

# Go Down in History

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## Etymology 8s

**ADULTERY** ADELRTUY voluntary sexual intercourse between married person and someone other than his or her spouse [n -RIES]

"voluntary violation of the marriage bed," c. 1300, *avoutrie*, from Old French *avouterie* (12c., later *adulterie*, Modern French *adultère*), noun of condition from *avoutre*, from Latin *adulterare* "commit adultery; corrupt," from *ad* "to" + *alterare* "to alter". Compare adulteration. The spelling was corrected toward Latin from early 15c. in English, following French.

In Middle English, also "sex between husband and wife for recreational purposes; idolatry, perversion, heresy." As a crime, formerly classified as *single adultery* (with an unmarried person) and *double adultery* (with a married person). The Old English word was *æwbryce* "breach of law(ful marriage)" (similar formation in German *Ehebruch*). In translations of the 7th Commandment it is understood to mean "lewdness or unchastity" of any kind, in act or thought.

**AGNOSTIC** ACGINOST one who disclaims any knowledge of God [n -S]

1870, "one who professes that the existence of a First Cause and the essential nature of things are not and cannot be known" [Klein]; coined by T.H. Huxley, supposedly in September 1869, from Greek *agnostos* "unknown, unknowable," from *a-* "not" + *gnōstos* "(to be) known." Sometimes said to be a reference to Paul's mention of the altar to "the Unknown God" in Acts, but according to Huxley it was coined with reference to the early Church movement known as Gnosticism. The adjective also is first recorded 1870.

I ... invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of 'agnostic,' ... antithetic to the 'Gnostic' of Church history who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant. [T.H. Huxley, "Science and Christian Tradition," 1889]

The agnostic does not simply say, "I do not know." He goes another step, and he says, with great emphasis, that you do not know. [Robert G. Ingersoll, "Reply to Dr. Lyman Abbott," 1890]

**ALUMINUM** AILMMNUU metallic element [n -S]

1812, coined by English chemist Sir Humphry Davy, from *alumina*, *alumine*, name given by French chemists late 18c. to aluminum oxide, from Latin *alumen* "alum" Davy originally called it *aluminium* (1808), then amended this to *aluminum*, which remains the U.S. word, but British editors in 1812 further amended it to *aluminium*, the modern preferred British form, to better harmonize with other metallic element names (*sodium*, *potassium*, etc.).

Aluminium, for so we shall take the liberty of writing the word, in preference to aluminum, which has a less classical sound. ["Quarterly Review," 1812]

*Aluminum foil* attested by 1859; popularized in food packaging from c. 1950.

**AMORTIZE** AEIMORTZ to liquidate gradually, as debt [v -D, -ZING, -S] ~ also AMORTISE / -D, -SING, -S

late 14c., from Old French *amortiss-*, present participle stem of *amortir* "deaden, kill, destroy; give up by right" (12c.), from Vulgar Latin *\*admortire* "to extinguish," from *ad* "to" + *mortus* "dead," from Latin *mors* "death," (also "to die" and forming words referring to death and to beings subject to death).

Originally in English in the literal sense "make dead," also a legal term for an act of alienating lands. In reference to extinguishing a debt from early 19c.

**ANCESTOR** ACENORST to be ancestor (person from whom one is descended [v -ED, -ING, -S])

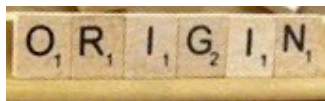
"one from whom a person is descended," c. 1300, *ancestre*, *antecessour*, from Old French *ancestre*, *ancessor* "ancestor, forebear, forefather" (12c., Modern French *ancêtre*), from Late Latin *antecessor* "predecessor," literally "fore-goer," agent noun from past participle stem of Latin *antecedere* "to precede," from *ante* "before" + *cedere* "to go". Current form from early 15c. Feminine form *ancestress* recorded from 1570s.

**ANECDOTE** ACDEENOT brief story [n -S]

1670s, "secret or private stories," from French *anecdote* (17c.) or directly from Medieval Latin *anecdota*, from Greek *anekdota* "things unpublished," neuter plural of *anekdotos*, from *an-* "not" + *ekdotos* "published," from *ek-* "out" + *didonai* "to give".

Procopius' 6c. *Anecdota*, unpublished memoirs of Emperor Justinian full of court gossip, gave the word a sense of "revelation of secrets," which decayed in English to "brief, amusing story" (1761).

**APHORISM** AHIMOPRS brief statement of truth or principle [n -S]



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1520s, "concise statement of a principle" (especially in reference to the "Aphorisms of Hippocrates"), from Middle French *aphorisme* (corrected from Old French *aufforisme*, 14c.), from Late Latin *aphorismus*, from Greek *aphorismos* "definition; short, pithy sentence," from *aphorizein* "to mark off, divide," from *apo* "from" + *horizein* "to bound".

General sense of "short, pithy statement containing a truth of general import" (e.g. "life is short, and art is long") is from 1580s in English. Distinguished from an axiom, which is a statement of self-evident truth; an epigram is like an aphorism, but lacking in general import. Maxim and saying can be used as synonyms for *aphorism*, but maxims tend to be practical and sayings tend to be more commonplace and have an author's name attached.

**APOSTASY**    **AAOPSTY**    abandonment of one's faith or principles [n -SIES] ~ also **APOSTACY** /-CIES  
late 14c., "renunciation, abandonment or neglect of established religion," from Late Latin *apostasias*, from later Greek *apostasias* for earlier *apostasis* "revolt, defection," literally "a standing off," from *apostanai* "to stand away". General (non-religious) sense "abandonment of what one has professed" is attested from 1570s.

**BACHELOR**    **ABCEHLOR**    unmarried man [n -S]  
c. 1300, "young man;" also "youthful knight, novice in arms," from Old French *bachelor*, *bachelor*, *bachelier* (11c.) "knight bachelor," a young squire in training for knighthood, also "young man; unmarried man," and a university title. Of uncertain origin.  
Perhaps from Medieval Latin *baccalarius* "vassal farmer, adult serf without a landholding," one who helps or tends a *baccalaria* "field or land in the lord's demesne" (according to old French sources, perhaps from an alteration of *vacca* "a cow" and originally "grazing land" [Kitchin]). But Wedgwood points out that the *baccalarii* "were reckoned as *rustici*, and were bound to certain duty work for their lord. There is no appearance in the passages cited of their having had any military character whatever." (He favored a Celtic origin).

Or perhaps from Latin *baculum* "a stick," because the squire would practice with a staff, not a sword. "Perhaps several independent words have become confused in form" [Century Dictionary].

The meaning in English expanded by early 14c. to "young unmarried man," late 14c. to "one who has taken the lowest degree in a university." *Bachelor party* as a pre-wedding ritual is by 1882.

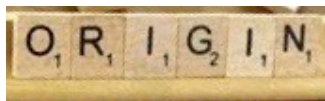
**BALLYHOO**    **ABHLLOOY**    to promote by uproar [v -ED, -ING, -S]  
"publicity, hype," 1908, from circus slang, "a short sample of a sideshow" used to lure customers (1901), which is of unknown origin. The word seems to have been in use in various colloquial senses in the 1890s. To *catch ballyhoo* is attested from 1895 in sense "be in trouble." There is a village of *Ballyhooly* in County Cork, Ireland, (the *Bally-* is a common Irish place-name element meaning "a town, village") but no evident sense connection. In nautical lingo, *ballahou* or *ballahoo* (1867, perhaps 1836) was a sailor's contemptuous word for any vessel they disliked (from Spanish *balahu* "schooner"). As a verb from 1901 (implied in *ballyhooer*).

**BARBARIC**    **AABBCIRR**    uncivilized [adj]  
late 15c., "uncultured, uncivilized, unpolished," from Middle French *barbarique* (15c.), from Latin *barbaricus* "foreign, strange, outlandish," from Greek *barbarikos* "like a foreigner," from *barbaros* "foreign, rude". Meaning "pertaining to or characteristic of barbarians" is from 1660s.

**BARRATRY**    **AABRRRTY**    fraud committed by master or crew of ship [n -RIES]  
early 15c., "sale of ecclesiastical or state offices," from Old French *baraterie* "deceit, guile, trickery," from *barat* "malpractice, fraud, deceit, trickery," which is of unknown origin, perhaps from Celtic. In marine law, "wrongful conduct by a ship's crew or officer, resulting in loss to owners," from 1620s.  
Meaning "offense of habitually starting legal suits" is from 1640s. The sense has been somewhat confused with that of Middle English *baratri* "combat, fighting" (c. 1400), from Old Norse *baratta* "fight, contest strife." This was an active word in Middle English, with forms such as *baraten* "to disturb the peace" (mid-15c.); *baratour* "inciter to riot, bully" (late 14c., mid-13c. as a surname).

*Barataria Bay*, Louisiana, U.S., is from Spanish *baratear* "to cheat, deceive," cognate of the French word; the bay so called in reference to the difficulty of its entry passages.

**BENEDICT**    **BCDEEINT**    newly married man [n -S]  
"newly married man" (especially one who had seemed a confirmed bachelor), 1821, from the character *Benedick* in "Much Ado About Nothing" (1599). The name is from Late Latin *Benedictus*, literally "blessed," from Latin *benedicte* "bless (you)."



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This also produced the proper name and surname *Bennet*; hence also *benet* (late 14c.), the third of the four lesser orders of the Roman Catholic Church, one of whose functions was to exorcize spirits.

**BLACKLEG** ABCEGKLL to work against labor strike [v -GGED, -GGING, -S]

"swindler," originally especially in equestrian events, 1771, from black (adj.) + leg (n.), but the exact signification is uncertain. The term implies the habitual frequenting of places where wagers are made and games of chance are played, and the seeking of subsistence by dishonorable betting, but does not always imply direct cheating. Sometimes contracted to *leg*. [Century Dictionary]. Used from 1865 of strike-breakers and workmen who refused to join trade unions.

**BORDELLO** BDELLOOR brothel [n -S]

c. 1300, *bordel* "house of prostitution," from Old French *bordel* "small hut, cabin; brothel" (12c.), diminutive of *borde* "hut made of planks," from Frankish *\*bord* "wooden board" or some other Germanic source related to board. The modern form (1590s) is a result of the French word being borrowed by Italian then passed back to French with a suffix and re-borrowed into English.

**BROCCOLI** BCCILOOR vegetable related to cabbage [n -S] ~also BROCOLI /-S

variety of common cabbage with a dense, edible head, 1690s, from Italian *broccoli*, plural of *broccolo* "a sprout, cabbage sprout," diminutive of *brocco* "shoot, protruding tooth, small nail," from Latin *broccus* (see broach (n.)).

**BROUHAHA** AABHHORU uproar [n -S]

1890, from French *brouhaha* (15c.), said by Gamillscheg to have been, in medieval theater, "the cry of the devil disguised as clergy." If it has an etymology, it is perhaps from Hebrew *barukh habba* "blessed be the one who comes," used on public occasions (as in Psalm cxviii).

**CADUCEUS** ACCDESUU wand or staff [n -CEI]

in ancient Greece or Rome, "herald's staff," 1590s, from Latin *caduceus*, alteration of Doric Greek *karykeion* "herald's staff," from *kēryx* (genitive *kērykos*) "a herald," probably a Pre-Greek word. Token of a peaceful embassy; originally an olive branch. Later especially the wand carried by Mercury, messenger of the gods, usually represented with two serpents twined round it and wings. Related: *Caducean*.

The caduceus is a symbol of peace and prosperity, and in modern times figures as a symbol of commerce, Mercury being the god of commerce. The rod represents power; the serpents represent wisdom; and the two wings, diligence and activity. [Century Dictionary]

**CALENDAR** AACDELNR to schedule [v -ED, -ING, -S]

c. 1200, "the year as divided systematically into days and months;" mid-14c. as "table showing divisions of the year;" from Old French *calendier* "list, register," from Latin *calendarium* "account book," from *calendae/kalendae* "the calends" the first day of the Roman month, when debts fell due and accounts were reckoned.

This is from *calare* "to announce solemnly, call out," as the priests did in proclaiming the new moon that marked the calends. In Rome, new moons were not calculated mathematically but rather observed by the priests from the Capitol; when they saw it, they would "declare" the number of days till the nones (five or seven, depending on the month). The word was taken by the early Church for its register list of saints and their feast days. Meaning "list of documents arranged chronologically" is from late 15c.

The *-ar* spelling in English is 17c. to differentiate it from the now-obscure calender "cloth-presser."

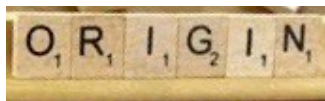
**CASTRATE** AACERSTT to remove testes of [v -D, -TING, -S]

"to deprive of the testicles, emasculate," 1610s (implied in *castrated*), back-formation from castration, or from Latin *castratus*, past participle of *castrare* "to castrate, emasculate; to prune," supposedly from a noun *\*castrum* "knife, instrument that cuts,". The figurative sense "destroy the strength or vitality of" is attested earlier (1550s).

**CORVETTE** CEEORTTV small, swift warship [n -S] ~also CORVET /-S

1630s, also *corvet*, "wooden ship of war, flush-decked, frigate-rigged, and having only one tier of guns," from French *corvette* "small, fast frigate" (15c.), perhaps from Middle Dutch *korver* "pursuit ship," or Middle Low German *korf* meaning both a kind of boat and a basket, or from Latin *corbita (navis)* "slow-sailing ship of burden, grain ship" from *corbis* "basket" (OED, but Gamillscheg is against this).

In late 19c. a class of cruiser-like ships in the British navy; in World War II a fast naval escort vessel used in convoy duty. The U.S. sports car was so named September 1952, after the type of warship, on a suggestion by Myron Scott, employee of Campbell-Ewald, Chevrolet's advertising agency. Italian *corvetta*, Spanish *corbeta* are French loan-words.



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**DANDRUFF**    **ADFFNRU**    scurf that forms on scalp [n -S] ~also **DANDRIFF** /-S

"scurf which forms on the scalp or skin of the head and comes off in small scales or dust," 1540s; the first element is obscure (despite much speculation, OED concludes "nothing satisfactory has been suggested"). The second element probably is Northumbrian or East Anglian dialectal *huff*, *hurf* "scab," from Old Norse *hrufa*, from Proto-Germanic *\*hrefuaz*, source of Old English *hreoþla* "leper." Middle English words for it were *bran* (late 14c.), *furfur* (c. 1400, from Latin), *scales* (mid-15c.).

**DIARRHEA**    **AADHIRR**    intestinal disorder [n -S]

"morbid frequent evacuation of the bowels," late 14c., *diaria*, from Old French *diarrie*, from Late Latin *diarrhoea*, from Greek *diarrhoia* "diarrhea" (coined by Hippocrates), literally "a flowing through," from *diarrhein* "to flow through," from *dia-* "through" + *rhein* "to flow". Respelled 16c. from *diarria* on Latin model.

**DINOSAUR**    **ADINORSU**    one of group of extinct reptiles [n -S]

one of the *Dinosauria*, a class of extinct Mesozoic reptiles often of enormous size, 1841, coined in Modern Latin by Sir Richard Owen, from Greek *deinos* "terrible" + *sauros* "lizard". Figurative sense of "person or institution not adapting to change" is from 1952.

**DOMESTIC**    **CDEIMOST**    household servant [n -S]

early 15c., "prepared or made in the house," from Old French *domestique* (14c.) and directly from Latin *domesticus* "belonging to the household," from *domus* "house."

From 1610s as "relating to or belonging to the home or household affairs." From 1650s as "attached to home, devoted to home life." Meaning "pertaining to a nation (considered as a family), internal to one's country" is from 1540s. Of animals, "tame, living under the care of humans," from 1610s. Related: *Domestically*.

The noun meaning "a household servant" is from 1530s (a sense also found in Old French *domestique*); the full phrase *servant domestical* is attested in English from mid-15c. *Domestics*, originally "articles of home manufacture," is attested from 1620s; in 19c. U.S. use especially "home-made cotton cloths." *Domestic violence* is attested from 19c. as "revolution and insurrection;" 1977 as "spouse abuse, violence in the home."

The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion; and on application of the Legislature, or of the executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic violence. [Article IV, Section 4, U.S. Constitution, 1787]

**FLACKERY**    **ACEFKLRY**    publicity [n -RIES]

FLACK, "publicity or press agent," 1945, also by that year as a verb, said to have been coined at show biz magazine "Variety" (but the first attested use is not in "Variety") and supposedly from name of Gene *Flack*, a movie agent, but influenced by flak. There was a Gene Flack who was an advertising executive in the U.S. during the 1940s, but he seems to have sold principally biscuits, not movies.

**FLUNKIES**    **EFIKLNSU**    **FLUNKY** or **FLUNKIE** or **FLUNKEY**, servile follower [n]

also *flunkey*, 1782, Scottish dialect, "footman, liveried servant," of uncertain origin, perhaps a diminutive variant of *flanker* (in reference to servants running alongside coaches; compare footman). Sense of "flatterer, toady" first recorded 1855. "Recent in literature, but prob. much older in colloquial speech" [Century Dictionary].

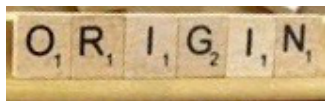
**FUNCTION**    **CFINNOTU**    to be in action [v -ED, -ING, -S]

FUNCTION [n] 1530s, "one's proper work or purpose; power of acting in a specific proper way," from Middle French *fonction* (16c.) and directly from Latin *functionem* (nominative *functio*) "a performance, an execution," noun of action from *funct-*, past-participle stem of *fungi* "perform, execute, discharge," from PIE *\*bhung-* "be of use, be used" (source also of Sanskrit *bhunjate* "to benefit, make benefit, atone," Armenian *bowcanem* "to feed," Old Irish *bongaid* "to break, harvest"), which is perhaps related to root *\*bhrug-* "to enjoy." Meaning "official ceremony" is from 1630s, originally in church use. Use in mathematics probably was begun by Leibnitz (1692). In reference to computer operations, 1947.

**GADZOOKS**    **ADGKOOSZ**    used as mild oath [interj]

1690s, a condensed form of some exclamation, usually said to be *God's hooks* (nails of Christ's Cross) or even *God's hocks*. Compare *godsookers* (1670s). The use of *Gad* for *God* (as in egad) is first attested 1590s. Among other similar "phraseological combinations" noted by OED (all from 17c.) were *gadsbobs*, *gadslid*, *gadsniggers*, *gadsbudlikins*, and *gadsnouns*; in all of which the second elements are sometimes said to be mere fanciful syllables.

**GHOULISH**    **GHHILOSU**    **GHOUL** (demon (evil spirit)) [adj]



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GHOUL- 1786, *goul*, in the English translation of William Beckford's Orientalist novel "Vathek" (which was written in French), from Arabic *ghul*, an evil spirit that robs graves and feeds on corpses, from *ghala* "he seized."

GLIBNESS BEGILNSS quality of being glib (fluent) [n -ES]

1590s, "smooth and slippery," a dialect word, possibly a shortening of obsolete *glibbery* "slippery," which is perhaps from Low German *glibberig* "smooth, slippery," from Middle Low German *glibberich*, from or related to *glibber* "jelly," all part of the Germanic group of *gl-* words for "smooth, shining, joyful." Of words, speakers, etc., from c. 1600.

GORGEOUS EGGOORSU beautiful [adj]

c. 1500, "splendid, showy, sumptuously adorned" (of clothing), from Middle French *gorgias* "elegant, fashionable," of unknown origin; perhaps a special use of *gorgias* "necklace" (and thus "fond of or resembling jewelry"), from Old French *gorge* "throat," also "something adorning the throat". A connection to the Greek proper name *Gorgias* (supposedly in reference to a notorious sophist) also has been proposed.

HECATOMB ABCEHMOT great sacrifice or slaughter [n -S]

1590s, from Latinized form of Greek *hekatombe*, properly (and literally) "offering of 100 oxen," but generally "a great public sacrifice." It is a compound of *hekatón* "one hundred," which perhaps is dissimilation of *\*hem-katon*, with *hen*, neuter of *heis* "one" + *\*katon* "hundred." The second element is *bous* "ox". The first month of the Attic calendar (corresponding to July-August) was *Hekatombaion*, in which sacrifices were made.

HUMILITY HIILMTUY quality of being humble (modest) [n -TIES]

early 14c., "quality of being humble," from Old French *umelite* "humility, modesty, sweetness" (Modern French *humilité*), from Latin *humilitatem* (nominative *humilitas*) "lowness, small stature; insignificance; baseness, littleness of mind," in Church Latin "meekness," from *humilis* "lowly, humble," literally "on the ground," from *humus* "earth." In the Mercian hymns, Latin *humilitatem* is glossed by Old English *eaðmodniss*.

KIBOSHED BDEHIKOS KIBOSH, to stop [v -ED, -ING, -ES] ~ also KYBOSH /-ED, -ING, -ES

1836, *kye-bosk*, in British English slang phrase *put the kibosh on*, of unknown origin, despite intense speculation. The earliest citation is in Dickens. Looks Yiddish, but its original appearance in a piece set in the heavily Irish "Seven Dials" neighborhood in the West End of London seems to argue against this.

One candidate is Irish *caip bháis*, *caipín báis* "cap of death," sometimes said to be the black cap a judge would don when pronouncing a death sentence, but in other sources this is identified as a gruesome method of execution "employed by Brit. forces against 1798 insurgents" [Bernard Share, "Slanguage, A Dictionary of Irish Slang"]. Or the word might somehow be connected with Turkish *bosh*.

KNAPSACK AACKKNPS bah carried on back [n -S]

c. 1600, from Low German *Knapsack* (16c.), probably from *knappen* "to eat" literally "to crack, snap" (imitative) + *Sack* "bag" (see sack (n.1)). Similar formation in Dutch *knapsak*.

KVETCHES CEEHKSTV KVETCH, to complain [v -ED, -ING, -S]

"to complain, whine," 1953 (implied in *kvetching*), from Yiddish *kvetshn*, literally "squeeze, press," from German *quetsche* "crusher, presser." As a noun, from 1936 as a term of abuse for a person.

LAMBASTE AABELMST to beat severely [v -D, -TING, -S] ~ also LAMBAST /-ED, -ING, -S

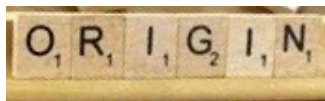
1630s, apparently from *baste* "to thrash" + the obscure verb *lam* "to beat, to lame" or the related Elizabethan noun *lam* "a heavy blow" (implied by 1540s in puns on *lambskin*). Compare earlier *lamback* "to beat, thrash" (1580s, used in old plays). A dictionary from c. 1600 defines Latin *defustare* as "to lamme or bumbast with strokes."

LAUGHTER AEGHLRTU act or sound of one that laughs (to express emotion, typically mirth, by series of inarticulate sounds) [n -S]

late 14c., from Old English *hleahtr* "laughter; jubilation; derision," from Proto-Germanic *\*hlahtraz* (source also of Old Norse *hlatr*, Danish *latter*, Old High German *lahtrar*, German *Gelächter*).

LUSCIOUS CILOSSUU having very pleasing taste or smell [adj]

late 15c., according to Middle English Compendium a variant of Middle English *licius* "delicious" (c. 1400), which is a shortening of *delicious*, with the variant form perhaps influenced by Old French *luxure*, *lusure*. But OED 2nd ed. and Century Dictionary are against all this and the former considers it "of obscure origin" while the latter suggests *lusty* with a pseudo-Latin ending. John Palsgrave, the 16c. grammarian, spelled it *lussuose*.



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**MIGRAINE** AEGIIMNR severe headache [n -S]

late 14c., *migrane*, "severe headache, especially on one side of the head," from Old French *migraine*, *migraigne* (13c.), from the vulgar pronunciation of Late Latin *hemicrania* "pain in one side of the head, headache," from Greek *hēmikrania*, from *hēmi-* "half" + *kranion* "skull".

The corrupt form *megrim* was common from 15c. on and is the principle entry for the word in Century Dictionary (1895), but it seems to be now obsolete or archaic even in its secondary senses of "depression; low spirits" and "a whim or fancy."

**NAPALMED** AADELMP 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. See naphtha. 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.

**NAPOLEON** AELNNOOP type of pastry [n -S]

used in reference to various qualities and things associated with 19c. French emperors of that name, especially *Napoleon I* (Bonaparte), 1769-1821. The given name (Italian *Napoleone*) is attested from 13c., said to be from a St. *Napoleone* of Alexandria, a 4c. martyr. It has been folk-etymologized as "lion of Naples" or "nose of a lion." The name was applied to a gold coin issued by the government of Napoleon I, bearing his image, worth 20 francs. As the name of a 12-pound artillery piece, it is in use in U.S. military from 1857, from *Napoleon III* (1808-1873), under whose rule it was designed. As a type of boot, by 1860; as a card game, by 1876; as a type of rich cake, from 1892; as a type of good brandy, from 1930. The name also was applied by 1821 to anyone thought to have achieved domination in any field by ambition and ruthlessness. *Napoleon complex* in reference to aggressiveness by short people is attested by 1930.

**NEPENTHE** EEEHNPT drug that induces forgetfulness [n -S]

1590s, earlier *nepenthes* (1570s), "a drug or magic potion of Egypt mentioned in the 'Odyssey' as capable of banishing grief or trouble from the mind," from Greek *nēpenthēs*, from *nē-* "no, not" + *penthos* "pain, grief," from PIE root \*kwent(h)- "to suffer."

**NEWSPEAK** AEEKNPSW deliberately ambiguous language [n -S]

name of the artificial language of official communication in George Orwell's novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four," 1949, from new (adj.) + speak (n.). Frequently applied to what is perceived as propagandistic warped English.

**NOUMENON** EMNNOOU object of intellectual intuition [n -MENA]

"that which can be the object only of a purely intellectual intuition" (opposed to a *phenomenon*), 1796, a term introduced by Kant, from Greek *noumenon* "that which is perceived," neuter passive present participle of *noein* "to apprehend, perceive by the mind" (from *noos* "mind," which is of uncertain origin).

**NOVERCAL** ACELNORV pertaining to stepmother [adj]

"characteristic of or resembling a step-mother," 1620s, from Late Latin *novercalis*, "of or like a step-mother," also "hostile, violent," from *noverca*, literally "a new mother," from *novus* "new"

**OPSIMATH** AHIMOPST person who learns only late in life [n -S]

"education late in life," 1650s, from Greek *opsimathia* "late learning," from *opse* "late, after a long time" (related to *opiso* "backward," *opisthen* "behind," from *opi*, a variant of *epi* "on it, at it;" see *epi-*) + *manthanein* "to learn".

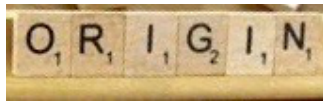
**OXYMORON** MNOORXY combination of contradictory or incongruous words [n -RA, -S]

1650s, from Greek *oxymoron*, noun use of neuter of *oxymoros* (adj.) "pointedly foolish," from *oxys* "sharp, pointed" + *mōros* "stupid". Rhetorical figure by which contradictory terms are conjoined so as to give point to the statement or expression; the word itself is an illustration of the thing. Now often used loosely to mean "contradiction in terms."

**PALIMONY** AILMNOPY allowance paid to one member of unmarried couple who have separated [n -NIES]

1979, coined from pal (n.) + alimony. Popularized, if not introduced, during lawsuit against U.S. film star Lee Marvin (1924-1987).

**PASSOVER** AEOPRSSV lamb eaten on feast of Jewish holiday [n -S]



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1530, coined by Tyndale from verbal phrase *pass over*, to translate Hebrew *ha-pesah* "Passover," from *pesah* (see paschal), in reference to the Lord "passing over" the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he killed the first-born of the Egyptians (Exodus xii).

**PATOOTIE** AEIOOPTT buttocks [n -S]

"sweetheart, pretty girl," colloquial American English, 1921, perhaps a corruption of potato (c.f. *sweet potato*). *Sweet patootie* is recorded from 1919 as a generic exclamation.

**PHARISEE** AEEHIPRS hypocritically self-righteous person [n -S]

from Old English *Fariseos*, Old French *pharise* (13c.), and directly from Late Latin *Pharisæus*, from Greek *Pharisaïos*, from Aramaic (Semitic) *perishayya*, emphatic plural of *perish* "separated, separatist," corresponding to Hebrew *parush*, from *parash* "he separated." Ancient Jewish sect (2c. B.C.E.-1c. C.E.) distinguished by strict observance but regarded as pretentious and self-righteous, at least by Jesus (Matthew xxiii.27). Meaning "self-righteous person, formalist, hypocrite" is attested from 1580s.

**PHATTEST** AEHPSTTT 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.

**PINOCHLE** CEHILNOP card game [n -S] ~ also PINOCLE /-S, PENUCHLE /-S, PENUCKLE /-S

also *pinocle*, 1864, *Peaknuckle*, of uncertain origin, perhaps from Swiss dialect *Binokel* (German), *binocle* (French), from French *binocle* "pince-nez" (17c.), from Medieval Latin *binoculus* "binoculars" (see binocular). Taken as a synonym for *bésigue* "bezique," the card game, and wrongly identified with *besicles* "spectacles," probably because the game is played with a double deck. Pinochle was popularized in U.S. late 1800s by German immigrants.

**PLATONIC** ACILNOPT purely spiritual and free from sensual desire [adj]

1530s, "of or pertaining to Greek philosopher *Plato*" (429 B.C.E.-c. 347 B.C.E.), from Latin *Platonicus*, from Greek *Platonikos*. The name is Greek *Platon*, properly "broad-shouldered" (from *platys* "broad;". His original name was Aristocles. The meaning "free of sensual desire" (1630s), which the word usually carries nowadays, is a Renaissance notion; it is based on Plato's writings in "*Symposium*" about the kind of interest Socrates took in young men, which originally had no reference to women.

**POLLIWOG** GILLOOPW tadpole [n -S] ~ also POLLYWOG /-S

"tadpole," mid-15c., *polwygle*, probably from *pol* "head" + *wiglen* "to wiggle" (see wiggle (v.)). Modern spelling is 1830s, replacing earlier *polwidge*.

**POPSICLE** CEILOPPS trademark [n -S]

1923, trademark name registered by Frank Epperson of Oakland, Calif., presumably from (*lolly*)pop + (*ic*)icle.

**QUIDNUNC** CDINNQUU nosy person [n -S]

"gossip-monger," 1709, formed from Latin *quid* "what?" (neuter of interrogative pronoun *quis* "who?" from and *nunc* "now" to describe someone forever asking "What's the news?"

**RAKEHELL** AEEHLLR man lacking in oral restraint [n -S]

1540s, possibly an alteration (by association with *rake* (n.1) and *Hell*) of Middle English *rakel* (adj.) "hasty, rash, headstrong," probably from *raken* "to go, proceed," from Old English *racian* "to go forward, move, hasten," of unknown origin.

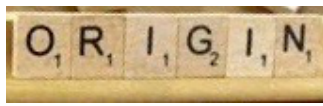
**RAPPAREE** AAEEPPRR plunderer [n -S]

"Irish freebooter," 1680s, originally "pikeman," from Irish *rapairidhe*, plural of *rapaire* "half-pike." Kind of soldier prominent in the war of 1688-92.

**REDSTART** ADERRSTT small songbird [n -S]

type of bird, 1560s, from red (adj.1) + *start* "tail," from Old English *steort* "tail, rump," from Proto-Germanic *\*stertaz*, extended form of root *\*ster-* (1) "stiff."

**RELIGION** EGILNOR worship of god or supernatural [n -S]



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c. 1200, "state of life bound by monastic vows," also "conduct indicating a belief in a divine power," from Anglo-French *religiun* (11c.), Old French *religion* "piety, devotion; religious community," and directly from Latin *religionem* (nominative *religio*) "respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods; conscientiousness, sense of right, moral obligation; fear of the gods; divine service, religious observance; a religion, a faith, a mode of worship, cult; sanctity, holiness," in Late Latin "monastic life" (5c.).

**REVEILLE** EEEILLRV morning bugle call [n -S]

1640s, from French *réveillez-vous* "awaken!" imperative plural of *réveiller* "to awaken, to wake up," from Middle French *re-* "again" + *eveiller* "to rouse," from Vulgar Latin *\*exvigilare*, from Latin *ex-* "out" + *vigilare* "be awake, keep watch".

**RHAPSODY** ADHOPRSY exalted expression of feeling [n -DIES]

1540s, "epic poem," from Middle French *rhapsodie*, from Latin *rhapsodia*, from Greek *rhapsōidia* "verse composition, recitation of epic poetry; a book, a lay, a canto," from *rhapsōdos* "reciter of epic poems," literally "one who stitches or strings songs together," from *rhaptein* "to stitch, sew, weave" + *ōidē* "song" (see ode). According to Beekes, the notion is "originally 'who sews a poem together', referring to the uninterrupted sequence of epic verses as opposed to the strophic compositions of lyrics." Meaning "exalted enthusiastic feeling or expression" is from 1630s. Meaning "sprightly musical composition" is first recorded 1850s.

**RICKSHAW** ACHIKRSW small two-wheeled passenger vehicle [n -S]

"small, two-wheeled carriage drawn by a man," 1885, shortened form of *jinrikisha* (1873), from Japanese *jin* "a man" + *riki* "power" + *sha* "carriage." The elements are said to be ultimately from Chinese. Watkins writes that the Old Chinese word for "wheeled vehicle" preserved here is probably ultimately from "revolve, move round; sojourn, dwell"), perhaps borrowed from Tocharian, an extinct Indo-European language of Central Asia.

**RIGATONI** AGIINORT tubular pasta [n -S]

"short, hollow, fluted tubes of pasta," 1930, from Italian *rigatoni*, plural of *rigato*, past participle of *rigare* "to draw a line, to make fluting," from *riga* "line; something cut out," from a Germanic source, from Proto-Germanic *\*rigon* "to scratch, tear, cut".

**ROSEMARY** AEMORRSY evergreen shrub [n -RIES]

late 14c., earlier *rosmarine* (c. 1300), from Latin *rosmarinus*, literally "dew of the sea", from *ros* "dew" + *marinus* "of the sea, maritime," from *mare* "sea, the sea, seawater." Perhaps so called because it grew near coasts. Form altered in English by influence of *rose* and *Mary*.

**RUCKSACK** ACCKKRSU knapsack [n -S]

1866, from German *Rucksack*, from Alpine dialect *Rück* "the back" (from German *Rücken*) + *Sack* "sack".

**RUTABAGA** AAABGRTU plant having thick, edible root [n -S]

1799, from Swedish dialectal (West Götland) *rotabagge*, from *rot* "root" + *bagge* "bag". Slang meaning "dollar" is from 1940s.

**SABOTAGE** AABEGOST to destroy maliciously [v -D, -GING, -S]

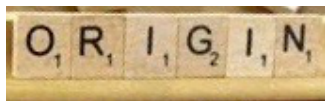
1907 (from 1903 as a French word in English), from French *sabotage*, from *saboter* "to sabotage, bungle," literally "walk noisily," from *sabot* "wooden shoe" (13c.), altered (by association with Old French *bot* "boot") from Middle French *savate* "old shoe," from the same source (perhaps Persian *ciabat*) that also produced similar words in Old Provençal, Portuguese, Spanish (*zapata*), Italian (*ciabatta*), Arabic (*sabbat*), and Basque (*zapata*).

In French, and at first in English, the sense of "deliberately and maliciously destroying property" originally was in reference to labor disputes, but the oft-repeated story (as old as the record of the word in English) that the modern meaning derives from strikers' supposed tactic of throwing shoes into machinery is not supported by the etymology. Likely it was not meant as a literal image; the word was used in French in a variety of "bungling" senses, such as "to play a piece of music badly." This, too, was the explanation given in some early usages.

SABOTAGE- The title we have prefixed seems to mean "scamping work." It is a device which, we are told, has been adopted by certain French workpeople as a substitute for striking. The workman, in other words, purposes to remain on and to do his work badly, so as to annoy his employer's customers and cause loss to his employer. ["The Liberty Review," January 1907]

You may believe that sabotage is murder, and so forth, but it is not so at all. Sabotage means giving back to the bosses what they give to us. Sabotage consists in going slow with the process of production when the bosses go slow with the same process in regard to wages. [Arturo M. Giovannitti, quoted in report of the Sagamore Sociological Conference, June 1907]





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In English, "malicious mischief" would appear to be the nearest explicit definition of "sabotage," which is so much more expressive as to be likely of adoption into all languages spoken by nations suffering from this new force in industry and morals. Sabotage has a flavor which is unmistakable even to persons knowing little slang and no French .... ["Century Magazine," November 1910]

**SALARIES**    **AAEILRSS**    **SALARY**, to pay periodic, fixed compensation to [v]  
late 13c., "compensation, payment," whether periodical, for regular service or for a specific service; from Anglo-French *salarie*, Old French *salair* "wages, pay, reward," from Latin *salarium* "an allowance, a stipend, a pension," said to be originally "salt-money, soldier's allowance for the purchase of salt" [Lewis & Short] noun use of neuter of adjective *salarius* "of or pertaining to salt; yearly revenue from the sale of salt;" as a noun, "a dealer in salt fish," from *sal* (genitive *salis*) "salt". The *Via Salaria* was so called because the Sabines used it to fetch sea-salt near the Porta Collina. Japanese *sarariman* "male salaried worker," literally "salary-man," is from English.

**SANDWICH**    **ACDJINSW**    to place between two layers or objects [v -ED, -ING, -S]  
1762, said to be a reference to John Montagu (1718-1792), Fourth Earl of *Sandwich*, who was said to be an inveterate gambler who ate slices of cold meat between bread at the gaming table during marathon sessions rather than get up for a proper meal (this account dates to 1770). It was in his honor that Cook named the Hawaiian Islands (1778) when Montagu was first lord of the Admiralty. The family name is from the place in Kent, Old English *Sandwicæ*, literally "sandy harbor (or trading center)."

**SANGUINE**    **AEGINNSU**    red color [n -S]  
"blood-red," late 14c. (late 12c. as a surname), from Old French *sanguin* (fem. *sanguine*), from Latin *sanguineus* "of blood," also "bloody, bloodthirsty," from *sanguis* (genitive *sanguinis*) "blood". Meaning "cheerful, hopeful, confident" first attested c. 1500, because these qualities were thought in old medicine to spring from an excess of blood as one of the four humors. Also in Middle English as a noun, "type of red cloth" (early 14c.).

**SAYONARA**    **AAANORSY**    goodbye [n -S]  
"farewell, good-bye" 1875, from Japanese, literally "if it is to be that way," from *sayo* "that way," + *nara* "if."

**SCAFFOLD**    **ACDFFLOS**    to provide with scaffold (temporary platform for workmen) [v -ED, -ING, -S]  
mid-14c., "wooden framework used in building, etc., temporary structure for workmen to make walls," a shortening of an Old North French variant of Old French *eschafaut* "scaffold" (Modern French *échafaud*), probably altered (by influence of *eschace* "a prop, support") from *chaffaut*, from Vulgar Latin *\*catafalicum*, from Greek *kata-* "down" (see *cata-*), used in Medieval Latin with a sense of "beside, alongside" + *fala* "scaffolding, wooden siege tower," a word said to be of Etruscan origin. Meaning "platform for a hanging" is from 1550s. Dutch *schavot*, German *Schafott*, Danish *skafot* are from French. As a verb from 1540s.

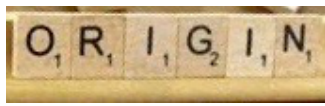
**SCALAWAG**    **AAACGLSW**    rascal [n -S]  
also *scallawag*, "disreputable fellow," 1848, American English, originally in trade union jargon, of uncertain origin; perhaps an alteration (by influence of *wag* "habitual joker") of Scottish *scallag* "farm servant, rustic," itself an alteration of *Scalloway*, one of the Shetland Islands, with the reference being to little Shetland ponies (an early recorded sense of *scalawag* was "undersized or worthless animal," 1854). In U.S. history, used from 1862 as a derogatory term for anti-Confederate native white Southerners.

**SCHEDULE**    **CDEEHLSU**    to assign to certain date or time [v -D, -LING, -S]  
late 14c., *sedule*, *cedule* "ticket, label, slip of paper with writing on it," from Old French *cedule* (Modern French *cédule*), from Late Latin *schedula* "strip of paper" (in Medieval Latin also "a note, schedule"), diminutive of Latin *scheda*, *scida* "one of the strips forming a papyrus sheet," from Greek *skhida* "splinter," from stem of *skhizein* "to cleave, split". Also from the Latin word are Spanish *cédula*, German *Zettel*.

The notion is of slips of paper attached to a document as an appendix (a sense maintained in U.S. tax forms). The specific meaning "printed timetable" is first recorded 1863 in railway use. Modern spelling is a 15c. imitation of Latin, but pronunciation remained "sed-yul" for centuries afterward; the modern British pronunciation ("shed-yul") is from French influence, while the U.S. pronunciation ("sked-yul") is from the practice of Webster, based on the Greek original.

**SCHMALTZ**    **ACHLMSTZ**    excessive sentimentality [n -ES] ~ also SHMALTZ /-ES  
"banal or excessive sentimentalism," 1935, from Yiddish *shmalts*, literally "melted fat," from Middle High German *smalz*, from Old High German *smalz* "animal fat," related to *smelzan* "to melt". Modern German *Schmalz* "fat, grease" has the same figurative meaning. First mentioned in English as "a derogatory term used to describe straight jazz" ["Vanity Fair," Nov. 1935].

**SCHMOOZE**    **CEHMOOSZ**    to gossip [v -D, -ZING, -S] ~ also SCHMOOSE /-D, -SING, -S, SHMOOZE /-D, -ZING, -S



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"to chat intimately," 1897, from Yiddish *shmuesn* "to chat," from *shmues* "idle talk, chat," from Hebrew *shemu'oth* "news, rumors." As a noun from 1939.

**SCHNAPPS** ACHNPPSS strong liquor [n SCHNAPPS] ~ also SHNAPPS

1818, kind of Holland gin, from German *Schnaps*, literally "a mouthful, gulp," from Low German *snaps*, from *snappen* "to snap". For sense, compare *nip* for "alcoholic drink quickly taken."

**SCOFFLAW** ACFFLOSW habitual law breaker [n -S]

1924, from *scoff* (v.) + *law* (n.). The winning entry in a national contest during Prohibition to coin a word to characterize a person who drinks illegally, chosen from more than 25,000 entries; the \$200 winning prize was split between two contestants who sent in the word separately: Henry Irving Dale and Miss Kate L. Butler. Other similar attempts did not stick, such as *pitilacker* (1926), winning entry in a contest by the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to establish a scolding word for one who mistreats animals.

**SCRABBLE** ABBCELRS to claw or grope about frantically [v -D, -LING, -S]

1530s, "to scrawl, scribble," from Dutch *schrabbelen*, frequentative of *schrabben* "to scratch." Meaning "to struggle, scramble" first recorded 1630s.

**SCRAPPLE** ACELPPRS seasoned mixture of ground meat and cornmeal [n -S]

"scraps of pork and cornmeal seasoned, boiled, and pressed into large cakes," 1850, probably a diminutive form of *scrap* with -el. Noted especially, and perhaps originally, as a regional favorite dish in and around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**SERENADE** ADEEENRS to perform honorific evening song [v -D, -DING, -S]

1640s, "musical performance at night in open air" (especially one given by a lover under the window of his lady), from French *sérénade* (16c.), from Italian *serenata* "an evening song," literally "calm sky," from *sereno* "the open air," noun use of *sereno* "clear, calm," from Latin *serenus* "peaceful, calm, serene." Sense influenced by Italian *sera* "evening," from Latin *sera*, fem. of *serus* "late." Meaning "piece of music suitable for a serenade" is attested from 1728.

**SERGEANT** AEEGNRST noncommissioned military officer [n -S] ~ also SERJEANT /-S

c. 1200, "servant," from Old French *sergent*, *serjant* "(domestic) servant, valet; court official; soldier," from Medieval Latin *servientum* (nominative *serviens*) "servant, vassal, soldier" (in Late Latin "public official"), from Latin *servietem* "serving," present participle of *servire* "to serve"; cognate with Spanish *serviente*, Italian *servente*; a twin of *servant*, and 16c. writers sometimes use the two words interchangeably.

**SHREWDIE** DEEHIRSW shrewd (having keen insight) person [n -S]

c. 1300, "wicked, evil," from *shrewe* "wicked man". The sense of "cunning" is first recorded 1510s. Related: *Shrewdly*; *shrewdness*. Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes of the People of England" (1801) has a *shrewdness of apes* for a company or group of them. *Shrewdie* "cunning person" is from 1916.

**SIMONIAK** ACIIMNOS one who practices simony (the buying or selling of church office) [n -S]

c. 1200, "the sin of buying or selling sacred things," from Old French *simonie* "selling of church offices" (12c.), from Late Latin *simonia*, from *Simon Magus*, the Samaritan magician who was rebuked by Peter when he tried to buy the power of conferring the Holy Spirit (Acts viii.18-20).

**SKELETON** EEKLNOST supporting or protecting framework of human or animal body [n -S]

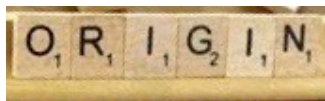
1570s, from Modern Latin *sceletum* "bones, bony framework of the body," from Greek *skeletum soma* "dried-up body, mummy, skeleton," from neuter of *skeletos* "dried-up" (also, as a noun, "dried body, mummy"), from *skellein* "dry up, make dry, parch."

*Skelton* was an early variant form. The noun use of Greek *skeletos* passed into Late Latin (*sceletus*), hence French *squelette* and rare English *skelet* (1560s), Spanish *esqueleto*, Italian *scheletro*. The meaning "bare outline" is first recorded c. 1600; hence *skeleton crew* (1778), *skeleton key*, etc. Phrase *skeleton in the closet* "source of secret shame to a person or family" is from 1812 (the image is perhaps from the Bluebeard fable).

**SKIRMISH** HIIKMRSS to engage in minor battle [v -ED, -ING, -ES]

late 14c., from Old French *escarmouche* "skirmish," from Italian *scaramuccia*, earlier *schermugio*, probably from a Germanic source (compare Old High German *skirmen* "to protect, defend"), with a diminutive or depreciatory suffix, from Proto-Germanic *\*skerm-*.

Influenced in Middle English by a separate verb *skirmyschen* "to brandish a weapon," from Old French *eskirmis-*, stem of *eskirmir* "to fence," from Frankish *\*skirmjan*, from the same Germanic source. Compare *scrimmage*. Other modern



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Germanic forms have an additional diminutive affix: German *scharmützel*, Dutch *schermutseling*, Danish *skjærmydsel*. *Skirmish-line* attested by 1864.

**SLATTERN** AELNRSTT slovenly woman [n -S]

1630s, "a woman negligent or disordered in her dress or household," of uncertain origin, probably related to Low German *Slattje*, Dutch *slodder*, dialectal Swedish *slata* "slut" (in the older, non-sexual sense). Compare dialectal English verb *slatter* "to spill or splash awkwardly, to waste," used of women or girls considered untidy or slovenly.

**SLOVENLY** ELLNOSVY habitually untidy or unclean [adj]

SLOVEN- late 15c., "immoral woman," later (16c.) also "rascal, knave" (regardless of gender); probably from a continental Germanic source, compare Middle Flemish *sloovin* "a scold," *sloef* "untidy, shabby," Dutch *slof* "careless, negligent," Middle Low German *sloven* "put on clothes carelessly," from Proto-Germanic *\*slaubjan*. Meaning "person careless of dress or negligent of cleanliness" is from 1520s.

**STRAIGHT** AGHIRSTT extending uniformly in one direction without bends or irregularities [adj]

late 14c., "direct, undeviating; not crooked, not bent or curved," of a person, "direct, honest;" properly "stretched," adjectival use of Old English *streht* (earlier *streaht*), past participle of *streccan* "to stretch".

Meaning "true, direct, honest" is from 1520s. Of communication, "clear, unambiguous," from 1862. Sense of "undiluted, uncompromising" (as in *straight whiskey*, 1874) is American English, first recorded 1856. As an adverb from c. 1300, "in a straight line, without swerving or deviating." Theatrical sense of "serious" (as opposed to *popular* or *comic*) is attested from 1895; vaudeville slang *straight man* first attested 1923.

*Go straight* in the underworld slang sense is from 1919; *straighten up* "become respectable" is from 1907. To *play it straight* is from 1906 in theater, 1907 in sports ("play fair"), with figurative extension; later perhaps also from jazz. *Straight arrow* "decent, conventional person" is 1969, from archetypal Native American brave name. *Straight shooter* is from 1928. *Straight As* "top grades" is from 1920.

**SUFFRAGE** AEFGRSU right to vote [n -S]

late 14c., "intercessory prayers or pleas on behalf of another," from Old French *sofrage* "plea, intercession" (13c.) and directly from Medieval Latin *suffragium*, from Latin *suffragium* "support, ballot, vote; right of voting; a voting tablet," from *suffragari* "lend support, vote for someone," conjectured to be a compound of *sub* "under" + *fragor* "crash, din, shouts (as of approval)," related to *frangere* "to break". On another theory (Watkins, etc.) the second element is *frangere* itself and the notion is "use a broken piece of tile as a ballot". Meaning "a vote for or against anything" is from 1530s. The meaning "political right to vote" in English is first found in the U.S. Constitution, 1787.

**SYNOPSIS** INOPSSSY summary [n -SES]

1610s, "a general view, an outline," from Late Latin *synopsis* "a synopsis," from Greek *synopsis* "a general view," literally "a seeing altogether, a seeing all at once," from *syn-* "together" + *opsis* "sight, appearance."

**TALISMAN** AAILMNST object believed to possess magical powers [n -S]

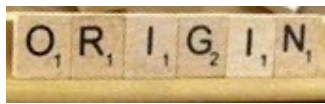
1630s, "magical figure cut or engraved under certain observances," from French *talisman*, in part via Arabic *tilsam* (plural *tilsaman*), from Byzantine Greek *telesma* "talisman, religious rite, payment," earlier "consecration, ceremony," originally in ancient Greek "completion," from *telein* "perform (religious rites), pay (tax), fulfill," from *telos* "end, fulfillment, completion". The Arabic word also was borrowed into Turkish, Persian, Hindi.

**THUGGISH** GGHISTU characteristic of thug (brutal ruffian or assassin) [adj]

THUG-1810, "member of a gang of murderers and robbers in India who strangled their victims," from Marathi *thag*, *thak* "cheat, swindler," Hindi *thag*, perhaps from Sanskrit *sthaga-s* "cunning, fraudulent," from *sthaḡayati* "(he) covers, conceals."

The thugs roamed about the country in bands of from 10 to 100, usually in the disguise of peddlers or pilgrims, gaining the confidence of other travelers, whom they strangled, when a favorable opportunity presented itself, with a handkerchief, an unwound turban, or a noosed cord. The shedding of blood was seldom resorted to. The motive of the thugs was not so much lust of plunder as a certain religious fanaticism. The bodies of their victims were hidden in graves dug with a consecrated pickax, and of their spoil one third was devoted to the goddess Kali, whom they worshiped. [Century Dictionary]

The more correct Indian name is *phanseegur* (from *phansi* "noose"), and the activity was described in English as far back as c. 1665. Rigorously prosecuted by the British from 1831, they were driven from existence by century's end. Transferred sense of "ruffian, cutthroat, violent lowbrow" is from 1839.



# Go Down in History

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## TRICKERY CEIKRRTY deception [n -RIES]

TRICK- early 15c., "a cheat, a mean ruse," from Old North French *trique* "trick, deceit, treachery, cheating," from *trikier* "to deceive, to cheat," variant of Old French *trichier* "to cheat, trick, deceive," of uncertain origin, probably from Vulgar Latin *\*triccare*, from Latin *tricari* "be evasive, shuffle," from *tricæ* "trifles, nonsense, a tangle of difficulties," of unknown origin.

Meaning "a roguish prank" is recorded from 1580s; sense of "the art of doing something" is first attested 1610s. Meaning "prostitute's client" is first attested 1915; earlier it was U.S. slang for "a robbery" (1865). To *do the trick* "accomplish one's purpose" is from 1812; to *miss a trick* "fail to take advantage of opportunity" is from 1889; from 1872 in reference to playing the card-game of whist, which might be the original literal sense. *Trick-or-treat* is recorded from 1942. *Trick question* is from 1907.

## TROUSERS EORRSSTU garment for lower part of body [n]

"garment for men, covering the lower body and each leg separately," 1610s, earlier *trouzes* (1580s), extended from *trouse* (1570s), with plural ending typical of things in pairs, from Gaelic or Middle Irish *triubhas* "close-fitting shorts," of uncertain origin. Early recorded use of the word indicates the garment was regarded as Celtic: "A jellous wife was like an Irish trouze, always close to a mans tayle" [1630]. The unexplained, unetymological second *-r-* is perhaps by influence of *drawers* or other words in pairs ending in *-ers*

## TUNGSTEN EGNSTTU metallic element [n -S]

rare metallic element, 1796, from Swedish *tungsten* "calcium tungstate," coined 1780 by its discoverer, Swedish chemist Karl Wilhelm Scheele (1742-1786) from *tung* "heavy" + *sten* "stone". The word was used earlier as the name for calcium tungstate (1770). Atomic symbol *W* is from Latin *wolframium*, from German *Wolfram* "iron tungstate".

## UMBRELLA ABELLMRU to provide with umbrella (portable cover for protection from rain or sun) [v -ED, -ING, -S]

"hand-held portable canopy which opens and folds," c. 1600, first attested in Donne's letters, from Italian *ombrello*, from Late Latin *umbrella*, altered (by influence of *umbra*) from Latin *umbella* "sunshade, parasol," diminutive of *umbra* "shade, shadow".

A sunshade in the Mediterranean, a shelter from the rain in England; in late 17c. usage, usually as an Oriental or African symbol of dignity. Said to have been used by women in England from c. 1700; the use of rain-umbrellas carried by men there traditionally is dated to c. 1750, first by Jonas Hathaway, noted traveler and philanthropist. Figurative sense of "authority, unifying quality" (usually in a phrase such as *under the umbrella of*) is recorded from 1948.

## VERMOUTH EHMORTUV liquor [n -S] ~ also VERMUTH /-S

white wine flavored with aromatic herbs, 1806, from French *vermouth* (18c.), from German *Wermuth* "wormwood," from Middle High German *wermuot*, from Old High German *wermuota* (wormwood), name of the aromatic herb formerly used in the flavoring of the liqueur.

## VIGNETTE EEGINTTV to describe briefly [v -D, -TTING, -S]

1751, "decorative design," originally a design in the form of vine tendrils around the borders of a book page, especially a picture page, from French *vignette*, from Old French diminutive of *vigne* "vineyard". Sense transferred from the border to the picture itself, then (1853) to a type of small photographic portrait with blurred edges very popular mid-19c. Meaning "literary sketch" is first recorded 1880, probably from the photographic sense.

## VOGUEING EGGINOUV VOGUE, to imitate poses of fashion models [v] ~ also VOGUING

VOGUE- 1570s, *the vogue*, "height of popularity or accepted fashion," from Middle French *vogue* "fashion, success;" also "drift, swaying motion (of a boat)" literally "a rowing," from Old French *voguer* "to row, sway, set sail" (15c.), probably from a Germanic source. Compare Old High German *wagon* "to float, fluctuate," literally "to balance oneself;" German *Woge* "wave, billow," *wogen* "fluctuate, float."

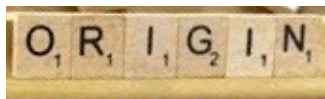
Perhaps the notion is of being "borne along on the waves of fashion." Italian *voga* "a rowing," Spanish *boga* "rowing," but colloquially "fashion, reputation" also probably are from the same Germanic source. Phrase *in vogue* "having a prominent place in popular fashion" first recorded 1643. The fashion magazine began publication in 1892.

## WAINSCOT ACINOSTW to line walls of with wooden paneling [v -ED, -ING, -S or -TTED, -TTING, -S]

mid-14c., "imported oak of superior quality" (well-grained and without knots), probably from Middle Dutch or Middle Flemish *waghenscote* "superior quality oak wood, board used for paneling" (though neither of these is attested as early as the English word), related to Middle Low German *wagenschot* (late 14c.), from *waghen* + *scote* "partition, crossbar".

So called perhaps because the wood originally was used for wagon building and coachwork, but the sense evolution is not entirely clear. Meaning "panels lining the walls of rooms" is recorded from 1540s. *Wainscoting* is from 1570s.

## WISEACRE ACEEIRSW pretentiously wise person [n -S]



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1590s, partial translation of Middle Dutch *wijssegger* "soothsayer" (with no derogatory connotation), probably altered by association with Middle Dutch *segger* "sayer" from Old High German *wizzago* "prophet," from *wizzan* "to know," from Proto-Germanic *\*wit-* "to know". The deprecatory sense of "one who pretends to know everything" may have come through confusion with obsolete English *segger* "sayer," which also had a sense of "braggart" (mid-15c.).