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2. An advance guard of troops sent on a hazardous mission. [by folk ety. < Du. *verloren hoop*, advance guard; *verloren*, p.part. of *verliezen*, to lose; see *leu** + *hoop*, troop.]

form (fôrm) *n.* 1.a. The shape and structure of an object. b. The body or outward appearance of a person or an animal considered separately from the face or head; figure. 2.a. The essence of something. b. The mode in which a thing exists, acts, or manifests itself; kind. 3.a. Procedure as determined by regulation or custom. b. A fixed order of words or procedures, as for use in a ceremony; a formula. 4. A document with blanks for the insertion of details or information. 5.a. Manners or conduct as governed by etiquette, decorum, or custom. b. Behavior according to a fixed or accepted standard; *had form to be late*. c. Performance considered with regard to acknowledged criteria; *unusual form as a bowler*. 6.a. Proven ability to perform; *a musician in top form*. b. Fitness, as of an athlete, with regard to health or training. c. The past performance of a racehorse. d. A racing form. 7.a. Method of arrangement or manner of coordinating elements in literary or musical composition or in organized discourse; *in outline form*. b. A particular type or example of such arrangement; *The essay is a literary form*. c. The design, structure, or pattern of a work of art; *symphonic form*. 8.a. A mold for the setting of concrete. b. A model of the human figure or part of it used for displaying clothes. c. A proportioned model that may be adjusted for fitting clothes. 9. A grade in a British secondary school or in some American private schools; *the sixth form*. 10.a. A linguistic form. b. The external aspect of words with regard to their inflections, pronunciation, or spelling. 11.a. Chiefly British. A long seat; a bench. b. The resting place of a hare. 12. Bot. A subdivision of a variety usu. differing in one trivial characteristic. — *v.* **formed, form-ing, forms.** — *tr.* 1.a. To give form to; shape. b. To develop in the mind; conceive. 2.a. To shape or mold (something, for example) into a particular form. b. To arrange oneself in. c. To organize or arrange. d. To fashion, train, or develop by instruction or precept. 3. To come to have; develop or acquire. 4. To constitute or compose a usu. basic element, part, or characteristic of. 5.a. To produce (a tense, for example) by inflection. b. To make (a word) by derivation or composition. 6. To put in order; arrange. — *intr.* 1. To become formed or shaped. 2. To come into being by taking form. 3. To assume a specified form, shape, or pattern. [ME *forme* < Lat. *forma*.] — **form'a-bil'i-ty** *n.* — **form'a-ble** *adj.* Having the form of; *plexiform*. [NLat. *-fôrmis* < Lat. *forma*, form.]

formal (fôr'mâl) *adj.* 1.a. Relating to or involving outward appearance or structure. b. Being or relating to essential form or organization; *a formal principle*. 2.a. Following or being in accord with accepted forms, conventions, or regulations; *a formal dinner*. b. Executed, carried out, or done in proper or regular form. 3.a. Characterized by strict observation of formal, methodical; *formal in their transactions*. b. Stiffly certain; *but lacking in substance*. — *n.* Something, such as a ceremony, that is formal in nature. [ME < Lat. *fôr'mâlis* < *fôrma*, — **fôr'mâl-ly** *adv.* — **fôr'mâl-ness** *n.*

formal-de-hyde (fôr'mâl'de-hid') *n.* A colorless gaseous compound, HCHO, the simplest aldehyde, used to make syntheses, as an embalming fluid, and in aqueous solution as a preservative and disinfectant. [FORMIC ACID + ALDEHYDE.]

formal-de-hyde (fôr'mâl-de-hid') *n.* An aqueous solution of formaldehyde that is 37 percent by weight. [Originally a trademark.]

formal-de-hyde (fôr'mâl-de-hid') *n.* 1. Rigorous or excessive adherence to recognized forms, as in art. 2. An instance of formalism. — **fôr'mâl-ist** *adj. & n.* — **fôr'mâl-ist'ic** *adj.*

formal-ly (fôr'mâl-ly) *adv.*

formal-ty (fôr'mâl-ty) *n., pl. -ties* 1. The quality or condition of being formal. 2. Rigorous or ceremonious adherence to forms, rules, or customs. 3. An established procedure or ceremony, esp. one followed merely for the sake of form or decorum.

formal-ize (fôr'mâl-iz) *tr. -ized, -iz-ing, -iz-es* 1. To give form or shape to. 2.a. To make formal. b. To give form or shape to; *to make official by the observance of proper procedure*. — **fôr'mâl-iz'a-ble** *adj.*

formal-iz'a-tion (fôr'mâl-iz-ash-ən) *n.* — **fôr'mâl-iz'at-ion** *n.* The study of the properties of prepositions and the way in which they are used in the construction of the form of a sentence. — **fôr'mâl-iz'at-ion** *n.* A series, such as evening gown, that wear on formal occasions.

formal-ly (fôr'mâl-ly) *adv.* Any of several frequency regions of the electromagnetic spectrum, which together constitute the characteristic quality of a vowel sound. [OEt. = *formal*, *formare*, p.part. of *fôr'mare*, to form < *fôrma*, form.]

formal-ly (fôr'mâl-ly) *adv.* 1. A plan for the organization and arrangement of a specified production. 2. The material form or structure of a production. 3. Comp. Sci. a. The arrangement of the elements of a program. b. A method for achieving such an

arrangement. — *tr. v.* **mat-ted, mat-ting, -mats.** 1. To plan or arrange in a specified form. 2. Comp. Sci. a. To divide (a disk) into marked sectors so that it may store data. b. To determine the arrangement of (data) for storage or display. [Fr., ult. < Lat. *fôr'mâtus*, p.part. of *fôr'mâre*, to form < *fôrma*, form.]

form-ate (fôr'mât') *n.* A salt or an ester of formic acid that contains the HCOO⁻ radical. [FORMIC ACID + -ATE².]

form-a-tion (fôr-mâ'shən) *n.* 1. The act or process of forming something or of taking form. 2. Something formed; *cloud formations*. 3. The manner or style in which something is formed; structure. 4. A specified arrangement or deployment, as of troops. 5. Geol. The primary unit of lithostratigraphy, consisting of a body of rock useful for mapping or description. — **fôr'mâ'tion-al** *adj.*

form-a-tive (fôr'mâ-tiv) *adj.* 1. Forming or capable of forming. 2.a. Susceptible to transformation by growth and development. b. Biol. Capable of producing new cells or tissue. 3. Of or relating to formation, growth, or development; *the formative stages of a plot*. 4. Ling. Relating to the formation or inflection of words. — *n.* Gram. A derivational or inflectional affix. — **fôr'mâ'tive-ly** *adv.*

form class *n.* Ling. A set of words that have one or more grammatical or syntactic characteristics in common.

form criticism *n.* A method of textual criticism, applied esp. to the Bible, for tracing the origin and history of certain passages through systematic study of the writings in terms of conventional literary forms.

form-er (fôr'mər) *n.* 1. One that forms; a maker or creator. 2. Chiefly British. A member of a school form.

form-er (fôr'mər) *adj.* 1.a. Occurring earlier in time. b. Of, relating to, or taking place in the past. 2. Coming before in place or order; foregoing. 3. Being the first of two mentioned. 4. Having been in the past; *a former ambassador*. [ME, comp. of *forme*, first < OE *forma*. See *per**.]

Usage Note: Grammarians have often insisted that the phrases *the former* and *the latter* should be used only to refer to the first of two things and the second of two things, respectively: "*But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake, and the former was a lulu and the latter was a fake.*" It is not difficult to find violations of this rule in the works of reputable writers. But the fact that *former* and *latter* are plainly comparatives will make many readers uneasy when the words are used in enumerations of more than two things.

fôr'mər-ly (fôr'mər-lē) *adv.* At an earlier time; once.

form-fit-ting (fôr'm'fit'ing) *adj.* Snugly fitting the contours of the body; *formfitting jeans*.

form genus *n.* Bot. A classification, as of fossil plants, based on morphological resemblance.

fôr'mik (fôr'mik) *adj.* 1. Of or relating to ants. 2. Of, derived from, or containing formic acid. [< Lat. *formica*, ant.]

Fôr'mi-ca (fôr'mi'kə) A trademark for a variety of laminated plastic sheets of synthetic resin used esp. as a surface on tables and counters.

formic acid *n.* A colorless caustic fuming liquid, HCOOH, used in dyeing and finishing textiles and paper and in fumigants and insecticides. [From its natural occurrence in ants.]

fôr'mi-car-y (fôr'mi-kər'ē) *n., pl. -ies*. A nest of ants; an anthill. [Med.Lat. *formicarium* < Lat. *formica*, ant.]

fôr'mi-civ-o-rous (fôr'mi-siv'ər-əs) *adj.* Feeding on ants. [Lat. *formica*, ant + *-vorous*.]

fôr'mi-da-ble (fôr'mi-də-bəl) *adj.* 1. Arousing fear, dread, or alarm. 2. Inspiring awe, admiration, or wonder. 3. Difficult to undertake, surmount, or defeat; *a formidable challenge*. [ME < OFr. < Lat. *fôr'midâbilis* < *fôr'midâre*, to fear < *fôr'midô*, fear.] — **fôr'mi-da-ble'ty**, **fôr'mi-da-ble-ness** *n.* — **fôr'mi-da-ble-ly** *adv.*

form-less (fôr'm'lis) *adj.* 1. Having no definite form; shapeless. 2. Lacking order. 3. Having no material existence. — **fôr'm-less-ly** *adv.* — **fôr'm-less-ness** *n.*

form letter *n.* A usu. impersonal letter in a standardized format that may be sent to different people.

Fôr'mo-sa (fôr'mô'sə) See *Taiwan*.

Formosa Strait also **Tai-wan Strait** (tî'wän'st): An arm of the Pacific Ocean between Taiwan and China linking the East China Sea with the South China Sea.

fôr'mu-la (fôr'myə-lə) *n., pl. -las or -lao (-lə')* 1.a. An established form of words or symbols for use in a ceremony or procedure. b. An utterance of conventional notions or beliefs; *a hackneyed expression*. 2. A method of doing or treating something that relies on an established uncontroversial model or approach. 3. Chem. a. A symbolic representation of the composition or of the composition and structure of a compound. b. The compound so represented. 4.a. A prescription of ingredients in fixed proportion; a recipe. b. A liquid food for infants, containing most of the nutrients in human milk. 5. Math. A statement, esp. an equation, of a rule, principle, or other factual relation. 6. Formula, Sports. A set of specifications that determine a class of racing car. [Lat. *fôr'mula*, dim. of *fôr'ma*, form.] — **fôr'mu-la'ic** (-lə'ik) *adj.* — **fôr'mu-la'i-cal-ly** *adv.*

fôr'mu-la-rize (fôr'myə-lə-rīz) *tr. v. -rized, -riz-ing, -riz-es*,

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| a pat | oi boy |
| a pay | ou out |
| ar care | oo took |
| a father | oo boot |
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| i pie | th this |
| ie pier | hw which |
| o pot | zh vision |
| o toe | ə about |
| o paw | item |

Stress marks:
 ' (primary);
 ' (secondary), as in
 dictionary (dik'shə-nēr'ē)