



# Merriam- Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary

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tice of taking advantage of opportunities or circumstances often with little regard for principles or consequences — **op-por-tun-ist** \-'tū-nist, -'tyū-\\ n or adj

**op-por-tu-nis-tic** \-'tū-nis-tik, -'tyū-\\ adj (1892) : taking advantage of opportunities as they arise: as a : exploiting opportunities with little regard to principle or consequences (a politician considered ~) b : feeding on whatever food is available (~ feeders) c : being or caused by a usu. *harmless microorganism* that can become pathogenic when the host's resistance is impaired (~ infections) — **op-por-tu-nis-ti-cal-ly** \-'ti-k(ə)-lē\\ adv

**op-por-tu-ni-ty** \-'pər-'tū-nə-tē, -'tyū-\\ n, pl -ties (14c) 1 : a favorable juncture of circumstances (the halt provided an ~ for rest and refreshment) 2 : a good chance for advancement or progress

**opportunity cost** n (1911) : the cost of making an investment that is the difference between the return on one investment and the return on an alternative

**op-pos-able** \ə-'pō-zə-bəl\\ adj (1667) 1 : capable of being opposed or resisted 2 : capable of being placed against one or more of the remaining digits of a hand or foot (the ~ human thumb) — **op-pos-abil-ity** \ə-'pō-zə-'bi-lə-tē\\ n

**op-pose** \ə-'pōz\\ vt **op-posed**; **op-pos-ing** [F *opposer*, fr. L *opponere* (perf. indic. *opposui*), fr. *ob-* against + *ponere* to place — more at **OB-** POSITION] (1579) 1 : to place opposite or against something 2 : to place over against something so as to provide resistance, counterbalance, or contrast 3 : to offer resistance to — **op-pos-er** n

**syn** OPOSE, COMBAT, RESIST, WITHSTAND mean to set oneself against someone or something. OPOSE can apply to any conflict, from mere objection to bitter hostility or warfare (opposed the plan). COMBAT stresses the forceful or urgent countering of something (combat disease). RESIST implies an overt recognition of a hostile or threatening force and a positive effort to counteract or repel it (resisting temptation). WITHSTAND suggests a more passive resistance (trying to withstand peer pressure).

**op-posed** \-'pōzd\\ adj (1596) : set or placed in opposition : CONTRARY (with politicians, as ~ to soap, you cannot return what you have bought — Felix G. Rohatyn)

**op-pose-less** \ə-'pōz-ləs\\ adj (1605) *archaic* : IRRESISTIBLE

**op-po-site** \ə-'pō-zət, 'ap-sət\\ adj [ME, fr. MF, fr. L *oppositus*, pp. of *opponere*] (14c) 1 a : set over against something that is at the other end or side of an intervening line or space (~ interior angles) (~ ends of a diameter) b : situated in pairs on an axis with each member being separated from the other by half the circumference of the axis (~ leaves) — compare **ALTERNATE** 2 a : occupying an opposing and often antagonistic position (~ sides of the question) b : diametrically different (as in nature or character) (~ meanings) 3 : contrary to one another or to a thing specified : REVERSE (gave them ~ directions) 4 : being the other of a pair that are corresponding or complementary in position, function, or nature (members of the ~ sex) 5 : of, relating to, or being the side of a baseball field that is near the first base line for a right-handed batter and near the third base line for a left-handed batter — **op-po-site-ly** adv — **op-po-site-ness** n

**syn** OPPOSITE, CONTRADICTION, CONTRARY, ANTI-THETICAL mean being so far apart as to be or seem irreconcilable. OPPOSITE applies to things in sharp contrast or in conflict (opposite views on foreign aid). CONTRADICTION applies to two things that completely negate each other so that if one is true or valid the other must be untrue or invalid (made contradictory predictions about whether the market would rise or fall). CONTRARY implies extreme divergence or diametrical opposition (contrary assessments of the war situation). ANTI-THETICAL stresses clear and unequivocal diametrical opposition (a law that is antithetical to the very idea of democracy).

**2** **opposite** n (15c) 1 : something that is opposed to some other often specified thing 2 : ANTONYM 3 : ADDITIVE INVERSE; *esp* : the additive inverse of a real number

**3** **opposite** adv (1667) : on or to an opposite side

**4** **opposite** prep (1758) 1 : across from and usu. facing or on the same level with (sat ~ each other) 2 : in a role complementary to (played ~ the leading man in the comedy)

**opposite number** n (1906) : a member of a system or class who holds relatively the same position as a particular member in a corresponding system or class : COUNTERPART

**op-po-si-tion** \ə-'pō-'zi-shən\\ n (14c) 1 : a configuration in which one celestial body is opposite another in the sky or in which the elongation is near or equal to 180 degrees 2 : the relation between two propositions having the same subject and predicate but differing in quantity or quality or both 3 : an act of setting opposite or over against : the condition of being so set 4 : hostile or contrary action or condition 5 a : something that opposes; *specif* : a body of persons opposing something b *often cap* : a political party opposing and prepared to replace the party in power — **op-po-si-tion-al** \-'zish-nəl, -'zi-shən-əl\\ adj

**op-po-si-tion-ist** \-'zi-sh(ə)-nist\\ n (1773) : a member of an opposition — **op-positionist** adj

**op-press** \ə-'pres\\ vt [ME, fr. MF *oppresser*, fr. L *oppressus*, pp. of *opprimere*, fr. *ob-* against + *primere* to press — more at **OB-** PRESS] (14c) 1 a *archaic* : SUPPRESS b : to crush or burden by abuse of power or authority 2 : to burden spiritually or mentally : weigh heavily upon *syn* see **WRONG** — **op-pres-sor** \-'pre-sər\\ n

**op-pression** \ə-'pre-shən\\ n (14c) 1 a : unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power b : something that oppresses *esp*, in being an unjust or excessive exercise of power 2 : a sense of being weighed down in body or mind : DEPRESSION

**op-pres-sive** \ə-'pre-siv\\ adj (ca. 1677) 1 : unreasonably burdensome or severe (~ legislation) 2 : TYRANNICAL 3 : overwhelming or depressing to the spirit or senses (an ~ climate) **syn** see **ONEROUS** — **op-pres-sive-ly** adv — **op-pres-sive-ness** n

**op-pro-bri-ous** \ə-'prō-brē-əs\\ adj (14c) 1 : expressive of opprobrium : SCURRILOUS (~ language) 2 : deserving of opprobrium : INFAMOUS — **op-pro-bri-ous-ly** adv — **op-pro-bri-ous-ness** n

**op-pro-bri-um** \ə-'brē-əm\\ n [L, fr. *opprobriare* to reproach, fr. *ob* in the way of + *probrum* reproach; akin to L *pro* forward and to L *ferre* to carry, bring — more at **OB-** FOR, BEAR] (1656) 1 : something that brings disgrace 2 a : public disgrace or ill fame that follows from conduct considered grossly wrong or vicious b : CONTEMPT, REPROACH

**op-pugn** \ə-'pyün, ä-\\ vt [ME, fr. L *oppugnare*, fr. *ob-* against + *pugnare* to fight — more at **OB-** PUNGENT] (15c) 1 : to fight against 2 : to call in question — **op-pugn-er** n

**Ops** \ə'ps\\ n [L] : the Roman goddess of abundance and the wife of Saturn

**op-sin** \ə'p-sən\\ n [prob. fr. *rhodopsin*] (1951) : any of various colorless proteins that in combination with retinal or a related prosthetic group form a visual pigment (as rhodopsin) in a reaction which is reversed by light

**-opsis** n *comb form*, pl **-opses** or **-opsides** [NL, fr. Gk, fr. *opsis* appearance, vision] : structure resembling a (specified) thing (caryopsis)

**op-son-ic** \ə'p-sən-ik\\ adj (1903) : of, relating to, or involving opsonin

**op-so-nin** \ə'p-sən-nən\\ n [L *opsonare* to buy provisions, cater (fr. Gk *opsōnein*) + E *-in* — more at **OLIGOPSONY**] (1903) : an antibody of blood serum that makes foreign cells more susceptible to the action of the phagocytes

**-opsy** n *comb form* [Gk *-opsis*, fr. *opsis*] : examination (necropsy)

**opt** \ə'pt\\ vi [F *opter*, fr. L *optare*] (1877) : to make a choice; *esp* : to decide in favor of something (~ed for a tax increase — Tom Wicker)

**op-ta-tive** \ə'p-tə-tiv\\ adj (15c) 1 a : of, relating to, or constituting a verbal mood that is expressive of wish or desire b : of, relating to, or constituting a sentence that is expressive of wish or hope 2 : expressing desire or wish — **op-ta-tive-ly** adv

**op-tic** \ə'p-tik\\ adj [ME, fr. MF *optique*, fr. ML *opticus*, fr. Gk *optikos*, fr. *opsēthai* to be going to see; akin to Gk *opsis* appearance, *ops* eye — more at **EYE**] (14c) : of or relating to vision or the eye

**1** **optic** n (1600) 1 : EYE 2 a : any of the elements (as lenses, mirrors, or light guides) of an optical instrument or system — usu. used in pl. b : an optical instrument

**op-ti-cal** \ə'p-ti-kəl\\ adj (1570) 1 : of or relating to the science of optics 2 a : of or relating to vision : VISUAL b : VISIBLE 1 (~ wave-length) c : of, relating to, or being objects that emit light in the visible range of frequencies (an ~ galaxy) d : using the properties of light to aid vision (an ~ instrument) 3 a : of, relating to, or utilizing light *esp*, instead of other forms of energy (~ microscopy) b : involving the use of light-sensitive devices to acquire information for a computer (~ character recognition) 4 : of or relating to optical art — **op-ti-cal-ly** \-'k(ə)-lē\\ adv

**optical activity** n (1877) : ability of a chemical substance to rotate the plane of vibration of polarized light to the right or left

**optical art** n (1964) : nonobjective art characterized by the use of straight or curved lines or geometric patterns often for an illusory effect (as of motion)

**optical bench** n (1883) : an apparatus that is fitted for the convenient location and adjustment of light sources and optical devices and that is used for the observation and measurement of optical phenomena

**optical disk** n (1980) : a disk with a plastic coating on which information (as music or visual images) is recorded digitally (as in the form of tiny pits) and which is read by using a laser

**optical fiber** n (1962) : a single fiber-optic strand

**optical glass** n (1840) : flint or crown glass of well-defined characteristics used *esp*, for making lenses

**optical illusion** n (1794) : ILLUSION 2a(1)

**optically active** adj (1885) : capable of rotating the plane of polarization of light to the right or left — used of compounds, molecules, or atoms

**optical rotation** n (1895) : the angle through which the plane of vibration of polarized light that traverses an optically active substance is rotated

**optic axis** n (1664) : a line in a doubly refracting medium that is parallel to the direction in which all components of plane-polarized light travel with the same speed

**optic chiasma** n (1872) : the X-shaped partial decussation on the undersurface of the hypothalamus through which the optic nerves are continuous with the brain — called also *optic chiasm*

**optic cup** n (ca. 1885) : the optic vesicle after invaginating to form a 2-layered cup from which the retina and pigmented layer of the eye will develop — called also *eyecup*

**optic disk** n (ca. 1890) : BLIND SPOT 1a

**op-ti-cian** \ə'p-ti-shən\\ n (1687) 1 : a maker of or dealer in optical items and instruments 2 : a person who reads prescriptions for visual correction, orders lenses, and dispenses spectacles and contact lenses — compare **OPHTHALMOLOGIST**, **OPTOMETRIST**

**optic lobe** n (1854) : either of two prominences of the midbrain concerned with vision

**optic nerve** n (1615) : either of the pair of nerves that comprise the 2d pair of cranial nerves, arise from the ventral part of the diencephalon, supply the retina, and conduct visual stimuli to the brain — see **EYE** illustration

**optics** \ə'p-tiks\\ n pl *but sing in constr* (1579) : a science that deals with the genesis and propagation of light, the changes that it undergoes and produces, and other phenomena closely associated with it

**optic vesicle** n (ca. 1885) : an evagination of each lateral wall of the embryonic vertebrate forebrain from which the nervous structures of the eye develop

**op-ti-mal** \ə'p-tə-məl\\ adj (1890) : most desirable or satisfactory : OPTIMUM — **op-ti-mal-i-ty** \ə'p-tə-'ma-lə-tē\\ n — **op-ti-mal-ly** \-'mə-lē\\ adv

**op-ti-mi-sa-tion**, **op-ti-mise** *Brit var* of OPTIMIZATION, OPTIMIZE

**op-ti-mism** \ə'p-tə-'mi-zəm\\ n [F *optimisme*, fr. L *optimum*, n., best, fr. neut. of *optimus* best; akin to L *ops* power — more at **OPULENT**] (1759) 1 : a doctrine that this world is the best possible world 2 : an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events or to anticipate the best possible outcome — **op-ti-mist** \-'mɪ-st\\ n — **op-ti-mis-tic** \ə'p-tə-'mɪs-tik\\ adj — **op-ti-mis-ti-cal-ly** \-'ti-k(ə)-lē\\ adv

**Op-ti-mist** \ə'p-tə-'mɪ-st\\ n [*Optimist* (*Club*)] (1911) : a member of a major international service club

**op-ti-mi-za-tion** \ə'p-tə-'mā-'zā-shən\\ n (1857) : an act, process, or methodology of making something (as a design, system, or decision) as fully perfect, functional, or effective as possible; *specif* : the mathematical procedures (as finding the maximum of a function) involved in this

**op-ti-mize** \ə'p-tə-'mɪ-z\\ vt -mized; -miz-ing (1857) : to make as perfect, effective, or functional as possible — **op-ti-miz-er** \-'mɪ-zər\\ n

**op-ti-mum** \ə'p-tə-'məm\\ n, pl -ma \-'mə\\ also -mums [L] (1879) 1