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ac-ti-non \ak-tə-nən\ *n* [NL, fr. *actinium*] (1926): a gaseous radioactive isotope of radon that has a half-life of about 4 seconds

ac-tion \ak-shən\ *n* (14c) 1: the initiating of a proceeding in a court of justice by which one demands or enforces one's right; *also*: the proceeding itself 2: the bringing about of an alteration by force or through a natural agency 3: the manner or method of performing; *a*: the department of an actor or speaker or his expression by means of attitude, voice, and gesture *b*: the style of movement of the feet and legs (as of a horse) *c*: a function of the body or one of its parts 4: an act of will 5 *a*: a thing done; *DEED* *b*: the accomplishment of a thing usu. over a period of time, in stages, or with the possibility of repetition *c pl*; *BEHAVIOR, CONDUCT* (unscrupulous ~s) *d*: INITIATIVE, ENTERPRISE (a man of ~) 6 *a* (1): an engagement between troops or ships (2): combat in war (gallantry in ~) *b* (1): an event or series of events forming a literary composition (2): the unfolding of the events of a drama or work of fiction; *PLOT* (3): the movement of incidents in a plot *c*: the combination of circumstances that constitute the subject matter of a painting or sculpture 7 *a*: an operating mechanism *b*: the manner in which a mechanism or instrument operates 8 *a*: the price movement and trading volume of a commodity, security, or market *b*: the process of betting including the offering and acceptance of a bet and determination of a winner *c*: an opportunity for financial gain (a piece of the ~) 9: the most vigorous, productive, or exciting activity in a particular field, area, or group (they itch to go where the ~ is —D. J. Henahan)

ac-tion-able \ak-sh(ə)-ə-bəl\ *adj* (1591): subject to or affording ground for an action or suit at law — **ac-tion-ably** \-b(ə)-l\ *adv*

ac-tion-less \ak-shən-ləs\ *adj* (ca. 1817): marked by inaction; *IMMOBILE*

ac-tion painting *n* (1952): abstract expressionism marked esp. by the use of spontaneous techniques (as dribbling, splattering, or smearing) — **ac-tion painter** *n*

ac-tion po-ten-tial *n* (1926): a momentary change in electrical potential (as between the inside of a nerve cell and the extracellular medium) that occurs when a cell or tissue has been activated by a stimulus

ac-ti-vate \ak-tə-ˈvāt\ *vb* -**vat-ed**; -**vat-ing** *vt* (1626): to make active or more active: *as* (1): to make (as molecules) reactive or more reactive (2): to convert (as a provitamin) into a biologically active derivative; *b*: to make (as a substance) radioactive *c*: to treat (as carbon or aluminum) so as to improve adsorptive properties *d* (1): to set up or formally institute (as a military unit) with the necessary personnel and equipment (2): to put (an individual or unit) on active duty ~ *vi*: to become active — **ac-ti-va-tion** \ak-tə-ˈvā-shən\ *n* — **ac-ti-va-tor** \ak-tə-ˈvā-tər\ *n*

activated carbon *n* (1921): a highly adsorbent powdered or granular carbon made usu. by carbonization and chemical activation and used chiefly for purifying by adsorption — called also *activated charcoal*

activation analysis *n* (1949): NEUTRON ACTIVATION ANALYSIS

activation energy *n* (1940): the minimum amount of energy required to convert a normal stable molecule into a reactive molecule

ac-tive \ak-tiv\ *adj* [ME, fr. MF or L; MF *actif*, fr. L *activus*, fr. *actus*, pp. of *agere* to drive, do — more at *AGENT*] (14c) 1: characterized by action rather than by contemplation or speculation 2: producing or involving action or movement 3 *a of a verb form or voice*: asserting that the person or thing represented by the grammatical subject performs the action represented by the verb ('hits in "he hits the ball" is ~) *b*: expressing action as distinct from mere existence or state 4: quick in physical movement; *LIVELY* 5: marked by vigorous activity; *BUSY* (the stock market was ~) 6: requiring vigorous action or exertion (~ sports) 7: having practical operation or results; *EFFECTIVE* (an ~ law) 8 *a*: disposed to action; *ENERGETIC* (took an ~ interest) *b*: engaged in an action or activity (an ~ club member) *c of a volcano*: currently erupting or likely to erupt — compare *DORMANT* 2a, *EXTINCT* 1b *d*: characterized by emission of large amounts of electromagnetic energy (an ~ galactic nucleus) 9: engaged in full-time service esp. in the armed forces (~ duty) 10: marked by present operation, transaction, movement, or use (~ account) 11 *a*: capable of acting or reacting; reacting readily (~ nitrogen) *b*: tending to progress or to cause degeneration (~ tuberculosis) *c of an electronic circuit element*: capable of controlling voltages or currents *d* (1): requiring the expenditure of energy (~ calcium ion uptake) (2): functioning by the emission of radiant energy (radar is an ~ sensor) 12: still eligible to win the pot in poker 13: moving down the line; *visiting in the set* — used of couples in contradances or square dances — **ac-tive-ly** *adv* — **ac-tive-ness** *n*

active immunity *n* (ca. 1903): usu. long-lasting immunity that is acquired through production of antibodies within the organism in response to the presence of antigens — compare *PASSIVE IMMUNITY*

active transport *n* (1963): movement of a chemical substance by the expenditure of energy through a gradient (as across a cell membrane) in concentration or electrical potential and opposite to the direction of normal diffusion

ac-tiv-ism \ak-ti-ˈvī-zəm\ *n* (1915): a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action esp. in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue — **ac-tiv-ist** \-vist\ *n* or *adj* — **ac-tiv-is-tic** \ak-ti-ˈvī-tik\ *adj*

ac-tiv-i-ty \ak-ti-ˈvə-tē\ *n, pl* -ties (1530) 1: the quality or state of being active 2: vigorous or energetic action; *LIVELINESS* 3: natural or normal function: *as* a: a process (as digestion) that an organism carries on or participates in by virtue of being alive *b*: a similar process actually or potentially involving mental function; *specif*: an educational procedure designed to stimulate learning by firsthand experience 4: an active force 5 *a*: a pursuit in which a person is active *b*: a form of organized, supervised, often extracurricular recreation 6: an organizational unit for performing a specific function; *also*: its function or duties

act of God (ca. 1859): an extraordinary interruption by a natural cause (as a flood or earthquake) of the usual course of events that experience, presence, or care cannot reasonably foresee or prevent

ac-to-my-o-sin \ak-tə-ˈmī-ə-sən\ *n* [ISV *actin* + *-o-* + *myosin*] (1942): a viscous contractile complex of actin and myosin concerned together with ATP in muscular contraction

ac-tor \ak-tər *also* -tōr\ *n* (15c) 1: one that acts; *DOER* 2 *a*: one who represents a character in a dramatic production *b*: a theatrical

performer *c*: one that behaves as if acting a part 3: one that takes part in any affair — **ac-tor-ish** \-tə-rish\ *adj*

act out *vt* (1611) 1 *a*: to represent in action (children *act out* what they read) *b*: to translate into action (unwilling to *act out* their beliefs) 2: to express (as an impulse or a fantasy) directly in overt behavior without modification to comply with social norms

ac-tress \ak-trəs\ *n* (1676): a woman who is an actor — **ac-tressy** \-trə-sē\ *adj*

Acts \ak-ts\ *n pl* *but sing in constr*: a book in the New Testament narrating the beginnings of the Christian Church — called also *Acts of the Apostles*; see *BIBLE* table

ac-tu-al \ak-ch(ə)-wəl, -sh(ə)-wəl\ *adj* [ME *actuel*, fr. MF, fr. LL *actualis*, fr. L *actus* act] (14c) 1 *obs*: ACTIVE 2 *a*: existing in fact and not merely potentially *b*: existing in fact or reality (~ and imagined conditions) *c*: not false or apparent (~ costs) 3: existing or occurring at the time; *CURRENT* (caught in the ~ commission of a crime)

actual cash value *n* (ca. 1946): money equal to the cost of replacing lost, stolen, or damaged property after depreciation

ac-tu-al-ity \ak-chə-ˈwə-lə-tē, -ak-shə-ˈl\ *n, pl* -ties (1652) 1: the quality or state of being actual 2: something that is actual: *FACT, REALITY* (possible risks which have been seized upon as *actualities* —T. S. Eliot)

ac-tu-al-ize \ak-ch(ə)-wə-līz, -sh(ə)-wə-līz\ *vb* -ized; -iz-ing *vt* (1701): to make actual; *REALIZE* ~ *vi*: to become actual — **ac-tu-al-iza-tion** \ak-ch(ə)-wə-lə-ˈzā-shən, -sh(ə)-wə-lə-ˈzā-\ *n*

ac-tu-al-ly \ak-ch(ə)-wə-lē, -sh(ə)-wə-lē, -aksh-lē, -aks-ˈl\ *adv* (15c) 1: in act or in fact; *REALLY* (nominally but not ~ independent —Karl Loewenstein) ('don't know how old they ~ are) (~ they just arrived) 2: in point of fact; in truth — used to suggest something unexpected (I have ~ been invited) (he could ~ read the Greek)

ac-tu-ar-i-al \ak-chə-ˈwer-ē-əl, -shə-ˈl\ *adj* (1869) 1: of or relating to actuaries 2: relating to statistical calculation esp. of life expectancy — **ac-tu-ar-i-al-ly** \-ē-ə-lē\ *adv*

ac-tu-ary \ak-chə-ˈwer-ē, -shə-ˈl\ *n, pl* -ar-ies [L *actuarius* shorthand writer, alter. of *actarius*, fr. *actum* record — more at *ACT*] (1553) 1 *obs*: CLERK, REGISTRAR 2: one who calculates insurance and annuity premiums, reserves, and dividends

ac-tu-ate \ak-chə-ˈwāt, -shə-ˈl\ *vt* -ated; -at-ing [ML *actuatus*, pp. of *actuare* to execute, fr. L *actus* act] (1645) 1: to put into mechanical action or motion 2: to move to action *syn* see *MOVE* — **ac-tu-a-tion** \ak-chə-ˈwā-shən, -shə-ˈl\ *n*

ac-tu-a-tor \ak-chə-ˈwā-tər, -shə-ˈl\ *n* (ca. 1864): one that actuates; *specif*: a mechanical device for moving or controlling something

act up *vi* (1903) 1: to act in a way different from that which is normal or expected: *as* a: to behave in an unruly, recalcitrant, or capricious manner *b*: *SHOW OFF* *c*: to function improperly (this typewriter is *acting up* again) 2: to become active or active after being quiescent (her rheumatism started to *act up*)

ac-uity \ə-ˈkyū-ə-tē, ə-ˈl\ *n, pl* -ities [MF *acuité*, fr. LL *acuiat*, *acuitas*, fr. L *acuere*] (1543): keenness of perception; *SHARPNESS*

ac-ule-ate \ə-ˈkyū-lē-ət\ *adj* [L *aculeatus* having stings, fr. *aculeus* sting, fr. *acus*] (1875): relating to or being hymenopteran (as bees, ants, and many wasps) of a division (Aculeata) typically having the ovipositor modified into a sting

ac-u-men \ə-ˈkyū-mən, ə-ˈkju-mən\ *n* [L *acumin*, *acumen*, lit. point, fr. *acuere*] (ca. 1580): keenness and depth of perception, discernment, or discrimination esp. in practical matters; *SIREWIDNESS* *syn* see *DIS-CERNMENT*

ac-u-mi-nate \ə-ˈkyū-mə-nət\ *adj* (1646): tapering to a slender point

ac-u-pres-sure \ə-ˈkju-prə-shər, ə-ˈkə-ˈl\ *n* (1958): SHIATSU

ac-u-punc-ture \-ˌpʌŋ(k)-chər\ *n* [L *acus* + *E puncture*] (1684): an orig. Chinese practice of puncturing the body (as with needles) at specific points to cure disease or relieve pain (as in surgery) — **ac-u-punc-tur-ist** \-ˌpʌŋ(k)-chə-rɪst\ *n*

ac-ute \ə-ˈkyūt\ *adj* *acuter*; *acutest* [L *acutus*, pp. of *acuere* to sharpen, fr. *acus* needle; akin to L *acer* sharp — more at *EDGE*] (14c) 1 *a* (1): characterized by sharpness or severity (~ pain) (2): having a sudden onset, sharp rise, and short course (~ disease) *b*: lasting a short time (~ experiments) 2: ending in a sharp point: *as* a: being or forming an angle measuring less than 90 degrees (~ angle) *b*: composed of acute angles (~ triangle) 3 *a of an accent mark*: having the form *b*: marked with an acute accent *c*: of the variety indicated by an acute accent 4 *a*: marked by keen discernment or intellectual perception esp. of subtle distinctions; *PENETRATING* (an ~ thinker) *b*: responsive to slight impressions or stimuli (~ hearing) 5: felt, perceived, or experienced intensely (~ distress) 6: seriously demanding urgent attention — **ac-ute-ly** *adv* — **ac-ute-ness** *n*

syn ACUTE, CRITICAL, CRUCIAL mean of uncertain outcome. ACUTE stresses intensification of conditions leading to a culmination or breaking point (an *acute* housing shortage). CRITICAL adds to ACUTE implications of imminent change, of attendant suspense, and of decisiveness in the outcome (the war has entered a *critical* phase). CRUCIAL suggests a dividing of the ways and often a test or trial involving the determination of a future course or direction (a *crucial* vote). *syn* see in addition SHARP

ac-y-clic \jə-ˈsī-klɪk, -sī-ˈl\ *adj* (1878): not cyclic: *as* a: not disposed in whorls or cycles *b*: having an open-chain structure; ALIPHATIC (an ~ compound)

ac-y-clo-vir \jə-ˈsī-klō-ˈvīr\ *n* [2a- + *cycl-* + *virus*] (1979): a cyclic nucleoside C₈H₁₁N₅O₃ used esp. to treat the symptoms of the genital form of herpes simplex

ac-yl \ə-ˈsəl\ *n, often attrib* [ISV, fr. *acid*] (1899): a radical RCO— derived usu. from an organic acid by removal of the hydroxyl from all acid groups — often used in combination

ac-yl-ate \ə-ˈsə-ˈlāt\ *vt* -ated; -at-ing (1907): to introduce an acyl group into — **ac-yl-a-tion** \ə-ˈsə-ˈlā-shən\ *n*

ad \əd\ *n, often attrib* (1841) 1: ADVERTISEMENT 2: ADVERTISING

ad *n* (1947): ADVANTAGE 4

ad- or **ac-** or **af-** or **ag-** or **al-** or **ap-** or **as-** or **at-** prefix [ME, fr. MF, OF & L; MF, fr. OF, fr. L, fr. *ad-* more at *AT*] 1: to: toward — usu. *ac-* before *c*, *g* (acculturation) and *af-* before *f* (affluent) and *ag-* before *g* (aggradation) and *al-* before *l* (alliteration) and *ap-* before *p* (apportion) and *as-* before *s* (assuasive) and *at-* before *t* (artune) and *ad-* before other sounds but sometimes *ad-* even before one of the listed

shrubs with aromatic leaves; esp: a woody vine (*P. nigrum*) with spicate flowers that is widely cultivated in the tropics for its red berries from which black pepper and white pepper are prepared 2 a: any of several products similar to pepper that are obtained from close relatives of the pepper plant b: any of various pungent condiments obtained from plants of other genera than that of the pepper 3 a: CAPSICUM 1; esp: a New World capsicum (*Capsicum annuum*) whose fruits are hot peppers or sweet peppers b: the fruit of a pepper that is usu. red or yellow when ripe — **pepper** *adj*

pepper *vi* **peppered**; **pepper-ing** \ˈpeɪ-p(ə)-rɪŋ\ (1538) 1 a: to sprinkle, season, or cover with or as if with pepper b: to shower with or as if with shot or other missiles 2: to hit with rapid repeated blows 3: to sprinkle as if with pepper (~ed the report with statistics) — **pepper-ed** \-p(ə)-rəd\ *n*

pepper-and-salt \ˈpeɪ-pər-(ə)n(d)-sɔlt\ *adj* (1774): SALT-AND-PEPPER
pepper-box \ˈpeɪ-pər-ˈbɒks\ *n* (1546) 1: a small usu. cylindrical box or bottle with a perforated top used for sprinkling ground pepper on food 2: a pistol of the late 18th century with five or six revolving barrels

pepper-corn \ˈpeɪ-pər-kɔrn\ *n* (bef. 12c): a dried berry of the black pepper
peppered moth *n* (ca. 1832): a European geometrid moth (*Biston betularia*) that typically has white wings with small black specks but also occurs as a solid black form esp. in areas where the air is heavily polluted by industry

pepper-grass \ˈpeɪ-pər-ˈgræs\ *n* (15c): any of a genus (*Lepidium*) of cresses; esp: GARDEN CRESS

pepper mill *n* (ca. 1858): a hand mill for grinding peppercorns

pepper-mint \ˈpeɪ-pər-mɪnt-, -mɪnt-, *in rapid speech* \ˈpeɪ-mɒnt or -mɪnt\ *n* (1696) 1 a: a pungent and aromatic mint (*Mentha piperita*) with dark green lanceolate leaves and whorls of small pink flowers in spikes b: any of several mints (as *M. arvensis*) that are related to the peppermint 2: candy flavored with peppermint — **pepper-minty** \ˈpeɪ-pər-mɪn-ti\ *adj*

pepper-oni \ˈpeɪ-pə-ˈrɒ-ni\ *n* [It *peperoni* cayenne peppers, pl. of *peperone*, aug. of *pepe* pepper, fr. *L. piper* — more at PEPPER] (1921): a highly seasoned beef and pork sausage

pepper pot *n* (1679) 1 *Brit*: PEPPERBOX 1 2 a: a highly seasoned West Indian stew of vegetables and meat or fish b: a thick soup of tripe, meat, dumplings, and vegetables highly seasoned esp. with crushed peppercorns — called also *Philadelphia pepper pot*

pepper shaker *n* (1895): a container with a perforated top for sprinkling pepper

pepper-tree \ˈpeɪ-pər-ˈtriː\ *n* (ca. 1692): a Peruvian evergreen tree (*Schinus molle*) of the cashew family grown as a shade tree in mild regions

peppery \ˈpeɪ-p(ə)-ri\ *adj* (1699) 1: of, relating to, or having the qualities of pepper: HOT, PUNGENT (a ~ taste) 2: having a hot temper: TOUCHY (a ~ boss) 3: FIERY, STINGING (a ~ satire) — **peppery-ness** \-nəs\ *n*

peppery *n* (1937): any of various stimulant drugs in pill or tablet form

peppy \ˈpeɪ-pi\ *adj* **peppy**; -est (ca. 1918): full of pep — **peppiness** *n*

pep-sin \ˈpeɪ-p(ə)-sɪn\ *n* [G, fr. Gk *pepsis* digestion, fr. *pepsin*] (ca. 1844) 1: a protease of the stomach that breaks down most proteins to polypeptides 2: a preparation containing pepsin that is obtained from the stomach esp. of the hog and is used esp. as a digestive

pep-sin-o-gen \ˈpeɪ-sɪ-nə-ˈdʒən\ *n* [ISV] (1878): a granular zymogen of the gastric glands that is readily converted into pepsin in a slightly acid medium

pep talk *n* (1925): a usu. brief, intense, and emotional talk designed to influence or encourage an audience

pep-tic \ˈpeɪ-tɪk\ *adj* [*L. pepticus*, fr. Gk *peptikos*, fr. *peptos* cooked, fr. *peptin*, *pepsin* to cook, digest — more at COOK] (1651) 1: relating to or promoting digestion: DIGESTIVE 2: of, relating to, producing, or caused by pepsin (~ digestion) 3: connected with or resulting from the action of digestive juices (a ~ ulcer)

pep-ti-dase \ˈpeɪ-tɪ-ˈdās-, -dāz\ *n* (1918): an enzyme that hydrolyzes simple peptides or their derivatives

pep-tid \ˈpeɪ-tɪd\ *n* [ISV, fr. *peptide*] (1906): any of various amides that are derived from two or more amino acids by combination of the amino group of one acid with the carboxyl group of another and are usu. obtained by partial hydrolysis of proteins — **pep-tid-ic** \ˈpeɪ-tɪ-dɪk\ *adj*

peptide bond *n* (1935): the chemical bond between carbon and nitrogen in a peptide linkage

peptide linkage *n* (1925): the bivalent group CONH that unites the amino acid residues in a peptide

pep-ti-do-ly-can \ˈpeɪ-tɪ-də-ˈlɪi-kan\ *n* (1966): a polymer that is composed of polysaccharide and peptide chains and is found esp. in bacterial cell walls — called also *mucopeptide*, *muurein*

pep-tone \ˈpeɪ-tən\ *n* [G *Pepton*, fr. Gk. neut. of *peptos* cooked] (1860): any of various water-soluble products of partial hydrolysis of proteins

Pe-quot \ˈpeɪ-ˈkwɒt\ *n* [Narraganset *Pequittōg*] (1613): a member of an American Indian people of what is now eastern Connecticut

per \ˈpɔr\ *prep* [*L. through*, by means of, by — more at FOR] (14c) 1: by the means or agency of: THROUGH (~ bearer) 2: with respect to every member of a specified group: for each 3: according to — often used with *as* (~ instructions) (as ~ usual)

usage *Per* occurs most frequently in business contexts; its use outside such contexts is often criticized but is quite widespread, esp. in sense 2. Its most common and natural nonbusiness uses always involve figures, usu. in relation to price (\$150 per performance), automobiles (32 miles per gallon) (55 miles per hour), or sports (averages 15 points and 9 rebounds per game).

per adv (1899): for each: A PRICE (a bargain at \$3.50 ~)

per- *prefix* [*L. through*, thoroughly, thoroughly, detrimental to, fr. *per*] 1: throughout: thoroughly (*peruse*) 2 a: containing the largest possible or a relatively large proportion of (a specified) chemical element (*perchloroethylene*) b: containing an element in its highest or a high oxidation state (*perchloric acid*)

per-adv-en-ture \ˈpɔr-əd-ven-ˈtʃər-, -pɔr-, -pɔr-əd-, -pɛr-\ *adv* [ME *peraventure*, fr. OF, by chance] (14c) *archaic*: PERHAPS, POSSIBLY

peradventure *n* (1627) 1: DOUBT (a fact established beyond ~) 2: CHANCE 4a (beyond ~ of doubt)

per-am-bu-late \pə-ˈrɑm-byə-ˈlɑt-ēd\ *vb* -lat-ed; -lat-ing [*L. perambulatus*, pp. of *perambulare*, fr. *per-* through + *ambulare* to walk] *vt* (1568) 1: to travel over or through esp. on foot: TRAVERSE 2: to make an official inspection of (a boundary) on foot ~ *vi*: STROLL — **per-am-bu-la-tion** \-rəm-byə-ˈlɑ-shən\ *n* — **per-am-bu-la-to-ry** \-rəm-byə-ˈlɑ-tɔr-ē-, -tɔr-\ *adj*

per-am-bu-la-tor \pə-ˈrɑm-byə-ˈlɑ-tər\ *n* (1611) 1: one that perambulates 2 *chiefly Brit*: a baby carriage

per-an-num \(p)ɔr-ˈɑ-nəm\ *adv* [ML] (1536): in or for each year

per-bo-rate \(p)ɔr-ˈbɔr-ət-, -bɔr-\ *n* [ISV] (1881): a salt that is a compound of a borate with hydrogen peroxide

per-cale \(p)ɔr-ˈkæl-, -pɔr-, (p)ɔr-ˈkæl\ *n* [Per *parçalah*] (1840): a fine closely woven cotton cloth variously finished for clothing, sheeting, and industrial uses

per-ca-line \pɔr-kə-ˈlɛn\ *n* [F, fr. *percale*] (ca. 1858): a lightweight cotton fabric; esp: a glossy fabric used for bookbindings

per-cap-ita \(p)ɔr-ˈkɑ-pɑ-tə\ *adv* or *adj* [ML, by heads] (1682) 1: equally to each individual 2: per unit of population: by or for each person (the highest income *per capita* of any state in the union)

per-ceive \pə-ˈsi:v\ *vi* **per-ceived**; **per-ceiving** [ME, fr. MF *perceivre*, fr. *L. percipere*, fr. *per-* thoroughly + *capere* to take — more at HEAVE] (14c) 1 a: to attain awareness or understanding of b: to regard as being such (*perceived* threats) (*was perceived* as a loser) 2: to become aware of through the senses; esp: SEE, OBSERVE — **per-ceive-able** \-sɪ-və-bəl\ *adj* — **per-ceive-ably** \-blɪ\ *adv* — **per-ceive-er** *n*

per-cent \pɔr-ˈsɛnt\ *adv* [earlier *per cent*, fr. *per* + *L. centum* hundred — more at HUNDRED] (1588): in the hundred: of each hundred

percent *n, pl* percent or percents (1667) 1 *pl percent* a: one part in a hundred b: PERCENTAGE (a large ~ of his income) 2 *percents pl, Brit*: securities bearing a specified rate of interest

percent *adj* (1888) 1: reckoned on the basis of a whole divided into one hundred parts 2: paying interest at a specified percent

per-cent-age \pɔr-ˈsɛn-tɪj\ *n* (ca. 1789) 1 a: a part of a whole expressed in hundredths b: the result obtained by multiplying a number by a percent 2 a: a share of winnings or profits b: ADVANTAGE, PROFIT (no ~ in going around looking like an old sack of laundry — Wallace Stegner) 3: an indeterminate part: PROPORTION 4 a: PROBABILITY b: favorable odds

per-cent-ile \pə-ˈsɛn-tɪl\ *n* (1885): a value on a scale of one hundred that indicates the percent of a distribution that is equal to or below it (a score in the 95th ~)

per-cent-um \pɔr-ˈsɛn-təm\ *n* [*per* + *L. centum*] (ca. 1565): PERCENT

per-cept \pɔr-ˈsɛpt\ *n* [back-formation fr. *perception*] (1837): an impression of an object obtained by use of the senses: SENSE-DATUM

per-cep-ti-ble \pɔr-ˈsɛp-tə-bəl\ *adj* (1603): capable of being perceived esp. by the senses (a ~ change in her tone) (the light became increasingly ~) — **per-cep-ti-bil-i-ty** \-sɛp-tə-ˈbi-lə-ti\ *n* — **per-cep-ti-bly** \-blɪ\ *adv*

syn PERCEPTIBLE, SENSIBLE, PALPABLE, TANGIBLE, APPRECIABLE, PONDERABLE mean apprehensible as real or existent. PERCEPTIBLE applies to what can be discerned by the senses often to a minimal extent (a *perceptible* difference in sound to a careful listener). SENSIBLE applies to whatever is clearly apprehended through the senses or impresses itself strongly on the mind (an abrupt, *sensible* drop in temperature). PALPABLE applies either to what has physical substance or to what is obvious and unmistakable (the tension in the air was almost *palpable*). TANGIBLE suggests what is capable of being handled or grasped both physically and mentally (no *tangible* evidence of UFOs). APPRECIABLE applies to what is distinctly discernible by the senses or definitely measurable (an *appreciable* increase in income). PONDERABLE suggests having definitely measurable weight or importance (exerted a *ponderable* influence on world events).

per-cep-tion \pɔr-ˈsɛp-shən\ *n* [*L. perceptio*-, *perceptio* act of perceiving, fr. *percipere*] (14c) 1 a: a result of perceiving: OBSERVATION b: a mental image: CONCEPT 2 *obs*: CONSCIOUSNESS 3 a: awareness of the elements of environment through physical sensation (color ~) b: physical sensation interpreted in the light of experience 4 a: quick, acute, and intuitive cognition: APPRECIATION b: a capacity for comprehension **syn** SEE DISCERNMENT — **per-cep-tion-al** \-shənəl-, -shə-nəl\ *adj*

per-cep-tive \pɔr-ˈsɛp-tɪv\ *adj* (1656) 1: responsive to sensory stimuli: DISCERNING (a ~ eye) 2 a: capable of or exhibiting keen perception: OBSERVANT (a ~ scholar) b: characterized by sympathetic understanding or insight — **per-cep-tive-ly** *adv* — **per-cep-tive-ness** *n* — **per-cep-tiv-i-ty** \(p)ɔr-ˈsɛp-tɪ-və-ti\ *n*

per-cep-tu-al \(p)ɔr-ˈsɛp-ʃə-wəl-, -chəl-, -shwəl\ *adj* [*percept* + *-ual* (as in *conceptual*)] (1878): of, relating to, or involving perception esp. in relation to immediate sensory experience — **per-cep-tu-al-ly** *adv*

per-cep-tu-al \pɔr-ˈsɛp-ʃə-wəl\ *n* [OF]: a knight of King Arthur who wins a sight of the Holy Grail


perch \ˈpɔrch\ *n* [ME *perche*, fr. MF, fr. *L. pertica* pole] (14c) 1: a bar or peg on which something is hung 2 a: a roost for a bird b: a resting place or vantage point: SEAT c: a prominent position (his new ~ as president) 3 *chiefly Brit*: ROD 2

perch vi (14c): to alight, settle, or rest on a perch, a height, or a precarious spot ~ *vt*: to place on a perch, a height, or a precarious spot

perch n, pl perch or **perches** [ME *perche*, fr. MF, fr. *L. perca*, fr. Gk *perke*; akin to CHG *Jaro* colored, *L. porcus*, a spiny fish] (14c) 1 a: a small European freshwater bony fish (*Perca fluviatilis*) of the family Percidae, the perch family) b: YELLOW PERCH 2: any of numerous bony fishes (as of the families Percidae, Centrarchidae, and Serranidae)

per-chance \pə-ˈtʃɑn(t)s\ *adv* [ME *per chance*, fr. MF, by chance] (14c): PERHAPS, POSSIBLY

\ə\ about \ə\ kitten, F table \ɔr\ further \ə\ ash \ə\ ace \ə\ mop, mar \ə\ out \ə\ chin \e\ bet \e\ easy \g\ go \h\ hit \h\ ice \h\ job \h\ sing \ɔ\ go \ɔ\ law \ɔ\ boy \θ\ thin \θ\ the \θ\ loot \u\ foot \ə\ yet \z\h\ vision \ə\ k, ɪ, ʌ, e, i, u, w, ɪ, see Guide to Pronunciation

see-through \sē-θrū\ *adj* (1945): TRANSPARENT 1
segment \seg-mənt\ *n* [L *segmentum*, fr. *secare* to cut — more at SAW] (1570) 1 a: a separate piece of something; BIT, FRAGMENT (chop the stalks into short ~s) b: one of the constituent parts into which a body, entity, or quantity is divided or marked off by or as if by natural boundaries (all ~s of the population agree) 2: a portion cut off from a geometric figure by one or more points, lines, or planes; as a: the part of a circular area bounded by a chord and an arc of that circle or so much of the area as is cut off by the chord b: the part of a sphere cut off by a plane or included between two parallel planes c: the finite part of a line between two points in the line *syn* see PART — **seg-men-tary** \-mən-ter-ē\ *adj*
segment \seg-mənt\ *vt* (1859): to separate into segments; give off as segments
seg-men-tal \seg-mən-tl\ *adj* (1816) 1: of, relating to, or having the form of a segment and esp. the sector of a circle (~ fanlight) 2: of, relating to, or composed of somites or metameres; METAMERIC 3 a: divided into segments (~ knowledge) b: PARTIAL, INCOMPLETE c: resulting from segmentation — **seg-men-tal-ly** \-tl-ē\ *adv*
seg-men-ta-tion \seg-mən-tā-shən, -mən-ā\ *n* (1851): the process of dividing into segments; esp.: the formation of many cells from a single cell (as in a developing egg)
segmentation cavity *n* (1888): BLASTOCOELE
seg-ment-ed \seg-mən-təd, -təd\ *adj* (1854): divided into or composed of segments or sections (~ worms)
se-gno \sān-(g)ŋ\ *n*, *pl* *segnos* [It. sign, fr. L *signum* — more at SIGN] (1908): a notational sign; *specif*: the sign that marks the beginning or end of a musical repeat
se-go lily \sē-(g)ŋ\ *n* [*sego* the bulb of the sego lily, fr. Southern Paiute *siyo'ŋ*] (1913): a mariposa lily (*Calochortus nuttallii*) of western No. America having mostly white or in some areas mostly yellow flowers mottled with a darker color

seg-re-gant \se-gri-gənt\ *n* (1926): a genetic segregate
seg-re-gate \se-gri-gāt\ *vb* -gated; -gating [L *segregatus*, pp. of *segregare*, fr. *se-* apart + *greg-*, *greg* herd — more at SECEDE] *vt* (1542) 1: to separate or set apart from others or from the general mass; ISOLATE 2: to cause or force the separation of (as from the rest of society) ~ *vi* 1: SEPARATE, WITHDRAW 2: to practice or enforce a policy of segregation 3: to undergo genetic segregation — **seg-re-ga-tive** \-gā-tiv\ *adj*
seg-re-gate \se-gri-gāt, -gāt\ *n* (1871): one that is in some respect segregated; esp.: one that differs genetically from the parental line because of genetic segregation
segregated *adj* (1652) 1 a: set apart or separated from others of the same kind or group (a ~ account in a bank) b: divided in facilities or administered separately for members of different groups or races (~ education) c: restricted to members of one group or one race by a policy of segregation (~ schools) 2: practicing or maintaining segregation esp. of races (~ states)
seg-re-ga-tion \se-gri-gā-shən\ *n* (1555) 1: the act or process of segregating; the state of being segregated 2 a: the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means b: the separation for special treatment or observation of individuals or items from a larger group (~ of gifted children into accelerated classes) 3: the separation of allelic genes that occurs typically during meiosis
seg-re-ga-tion-ist \-sh(ə)-nist\ *n* (1913): a person who believes in or practices segregation esp. of races — **seg-re-ga-tion-ist** *adj*
se-gue \se-(g)wā, -sā-ē\ *vb* imper [It. there follows, fr. *sequire* to follow, fr. L *sequi* — more at SUE] (ca. 1740) 1: to proceed to what follows without pause — used as a direction in music 2: to perform the music that follows like that which has preceded — used as a direction in music
segue *vi* *se-que*; *se-que-ing* (ca. 1913) 1: to proceed without pause from one musical number or theme to another 2: to make a transition without interruption from one activity, topic, scene, or part to another
segue *n* (ca. 1937): the act or an instance of segueing
se-gui-di-lla \se-gā-'dē-yə, -'dēl-yə\ *n* [Sp. dim. of *seguida*, a dance, lit., sequence, fr. *seguido*, pp. of *seguir* to follow, fr. L *sequi*] (1763) 1 a: a Spanish dance with many regional variations b: the music for such a dance 2: a Spanish stanza of four or seven short partly associated verses
sei-cent-to \sā-'chen-(t)ō\ *n* [It. lit., six-hundred, fr. *sei* six (fr. L *sex*) + *cento* hundred — more at SIX, CINQUECENTO] (ca. 1902): the 17th century; *specif*: the 17th century period in Italian literature and art
seiche \sāsh, 'sēch\ *n* [F] (ca. 1839): an oscillation of the surface of a landlocked body of water (as a lake) that varies in period from a few minutes to several hours
sei-del \sē-'dēl, -'zēl\ *n* [G, fr. MHG *sidel*, fr. L *situla* bucket] (1908): a large glass for beer
Sedlitz powders \sed-lits-ē\ *n* *pl* [*Sedlitz*, (Sedlitz), village in Bohemia; fr. the similarity of their effect to that of the water of the village] (1815): effervescing salts consisting of one powder of sodium bicarbonate and Rochelle salt and another of tartaric acid that are mixed in water and drunk as a mild cathartic
seigneur \sān-yōr\ *n*, often *cap* [MF, fr. ML *senior*, fr. L, *adj.*, elder — more at SENIOR] (1592) 1: a man of rank or authority; esp.: the feudal lord of a manor 2: a member of the landed gentry of Canada
seigneurial \-yūr-ē-əl, -yōr-ē\ *adj* (1656): of, relating to, or befitting a seigneur
seigneurly \sān-yō-rē\ *n*, *pl* *seigneuries* (1683) 1 a: the territory under the government of a feudal lord b: a landed estate held in Canada by feudal tenure until 1854 2: the manor house of a Canadian seigneur
seignior \sān-'yōr, 'sān-ē\ *n* [ME *seignior*, fr. MF *seigneur*] (15c): SEIGNEUR 1
seignior-age or **seignior-age** \sān-yō-rij\ *n* [ME *seigneurage*, fr. MF,

right of the lord (esp. to coin money), fr. *seigneur*] (15c): a government revenue from the manufacture of coins calculated as the difference between the face value and the metal value of the coins
seignior or **seignior** \sān-yō-rē\ *n*, *pl* *seignior-ies* or *seignior-ies* (14c) 1: LORDSHIP, DOMINION; *specif*: the power or authority of feudal lord 2: the territory over which a lord holds jurisdiction
seignior-ial \sān-yō-rē-əl, -yōr-ē\ *adj* (1818): of, relating to, or befitting a seignior; MANORIAL
seine \sān\ *n* [ME, fr. OE *segne*, fr. L *sagena*, fr. Gk *σαγήνη*] (bef. 12c) 1: a large net with sinkers on one edge and floats on the other that hangs vertically in the water and is used to enclose fish when its end are pulled together and are drawn ashore
seine *vb* *seined*; *seining* *vi* (1836): to fish with or catch fish with; *seine* ~ *vi*: to fish for or in with a seine
seiner \sā-nər\ *n* (1602). 1: one who fishes with a seine 2: a boat used for seining
seis-in or **seis-zin** \sē-zēn\ *n* [ME *seisine*, fr. OF *saisine*, fr. *saisir* to seize — more at SEIZE] (14c) 1: the possession of land or chattels 2: the possession of a freehold estate in land by one having title thereto
seis-mic \sēz-mik, 'sēz-ē\ *adj* [Gk *seismos* shock, earthquake, fr. *σεισσειν* to shake; prob. akin to Av *θwašhō* fear] (1858) 1: of, subject to, caused by an earthquake; also: of or relating to an earth vibration caused by something else (as an explosion or the impact of a meteorite) 2: of or relating to a vibration on a celestial body (as the moon) comparable to a seismic event on earth 3: having a strong or widespread impact; EARTHSHAKING (~ social changes) — **seis-mi-cal-ly** \-mī-k(ə)-lē\ *adv*
seis-mic-ity \sēz-'mī-sē-tē, 'sēz-ē\ *n* (1902): the relative frequency and distribution of earthquakes
seismo-comb form [Gk, fr. *seismos*]: earthquake; vibration (*seismometer*)
seis-mo-gram \sēz-mō-'gram, 'sēz-ē\ *n* [ISV] (ca. 1891): the record of an earth tremor by a seismograph
seis-mo-graph \-grāf\ *n* [ISV] (1858): an apparatus to measure and record vibrations within the earth and of the ground — **seis-mo-graph-er** \-mō-grə-'fər, 'sēz-ē\ *n* — **seis-mo-graph-ic** \-sēz-mō-'grā-fik, 'sēz-ē\ *adj* — **seis-mo-graph-phy** \sēz-'mō-'grā-fē, 'sēz-ē\ *n*
seis-mol-o-gy \sēz-'mō-lō-jē, 'sēz-ē\ *n* [ISV] (1858): a science that deals with earthquakes and with artificially produced vibrations of the earth — **seis-mol-o-gi-cal** \sēz-mō-'lō-jī-kəl, 'sēz-ē\ *adj* — **seis-mol-o-gist** \sēz-'mō-lō-jist, 'sēz-ē\ *n*
seis-mom-e-ter \sēz-'mō-mə-ter, 'sēz-ē\ *n* (1841): a seismograph measuring the actual movements of the ground (as on the earth or the moon) — **seis-mo-met-ric** \sēz-mō-'mē-trik, 'sēz-ē\ *adj*
seis-mo-met-ry \sēz-'mō-mē-trē, 'sēz-ē\ *n* [ISV] (1858): the scientific study of earthquakes
sei whale \sā-'sē, -sē\ *n* [part trans. of Norw *seihval*, fr. *sei* coalfish + *hval* whale] (1912): a common and widely distributed dark gray rorqual (*Balaenoptera borealis*) that has a ridge on the top of the head and grows to a length of nearly 60 feet (18 meters) — called also *sei*
seize \sēz\ *vb* *seized*; *seizing* [ME *saisen*, fr. OF *saisir* to put in possession of, fr. ML *sacire*, of Gmc origin; perh. akin to OHG *sezzen* to set — more at SET] *vt* (14c) 1 a: *usu* *seize* \sēz\; to vest ownership of a freehold estate in b: *often* *seize* to put in possession of something (the biographer will be *seized* of all pertinent papers) 2 a: to take possession of; CONFISCATE b: to take possession of by legal process 3 a: to possess or take by force; CAPTURE b: to take prisoner; ARREST 4 a: to take hold of; CLUTCH b: to possess oneself of; GRASP c: to understand fully and distinctly; APPREHEND 5 a: to attack or overwhelm physically; AFFLICT (suddenly *seized* with an acute illness — H. G. Armstrong) b: to possess (as one's mind) completely or overwhelmingly (*seized* the popular imagination — Basil Daventry) 6: to bind or fasten together with a lashing of small stuff (as yarn, marine, or fine wire) ~ *vi* 1: to take or lay hold suddenly or forcibly 2 a: to cohere to a relatively moving part through excessive pressure, temperature, or friction — used esp. of machine parts (as bearings, brakes, or pistons) b: to fail to operate due to the seizing of a part — used of an engine *syn* see TAKE — **seiz-er** *n*
seizing *n* (14c) 1 a: the cord or lashing used in binding or fastening b: the fastening so made — see KNOT illustration 2: the operation of fastening together or lashing with tarred small stuff
seizure \sēz-ŷər\ *n* (15c) 1 a: the act, action, or process of seizing b: the state of being seized; b: the taking possession of person or property by legal process 2: a sudden attack (as of disease) (an epileptic ~)
se-jant \sē-jənt\ *adj* [modif. of MF *seant*, prp. of *seoir* to sit, fr. L *sedere* — more at SIT] (ca. 1500): SITTING — used of a heraldic animal *sel* \sēl\ chiefly Scot var of *self*
se-la-chi-an \sē-'lā-ke-ən\ *n* [ultim. fr. Gk *selachos* cartilaginous phosphorescent fish; akin to Gk *selas* brightness] (1835): any of a variously defined group (Selachii) of cartilaginous fishes that includes all the elasmobranchs or all elasmobranchs except the chimaeras, the existing sharks and rays or in its most restricted use the existing sharks as distinguished from the rays — **selachian** *adj*
se-lag-i-nel-la \sā-'lā-jə-'nē-lə\ *n* [NL, fr. L *selagin*, *selago*, a plant resembling the savin] (1835): any of a genus (*Selaginella*) of mossy lower tracheophytes that are related to or grouped with the club mosses and have branching stems and scalelike leaves and produce one-celled sporangia containing both megaspores and microspores
selah \sē-lā, -lā\ *interj* [Heb *selāh*] (1530) — a term of uncertain meaning found in the Hebrew text of the Psalms and Habakkuk carried over untranslated into some English versions
sel-couth \sel-'kūth\ *adj* [ME, fr. OE *selcūth*, fr. *seidan* seldom + *cūth* known — more at UNCOUTH] (bef. 12c) *archaic*; UNUSUAL, STRANGE
sel-dom \sel-'dōm\ *adv* [ME, fr. OE *seldan*; akin to OHG *seltan* seldom] (bef. 12c): in few instances; RARELY, INFREQUENTLY
sel-dom *adj* (13c): RARE, INFREQUENT
se-lec-t \sē-'lekt\ *adj* [L *selectus*, pp. of *selegere* to select, fr. *se-* apart (fr. *sed*, *se* without) + *legere* to gather, select — more at SUICIDE, LEGEND] (1565) 1: chosen from a number or group by fitness or preference 2 a: of special value or excellence; SUPERIOR, CHOICE b: exclusively or fastidiously chosen often with regard to social, economic, or cultural characteristics 3: judicious or restrictive in choice; DISCRIMINATING

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