

# Oxford Dictionary of English

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sermon.

- (the **pulpit**) religious teaching as expressed in sermons: *the motives could rival the pulpits at an agency moulding the ideas of the mass public.*
- 2 a raised platform in the bows of a fishing boat or whaler.
- a guard rail enclosing a small area at the bow of a yacht.

— ORIGIN Middle English: from Latin *pulpitum* 'scaffold, platform', in medieval Latin 'pulpit'.

**pulpwood** /pʊl'wɔ:nd/ ► noun [mass noun] timber suitable for making into pulp.

**pulque** /pʊl'keɪ, 'pɒlki:/ ► noun [mass noun] a Mexican alcoholic drink made by fermenting sap from the maguey plant.

— ORIGIN via American Spanish from Nahuatl *pulhūhki* 'decomposed'.

**pulsar** /'pʌlsə:/ ► noun Astronomy a celestial object, thought to be a rapidly rotating neutron star, that emits regular pulses of radio waves and other electromagnetic radiation at rates of up to one thousand pulses per second.

— ORIGIN from pulsating star, on the pattern of quasar.

**pulsate** /pʌl'seɪt, 'pʌlseɪt/ ► verb [no obj.] expand and contract with strong regular movements: *blood vessels throb and pulsate.*

- (often as adj. **pulsating**) produce a regular throbbing sensation or sound: *dance the night away in one of the pulsating discos.* ■ (usu. as adj. **pulsating**) be very exciting: *victory in a pulsating semi-final.*

— DERIVATIVES **pulsation** noun, **pulsator** noun, **pulsatory** /pʌlsət(ə)rɪ/ adjective.

— ORIGIN late 18th cent. (earlier (Middle English) as *pulsation*): from Latin *pulsat* 'throbbled, pulsed', from the verb *pulsare*, frequentative of *pellere* 'to drive, beat'.

**pulsatile** /pʌlsətəɪl/ ► adjective chiefly Physiology pulsating; relating to pulsation: *pulsatile tinnitus.*

— ORIGIN late Middle English: from medieval Latin *pulsatilis* (in *vena pulsatilis* 'artery', from the verb *pulsare* (see **PULSATE**)).

**pulsatilla** /pʌlsə'tɪlə/ ► noun a plant of a genus that includes the pasque flower.

- Genus *Pulsatilla*, family Ranunculaceae.

— ORIGIN modern Latin, diminutive of *pulsatus* 'beaten about', expressing the notion 'small flower beaten by the wind'.

**pulse** ► noun 1 a rhythmic throbbing of the arteries as blood is propelled through them, typically as felt in the wrists or neck: *the doctor found a faint pulse | the idea was enough to set my pulse racing.*

- each successive throb of the arteries or heart.
- 2 a single vibration or short burst of sound, electric current, light, or other wave: *a pulse of gamma rays | (as modifier) a pulse generator.*
- a musical beat or other regular rhythm.
- 3 the central point of energy and organization in an area or activity: *those close to the financial and economic pulse maintain that there have been fundamental changes.*
- 4 Biochemistry a measured amount of an isotopic label given to a culture of cells.

► verb 1 [no obj.] throb rhythmically; *pulsate a knot of muscles at the side of his jaw pulsed.*

- 2 [with obj.] modulate (a wave or beam) so that it becomes a series of pulses.
- apply a pulsed signal to (a device). ■ Biochemistry short for **PULSE-LABEL**.

— PHRASES **feel (or take) the pulse of** determine the heart rate of (someone) by feeling and timing the pulsation of an artery. ■ ascertain the general mood or opinion of: *the conference will be an opportunity to feel the pulse of those working in the field.*

— DERIVATIVES **pulseless** adjective.

— ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin *pulsus* 'beating', from *pellere* 'to drive, beat'.

**pulse** ► noun the edible seed of a leguminous plant, for example a chickpea, lentil, or bean.

- a plant producing pulses.

— ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *polt*, from Latin *puls* 'porridge of meal or pulse'; related to **PULLEN**.

**pulse code modulation** ► noun [mass noun] Electronics a pulse modulation technique in which the amplitude of an analogue signal is converted to a binary value represented as a series of pulses.

— ORIGIN 1960s: from **PULSE** + **CODE**.

**pulsion** is intermittent, the ignition and expulsion of each charge of mixture causing the intake of a fresh charge.

**pulse-label** ► verb [with obj.] Biochemistry subject (cells in a culture) to a pulse of an isotopic label.

**pulse modulation** ► noun [mass noun] Electronics a type of modulation in which pulses are varied in some respect, such as width or amplitude, to represent the amplitude of a signal.

**pultrude** /pʊl'tru:ɪd, 'pʌl-/ ► verb [with obj.] (use as adj. **pultruded**) make (a reinforced plastic article) by drawing resin-coated glass fibres through a heated die.

- DERIVATIVES **pultrusion** noun.
- ORIGIN 1960s: from **PULTRUDING** + **EXTRUDE**.

**pulverize** (also **pulverise**) ► verb [with obj.] reduce to fine particles: *the brick of the villages was pulverized by the bombardment.*

- Informal, chiefly Brit. defeat utterly: *he had a winning car and pulverized the opposition.*

— DERIVATIVES **pulverization** noun, **pulverizer** noun.

— ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin *pulverizare*, from *pulvis*, *pulvis* 'dust'.

**pulverulent** /pʊl'verjʊlənt/ ► adjective archaic consisting of fine particles: *powdery or crumbly.*

— ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from Latin *pulverulentus*, from *pulvis*, *pulvis* 'dust'.

**pulvinus** /pʊl'veɪnəs/ ► noun (pl. **pulvini** /-ɪnəz/) Botany an enlarged section at the base of a leaf stalk in some plants, which is subject to changes of rigidity leading to movements of the leaf or leaflet.

— ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from Latin, literally 'cushion'.

**puma** ► noun chiefly Brit. a large American wild cat with a plain tawny to greyish coat, found from Canada to Patagonia. Also called **COUGAR**, **PANTHER**, and **MOUNTAIN LION** in North America.

- Falls concolor, family Felidae.

— ORIGIN late 18th cent.: via Spanish from Quechua.

**pumice** /'pʌmɪs/ ► noun [mass noun] a very light and porous volcanic rock formed when a gas-rich froth of glassy lava solidifies rapidly.

- (As **pumice stone**) [count noun] a piece of pumice used as an abrasive, especially for removing hard skin.

► verb [with obj.] rub with pumice to smooth or clean.

- DERIVATIVES **pumiceous** /pju:mɪ's/ adjective.

— ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *pomis*, from a Latin dialect variant of *pumex*, *pumic*. Compare with **POUNCE**.

**pummel** ► verb (**pummels**, **pummelling**, **pummelled**; US **pummels**, **pummeling**, **pummelled**) [with obj.] strike repeatedly with the fists: *he felt like a boxer who had been pummelled mercilessly against the ropes.*

- N Amer. informal criticize severely: *he has been pummelled by the reviewers.*

— ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: variant of **POMMEL**.

**pummelo** ► noun variant spelling of **POMMELLO**.

**pump** ► noun 1 a mechanical device using suction or pressure to raise or move liquids, compress gases, or force air into inflatable objects such as tyres: *a petrol pump.*

- (In sing.) an instance of moving something by or as if by a pump: *the pump of blood to her heart.*
- 2 [with modifier] Physiology an active transport mechanism in living cells by which specific ions are moved through the cell membrane against a concentration gradient: *the bacterium's sodium pump.*

► verb [with obj.] 1 [with adverbial of direction] force (liquid, gas, etc.) to move by or as if by means of a pump: *the blood is pumped around the body.*

- (no obj., with adverbial of direction) move in spurts as though driven by a pump: *blood was pumped from a wound in his shoulder.* ■ (pump something out) produce or emit something in large quantities or amounts: *carnival bands pumping out music.*
- 2 fill (something such as a tyre or balloon) with liquid or gas using a pump: *I fetched the bike and pumped up the back tyre | my veins had been pumped full of glucose.*
- Informal shoot (bullets) into (a target). ■ (pump something in/into) invest a large sum of money in (something): *he pumped all his savings into building the boat.* ■ (pump something up) informally turn up the volume of music. ■ (as adj. **pumped** or **pumped up**) informal very enthusiastic or excited: *the team came out really pumped up.*

— ORIGIN 15th cent.: from **PUMPE**, typically of **PUMPEL** SKODING.

4 Informal try to elicit information from (someone) by persistent questioning: *she began to pump her friend for details.*

— PHRASES **pump someone's hand** shake a person's hand vigorously. **pump iron** informal exercise with weights.

— DERIVATIVES **pumper** noun.

— ORIGIN late Middle English (originally in nautical use): related to Dutch *pomp* 'ship's pump' (earlier in the sense 'wooden or metal conduit'), probably partly of imitative origin.

**pump** ► noun a light shoe, in particular:

- chiefly N. Amer. a sports shoe: a **pumps**. ■ Brit. a light shoe for dancing. ■ N. Amer. a court shoe.

— ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: of unknown origin.

**pump-action** ► adjective 1 denoting a repeating firearm in which a new round is brought from the magazine into the breech by a slide action in line with the barrel: *a pump-action shotgun.*

- 2 denoting an unpressurized spray dispenser for liquid that is worked by finger action rather than by internal pressure (as in an aerosol).

**pumpnickel** /'pʌmp,nɪk(ə), 'pʌm-/ ► noun [mass noun] dark, dense German bread made from coarsely ground wholemeal rye.

- ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: transferred use of German *Pumpnickel* 'lout, bumpkin', of unknown ultimate origin.

**pump gun** ► noun a pump-action rifle with a tubular magazine.

**pumpkin** ► noun 1 a large rounded orange-yellow fruit with a thick rind, the flesh of which can be used in sweet or savoury dishes.

- 2 the plant of the gourd family which produces pumpkins, having tendrils and large lobed leaves and native to warm regions of America.

- Genus *Cucurbita*, family Cucurbitaceae: several species, in particular *C. pepo*.
- Brit. another term for **SQUASH**.

— ORIGIN late 17th cent.: alteration of earlier *pumpkin*, from obsolete French *pepon*, via Latin from Greek *pepon* 'large melon' (see **PEPO**).

**pumpkinseed** ► noun (pl. same or **pumpkinseeds**) a small, edible brightly coloured freshwater fish of the sunfish family, native to North America. It is popular in aquaria and has been introduced into many European waters.

- *Lepomis gibbosus*, family Centrarchidae.

**pump-priming** ► noun [mass noun] 1 the introduction of fluid into a pump to prepare it for working.

- 2 the stimulation of economic activity by investment: (as modifier) *a pump-priming fund.*

— DERIVATIVES **pump-prime** verb, **pump-primer** noun.

**pump room** ► noun a room, building, or compartment in which pumps are housed or from which they are controlled.

- a room at a spa where medicinal water is dispensed.

**pump-pum** /pʌmp,pʌm/ ► noun W. Indian vulgar slang the female genitals.

— ORIGIN from a West African language.

**pun** ► noun a joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings.

► verb (**puns**, **punning**, **punned**) [no obj.] (often as adj. **punning**) make a pun.

- DERIVATIVES **punningly** adverb, **punster** noun.

— ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: perhaps an abbreviation of obsolete *pundigron*, as a fanciful alteration of **PUNCTILIO**.

**pun** ► verb (**puns**, **punning**, **punned**) [with obj.] Brit. consolidate (earth or rubble) by pounding it.

- DERIVATIVES **punner** noun.

— ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: dialect variant of **POUNCE**.

**puna** /'pʌnə/ ► noun 1 a high treeless plateau in the Peruvian Andes.

- 2 another term for **ALTITUDE SICKNESS**.

— ORIGIN via American Spanish from Quechua.

**Punan** /pu:'næn/ ► noun (pl. same or **Punans**) 1 a member of any of various groups of Dayak peoples inhabiting parts of Borneo.

- 2 [mass noun] any of the related languages of the Punan, now with fewer than 4,000 speakers.

► adjective relating to the Punan or their languages.

— ORIGIN the name in Dayak.

CONSONANTS: b but d dog f few g get h he j yes k cat l leg m man n no p pen r red s sit t top v voice

pronounced same) one of a number of women who sat and knitted while attending public executions during the French Revolution.

ORIGIN French, from *tricoter* 'to knit'.

**tric-trac** ▶ noun [mass noun] historical a form of backgammon.

ORIGIN late 17th cent.: from French, from the clicking sound made by the game pieces.

**tricuspid** /traɪ'kʌspɪd/ ▶ adjective 1 denoting a tooth with three cusps or points.

2 denoting or relating to a valve formed of three triangular segments, particularly that between the right atrium and ventricle of the heart: *tricuspid aetria*.

ORIGIN late 17th cent.: from TRI- 'three' + Latin *cuspid*, *cuspid* 'cusp'.

**tricycle** ▶ noun a vehicle similar to a bicycle, but having three wheels, two at the back and one at the front.

▶ a three-wheeled motor vehicle for a disabled driver.

▶ verb [no obj.] (often as noun *tricycling*) ride on a tricycle.

DERIVATIVES *tricyclist* noun.

**tricyclic** /traɪ'saiklɪk/ ▶ adjective Chemistry (of a compound) having three rings of atoms in its molecule.

▶ noun (usu. *tricycles*) Medicine any of a class of antidepressant drugs having molecules with three fused rings.

ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from TRI- 'three' + Greek *kuklos* 'circle' + *-ic*.

**tridactyl** /traɪ'dæktɪl/ ▶ adjective Zoology (of a vertebrate limb) having three toes or fingers.

DERIVATIVES *tridactyl* noun.

ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from TRI- 'three' + Greek *daktulos* 'finger'.

**trident** ▶ noun 1 a three-pronged spear, especially as an attribute of Poseidon (Neptune) or Britannia.

2 (*Trident*) a US design of submarine-launched long-range ballistic missile.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin *trident*, from *tri-* 'three' + *dens*, *dens* 'tooth'.

**Tridentine** /trɪ'dentɪn/ ▶ adjective relating to the Council of Trent, especially as the basis of Roman Catholic doctrine.

ORIGIN from medieval Latin *Tridentinus*, from *Tridentum* 'Trent'.

**Tridentine mass** ▶ noun the Latin Eucharistic liturgy used by the Roman Catholic Church from 1570 to 1964.

**tridium** /'trɪdɪəm/ ▶ noun [no sing.] (especially in the Roman Catholic Church) a period of three days' observance, specifically Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

ORIGIN Latin, from *tri-* 'three' + *diēs* 'day'.

**tridymite** /trɪ'dɪmɪt/ ▶ noun [mass noun] a high-temperature form of quartz found as thin hexagonal crystals in some igneous rocks and stony meteorites.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from German *Tridymit*, from Greek *tridyminos* 'threefold', from *tri-* 'three' + *dymos* (as in *didymos* 'twin'), because of its occurrence in groups of three crystals.

**tried** past and past participle of TRY.

PHRASES **tried and tested** (or **tried and trusted** or **N. Amer. tried and true**) denoting something that has proven in the past to be effective or reliable: *a tried-and-tested recipe*.

**triene** /'traɪniən/ ▶ noun Chemistry an unsaturated hydrocarbon containing three double bonds between carbon atoms.

**triennial** /traɪ'ni:niəl/ ▶ adjective recurring every three years: *the triennial meeting of the Association*.

▶ last(ing) for or relating to a period of three years.

▶ noun a visitation of an Anglican diocese by its bishop every three years.

DERIVATIVES *triennially* adverb.

ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from late Latin *triennis* (from Latin *tri-* 'three' + *annus* 'year') + *-AL*.

**triennium** /traɪ'ni:niəm/ ▶ noun (pl. *triennia* [-ri:niə] or *trienniums*) a specified period of three years.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from Latin, from *tri-* 'three' + *annum* 'year'.

**Trier** /traɪ/ ▶ noun a city on the River Mosel in Rhineland-Palatinate, western Germany; pop. 99,200 (est. 2002). French name **Trèves**. Established by a Germanic tribe, the Treveri, c.400 BC. Trier is one of the oldest

however unsuccessful they may be: *Kelly was described by her teachers as a real Trier*.

2 a person or body responsible for investigating and deciding a case judicially: *the jury is the trier of fact*.

**Trieste** /traɪ'stɪ/ ▶ noun a city in NE Italy, the largest port on the Adriatic and capital of Friuli-Venezia Giulia region; pop. 209,520 (2001). Formerly held by Austria (1382-1918). Trieste was annexed by Italy after the First World War. The Free Territory of Trieste was created after the Second World War but returned to Italy in 1954.

**trifa** /'traɪfə/ ▶ adjective another term for TREFA.

**trifacial nerve** /traɪ'feɪʃ(ə)l/ ▶ noun another term for TRIGEMINAL NERVE.

**trifecta** /traɪ'fektə/ ▶ noun N. Amer. & Austral./NZ a bet in which the person betting forecasts the first three finishers in a race in the correct order.

▶ [in sing.] a run of three wins or grand events: *he will attempt a trifecta of the long jump, triple jump, and 210-meter high hurdles*.

ORIGIN 1970s: from TRI- 'three' + PERFECTA.

**triffid** ▶ noun (in science fiction) a member of a race of predatory plants which are capable of growing to a gigantic size and are possessed of locomotive ability and a poisonous sting.

ORIGIN coined by John Wyndham in *Day of the Triffids* (1951).

**trifid** /'traɪfɪd/ ▶ adjective 1 chiefly Biology partly or wholly split into three divisions or lobes.

2 (also **tréfíd**) (of an antique spoon) with three notches splitting the end of the handle.

ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: from Latin *trifidus*, from *tri-* 'three' + *fid-* 'split, divided' (from the verb *findere*).

**trifle** ▶ noun 1 a thing of little value or importance: *we needn't trouble the headmaster over such trifles*.

▶ [in sing.] a small amount of something: *the thousand yen he'd paid seemed the merest trifle*.

2 Brit a cold dessert of sponge cake and fruit covered with layers of custard, jelly, and cream.

▶ verb [no obj.] 1 (**trifle with**) treat without seriousness or respect: *he is not a man to be trifled with* | *men who trifle with women's affections*.

2 speak or act frivolously: *we will not trifle—life is too short*.

▶ [with obj.] (**trifle something away**) waste (something, especially time) frivolously.

PHRASES **a trifle** a little; somewhat: *his methods are a trifle eccentric*.

DERIVATIVES *trifler* noun.

ORIGIN Middle English (also denoting an idle story told to deceive or amuse): from Old French *trifler*, by-form of *trufe* 'deceit', of unknown origin. The verb derives from Old French *truffer* 'mock, deceive'.

**trifling** ▶ adjective unimportant or trivial: *a trifling sum*.

DERIVATIVES *triflingly* adverb.

**trifluoperazine** /'traɪfluəpə'zɪn/ ▶ noun [mass noun] Medicine an antipsychotic and sedative drug related to phenothiazine.

ORIGIN 1950s: from TRI- + *fluo* (fluo) + *perazine*.

**trifocal** ▶ adjective (of a pair of glasses) having lenses with three parts with different focal lengths.

▶ noun (**trifocals**) a pair of glasses with trifocal lenses.

**trifold** /'traɪfəʊld/ ▶ adjective triple; threefold: *a trifold partnership between government, employers, and students*.

**trifoliate** /traɪ'fəʊliət/ ▶ adjective (of a compound leaf) having three leaflets: *dark green trifoliate leaves*.

▶ (of a plant) having trifoliate leaves. ▶ (of an object or design) having the form of a trifoliate leaf: *a bronze trifoliate key handle*.

**triforium** /traɪ'fɔ:riəm/ ▶ noun (pl. *triforia* [-ri:ə]) a gallery or arcade above the arches of the nave, choir, and transepts of a church.

ORIGIN early 18th cent.: from Anglo-Latin, of unknown origin.

**triform** ▶ adjective technical composed of three parts: *strawberries resting among their triform leaves*.

**trifurcate** ▶ verb /'traɪfʌkət/ [no obj.] divide into three branches or forks.

▶ adjective /-fʌkət/ divided into three branches or forks.

DERIVATIVES *trifurcation* noun.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from Latin *trifurcus* 'three-forked' (from *tri-* 'three' + *furca* 'fork') + *-ATE*.

▶ verb (trigs, **trigging**, **trigged**) [with obj.] make neat and smart in appearance: *he has rigged her and trigged her with paint and spar*.

ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'faithful, trusty'): from Old Norse *trýggj*; related to TRUVE. The current verb sense dates from the late 17th cent.

**trigamous** /'trɪgəməs/ ▶ adjective having three wives or husbands at the same time.

DERIVATIVES *trigamist* noun, *trigamy* noun.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from Greek *trigamos* (from *tri-* 'three' + *gamos* 'marriage') + *-OUS*. The nouns *trigamist* and *trigamy* date from the mid 17th cent.

**trigeminal nerve** /traɪ'dʒɪmɪn(ə)l/ ▶ noun Anatomy each of the fifth and largest pair of cranial nerves, supplying the front part of the head and dividing into the ophthalmic, maxillary, and mandibular nerves.

**trigeminal neuralgia** ▶ noun [mass noun] Medicine neuralgia involving one or more of the branches of the trigeminal nerves, and often causing severe pain.

**trigeminus** /traɪ'dʒɪmɪnəs/ ▶ noun (pl. *trigemini* [-ni:ni]) Anatomy each of the trigeminal nerves.

ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from Latin, literally 'three born at the same birth', extended to mean 'threefold'.

**trigger** ▶ noun a small device that releases a spring or catch and so sets off a mechanism, especially in order to fire a gun: *he pulled the trigger of the shotgun*.

▶ an event that is the cause of a particular action, process, or situation: *the trigger for the strike was the closure of a mine*.

▶ verb [with obj.] cause (a device) to function: *burglars fled empty-handed after triggering the alarm*.

▶ (also **trigger something off**) cause (an event or situation) to happen or exist: *an allergy can be triggered by stress or overwork*.

PHRASES **quick on the trigger** quick to respond.

DERIVATIVES *triggered* adjective.

ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from dialect *tricker*, from Dutch *trekker*, from *trekken* 'to pull'.

**trigger finger** ▶ noun 1 a forefinger of the right hand, as that with which the trigger of a gun is typically pulled.

2 (mass noun) Medicine a defect in a tendon causing a finger to jerk or snap straight when the hand is extended.

**triggerfish** ▶ noun (pl. same or *triggerfishes*) a marine fish occurring chiefly in tropical inshore waters. It has a large stout dorsal spine which can be erected and locked into place, allowing the fish to wedge itself into crevices.

▶ Family Balistidae: numerous genera and species.

**trigger hair** ▶ noun 1 Zoology (in a coelenterate) a filament at the mouth of a nematocyst which triggers the emission of the stinging hair when touched.

2 Botany a bristle on the leaf of a Venus flytrap which triggers the closure of the leaf around an insect.

**trigger-happy** ▶ adjective ready to react violently, especially by shooting, on the slightest provocation: *territory controlled by trigger-happy bandits*.

**trigger point** ▶ noun 1 a particular circumstance which causes an event: *the army's refusal to withdraw from the territory was the trigger point for military action*.

2 Physiology & Medicine a sensitive area of the body, stimulation or irritation of which causes a specific effect in another part, especially a tender area in a muscle which causes generalized musculoskeletal pain when overstimulated.

**Triglav** /'trɪgləv/ ▶ noun a mountain in the Julian Alps, NW Slovenia, near the Italian border. Rising to 2,863 m (9,392 ft), it is the highest peak in the mountains east of the Adriatic.

**triglyceride** /traɪ'glɪsəɪd/ ▶ noun Chemistry an ester formed from glycerol and three fatty acid groups. Triglycerides are the main constituents of natural fats and oils.

**triglyph** /'trɪglɪf/ ▶ noun Architecture a tablet in a Doric frieze with three vertical grooves alternating with metopes.

DERIVATIVES *triglyphic* adjective.

ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: via Latin from Greek *triglyphos*, from *tri-* 'three' + *glyphē* 'carving'.

**trigon** /'traɪɡɒn/ ▶ noun archaic term for TRIANGLE.

VOWELS: a cat a: arm e bed s: hair o ago x: her I sit i cosy k: see o hot ɔ: saw ʌ run u put u: too AI my

**Watteau** /'wɒtəʊ/ Jean Antoine (1684-1721), French painter, of Flemish descent. An initiator of the rococo style, he is also known for his invention of the *fête galante*.

**watt-hour** ► noun a measure of electrical energy equivalent to a power consumption of one watt for one hour.

**wattle** /'wɒt(ə)l/ ► noun 1 [mass noun] a material for making fences, walls, etc., consisting of rods or stakes interlaced with twigs or branches.  
■ (count noun) dried a wicker hurdle.  
2 chiefly Austral. an acacia.  
■ Genus *Acacia*, family Leguminosae: many species, including the golden wattle.

► verb [with obj.] make, enclose, or fill up with wattle.  
- ORIGIN Old English *watol*, of unknown origin.

**wattle** /'wɒt(ə)l/ ► noun a coloured fleshy lobe hanging from the head or neck of the turkey and some other birds.

- DERIVATIVES **wattled** adjective.  
- ORIGIN early 16th cent.: of unknown origin.

**wattle and daub** ► noun [mass noun] a material formerly or traditionally used in building walls, consisting of a network of interwoven sticks and twigs covered with mud or clay.

**wattlebird** ► noun 1 the largest of the honeyeaters found in Australia, with a wattle hanging from each cheek.  
■ Genus *Anthochaera* (and *Melicodactes*), family Meliphagidae: four species.

2 a songbird of a New Zealand family distinguished by wattles hanging from the base of the bill.  
■ Family *Calliastur*: the saddleback and the kokako, together with the extinct hui.

**wattle-eye** ► noun a small African flycatcher with a coloured patch of bare skin around or above the eye, typically having black and white plumage.  
■ Genus *Platysteira*, family Platysteiridae (or *Monarchidae*): several species.

**wattmeter** ► noun a meter for measuring electric power in watts.

**Watts**<sup>1</sup>, George Frederick (1817-1904), English painter and sculptor. He is best known for his portraits of public figures, including Gladstone, Tennyson, and J. S. Mill. He was married to the actress Ellen Terry from 1864 to 1877.

**Watts**<sup>2</sup>, Isaac (1674-1748), English hymn writer and poet, remembered for hymns such as 'O God, Our Help in Ages Past' (1719).

**Watusi** /wə'tu:si/ [also **Watutsi** /wə'tu:tsi/] ► noun 1 (treated as pl.) the Tutsi people collectively (now dated in English use).  
2 an energetic dance popular in the 1960s.

► verb [**Watusies**, **Watusiesing**, **Watusied**] (no obj.) dance the Watusi.  
- ORIGIN a local name, from the plural prefix *wa-* + *Tutsi*.

**Waught**<sup>1</sup> /wɔ:ʃ/, Evelyn (Arthur St John) (1903-66), English novelist. His work was profoundly influenced by his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1930. Notable works: *Decline and Fall* (1928); *Brideshead Revisited* (1945).

**Waught**<sup>2</sup> /wɔ:ʃ/, Steve (b.1965), Australian cricketer, captain of Australia 1999-2004.

**waul** /wɔ:ɪ/ ► verb (no obj.) give a loud plaintive cry like that of a cat.  
- ORIGIN early 16th cent.: imitative.

**wave** ► verb 1 (no obj.) move one's hand to and fro in greeting or as a signal: he waved to me from the train.  
■ [with obj.] move (one's hand or arm, or something held in one's hand) to and fro: he waved a sheet of papers in the air. ■ [with obj.] convey (a greeting or other message) by waving one's hand or something held in it: we waved our farewells | [with two objs.] she waved him goodbye.  
■ [with obj. and adverbial of direction] instruct (someone) to move in a particular direction by moving one's hand: he waved her back. ■ [with obj.] (wave something down) use one's hand to give a signal to stop to a driver or vehicle.  
2 (no obj.) move to and fro with a swaying motion while remaining fixed to one point: the flag waved in the wind.  
3 (with obj.) style (hair) so that it curls slightly: her hair had been carefully waved for the evening.  
■ (no obj.) (of hair) grow with a slight curl: [as adj.] waving thick, waving grey hair sprouted back from his forehead.

form and breaking on the shore: he was swept out to sea by a freak wave.

■ a ridge of water between two depressions in open water: gulls and cormorants bobbed on the waves. ■ a shape regarded as resembling a breaking wave: a wave of treasuries stretched to the horizon. ■ (the waves) literary the sea.

2 a sudden occurrence of or increase in a phenomenon, feeling, or emotion: a wave of strikes had paralyzed the government | fear came over me in waves.

3 a gesture or signal made by moving one's hand to and fro: he gave a little wave and walked off.

4 a slightly curling lock of hair: his hair was drying in unruly waves.

■ [in sing.] a tendency to curl in a person's hair: her hair has a slight natural wave.

5 Physics a periodic disturbance of the particles of a substance which may be propagated without net movement of the particles, such as in the passage of undulating motion, heat, or sound. See also **STANDING WAVE** and **TRAVELLING WAVE**.

■ a single curve in the course of this motion. ■ a similar variation of an electromagnetic field in the propagation of light or other radiation through a medium or vacuum.

- PHRASES **make waves** informal create a significant impression: he has already made waves as a sculptor. ■ cause trouble: I don't want to risk her welfare by making waves.

- DERIVATIVES **waveless** adjective, **wave-like** adjective.  
- ORIGIN Old English *wafian* (verb), from the Germanic base of **WAVER**; the noun by alteration (influenced by the verb) of Middle English *wave* '(sea) wave'.

**USAGE** On confusion between **wave** and **wave**, see **usage at wave**.

**waveband** ► noun a range of wavelengths falling between two given limits, used in radio transmission.

**wave equation** ► noun Mathematics a differential equation expressing the properties of motion in waves.

**waveform** ► noun Physics a curve showing the shape of a wave at a given time.

**wavefront** ► noun Physics a surface containing points affected in the same way by a wave at a given time.

**wave function** ► noun Physics a function that satisfies a wave equation and describes the properties of a wave.

**waveguide** ► noun a metal tube or other device confining and conveying microwaves.

**wavelength** /'wɛvlɛŋθ, -lɛŋθ/ ► noun 1 Physics the distance between successive crests of a wave, especially points in a sound wave or electromagnetic wave. (Symbol: λ.)  
■ this distance as a distinctive feature of radio waves from a transmitter.

2 a person's ideas and way of thinking, especially as it affects their ability to communicate with others: when we met we hit it off immediately—we're on the same wavelength.

**wavelet** ► noun a small wave of water; a ripple.

**wave machine** ► noun a machine that creates waves in the water in a swimming pool.

**wave mechanics** ► plural noun (treated as sing.) Physics a method of analysis of the behaviour of atomic phenomena with particles represented by wave equations.

**wave number** ► noun Physics the number of waves in a unit distance.

**wave packet** ► noun Physics a group of superposed waves which together form a travelling localized disturbance, especially one described by Schrödinger's equation and regarded as representing a particle.

**waver** ► verb (no obj.) 1 move in a quivering way: flicker: the flame wavered in the draught.  
2 become weaker; falter: his love for her had never wavered | [as id.] waverling she gave a wavering smile.

■ be undecided between two opinions or courses of action: she never wavered from her intention.

- DERIVATIVES **waverer** noun, **waveringly** adverb, **wavery** adjective.

- ORIGIN Middle English: from Old Norse *vafra* 'flicker', of Germanic origin. Compare with **WAVE**.

**WAVES** ► plural noun the women's section of the US Naval Reserve, established in 1942, or since 1948, of the US Navy.

something else that represents a human such as a piece of music.

**wave theory** ► noun Physics, historical the theory that light is propagated through the ether by a wave motion imparted to the ether by the molecular vibrations of the radiant body.

**wave train** ► noun a group of waves of equal or similar wavelengths travelling in the same direction.

**wavicle** /'wɛvɪk(ə)l/ ► noun Physics an entity having characteristic properties of both waves and particles.  
- ORIGIN 1920s: blend of **WAVE** and **PARTICLE**.

**wavy** ► adjective (**wavier**, **waviest**) having or consisting of a series of undulating and edge-like curves: she had long, wavy hair.

■ [usu. postpositive] Hereditary divided or edged with a line formed of alternating shallow curves.

- DERIVATIVES **wavily** adverb, **waviness** noun.

**WA-WA** ► noun variant spelling of **WAH-WAH**.

**wax**<sup>1</sup> ► noun [mass noun] 1 a sticky yellowish mouldable substance secreted by honeybees as the material of a honeycomb; beeswax.

■ a white translucent material obtained by bleaching and purifying beeswax and used for such purposes as making candles, modelling, and as a basis of polishes.

■ a similar viscous substance, typically a lipid or hydrocarbon. ■ earwax.

2 informal used in reference to gramophone records: he didn't get on wax until 1959.

► verb [with obj.] 1 cover or treat (something) with wax or a similar substance, typically to polish or protect it: I washed and waxed the floor.

■ remove unwanted hair from (a part of the body) by applying wax and then peeling off the wax and hairs together.  
2 informal make a recording of: he waxed a series of tracks that emphasized his lead guitar work | [as noun **waxing**] the latest waxing by the Grams.

- DERIVATIVES **waxer** noun.

- ORIGIN Old English *wax*, *waxan*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *was* and German *Wachs*. The verb dates from late Middle English.

**wax**<sup>2</sup> ► verb (no obj.) 1 (of the moon between new and full) have a progressively larger part of its visible surface illuminated, increasing its apparent size.

■ literary become larger or stronger: his anger waxed.  
2 (with complement) begin to speak or write about something in the specified manner: they waxed lyrical about the old days.

- PHRASES **wax and wane** undergo alternate increases and decreases: green sentiment has waxed and waned.

- ORIGIN Old English *waxan*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *wassen* and German *wachsen*, from an Indo-European root shared by Greek *auxanēin* and Latin *augere* 'to increase'.

**wax**<sup>3</sup> ► noun [usu. in sing.] Brit. informal, dated a fit of anger: she is in a wax about the delay to the wedding.

- ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: origin uncertain; perhaps from phrases such as *wax angry*.

**waxberry** ► noun a shrub with berries that have a waxy coating, in particular a bayberry.

**waxbill** ► noun a small finch-like Old World songbird, typically brightly coloured and with a red bill that resembles sealing wax in colour.

■ Family *Estiniidae* (the **waxbill family**), about three genera, especially *Estrioides* and several species. The *waxbill* family also includes the *avastavate*, *mannikins*, *cordon-bleu*, *Java sparrow*, *zebra finch*, etc., many being popular as cage birds.

**waxcloth** ► noun [mass noun] cloth that is impregnated with oil for covering floors and tables; oil-cloth.

**waxed jacket** ► noun an outdoor jacket made of a fabric that has been impregnated with wax to make it waterproof.

**waxed paper** ► noun [mass noun] paper that has been impregnated with wax to make it waterproof or greaseproof, used especially in cooking and the wrapping of foodstuffs.

**waxen** ► adjective 1 having a smooth, pale, translucent surface or appearance like that of wax: a canopy of waxen, creamy blooms.

2 artistic or literary made of wax: a waxen effigy.

**wax flower** ► noun a plant bearing flowers with a waxy appearance:

VOWELS: a cat a: arm e bed e: hair ə ago o: her i sit i cosy i: see o hot o: saw A run u put u: too Ai my