésier*), probably from Vulgar Latin *\*gicerium*, a dissimilation of Latin *gigeria* (neuter plural) "cooked entrails of a fowl," a delicacy in ancient Rome, from. The unetymological *-d* was added 1500s (perhaps on analogy of *-ard* words). Later extended to other animals, and, jocularly, to human beings (1660s).

**GOBLINS**    **BGILNOS**    **GOBLIN**, evil or mischievous creature [n]

early 14c., "a devil, incubus, mischievous and ugly fairy," from Norman French *gobelin* (12c., as Medieval Latin *Gobelinus*, the name of a spirit haunting the region of Evreux, in chronicle of Ordericus Vitalis), of uncertain origin; said to be unrelated to German *kobold*, or from Medieval Latin *cabalus*, from Greek *kobalos* "impudent rogue, knave," *kobaloi* "wicked spirits invoked by rogues," of unknown origin. Another suggestion is that it is a diminutive of the proper name *Gobel*. Though French *gobelin* was not recorded until almost 250 years after appearance of the English term, it is mentioned in the Medieval Latin text of the 1100's, and few people who believed in folk magic used Medieval Latin. [Barnhart] Thou schalt not drede of an arowe flynge in the dai, of a gobelyn goyng in derknessis [Psalms xci.5 in the later Wycliffe Bible, late 14c.]

**GRAMMAR**    **AAGMMRR**    study of formal features of language [n -S]

late 14c., "Latin grammar, rules of Latin," from Old French *gramaire* "grammar; learning," especially Latin and philology, also "(magic) incantation, spells, mumbo-jumbo" (12c., Modern French *grammaire*), an "irregular semi-popular adoption" [OED] of Latin *grammatica* "grammar, philology," perhaps via an unrecorded Medieval Latin form *\*grammaria*. The classical Latin word is from Greek *grammatike* (*tekhnē*) "(art) of letters," referring both to philology and to literature in the broadest sense, fem. of *grammatikos* (adj.) "pertaining to or versed in letters or learning," from *gramma* "letter" .An Old English gloss of it was *stæfcræft* .

A much broader word in Latin and Greek; restriction of the meaning to "systematic account of the rules and usages of language" is a post-classical development. Until 16c. limited to Latin; in reference to English usage by late 16c., thence "rules of a language to which speakers and writers must conform" (1580s). Meaning "a treatise on grammar" is from 1520s. For the "magic" sense, compare gramary. The sense evolution is characteristic of the Dark Ages: "learning in general, knowledge peculiar to the learned classes," which included astrology and magic; hence the secondary meaning of "occult knowledge" (late 15c. in English), which evolved in Scottish into glamour.

A *grammar-school* (late 14c.) originally was a school for learning Latin, which was begun by memorizing the grammar. In U.S. (1842) the term was put to use in the graded system for a school between primary and secondary where English grammar is one of the subjects taught. The word is attested earlier in surnames (late 12c.) such as Robertus *Gramaticus*, Richard *le Gramarie*, whence the modern surname *Grammar*.

**HALCYON**    **ACHLNOY**    mythical bird [n -S]

"calm, quiet, peaceful," 1540s, in *halcyon dayes* (translating Latin *alcyonei dies*, Greek *alkyonides hemerai*), 14 days of calm weather at the winter solstice, when a mythical bird (also identified with the kingfisher) was said to breed in a nest floating on calm seas. The name of this fabulous bird is attested in Middle English as *alcion* (late 14c.).

The name is from Latin *halcyon*, *alcyon*, from Greek *halkyon*, variant (perhaps a misspelling) of *alkyon* "kingfisher," a word of unknown origin. The explanation that this is from *hals* "sea; salt" + *kyon* "conceiving," present participle of *kyein* "to conceive," literally "to swell" probably is ancient folk-etymology to explain a loan-word from a non-Indo-European language. Identified in mythology with *Halcyone*, daughter of Aeolus, who when widowed threw herself into the sea and became a kingfisher.

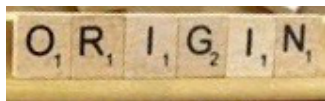
**HATCHET**    **ACEHHTT**    small ax [n -S]

c. 1300 (mid-12c. in surnames), "small axe with a short handle," designed to be used by one hand, from Old French *hachete* "small combat-axe, hatchet," diminutive of *hache* "axe, battle-axe, pickaxe," possibly from Frankish *\*happja* or some other Germanic source, from Proto-Germanic *\*hapjo-* (source also of Old High German *happa* "sickle, scythe").

This is perhaps from PIE root *\*kop-* "to beat, strike" (source also of Greek *kopis* "knife," *koptein* "to strike, smite," *komma* "piece cut off;" Lithuanian *kaplys* "hatchet," *kapti*, *kapiu* "to hew, fell;" Old Church Slavonic *skopiti* "castrate," Russian *kopat'* "to hack, hew, dig;" Albanian *kep* "to hew").

*Hatchet-face* in reference to one with sharp and prominent features is from 1650s. In Middle English, *hatch* itself was used in a sense "battle-axe." In 14c., *hang up (one's) hatchet* meant "stop what one is doing." Phrase *bury the hatchet* "lay aside





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instruments of war, forget injuries and make peace" (1754) is from a Native American peacemaking custom described from 1680. *Hatchet-man* was originally California slang for "hired Chinese assassin" (1880), later extended figuratively to journalists who attacked the reputation of a public figure (1944).

**HEYDAYS ADEHSYY HEYDAY**, period of one's greatest success [n] ~ also **HEYDEY /-S**  
also *hey-day*, late 16c. as an exclamation, an alteration of *heyda* (1520s), an exclamation of playfulness, cheerfulness, or surprise something like Modern English *hurrah*; apparently it is an extended form of the Middle English interjection *hey* or *hei*. Compare Dutch *heidaar*, German *heida*, Danish *heida*. Modern sense of "stage of greatest vigor" first recorded 1751 (perhaps from a notion that the word was *high-day*), and it altered the spelling.

**HOBNOBS BBHNOOS HOBNOB**, to associate in friendly way [v]  
1763, "to drink to each other," from *hob and nob* (1756) "to toast each other by turns, to buy alternate rounds of drinks," alteration of *hab nab* "to have or have not, hit or miss" (c. 1550), which is probably ultimately from Old English *habban*, *nabban* "have, not have," (that is, "to take or not take," used later as an invitation to drinking), with the negative particle *ne-* attached; Modern sense of "socialize" is 1866.

**HOODLUM DHLMOOU thug** [n -S]  
popularized 1871, American English, (identified throughout the 1870s as "a California word") "young street rowdy, loafer," especially one involved in violence against Chinese immigrants, "young criminal, gangster;" it appears to have been in use locally from a slightly earlier date and may have begun as a specific name of a gang:  
The police have recently been investigating the proceedings of a gang of thieving boys who denominate themselves and are known to the world as the Hoodlum Gang. [San Francisco "Golden Era" newspaper, Feb. 16, 1868, p.4]

Of unknown origin, though newspapers of the day printed myriad fanciful stories concocted to account for it. A guess perhaps better than average is that it is from German dialectal (Bavarian) *Huddellump* "ragamuffin" [Barnhart].  
What the derivation of the word "hoodlum" is we could never satisfactorily ascertain, though several derivations have been proposed; and it would appear that the word has not been very many years in use. But, however obscure the word may be, there is nothing mysterious about the thing; .... [Walter M. Fisher, "The Californians," London, 1876]

**HOSTILE EHILOST unfriendly person** [n -S]  
late 15c., from Middle French *hostile* "of or belonging to an enemy" (15c.) or directly from Latin *hostilis* "of an enemy, belonging to or characteristic of the enemy; inimical," from *hostis*, in earlier use "a stranger, foreigner," in classical use "an enem." The noun meaning "hostile person" is recorded from 1838, American English, a word from the Indian wars.

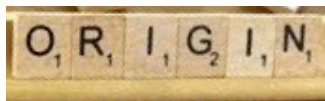
**JARGONS AGJNORS JARGON**, to speak or write obscure and often pretentious kind of language [v]  
mid-14c., "unintelligible talk, gibberish; chattering, jabbering," from Old French *jargon* "a chattering" (of birds), also "language, speech," especially "idle talk; thieves' Latin" (12c.). Ultimately of echoic origin (compare Latin *garrere* "to chatter").

From 1640s as "mixed speech, pigin;" 1650s as "phraseology peculiar to a sect or profession," hence "mode of speech full of unfamiliar terms." Middle English also had it as a verb, *jargounen* "to chatter" (late 14c.), from French.

**KITCHEN CEHIKNT room where food is cooked** [n -S]  
"room in which food is cooked, part of a building fitted out for cooking," c. 1200, from Old English *cycene* "kitchen," from Proto-Germanic *\*kokina* (source also of Middle Dutch *cökene*, Old High German *chuhhina*, German *Küche*, Danish *kjøkken*), probably borrowed from Vulgar Latin *\*cocina* (source also of French *cuisine*, Spanish *cocina*), a variant of Latin *coquina* "kitchen," from fem. of *coquius* "of cooks," from *coquus* "cook," from *coquere* "to cook."

The Old English word might be directly from Vulgar Latin. *Kitchen cabinet* "informal but powerful set of advisers" is American English slang, 1832, originally in reference to President Andrew Jackson, whose intimate friends were supposed to have more influence with him than his official advisers. *Kitchen midden* (1863) in archaeology translates Danish *kjøkken mødding*. Surname *Kitchener* ("one employed in or supervising a (monastic) kitchen") is from early 14c.

**LACKEYS ACEKLSY LACKEY**, to act in servile manner [v -ED, -ING, -S] ~ also **LAQUEY /-ED, -ING, -S**  
**LACKEY** [n]- 1520s, "footman, running footman, valet," from Middle French *laquais* "foot soldier, footman, servant" (15c.), a word of unknown origin; perhaps from Old Provençal *lacai*, from *lecai* "glutton, covetous," from *lecar* "to lick." The alternative etymology is that it comes via Old French *laquay*, from Catalan *alacay*, from Arabic *al-qadi* "the judge." Yet another guess traces it through Spanish *lacayo*, from Italian *lacchè*, from Modern Greek *oulakes*, from Turkish *ulak* "runner, courier." This suits the original sense better, but OED says Italian *lacchè* is from French. Sense of "servile follower" appeared 1580s. As a political term of abuse it dates from 1939 in communist jargon.



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**LANYARD**    **AADLNRY**    fastening rope on ship [n -S] ~ also LANIARD /-S

"small rope or cord used aboard ships," alternative spelling (influenced by nautical *yard* (2) "long beam used to support a sail") of Middle English *lainer*, "thong for fastening parts of armor or clothing" (late 14c.), from Old French *laniere* "thong, lash, strap of leather," from *lasniere* (12c., from *lasne* "strap, thong"), apparently altered (by metathesis and influence of Old French *las* "lace") from *nasliere* (*nasle*), from Frankish *\*nastila* or some other Germanic source, from Proto-Germanic *\*nastila-* (source also of Old High German, Old Saxon *nestila* "lace, strap, band," German *nestel* "string, lace, strap").

**LEARNER**    **AEELNRR**    one that learns (to gain knowledge by experience, instruction, or study) [n -S]

Old English *leornian* "to get knowledge, be cultivated; study, read, think about," from Proto-Germanic *\*lisnojanan* (cognates: Old Frisian *lernia*, Middle Dutch *leeren*, Dutch *leren*, Old High German *lernen*, German *lernen* "to learn," Gothic *lais* "I know"), with a base sense of "to follow or find the track." It is related to German *Gleis* "track," and to Old English *læst* "sole of the foot".

From c. 1200 as "to hear of, ascertain." Transitive use (*He learned me (how) to read*), now considered vulgar (except in reflexive expressions, *I learn English*), was acceptable from c. 1200 until early 19c. It is preserved in past-participle adjective *learned* "having knowledge gained by study." Old English also had *læran* "to teach".

**MESSIAH**    **AEHIMSS**    expected liberator [n -S]

c. 1300, *Messias*, a designation of Jesus as the savior of the world, from Late Latin *Messias*, from Greek *Messias*, from Aramaic (Semitic) *meshiha* and Hebrew *mashiah* "the anointed" (of the Lord), from *mashah* "anoint." It is thus the Hebrew equivalent of *Christ*, and it is the word rendered in Septuagint as Greek *Khristos*.

In Old Testament prophetic writing, it was used as a descriptive title of an expected deliverer of the Jewish nation. The modern English form represents an attempt to make the word look more Hebrew, and dates from the Geneva Bible (1560). Transferred sense of "an expected liberator or savior of a captive people" is attested from 1660s.

**MIRRORS**    **IMORRRS**    MIRROR, to reflect image of [v]

mid-13c., *mirour*, "polished surface (of metal, coated glass, etc.) used to reflect images of objects," especially the face of a person, from Old French *miroir* "a reflecting glass, looking glass; observation, model, example," earlier *miradoir* (11c.), from *mira* "look at" (oneself in a mirror), "observe, watch, contemplate," from Vulgar Latin *\*mirare* "to look at," variant of Latin *mirari* "to wonder at, admire".

The Spanish cognate, *mirador* (from *mirar* "to look, look at, behold"), has come to mean "watch tower, gallery commanding an extensive view." Latin *speculum* "mirror" (or its Medieval Latin variant *speglum*) is the source of words for "mirror" in neighboring languages: Italian *specchio*, Spanish *espejo*, Old High German *spiegel*, German *Spiegel*, Dutch *spiegel*, Danish *spejl*, Swedish *spegel*. An ancient Germanic group of words for "mirror" is represented by Gothic *skuggwa*, Old Norse *skuggsja*, Old High German *scucar*, which are related to Old English *scua* "shade, shadow."

Words for 'mirror' are mostly from verbs for 'look', with a few words for 'shadow' or other sources. The common use of the word for the material 'glass' in the sense of 'mirror' seems to be peculiar to English. [Carl Darling Buck, "A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages," 1949]

Figurative use, "that in or by which anything is shown or exemplified," hence "a model (of good or virtuous conduct)" is attested from c. 1300. Mirrors have been used in divination since classical and biblical times, and according to folklorists, in modern England they are the subject of at least 14 known superstitions. Belief that breaking one brings bad luck is attested from 1777. *Mirror image* "something identical to another but having right and left reversed" is by 1864. *Mirror ball* attested from 1968. To *look in (the) mirror* in the figurative sense of "examine oneself" is by early 15c.

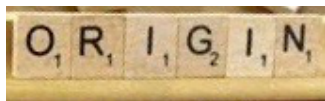
**MONIKER**    **EIKMNOR**    name [n -S] ~ also MONICKER /-S

"person's name, especially a nickname or alias," 1849, said to be originally a hobo term (but *monekeer* is attested in London underclass from 1851), of uncertain origin; perhaps from *monk* (monks and nuns take new names with their vows, and early 19c. British tramps referred to themselves as "in the monkery"). Its origins seem always to have been obscure: Sir H. Rawlinson can decipher cuneiform, but can he tell us why "moniker"--the word has a certain Coptic or Egyptian twang--means a name painted on a trunk? ["The Saturday Review," Dec. 19, 1857]

Watkins speculates from Old Irish *ainm* "name."

**MOTHERS**    **EHMORST**    MOTHER, to give birth to [v]

"female parent, a woman in relation to her child," Middle English *moder*, from Old English *modor*, from Proto-Germanic *\*mōdēr* (source also of Old Saxon *modar*, Old Frisian *moder*, Old Norse *moðir*, Danish *moder*, Dutch *moeder*, Old High German *muoter*, German *Mutter*), from PIE *\*mater-* "mother" (source also of Latin *māter*, Old Irish *mathir*, Lithuanian *motė*, Sanskrit *matar-*, Greek *mētēr*, Old Church Slavonic *mati*), "[b]ased ultimately on the baby-talk form *\*mā-*



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(2); with the kinship term suffix *\*-ter-* [Watkins]. Spelling with *-th-* dates from early 16c., though that pronunciation is probably older.

Sense of "that which has given birth to anything" is from late Old English; as a familiar term of address to an elderly woman, especially of the lower class, by c. 1200.

**NANKEEN**    **AEEKNNN**    cotton fabric [n -S]

kind of cotton cloth, originally usually yellow, 1755, from Nanking, China, where it originally was made. Also "trousers or breeches made of nankeen" (1806).

**NAPALMS**    **AALMNPS**    to assault with type of incendiary bomb [v]

1942, from *naphthenic* + *palmitic*, names of the two acids used in manufacture of the chemical thickening agent. It was used especially in mixture with gasoline to make a kind of inflammable jelly used in flame-throwers, incendiary bombs, etc. The verb, "to destroy with napalm," is by 1950, from the noun.

**NEBBISH**    **BBEHINS**    meek person [n -ES]

"ineffectual or hapless person," 1905, *nebbich*, from Yiddish (used as a Yiddish word in American English from 1890s), from a Slavic source akin to Czech *neboh* "poor, unfortunate," literally "un-endowed.

**NIMRODS**    **DIMNORS**    **NIMROD**, hunter [n]

"great hunter," 1712, a reference to the biblical son of Cush, referred to (Genesis x.8-9) as "a mighty hunter before the Lord." In Middle English he was *Nembrot* (mid-13c.), founder of cities and builder of the tower of Babel. In 16c.-17c. his name was synonymous with "a tyrant." The word came to mean "geek, klutz" by 1983 in teenager slang, for unknown reasons. (Amateur theories include its occasional use in "Bugs Bunny" cartoon episodes featuring rabbit-hunting Elmer Fudd as a foil; its alleged ironic use, among hunters, for a clumsy member of their fraternity; or a stereotype of deer hunters by the non-hunting population in the U.S.)

**NUDNIKS**    **DIKNNSU**    **NUDNIK**, annoying person [n] ~ also **NUDNICK** /-S

"a bore, irritating person," 1947, from Yiddish, with agential suffix *-nik* + Polish *nuda* "boredom" or Russian *nudnyi* "tedious, boring," from Old Church Slavonic *\*nauda-*, from *\*nauti-* "need"

**NUMBLES**    **BELMNSU**    animal entrails [n] ~ also **NOMBLES**

"edible viscera of animals, entrails of a deer," c. 1300, *noumbles*, from Old French *nombles* "loin of veal, fillet of beef, haunch of venison," from Latin *lumulus*, diminutive of *lumbus* "loin"

**OMERTAS**    **AEMORST**    **OMERTA**, code of silence about criminal activity [n]

Mafia code of obedience to the leader and silence about the organization and its business, 1909, from Italian *omertà*, a dialectal form of *umilta* "humility," in reference to submission of individuals to the group interest, from Latin *humilitas* "lowness, small stature; insignificance; baseness, littleness of mind," in Church Latin "meekness," from *humilis* "lowly, humble," literally "on the ground," from *humus* "earth."

**PARVENU**    **AENPRUV**    one who has suddenly risen above his class ~ also **PARVENUE** /-S

"upstart," 1802, from French *parvenu*, "said of an obscure person who has made a great fortune" (Littré); noun use of past participle of *parvenir* "to arrive" (12c.), from Latin *pervenire* "to come up, arrive, attain," from *per-* "through" + *venire* "to come".

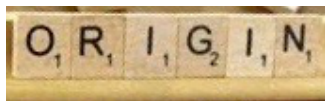
**PEEWEEES**    **EEEEPSW**    **PEEWEE**, unusually small person or thing [n]

1877, "small, tiny, for children," a dialect word, possibly a varied reduplication of *wee*. Attested earlier (1848) as a noun meaning "a small marble." (Baseball Hall-of-Famer Harold "Peevee" Reese got his nickname because he was a marbles champion before he became a Dodgers shortstop.) As a type of bird (variously applied on different continents) it is attested from 1886, imitative of a bird cry.

**PHATTER**    **AEHPRTT**    **PHAT**, excellent [adj]

hip-hop slang, "great, excellent," 1992, originating perhaps in the late 1980s and meaning at first "sexiness in a woman." The word itself is presumably a variant of *fat* in one of its slang senses, with the kind of off-beat spelling preferred in street slang. The spelling is attested as far back as 1678, as an erroneous form of *fat*. This spelling is said by some to be an acronym, and supposed originals are offered: "pretty hot and tasty," or "pretty hips and thighs" among them, all unconvincing. These, too, may have been innovations given as explanations to women who felt insulted by the word.

**PHOEBES**    **BEEHOPS**    **PHOEBE**, small bird



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small North American flycatcher, pewit, 1700, *phebe*, so called in imitation of its cry; spelling altered (1839) by influence of the woman's proper name Phoebe.

**PHREAKS**    **AEHKPRS**    **PHREAK**, to gain illegal access long-distance telephone service to avoid tolls  
1972, originally in *phone phreak*, one of a set of technically creative people who electronically hacked or defrauded telephone companies of the day. The phreaks first appeared on the US scene in the early 1960s, when a group of MIT students were found to have conducted a late night dialling experiment on the Defense Department's secret network. They were rewarded with jobs when they explained their system to Bell investigators. ... The name "phone phreak" identified the enthusiasts with the common underground usage of freak as someone who was cool and used drugs. ["New Scientist," Dec. 13, 1973]

**PIDGINS**    **DGIINPS**    **PIDGIN**, mixed language [n]  
1876, from *pigeon English* (1859), the reduced form of the language used in China for communication with Europeans, from *pigeon* (1826), itself a pidgin word, representing a Chinese pronunciation of business. Meaning extended 1891 to "any simplified language."

**PIGSNEY**    **EGINPSY**    **darling** [n -S]  
(obsolete), late 14c., endearing form of address to a girl or woman, apparently from Middle English *pigges eye*, literally "pig's eye," with unetymological *-n-* from *min eye*, *an eye*, etc.

**PIEBALD**    **ABDEILP**    **spotted animal** [n -S]  
"of two different colors," 1580s, formed from pie "magpie" + bald in its older sense of "spotted, white;" in reference to the black-and-white plumage of the magpie. Hence, "of mixed character, mongrel." Technically only of black-and-white colorings.

**PINKING**    **GIKNNP**    **PINK**, method of cutting or decorating [v]  
c. 1200, *pungde* "pierce, stab," later (early 14c.) "make holes in; spur a horse," of uncertain origin; perhaps from a Romanic stem that also yielded French *piquer*, Spanish *picar*. Or perhaps from Old English *pyngan* and directly from Latin *pungere* "to prick, pierce". Surviving mainly in *pinking shears*.

**PLACEBO**    **ABCELOP**    **substance containing no medication that is given for its psychological effect**  
early 13c., name given to the rite of Vespers of the Office of the Dead, so called from the opening of the first antiphon, "I will please the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalms cxiv.9), from Latin *placebo* "I shall please," future indicative of *placere* "to please" (see please). Medical sense is first recorded 1785, "a medicine given more to please than to benefit the patient." *Placebo effect* attested from 1900.

**POWWOWS**    **OOPSWWW**    **POWWOW**, to hold conference [v]  
1620s, "priest, sorcerer," from a southern New England Algonquian language (probably Narragansett) *powwaw* "shaman, medicine man, Indian priest," from a verb meaning "to use divination, to dream," from Proto-Algonquian *\*pawe:wa* "he dreams, one who dreams." Meaning "magical ceremony among North American Indians" is recorded from 1660s. Sense of "council, conference, meeting" is first recorded 1812. Verb sense of "to confer, discuss" is attested from 1780.

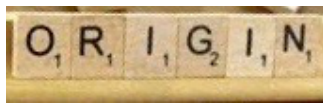
**PRALINE**    **AEILNPR**    **confection made of nuts cooked in sugar** [n -S]  
1727, *prawlin*, from French *praline* (17c.), from the name of Marshal Duplessis-Praslin (1598-1675, pronounced "praline"), "whose cook invented this confection" [Klein]. Modern spelling in English from 1809.

**PUTZING**    **GINPTUZ**    **PUTZ**, to waste time [v]  
"obnoxious man, fool," 1964, from Yiddish, from German *putz*, literally "finery, adornment," obviously used here in an ironic sense. Attested in writing earlier in slang sense of "penis" (1934, in "Tropic of Cancer"). A non-ironic sense is in *putz* "Nativity display around a Christmas tree" (1873), from Pennsylvania Dutch (German), which retains the old German sense.

**PYRRHIC**    **CHIPRRY**    **type of metrical foot** [n -S]  
1885 (usually in phrase *Pyrrhic victory*), from *Pyrrhus*, king of Epirus, who defeated Roman armies at Asculum, 280 B.C.E., but at such cost to his own troops that he was unable to follow up and attack Rome itself, and is said to have remarked, "one more such victory and we are lost."

**REREDOS**    **DEEORRS**    **ornamental screen behind altar** [n -ES]  
"screen behind an altar," late 14c., from Anglo-French *rere-*, archaic combining form of rear (n.), + *dos* "back". Klein's sources suggest it is aphetic of Anglo-French *areredos*, from Old French *arere* "at the back" (Modern French *arrière*).

**RHUBARB**    **ABBHRRU**    **perennial herb** [n -S]



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late 14c., from Old French *rubarbe*, from Medieval Latin *rheubarbarum*, from Greek *rha barbaron* "foreign rhubarb," from *rha* "rhubarb," perhaps ultimately from a source akin to Persian *rewend* "rhubarb" (associated in Greek with *Rha*, ancient Scythian name of the River Volga) + *barbaron*, neuter of *barbaros* "foreign" (see barbarian). Grown in China and Tibet, it was imported into ancient Europe by way of Russia.

**RICKETS**    **CEIKRST**    **disease resulting from vitamin D deficiency [n]**  
disease caused by vitamin D deficiency, 1630s, of uncertain origin. Originally a local name for the disease in Dorset and Somerset, England. Some derive it from a Dorset word, *rucket* "to breathe with difficulty," but the sense connection is difficult. The Modern Latin name for the disease, *rachitis*, comes from Greek *rhakhis* "spine" (see rachitic), but this was chosen by English physician Daniel Whistler (1619-1684) for resemblance to *rickets*.

**RIPOSTE**    **EIOPRST**    **to make return thrust in fencing [v -D, -TING, -S]**  
1707, "a quick thrust after parrying a lunge," a fencing term, from French *riposte*, by dissimilation from *risposte* (17c.), from Italian *risposta* "a reply," noun use of fem. past participle of *rispondere* "to respond," from Latin *respondere* (see respond). Sense of "sharp retort; quick, sharp reply," is first attested 1865. As a verb, 1851.

**RIPRAPS**    **AIPRRS**    **RIPRAP, to strengthen with foundation of broken stones [v]**  
also *riprap*, "loose stone thrown down in water or soft ground as foundation," 1822, American English, perhaps connected with earlier nautical word *rip-rap* meaning "stretch of rippling water" (often caused by underwater elevations), 1660s, probably of imitative origin (compare *riprap* "a sharp blow," 1570s).

**ROBOTIC**    **BCIOORT**    **ROBOT, humanlike machine that performs various functions [adj]**  
1923, from English translation of 1920 play "R.U.R." ("Rossum's Universal Robots"), by Karel Capek (1890-1938), from Czech *robotnik* "forced worker," from *robota* "forced labor, compulsory service, drudgery," from *robotiti* "to work, drudge," from an Old Czech source akin to Old Church Slavonic *robota* "servitude," from *rabu* "slave," from Old Slavic *\*orbu-*, from PIE *\*orbh-* "pass from one status to another". The Slavic word thus is a cousin to German *Arbeit* "work". According to Rawson the word was popularized by Karel Capek's play, "but was coined by his brother Josef (the two often collaborated), who used it initially in a short story."

**RUBBISH**    **BBHIRSU**    **worthless unwanted matter [n -ES]**  
c. 1400, *robous*, from Anglo-French *rubouses* (late 14c.), of unknown origin. No apparent cognates in Old French; apparently somehow related to rubble. Spelling with *-ish* is from late 15c. The verb sense of "disparage, criticize harshly" is first attested 1953 in Australian and New Zealand slang.

**RUBRICS**    **BCIRRSU**    **RUBRIC, part of manuscript or book that appears in red [n]**  
c. 1300, "directions in religious services" (often in red writing), from Old French *rubrique*, *rubriche* "rubric, title" (13c.), from Latin *rubrica* "red ochre, red coloring matter," from *ruber*. Meaning "title or heading of a book" is from early 15c.

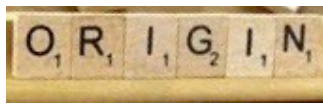
**SACKBUT**    **ABCKSTU**    **medieval trombone [n -S]**  
medieval wind instrument, c. 1500, from French *saquebute*, a bass trumpet with a slide like a trombone; presumably identical with Old North French *saqueboute* (14c.), "a lance with an iron hook for pulling down mounted men," said to be from Old North French *saquier* "to pull, draw" + *bouter* "to thrust," from Germanic *\*buttan*. Originally in English with many variant spellings, including *sagbutt*, *shakbott*, *shagbush*.

**SADDISH**    **ADHISS**    **somewhat sad [adj]**  
Old English *sæd* "sated, full, having had one's fill (of food, drink, fighting, etc.), weary of," from Proto-Germanic *\*sathaz* (source also of Old Norse *saðr*, Middle Dutch *sat*, Dutch *zad*, Old High German *sat*, German *satt*, Gothic *saps* "satiated, sated, full").  
  
Sense development passed through the meaning "heavy, ponderous" (i.e. "full" mentally or physically), and "weary, tired of" before emerging c. 1300 as "unhappy." An alternative course would be through the common Middle English sense of "steadfast, firmly established, fixed" (as in *sad-ware* "tough pewter vessels") and "serious" to "grave." In the main modern sense, it replaced Old English *unrot*, negative of *rot* "cheerful, glad."

Meaning "very bad" is from 1690s. Slang sense of "inferior, pathetic" is from 1899; *sad sack* is 1920s, popularized by World War II armed forces (specifically by cartoon character invented by Sgt. George Baker, 1942, and published in U.S. Armed Forces magazine "Yank"), probably a euphemistic shortening of common military slang phrase *sad sack of shit*.

**SALAMIS**    **AAILMSS**    **SALAMI, seasoned sausage [n]**  
"salted, flavored Italian sausage," 1852, from Italian *salami*, plural of *salame* "spiced pork sausage," from Vulgar Latin *\*salamen*, from *\*salare* "to salt," from Latin *sal* (genitive *salis*) "salt".





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**SALIENT**    **AEILNAST**    part of fortification projecting closest to enemy [n -S]  
1560s, "leaping," a heraldic term, from Latin *salientem* (nominative *saliens*), present participle of *salire* "to leap,"; "Greek *hallesthai* "to leap," Middle Irish *saltraim* "I trample," Middle Welsh *sathar* "trampling".

It was used in Middle English as an adjective meaning "leaping, skipping." The meaning "pointing outward" (preserved in military usage) is from 1680s; that of "prominent, striking" first recorded 1840, from *salient point* (1670s), which refers to the heart of an embryo, which seems to leap, and translates Latin *punctum saliens*, going back to Aristotle's writings. Hence, the "starting point" of anything.

**SALOONS**    **ALNOOSS**    **SALOON**, tavern  
1728, Englished form of *salon*, and originally used interchangeable with it. Meaning "large hall in a public place for entertainment, etc." is from 1747; especially a passenger boat from 1817, also used of railway cars furnished like drawing rooms (1842). Sense of "public bar" developed by 1841, American English.

**SARCASM**    **AACMRSS**    sharply mocking or contemptuous remark [n -S]  
1570s, *sarcasmus*, from Late Latin *sarcasmus*, from late Greek *sarkasmos* "a sneer, jest, taunt, mockery," from *sarkazein* "to speak bitterly, sneer," literally "to strip off the flesh," from *sarx* (genitive *sarkos*) "flesh," properly "piece of meat,". Current form of the English word is from 1610s.

**SAWBUCK**    **ABCKSUW**    sawhorse (rack used to support piece of wood being sawed) [n -S]  
"ten-dollar bill," American English slang, 1850, from resemblance of X (Roman numeral 10) to the ends of a sawhorse. *Sawbuck* in the sense of "sawhorse" is attested only from 1862 but presumably is older.

**SCANDAL**    **AACDLNS**    to defame [v -ED, -ING, -S or -LLED, -LLING, -S]  
1580s, "discredit caused by irreligious conduct," from Middle French *scandale* (12c.), from Late Latin *scandalum* "cause for offense, stumbling block, temptation," from Greek *skandalon* "a trap or snare laid for an enemy," in New Testament, metaphorically as "a stumbling block, offense;" originally "trap with a springing device."

**SCHLOCK**    **CCHKLOS**    inferior merchandise [n -S]  
"trash," 1915, from American Yiddish *shlak*, from German *Schlacke* "dregs, scum, dross". Alternative etymology is from Yiddish *shlogn* "to strike" (cognate with German *schlagen*). Derived form *schlockmeister* "purveyor of cheap merchandise" is from 1965. Adjectival form *schlocky* is attested from 1968; *schlock* was used as an adjective from 1916.

**SCIENCE**    **CCEEINS**    department of systematized knowledge [n -S]  
mid-14c., "what is known, knowledge (of something) acquired by study; information;" also "assurance of knowledge, certitude, certainty," from Old French *science* "knowledge, learning, application; corpus of human knowledge" (12c.), from Latin *scientia* "knowledge, a knowing; expertness," from *sciens* (genitive *scientis*) "intelligent, skilled," present participle of *scire* "to know," probably originally "to separate one thing from another, to distinguish," related to *scindere* "to cut, divide," (source also of Greek *skhizein* "to split, rend, cleave," Gothic *skaidan*, Old English *sceadan* "to divide, separate").

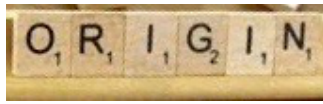
From late 14c. in English as "book-learning," also "a particular branch of knowledge or of learning;" also "skillfulness, cleverness; craftiness." From c. 1400 as "experiential knowledge;" also "a skill, handicraft; a trade." From late 14c. as "collective human knowledge" (especially that gained by systematic observation, experiment, and reasoning). Modern (restricted) sense of "body of regular or methodical observations or propositions concerning a particular subject or speculation" is attested from 1725; in 17c.-18c. this concept commonly was called *philosophy*. Sense of "non-arts studies" is attested from 1670s.

In *science* you must not talk before you know. In art you must not talk before you do. In literature you must not talk before you think. [John Ruskin, "The Eagle's Nest," 1872]

The distinction is commonly understood as between theoretical truth (Greek *epistemē*) and methods for effecting practical results (*tekhnē*), but *science* sometimes is used for practical applications and art for applications of skill. To *blind (someone) with science* "confuse by the use of big words or complex explanations" is attested from 1937, originally noted as a phrase from Australia and New Zealand.

**SCOURGE**    **CEGORSU**    to punish severely [v -D, -GING, -S]  
c. 1200, "a whip, lash," from Anglo-French *escorge*, back-formation from Old French *escorgier* "to whip," from Vulgar Latin \**excorrigiare*, from Latin *ex-* "out, off" (see *ex-*) + *corrigia* "thong, shoelace," in this case "whip," probably from a Gaulish word related to Old Irish *cúimrech* "fetter,". Figurative use from late 14c. *Scourge of God*, title given by later generations to Attila the Hun (406-453 C.E.), is attested from late 14c., from Latin *flagellum Dei*.

**SELTZER**    **EELRSTZ**    carbonated mineral water [n -S]



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1741, from German *Selterser* (*Wasser*), a kind of mineral water, literally "of *Selters*," village near Wiesbaden in Hesse-Nassau, where the mineral water is found.

**SFUMATO**    **AFMOSTU**    technique used on painting [n -S]  
1847, from Italian *sfumato*, literally "smoked," from Latin *fumus* "smoke."

**SHAKOES**    **AEHKOSS**    **SHAKO**, type of military hat ~ also **SHACKO** /-S, -ES  
also *chako*, cylindrical soldier's hat with plume, 1815, from Hungarian *csákó*, short for *csákós süveg* "peaked cap," from adjectival form of *csáko* "peak, projecting point of a cow's horn," which some European etymologists derive from German *zacken* "point, spike," but which Hungarian sources regard as of unknown origin.

**SHAMPOO**    **AHMOOPS**    to cleanse with special preparation [v -ED, -ING, -S]  
1762, "to massage," from Anglo-Indian *shampoo*, from Hindi *champo*, imperative of *champna* "to press, knead the muscles," perhaps from Sanskrit *capayati* "pounds, kneads." Meaning "wash the hair" first recorded 1860; extended 1954 to carpets, upholstery, etc.

**SHEBANG**    **ABEGHNS**    situation, organization, or matter [n -S]  
1862, "hut, shed, shelter," popularized among soldiers in the U.S. Civil War, but like other Civil War slang (such as *skedaddle*) of uncertain origin. Perhaps an alteration of *shebeen*, but *shebang* in the sense "tavern," a seemingly necessary transitional sense, is not attested before 1878 and *shebeen* seems to have been not much used in the U.S. Bartlett's 1877 edition describes it as "A strange word that had its origin during the late civil war. It is applied alike to a room, a shop, or a hut, a tent, a cabin; an engine house." Phrase *the whole shebang* first recorded 1869, but relation to the earlier use of the word is obscure. Either or both senses also might be mangled pronunciations of French *char-à-banc*, a bus-like wagon with many seats. For an older guess:

[Shebang] used even yet by students of Yale College and elsewhere to designate their rooms, or a theatrical or other performance in a public hall, has its origin probably in a corruption of the French *cabane*, a hut, familiar to the troops that came from Louisiana, and constantly used in the Confederate camp for the simple huts, which they built with such alacrity and skill for their winter quarters. The constant intercourse between the outposts soon made the term familiar to the Federal army also. ["Americanisms: The English of the New World," Maximilian Schele De Vere, New York, Charles Scribner & Co., 1872.]

**SHEBEEN**    **BEEEHNS**    place where liquor is sold illegally [n -S] ~ also **SHEBEAN** /-S  
"cabin where unlicensed liquor is sold and drunk," 1781, chiefly in Ireland and Scotland, from Irish *seibin* "small mug," also "bad ale," diminutive of *seibe* "mug, bottle, liquid measure." The word immigrated and persisted in South African and West Indian English.

**SHERIFF**    **EFFHIRS**    law enforcement officer [n -S]  
late Old English *scirgerefa* "representative of royal authority in a shire," from *scir* + *gerefa* "chief, official, reeve". As an American county official, attested from 1660s; *sheriff's sale* first recorded 1798. *Sheriff's tooth* (late 14c.) was a common name for the annual tax levied to pay for the sheriff's victuals during court sessions.

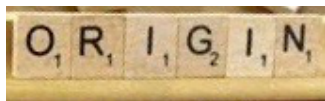
**SIROCCO**    **CCIOORS**    hot, dry wind [n -S]  
"hot wind blowing from the Libyan deserts," 1610s, from Italian *sirocco*, from vulgar Arabic *shoruq* "the east wind," from Arabic *sharqi* "eastern, east wind," from *sharq* "east," from *sharaqa* "to rise" (in reference to the sun).

**SISTERS**    **EIRSSST**    **SISTER**, to treat like sister (female sibling) [v]  
mid-13c., from Old English *sweostor*, *swuster* "sister," or a Scandinavian cognate (Old Norse *systir*, Swedish *syster*, Danish *søster*), in either case from Proto-Germanic *\*swestr-* (source also of Old Saxon *swestar*, Old Frisian *swester*, Middle Dutch *suster*, Dutch *zuster*, Old High German *swester*, German *Schwester*, Gothic *swistar*).

These are from PIE *\*swesor*, one of the most persistent and unchanging PIE root words, recognizable in almost every modern Indo-European language (Sanskrit *svasar-*, Avestan *shanhar-*, Latin *soror*, Old Church Slavonic, Russian *sestra*, Lithuanian *sesuo*, Old Irish *siur*, Welsh *chwaer*, Greek *eor*). French *soeur* "a sister" (11c., instead of *\*sereur*) is directly from Latin *soror*, a rare case of a borrowing from the nominative case.

According to Klein's sources, probably from PIE roots *\*swe-* "one's own" + *\*ser-* "woman." For vowel evolution, see **bury**. Used of nuns in Old English; of a woman in general from 1906; of a black woman from 1926; and in the sense of "fellow feminist" from 1912. Meaning "female fellow-Christian" is from mid-15c. *Sister act* "variety act by two or more sisters" is from vaudeville (1908).

**SKEPTIC**    **CEIKPST**    person who doubts generally accepted ideas [n -S] ~ also **SCEPTIC** /-S  
1580s, "member of an ancient Greek school that doubted the possibility of real knowledge," from Middle French *sceptique* and directly from Latin *scepticus* "the sect of the Skeptics," from Greek *skeptikos* (plural *Skeptikoi* "the



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Skeptics, followers of Pyrrho"), noun use of adjective meaning "inquiring, reflective" (the name taken by the disciples of the Greek philosopher Pyrrho, who lived c. 360-c. 270 B.C.E.), related to *skeptesthai* "to reflect, look, view". Skeptic does not mean him who doubts, but him who investigates or researches as opposed to him who asserts and thinks that he has found. [Miguel de Unamuno, "Essays and Soliloquies," 1924]

The extended sense of "one with a doubting attitude" first recorded 1610s. The *sk-* spelling is an early 17c. Greek revival and is preferred in U.S. As a verb, *scepticize* (1690s) failed to catch on.

**SKIDDOO**    **DDIKOOS**    to go away [v -ED, -ING, -S] ~ also **SKIDOO** /-ED, -ING, -S

a vogue word of 1905, "to leave in a hurry," perhaps a variant of skedaddle. The association with *twenty-three* is as old as the word, but the exact connection is obscure.

Then skidoo, little girl, skidoo.

23 is the number for you.

[1906]

**SLANDER**    **ADELNRS**    to defame [v -ED, -ING, S]

late 13c., "state of impaired reputation, disgrace or dishonor;" c. 1300, "a false tale; the fabrication and dissemination of false tales," from Anglo-French *esclaundre*, Old French *esclandre* "scandalous statement," alteration ("with interloping /" [Century Dictionary]) of *escandle*, *escandre* "scandal," from Latin *scandalum* "cause of offense, stumbling block, temptation". From late 14c. as "bad situation, evil action; a person causing such a state of affairs."

**SLAVERY**    **AELRSVY**    ownership of one person by another [n -RIES]

late 13c., "person who is the chattel or property of another," from Old French *esclave* (13c.), from Medieval Latin *Sclavus* "slave" (source also of Italian *schiaivo*, French *esclave*, Spanish *esclavo*), originally "Slav"; so used in this secondary sense because of the many Slavs sold into slavery by conquering peoples.

The oldest written history of the Slavs can be shortly summarised--myriads of slave hunts and the enthrallment of entire peoples. The Slav was the most prized of human goods. With increased strength outside his marshy land of origin, hardened to the utmost against all privation, industrious, content with little, good-humoured, and cheerful, he filled the slave markets of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It must be remembered that for every Slavonic slave who reached his destination, at least ten succumbed to inhuman treatment during transport and to the heat of the climate. Indeed Ibrāhīm (tenth century), himself in all probability a slave dealer, says: "And the Slavs cannot travel to Lombardy on account of the heat which is fatal to them." Hence their high price.

The Arabian geographer of the ninth century tells us how the Magyars in the Pontus steppe dominated all the Slavs dwelling near them. The Magyars made raids upon the Slavs and took their prisoners along the coast to Kerkh where the Byzantines came to meet them and gave Greek brocades and such wares in exchange for the prisoners. ["The Cambridge Medieval History," Vol. II, 1913]

Meaning "one who has lost the power of resistance to some habit or vice" is from 1550s. Applied to devices from 1904, especially those which are controlled by others (compare *slave jib* in sailing, similarly of locomotives, flash bulbs, amplifiers). *Slave-driver* is attested from 1807; extended sense of "cruel or exacting task-master" is by 1854. *Slave state* in U.S. history is from 1812. *Slave-trade* is attested from 1734.

It is absurd to bring back a runaway slave. If a slave can survive without a master, is it not awful to admit that the master cannot live without the slave? [Diogenes, fragment 6, transl. Guy Davenport]

Old English *Wealh* "Briton" also began to be used in the sense of "serf, slave" c.850; and Sanskrit *dasa-*, which can mean "slave," apparently is connected to *dasyu-* "pre-Aryan inhabitant of India." Grose's dictionary (1785) has under *Negro* "A black-a-moor; figuratively used for a slave," without regard to race. More common Old English words for slave were *peow* (related to *peowian* "to serve") and *bræl*. The Slavic words for "slave" (Russian *rab*, Serbo-Croatian *rob*, Old Church Slavonic *rabu*) are from Old Slavic *\*orbu*, the ground sense of which seems to be "thing that changes allegiance" (in the case of the slave, from himself to his master). The Slavic word is also the source of robot.

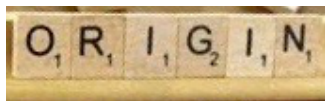
**SLOGANS**    **AGLNOSS**    **SLOGAN**, motto adopted by group [n -S]

1670s, earlier *slogorne* (1510s), "battle cry," from Gaelic *sluagh-ghairm* "battle cry used by Scottish Highland or Irish clans," from *sluagh* "army, host, slew," from Celtic and Balto-Slavic *\*slough-* "help, service." Second element is *gairm* "a cry". Metaphoric sense of "distinctive word or phrase used by a political or other group" is first attested 1704.

**SMIDGEN**    **DEGIMNS**    very small amount [n -S] ~ also **SMIDGEON** /-S, **SMIDGIN** /-S

1845, perhaps from Scottish *smitch* "very small amount; small insignificant person" (1822). Compare Northumbrian dialectal *smiddum* "small particle of lead ore" (1821).

**SMOTHER**    **EHMORST**    to prevent from breathing [v -ED, -ING, -S]



# Go Down in History

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c. 1200, "to suffocate with smoke," from *smother* (n.), earlier *smorthre* "dense, suffocating smoke" (late 12c.), from stem of Old English *smorian* "to suffocate, choke, strangle, stifle," cognate with Middle Dutch *smoren*, German *schmoren*; possibly connected to smolder. Meaning "to kill by suffocation in any manner" is from 1540s; sense of "to extinguish a fire" is from 1590s. Sense of "stifle, repress" is first recorded 1570s; meaning "to cover thickly (with some substance)" is from 1590s.

**SNEEZES**    **EEENSSZ**    **SNEEZE**, to make sudden, involuntary expiration of breath [v]  
late 15c., from Old English *fnēosan* "to snort, sneeze," from Proto-Germanic *\*fneusanan* (compare: Middle Dutch *fniesen*, Dutch *fniezen* "to sneeze;" Old Norse *fnysa* "to snort;" Old Norse *hnjosa*, Swedish *nysa* "to sneeze;" Old High German *niosan*, German *niesen* "to sneeze"), from Proto-Germanic base *\*fneu-s-* "sneeze," of imitative origin.

Other imitative words for it, perhaps in various ways related to each other, include Latin *sternuere* (source of Italian *starnutare*, French *éternuer*, Spanish *estornudar*), Breton *strevia*, Sanskrit *ksu-*, Lithuanian *čiaudėti*, Polish *kichać*, Russian *čichat'*.

English forms in *sn-* might be due to a misreading of the uncommon *fn-* (represented in only eight words in Clark Hall, mostly in words to do with breathing), or from Norse influence. OED suggests Middle English *fnese* had been reduced to simple *nese* by early 15c., and *sneeze* is a "strengthened form" of this, "assisted by its phonetic appropriateness." *To sneeze at* "to regard as of little value" (usually with negative) is attested from 1806.

**STENCIL**    **CEILNST**    to mark by means of perforated sheet of material [n -S]  
1707, not recorded again until 1848, probably from Middle English *stencellen* "decorate with bright colors," from Middle French *estenceler* "cover with sparkles or stars, powder with color," from *estencele* "spark, spangle" (Modern French *étincelle*), from Vulgar Latin *\*stincilla*, metathesis of Latin *scintilla* "spark"

**SUBLIME**    **BEILMSU**    of elevated or noble quality [adj]  
1580s, "expressing lofty ideas in an elevated manner," from Middle French *sublime* (15c.), or directly from Latin *sublimis* "uplifted, high, borne aloft, lofty, exalted, eminent, distinguished," possibly originally "sloping up to the lintel," from *sub* "up to" + *limen* "lintel, threshold, sill". *The sublime* (n.) "the sublime part of anything, that which is stately or imposing" is from 1670s.

**TACTFUL**    **ACFLTU**    having skill in dealing with delicate situations [adj]  
1650s, "sense of touch or feeling" (with an isolated instance, *tacpe* from c. 1200), from Latin *tactus* "a touch, handling, sense of touch," from root of *tangere* "to touch", handle." Meaning "sense of discernment in action or conduct, diplomacy, fine intuitive mental perception" first recorded 1804, from development in French cognate *tact*. The Latin figurative sense was "influence, effect."

**TATTOOS**    **AOSTTT**    **TATTOO**, to mark skin with indelible pigments [v]  
"pigment design in skin," 1769 (noun and verb, both first attested in writing of Capt. Cook), from a Polynesian noun (such as Tahitian and Samoan *tatau*, Marquesan *tatu* "puncture, mark made on skin"). Century Dictionary (1902) describes them as found on sailors and uncivilized people or as a sentence of punishment. Earlier names in English included *Jerusalem cross* (1690s) in reference to tattoos on the arms of pilgrims to the Holy Land, also *Jerusalem letters* (1760).

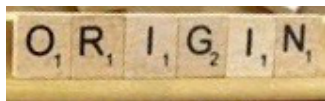
**TAXICAB**    **AABCITX**    automobile for hire [n -S]  
**TAXI-** 1907, shortening of *taximeter cab* (introduced in London in March 1907), from *taximeter* "automatic meter to record the distance and fare" (1898), from French *taximètre*, from German *Taxameter* (1890), coined from Medieval Latin *taxa* "tax, charge."

An earlier English form was *taxameter* (1894), used in horse-drawn cabs. *Taxi dancer* "woman whose services may be hired at a dance hall" is recorded from 1930. *Taxi squad* in U.S. football is 1966, said to be from a former Cleveland Browns owner who gave his reserves jobs with his taxicab company to keep them paid and available ["Dictionary of American Slang"], but other explanations ("short-term hire" or "shuttling back and forth" from the main team) seem possible.

**CAB-** 1826, "light, two- or four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage," a colloquial London shortening of *cabriolet*, a type of covered horse-drawn carriage (1763), from French *cabriolet* (18c.), diminutive of *cabriole* "a leap, a caper," earlier *capriole* (16c.), from Italian *capriola* "a caper, frisk, leap," literally "a leap like that of a kid goat," from *capriola* "a kid, a fawn," from Latin *capreolus* "wild goat, roebuck," from *caper*, *capri* "he-goat, buck," from PIE *\*kap-ro-* "he-goat, buck" (source also of Old Irish *gabor*, Welsh *gafr*, Old English *hæfr*, Old Norse *hafr* "he-goat"). The carriages were noted for their springy suspensions.

Originally a passenger-vehicle drawn by two or four horses; it was introduced into London from Paris in 1820. Extended to hansoms and other types of carriages, then extended to similar-looking parts of locomotives (1851). Applied especially to public horse carriages, then to automobiles-for-hire (1899) when these began to replace them.



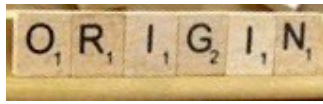


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- THEOREM**    **EEHMORT**    proposition that is demonstrably true or is assumed to be so [n -S]  
"demonstrable proposition in science or mathematics," 1550s, from Middle French *théorème* (16c.) and directly from Late Latin *theorema*, from Greek *theorema* "spectacle, sight," in Euclid "proposition to be proved," literally "that which is looked at," from *theorein* "to look at, behold".
- THUNDER**    **DEHNRTU**    to produce loud, resounding sound [v -ED, -ING, -S]  
mid-13c., from Old English *þunor* "thunder, thunderclap; the god Thor," from Proto-Germanic *\*thunraz* (source also of Old Norse *þorr*, Old Frisian *thuner*, Middle Dutch *donre*, Dutch *donder*, Old High German *donar*, German *Donner* "thunder"), thunder" (source also of Sanskrit *tanayitnuh* "thundering," Persian *tundar* "thunder," Latin *tonare* "to thunder"). Swedish *tordön* is literally "Thor's din." The unetymological *-d-* also is found in Dutch and Icelandic versions of the word. *Thunder-stick*, imagined word used by primitive peoples for "gun," attested from 1904.
- TOILETS**    **EILOSTT**    **TOILET**, to dress and groom oneself [v -ED, -ING, -S]  
1530s, earliest in English in an obsolete sense "cover or bag for clothes," from Middle French *toilette* "a cloth; a bag for clothes," diminutive of *toile* "cloth, net". *Toilet* acquired an association with upper class dressing by 18c., through the specific sense "a fine cloth cover on the dressing table for the articles spread upon it;" thence "the articles, collectively, used in dressing" (mirror, bottles, brushes, combs, etc.). Subsequent sense evolution in English (mostly following French uses) is to "act or process of dressing," especially the dressing and powdering of the hair (1680s); then "a dressing room" (1819), especially one with a lavatory attached; then "lavatory or porcelain plumbing fixture" (1895), an American euphemistic use.  
  
*Toilet paper* is attested from 1884 (the Middle English equivalent was *arse-wisp*). *Toilet trainings* recorded from 1940.
- TRUANTS**    **ANRSTTU**    **TRUANT**, to stay out of school without permission [v -ED, -ING, -S]  
c. 1200, "beggar, vagabond," from Old French *truant* "beggar, rogue" (12c.), as an adjective, "wretched, miserable, of low caste," from Gaulish *\*trougant-* (compare Breton *\*truan*, later *truant* "vagabond," Welsh *truan* "wretch," Gaelic *truaghan* "wretched"), of uncertain origin. Compare Spanish *truhan* "buffoon," from same source. Meaning "one who wanders from an appointed place," especially "a child who stays away from school without leave" is first attested mid-15c.
- TWIDDLE**    **DDEILTW**    to play idly with something [v -D, -LING, -S]  
1540s, "to trifle," of unknown origin, said to be probably imitative; of the fingers, "to twirl idly," first recorded 1670s. Figurative phrase *twiddle one's thumbs* "have nothing to do" is recorded from 1846; to *twirl one's thumbs* in the same sense is recorded from 1816.
- TYRANNY**    **ANNRTYY**    rule of tyrant (absolute ruler) [n -NNIES]  
late 14c., "cruel or unjust use of power; the government of a tyrant," from Old French *tyranie* (13c.), from Late Latin *tyrannia* "tyranny," from Greek *tyrannia* "rule of a tyrant, absolute power," from *tyrannos* "master".
- UMPIRES**    **EIMPRSU**    **UMPIRE**, to act as umpire (person appointed to rule on plays of game) [v -D, -RING, -S]  
mid-14c., *noumper*, from Old French *nonper* "odd number, not even," in reference to a third person to arbitrate between two, from *non* "not" + *per* "equal," from Latin *par* "equal". Initial *-n-* lost by mid-15c. due to faulty separation of a *noumpere*, heard as *an oumpere*. Originally legal, the gaming sense first recorded 1714 (in wrestling).
- VACUUMS**    **ACMSUUV**    **VACUUM**, space entirely devoid of matter [n -S, -UA]  
1540s, "emptiness of space," from Latin *vacuum* "an empty space, vacant place, a void," noun use of neuter of *vacuus* "empty, unoccupied, devoid of," figuratively "free, unoccupied." Properly a loan-translation of Greek *kenon*, literally "that which is empty."  
  
Meaning "a space emptied of air" is attested from 1650s. *Vacuum tube* "glass thermionic device" is attested from 1859. *Vacuum cleaner* is from 1903; shortened form *vacuum* (n.) first recorded 1910.  
The metaphysicians of Elea, Parmenides and Melissus, started the notion that a vacuum was impossible, and this became a favorite doctrine with Aristotle. All the scholastics upheld the maxim that "nature abhors a vacuum." [Century Dictionary]
- VAMPIRE**    **AEIMPRV**    reanimated corpse believed to feed on sleeping persons' blood [n -S]  
spectral being in a human body who maintains semblance of life by leaving the grave at night to suck the warm blood of the living as they sleep, 1734, from French *vampire* (18c.) or German *Vampir* (1732, in an account of Hungarian vampires), from Hungarian *vampir*, from Old Church Slavonic *opiri* (source also of Serbian *vampir*, Bulgarian *vapir*, Ukrainian *uper*), said by Slavic linguist Franc Miklošič to be ultimately from Kazan Tatar *ubyr* "witch," but Max Vasmer, an expert in this linguistic area, finds that phonetically doubtful. An Eastern European creature popularized in English by late 19c. gothic novels, however there are scattered English accounts of night-walking, blood-gorged, plague-spreading undead corpses from as far back as 1196. Figurative sense of "person who preys on others" is from 1741. Applied 1774 by French biologist Buffon to a species of South American blood-sucking bat.
- VENEERS**    **EEENRSV**    **VENEER**, to overlay with thin layers of material [v -ED, -ING, -S]





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1702, from German *Furnier*, from *furnieren* "to cover with a veneer, inlay," from French *fournir* "to furnish, accomplish," from Middle French *forrir* "to furnish," from a Germanic source (compare Old High German *frumjan* "to provide. From German to French to German to English. Figurative sense of "mere outward show of some good quality" is attested from 1868.

**WALLETS**    **AELLSTW**    **WALLET**, flat folding case [n]

late 14c., "bag, knapsack," of uncertain origin, probably from an unrecorded Old North French *\*walet* "roll, knapsack," or similar Germanic word in Anglo-French or Old French, from Proto-Germanic *\*wall-* "roll." Meaning "flat case for carrying paper money" is first recorded 1834, American English.

**WHOPPER**    **EHOPPRW**    something unusually large [n -S]

1767, "uncommonly large thing," originally and especially an audacious lie, formed as if from *whop* (v.) "to beat, overcome." *Whopping* "large, big, impressive" is attested by 1620s.

**WINNOS**    **INNOSWW**    to free grain from impurities [v -ED, -ING, -S]

late 14c., from Old English *windwian* "to fan, winnow," from *wind* "air in motion, paring down," see *wind* (n.1). Cognate with Old Norse *vinza*, Old High German *winton* "to fan, winnow," Gothic *diswinþjan* "to throw (grain) apart."

**WIZARDS**    **ADIRSWZ**    **WIZARD**, sorcerer [n]

early 15c., "philosopher, sage," from Middle English *wys* "wise" + *-ard*. Compare Lithuanian *žynystė* "magic," *žynys* "sorcerer," *žynė* "witch," all from *žinoti* "to know." The ground sense is perhaps "to know the future." The meaning "one with magical power, one proficient in the occult sciences" did not emerge distinctly until c. 1550, the distinction between philosophy and magic being blurred in the Middle Ages. As a slang word meaning "excellent" it is recorded from 1922.

**WORSHIP**    **HIOPRSW**    to honor and love as divine being [v -ED, -ING, -S or -PPED, -PPING, -S]

Old English *worðscip*, *wurðscip* (Anglian), *weorðscipe* (West Saxon) "condition of being worthy, dignity, glory, distinction, honor, renown," from *weorð* "worthy" + *-scipe*. Sense of "reverence paid to a supernatural or divine being" is first recorded c. 1300. The original sense is preserved in the title *worshipful* "honorable" (c. 1300).