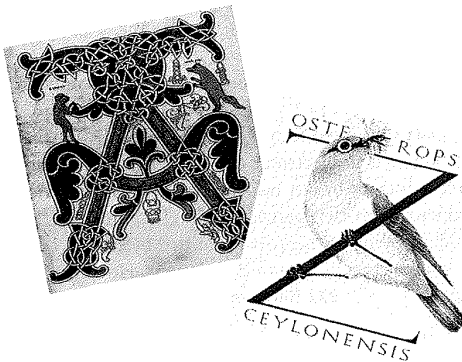


The
**American
Heritage® Dictionary**
of the English Language

FOURTH EDITION



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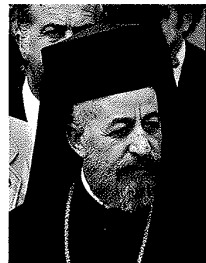
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majolica
c. 1530 plate from
Deruta, Italy



major scale



Makarios III

Royal dignity of bearing or aspect; grandeur. **b.** Stately splendor; magnificence, as of style or character: *the Parthenon in all its majesty*. [Middle English *mageste*, *maieste*, from Old French *majeste*, from Latin *māiestās*. See **meg-** in Appendix I.]

Maj Gen or **MajGen** *abbr.* major general

maj•o•li•ca (mə-jōl'ē-ka, -yōl'ē-) *n.* **1.** Tin-glazed earthenware that is often richly colored and decorated, especially an earthenware of this type produced in Italy. **2.** Pottery made in imitation of this earthenware. [Italian *maiolica*, from Medieval Latin *Māiōlica*, Majorca (where it was made), alteration of Late Latin *Māiōrica*.]

ma•jor (mə'jər) *adj.* **1.** Greater than others in importance or rank: *a major artist*. **2.** Great in scope or effect: *a major improvement*. **3.** Great in number, size, or extent: *the major portion of the population*. **4.** Requiring great attention or concern; very serious: *a major illness*. **5. Law** Having attained full legal age. **6.** Of or relating to the field of academic study in which a student specializes. **7. Music a.** Designating a scale or mode having half steps between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth degrees. **b.** Equivalent to the distance between the tonic note and the second or third or sixth or seventh degrees of a major scale or mode: *a major interval*. **c.** Based on a major scale: *a major key*. ♦ *n.* **1a. Abbr. MAJ** or **Maj** or **Maj.** A commissioned rank in the U.S. Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps that is above captain and below lieutenant colonel. **b.** One who holds this rank. **2.** One that is superior in rank, importance, or ability: *an oil-producing country considered as one of the majors*. **3. Law** One who has reached full legal age. **4a.** A field of study chosen as an academic specialty. **b.** A student specializing in such studies: *a linguistics major*. **5. Logic a.** A major premise. **b.** A major term. **6. Music a.** A major scale, key, interval, or mode. **b.** A chord containing a major third between the first and second notes and a minor third between the second and third notes. **7. majors Sports** The major leagues. ♦ *intr.v.* **-jored, -joring, -jors** To pursue academic studies in a major: *majoring in mathematics*. [Middle English *majour*, from Latin *māior*. See **meg-** in Appendix I.]

Ma•jor (mə'jər), **John Roy** Born 1943. British banker and conservative politician who served as prime minister from 1990 to 1997. During his administration he advocated privatization, anti-inflationary budget discipline, and negotiations for peace in Northern Ireland.

major axis *n.* The longer of the two lines about which an ellipse is symmetrical; the axis that passes through both foci of an ellipse.

Ma•jor•ca (mə-jōr'kə, -yōr'ē-) also **Mal•lor•ca** (mə-yōr'kə, -lyōr'ē-) An island of Spain in the western Mediterranean Sea off the east-central coast of the mainland. The largest of the Balearic Islands, it was the center of an independent kingdom from 1276 until 1343. Tourism is its major industry. —**Ma•jor•can** *adj.* & *n.*

ma•jor•do•mo (mə'jər-dō'mō) *n., pl. -mos* **1.** The head steward or butler in the household of a sovereign or great noble. **2.** A steward or butler. **3.** One who makes arrangements or directs affairs for another. [Italian *maggiordomo* or Spanish *mayordomo*, both from Medieval Latin *māior domūs*: Latin *māior*, chief; see **meg-** in Appendix I + Latin *domūs*, genitive of *domus*, house; see **dem-** in Appendix I.]

ma•jor•ette (mə'jə-rēt') *n.* A drum majorette.

major general *n.* **1. Abbr. MG** or **Maj Gen** or **MajGen** A commissioned rank in the U.S. Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps that is above brigadier general and below lieutenant general. **2.** One who holds this rank.

major histocompatibility complex *n. Abbr. MHC* A group of genes that code for cell-surface histocompatibility antigens and are the principle determinants of tissue type and transplant compatibility.

ma•jor•i•tar•i•an (mə-jōr'ē-tār'ē-ən, -jōr'ē-) *adj.* Based on majority rule: "a naively uncomplicated premise of simple majoritarian democracy" (Saturday Review). ♦ *n.* A person who is an advocate of majoritarianism.

ma•jor•i•tar•i•an•ism (mə-jōr'ē-tār'ē-ən-iz'm, -jōr'ē-) *n.* Rule by simple numerical majority in an organized group.

ma•jor•i•ty (mə-jōr'ē-tē, -jōr'ē-) *n., pl. -ties* **1.** The greater number or part; a number more than half of the total. **2.** The amount by which the greater number of votes cast, as in an election, exceeds the total number of remaining votes. **3.** The political party, group, or faction having the most power by virtue of its larger representation or electoral strength. **4. Law** The status of having reached full legal age, with attendant rights and responsibilities. **5.** The military rank, commission, or office of a major. **6. Obsolete** The fact or state of being greater; superiority. [French *majorité*, from Medieval Latin *māiōritās*, from Latin *māior*, greater. See **meg-** in Appendix I.]

Usage Note When *majority* refers to a particular number of votes, it takes a singular verb: *Her majority was five votes. His majority has been growing by 5 percent every year.* When it refers to a group of persons or things that are in the majority, it may take either a singular or plural verb, depending on whether the group is considered as a whole or as a set of people considered individually. So we say *The majority elects* (not *elect*) *the candidate it wants* (not *they want*), since the election is accomplished by the group as a whole; but *The majority of the voters live* (not *lives*) *in the city*, since living in the city is something that each voter does individually. • *Majority* is often preceded by *great* (but not by *greater*) in expressing emphatically the sense of "most of": *The great majority approved.* The phrase *greater majority* is appropriate only when considering two majorities: *He won by a greater majority in this election than in the last.*

majority leader *n.* The leader of the majority party in a legislature, as in the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives.

majority rule *n.* A doctrine by which a numerical majority of an

organized group holds the power to make decisions binding on all in the group.

major league *n.* **1.** Either of the two principal groups of professional baseball teams in the United States. **2.** A league of principal importance in other professional sports, such as basketball, football, or ice hockey.

ma•jor•league (mə'jər-lēg') *adj.* **1. Sports** Of or relating to a major league: *major-league baseball*. **2. Informal** Prominent or important: *a major-league ballet company*. **3. Informal** Impressive, as in extent or quantity: "a destination for major-league wooing" (Bryan Miller).

ma•jor•lea•guer (mə'jər-lē'gər) *n. Sports* A member of a major-league team, especially a major-league baseball player.

ma•jor•ly (mə'jər-lē) *adv. Slang* To a great or an intense degree; extremely: *got majorly depressed when she saw her test scores*.

major medical *n.* Insurance that covers all or most of the medical bills engendered by major or prolonged illnesses above a set amount.

major order *n. Ecclesiastical* A principal order of the clergy, especially the rank of bishop, priest, and deacon, in the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican churches. Also called *holy order*.

major party *n.* A political party having enough strength to gain control of a government with comparative regularity.

major premise *n.* The premise containing the major term in a syllogism.

Major Prophets *pl.n. Bible* The Hebrew prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

major scale *n. Music* A diatonic scale having half steps between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth degrees and whole steps between the other adjacent degrees.

major suit *n. Games* A suit of superior scoring value, either spades or hearts in bridge.

major term *n.* The term of a syllogism that forms the predicate of the conclusion.

major tranquilizer *n.* See **antipsychotic drug**.

Ma•ju•ro (mə-jōr'ō) The capital of the Marshall Islands, an atoll of the southern Ratak Chain. Population: 20,000.

ma•jus•cule (mə-jūs'kyool, məjə'skyool') *n.* A large letter, either capital or uncial, used in writing or printing. [French, from Latin *māiusculus*, somewhat larger, diminutive of *māior*, greater. See **meg-** in Appendix I.] —**ma•jus•cule, ma•jus•cu•lar** (mə-jūs'kyə-lər) *adj.*

Ma•kah (mə-kä') *n., pl. Makah* or **-kahs** **1a.** A Native American people inhabiting the Cape Flattery area of northwest Washington. **b.** A member of this people. **2.** The Wakashan language of the Makah.

Mak•a•lu (mük'ə-lō') A mountain, 8,476 m (27,790 ft) high, in the Himalaya Mountains of northeast Nepal. It was first scaled in 1955.

mak•ar (mä'kər, mā-) *n. Chiefly Scots* A poet. [Middle English, variant of *maker*, maker, poet.]

Ma•kar•i•os III (mə-kär'ē-as, -ōs', mā-kär'ē-ōs) Originally Mikhail Khristodolou Mouskos. 1913–1977. Cypriot prelate and politician. Bishop of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus (1950–1977), he supported the political unification of Cyprus and Greece and was the first president of independent Cyprus (1959–1977).

Ma•kas•sar or **Ma•ka•sar** (mə-käs'ər) See **Ujung Pandang**.

Makassar Strait A strait between Borneo and Sulawesi connecting the Java Sea with the Celebes Sea.

Ma•ka•ti (mä'kə-tē') A city of southwest Luzon, Philippines, a suburb of Manila. Population: 408,991.

make (mäk) *v. made* (mäd), **mak•ing, makes** —*tr.* **1.** To cause to exist or happen; bring about; create: *made problems for us; making a commotion*. **2.** To bring into existence by shaping, modifying, or putting together material; construct: *make a dress; made a stone wall*. **3.** To form by assembling individuals or constituents: *make a quorum*. **4.** To change from one form or function to another: *make clay into bricks*. **5a.** To cause to be or become: *made her position clear; a decision that made him happy*. **b.** To cause to assume a specified function or role: *made her treasurer; made Austin his home*. **6a.** To cause to act in a specified manner: *Heat makes gases expand*. **b.** To compel: *made him quit*. **7a.** To form in the mind: *make an estimate*. **b.** To compose: *make verses*. **8a.** To prepare; fix: *make dinner*. **b.** To get ready or set in order for use: *made the bed*. **c.** To gather and light the materials for (a fire). **9a.** To engage in: *make war*. **b.** To carry out; perform: *make a phone call; make an incision*. **10.** To achieve, produce, or attain: *made peace between the two sides; not making sense; didn't make the quota*. **11a.** To institute or establish; enact: *make laws*. **b.** To draw up and execute in a suitable form: *make a will*. **c.** To arrange or agree to: *make a date*. **12a.** To arrive at; reach: *made Seattle in two hours*. **b.** To reach in time: *just made the plane*. **13a.** To attain the rank or position of: *made lieutenant*. **b.** To acquire a place in or on: *made the baseball team; made the newspapers*. **14a.** To gain or earn, as by working: *make money*. **b.** To behave so as to acquire: *make friends*. **c.** To score or achieve, as in a sport: *made a field goal*. **15a.** To assure the success of: *Favorable reviews can make a play*. **b.** To favor the development of: *Practice makes a winning team*. **16.** To be suited for: *Oak makes strong furniture*. **17.** To develop into: *will make a fine doctor*. **18a.** To draw a conclusion as to the significance or nature of: *don't know what to make of the decision*. **b.** To calculate as being; estimate: *I make the height 20 feet*. **c.** To consider as being: *wasn't the problem some people made it*. **19a.** To constitute: *Ten members make a quorum*. **b.** To add up to: *Two and two make four*. **c.** To amount to: *makes no difference*. **20.** To cover (a distance): *made 200 miles before sunset*. **21.** To constitute the essence or nature of: *Clothes make the man*. **22.** To cause to be especially enjoyable or rewarding: *You made my day*. **23.** To appear to begin (an action): *She made to leave*. **24. Slang** To persuade to have sexual intercourse. —*intr.* **1.** To act or behave in a specified manner: *make merry; make free*. **2.**

Sliven (sliv'ən) A city of east-central Bulgaria east of Sofia. It was contested by Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire in medieval times and by Russia and Turkey in the 19th century. Population: 106,225.

sliver (sliv'ər) *n.* 1. A slender piece cut, split, or broken off; a splinter: *slivers of broken glass*. 2. A small narrow piece, portion, or plot: *a sliver of land*. 3. (also *sliv'vər*) A continuous strand of loose wool, flax, or cotton, ready for drawing and twisting. *♦ tr. & intr. v. -ered, -ering, -ers* To split or become split into slivers. [Middle English *slivere*, from *sliven*, to split, from Old English *slifan*.]

slivovitz (sliv'ə-vīts) *n.* A dry colorless plum brandy. [Serbo-Croatian *šljivovica*, from *šljiva*, plum. See **sleia-** in Appendix I.]

Word History Though colorless, slivovitz is a brandy or schnapps made from bluish plums. The Slavic word for plum is *sliva*, which is related to Latin *lividus*, "bluish, bruise-colored," from which we get *livid*, a word synonymous with our *black-and-blue* when used to describe the discoloration caused by a bruise. The Indo-European root **sleia-*, "bluish," from which the Slavic and the Latin words are descended, has another descendant in English associated with alcohol, *sloe*, the name of a small sour plum of a dark purplish color. Many who have never seen this type of plum have tasted it in *sloe gin*, which is flavored with sloes.

Sloan (slōn), **John French** 1871–1951. American painter whose scenes of urban life include *Sunday*, *Women Drying Their Hair* (1912).

slob (slōb) *n.* Informal A person regarded as slovenly, crude, or obnoxious. [Irish Gaelic *slab*, mud, from Old Irish, probably of Scandinavian origin; akin to Swedish dialectal *slabb*, mud.] —**slob/bish**, **slob/-by** *adj.*

slobber (slōb'ər) *v. -bered, -bering, -bers* —*intr.* 1. To let saliva or liquid spill out from the mouth; drool. 2. To express sentiment or enthusiasm effusively or incoherently; gush. —*tr.* To wet or smear with or as if with saliva or liquid dribbled from the mouth. *♦ n.* 1. Saliva or liquid running from the mouth; drool. 2. Effusive or incoherent expression; drivel. [Middle English *sloberen*, perhaps of Low German origin.] —**slob/ber'er** *n.* —**slob/ber'y** *adj.*

slob ice *n.* Canadian Slushy or broken ice floating as a mass at sea. [From dialectal *slob*, muddy land, from Irish Gaelic *slab*, mud. See **SLOB**.]

sloe (slō) *n.* 1. See **blackthorn**. 2. Either of two eastern North American plum trees or shrubs, *Prunus alleghaniensis*, having dark purple fruit, or *P. americana*, having yellow or red fruit. 3. The tart plumlike fruit of either of these plants. [Middle English *slo*, from Old English *slā*. See **sleia-** in Appendix I.]

sloe-eyed (slō'id') *adj.* Having slanted dark eyes.

sloe gin *n.* A liqueur having a gin base, flavored with fresh sloes.

slog (slōg) *v. slogged, slogging, slogs* —*intr.* 1. To walk or progress with a slow heavy pace; plod: *slog across the swamp; slogged through both volumes*. 2. To work diligently for long hours: *slogged away at Latin*. —*tr.* 1. To make (one's way) with a slow heavy pace against resistance. 2. To strike with heavy blows. *♦ n.* 1. A long exhausting march or hike: *a slog through miles of jungle*. 2. A long session of hard work: *an 18-hour slog in the hay fields*. [Perhaps alteration of *SLUG*.] —**slog/ger** *n.*

slogan (slō'gən) *n.* 1. A phrase expressing the aims or nature of an enterprise, organization, or candidate; a motto. 2. A phrase used repeatedly, as in advertising or promotion: *"all the slogans and shibboleths coined out of the ideals of the peoples for the uses of imperialism"* (Margaret Sanger). 3. A battle cry of a Scottish clan. [Alteration of Scots *slogorne*, battle cry, from Gaelic *sluagh-ghairm*: *sluagh*, host; see **SLEW** + *gairm*, shout.]

sloganeer (slō'gə-nīr') *n.* A person who invents or uses slogans. *♦ intr. v. -eered, -eering, -eers* To invent or use slogans.

sloganize (slō'gə-nīz') *tr. v. -ized, -izing, -izes* To express as or in slogans or a slogan. —**slo'gan·iz'er** *n.*

sloka (shlō'kə) *n.* A distich of Sanskrit verse consisting of two sixteen-syllable lines of two eight-syllable padas each. [Sanskrit *sloka*, sound, hymn, sloka. See **kleu-** in Appendix I.]

sloop (slōp) *n.* A single-masted, fore-and-aft-rigged sailing boat with a short standing bowsprit or none at all and a single headsail set from the forestay. [Dutch *sloep*, from Middle Dutch *slāpen*, to glide. See **sleubh-** in Appendix I.]

sloop of war *n., pl. sloops of war* A small warship carrying guns on one deck only.

slop (slōp) *n.* 1. Spilled or splashed liquid. 2. Soft mud or slush. 3. Unappetizing watery food or soup. 4. Waste food used to feed pigs or other animals; swill. Often used in the plural. 5. Mash remaining after alcohol distillation. Often used in the plural. 6. Human excrement. Often used in the plural. 7. Repulsively effusive writing or speech; drivel. *♦ v. slopped, slopping, slops* —*intr.* 1. To be spilled or splashed: *Suds slopped over the rim of the washtub*. 2. To spill over; overflow. 3. To walk heavily or messily in or as if in mud; plod: *"He slopped along in broken slippers, hands in pockets, whistling"* (Alan Sillitoe). 4. To express oneself effusively; gush. —*tr.* 1. To spill (liquid). 2. To spill liquid on. 3. To serve unappetizingly or clumsily; dish out: *slopped some lasagna onto his plate*. 4. To feed slops to (animals): *slopped the hogs*. [Middle English *sloppe*, a muddy place, perhaps from Old English **slope*, dung, slime. See **sleubh-** in Appendix I.]

slop (slōp) *n.* 1. **slops** Articles of clothing and bedding issued or sold to sailors. 2. **slops** Short full trousers worn in the 16th century. 3. A loose outer garment, such as a smock or overalls. 4. **slops** Chiefly British Cheap, ready-made garments. [Middle English *sloppe*, a kind of garment, from Old English *-slop* (in *oferþslop*, surplice; see **sleubh-** in Appendix I).]

slope (slōp) *v. sloped, sloping, slopes* —*intr.* 1. To diverge from the vertical or horizontal; incline: *a roof that slopes; a sudden slope in the road*. See synonyms at **slant**. 2. To move on a slant; ascend or descend: *sloped down the trail*. —*tr.* To cause to slope: *engineers sloped the path down the bank*. *♦ n.* 1. An inclined line, surface, plane, position, or direction. 2. A stretch of ground forming a natural or artificial incline: *ski slopes*. 3a. A deviation from the horizontal. b. The amount or degree of such deviation. 4. **Mathematics** a. The rate at which an ordinate of a point of a line on a coordinate plane changes with respect to a change in the abscissa. b. The tangent of the angle of inclination of a line, or the slope of the tangent line for a curve or surface. 5. **Offensive Slang** Used as a disparaging term for a person of East Asian birth or descent. [Probably from Middle English *aslope*, sloping.] —**slop'er** *n.* —**slop'ingly** *adv.*

slop-pitch (slōp'pich') *n.* Variant of **slow-pitch**.

sloppy (slōp'ē) *adj. -pi·er, -pi·est* 1. Marked by a lack of neatness or order; untidy: *a sloppy room*. 2. Marked by a lack of care or precision; slipshod: *sloppy use of language*. 3. Informal Oversentimental; gushy. 4. Of, resembling, or covered with slop; muddy or slushy: *sloppy ground*. 5. Watery and unappetizing: *a sloppy stew*. 6. Spotted or splashed with liquid. —**slop/pi·ly** *adv.* —**slop/pi·ness** *n.*

Synonyms *sloppy, slovenly, unkempt, slipshod* These adjectives mean marked by an absence of due or proper care or attention. *Sloppy* evokes the idea of careless spilling, spotting, or splashing; it suggests slackness, untidiness, or diffuseness: *a sloppy kitchen; sloppy dress*. "I do not see how the sloppiest reasoner can evade that" (H.G. Wells). *Slovenly* implies habitual negligence and a lack of system or thoroughness: *a slovenly appearance; slovenly inaccuracies*. *Unkempt* stresses dishevelment resulting from a neglectful lack of proper maintenance: *"an unwashed brow, an unkempt head of hair"* (Sir Walter Scott). *Slipshod* suggests inattention to detail and a general absence of meticulousness: *"the new owners' camp . . . a slipshod and slovenly affair, tent half stretched, dishes unwashed"* (Jack London).

sloppy joe or **sloppy Joe** *n.* A bun filled or covered with ground beef cooked in a spicy tomato sauce.

slopwork (slōp'wŭrk') *n.* 1a. The manufacture of inexpensive, low-quality, ready-to-wear clothes. b. Cheap ready-to-wear clothes. 2. Careless or hasty work.

slosh (slōsh) *v. sloshed, sloshing, sloshes* —*tr.* 1. To spill or splash (a liquid) copiously or clumsily: *slosh paint on the floor*. 2. To agitate in a liquid: *slosh clothes in a solution of bleach and detergent*. —*intr.* To splash, wade, or flounder in water or another liquid: *sloshed through the creek*. *♦ n.* 1. Slush. 2. The sound of splashing liquid. [Perhaps blend of *SLOP* + *SLUSH*.] —**slosh'y** *adj.*

sloshed (slōsh't) *adj.* Slang Intoxicated; drunk.

slot (slōt) *n.* 1. A narrow opening; a groove or slit: *a slot for coins in a vending machine; a mail slot*. 2. A gap between a main and auxiliary airfoil to provide space for airflow and facilitate the smooth passage of air over the wing. 3a. An assigned place in a sequence or schedule: *a new time slot for a TV program*. b. A position of employment in an organization or hierarchy. 4. **Computer Science** An expansion slot. 5. Informal A slot machine designed for gambling: *lost \$100 playing the slots*. 6a. Football A space or gap between an end and a tackle in an offensive line. b. Sports An unmarked area in front of the goal between the face-off circles on an ice hockey rink. *♦ tr. v. slot·ted, slot·ting, slots 1.* To cut or make a slot or slots in. 2. To put into or assign to a slot. [Middle English, hollow of the breastbone, from Old French *esclot*.]

slot (slōt) *n.* The track or trail of an animal, especially a deer. [Obsolete French *esclot*, horse's hoofprint, from Old French, perhaps from Old Norse *slōth*, track.]

slot car *n.* An electric toy racing car that fits into a slotted track and is controlled by a rheostat held by the operator.

sloth (slōth, slōth, slōth) *n.* 1. Aversion to work or exertion; laziness; indolence. 2. Any of various slow-moving, arboreal, edentate mammals of the family Bradypodidae of South and Central America, having long hooklike claws by which they hang upside down from tree branches and feeding on leaves, buds, and fruits, especially: a. A member of the genus *Bradypus*, having three long-clawed toes on each forefoot. Also called *at Bradypus*, having three long-clawed toes on each forefoot. Also called *at three-toed sloth*. b. A member of the genus *Choloepus*, having two toes on each forefoot. Also called *two-toed sloth, unau*. 3. A company of bears. See synonyms at **flock**¹. [Middle English *slowth*, from *slow*, *slow*. See **SLOW**.]

sloth bear *n.* A bear (*Melursus ursinus*) of India and Sri Lanka, having a long snout, long sticky tongue, and dark shaggy hair and feeding on plants and insects, especially termites and the larvae of bees.

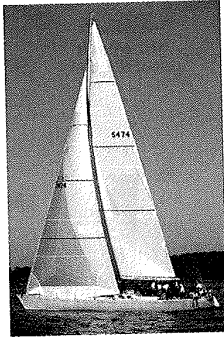
slothful (slōth'fəl, slōth'f-, slōth'f-) *adj.* Disinclined to work or exertion; lazy. See synonyms at **lazy**. —**sloth/ful·ly** *adv.* —**sloth/ful·ness** *n.*

sloth machine *n.* 1. A gambling machine operated by inserting coins into a slot and often by pulling down on a long handle. 2. A vending machine operated by inserting coins into a slot.

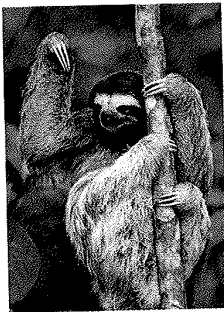
sloth racing *n.* The racing of slot cars. —**slot racer** *n.*

slouch (slouch) *v. slouched, slouching, slouches* —*intr.* 1. To sit, stand, or walk with an awkward, drooping, excessively relaxed posture. 2. To droop or hang carelessly, as a hat. —*tr.* To cause to droop; stoop. *♦ n.* 1. An awkward, drooping, excessively relaxed posture or gait. 2. Slang An awkward, lazy, or inept person: *good at chess and no slouch at bridge, either*. [Origin unknown.] —**slouch'er** *n.* —**slouch'ingly** *adv.* —**slouch/i·ness** *n.* —**slouch'y** *adj.*

slouch hat *n.* A soft hat with a broad flexible brim.



sloop



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three-toed sloth
Bradypus variegatus

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