

THE  
AMERICAN HERITAGE  
DICTIONARY  
OF THE ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE

---

THIRD EDITION

Words are included in this Dictionary on the basis of their usage. Words that are known to have current trademark registrations are shown with an initial capital and are also identified as trademarks. No investigation has been made of common-law trademark rights in any word, because such investigation is impracticable. The inclusion of any word in this Dictionary is not, however, an expression of the Publisher's opinion as to whether or not it is subject to proprietary rights. Indeed, no definition in this Dictionary is to be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark.

American Heritage and the eagle logo are registered trademarks of Forbes Inc. Their use is pursuant to a license agreement with Forbes Inc.

Houghton Mifflin Company gratefully acknowledges Mead Data Central, Inc., providers of the LEXIS®/NEXIS® services, for its assistance in the preparation of this edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company.  
All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Houghton Mifflin Company unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. Address inquiries to Permissions, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park Street, Boston, MA 02108.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

The American heritage dictionary of the English language.  
—3rd ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-395-44895-6

1. English language—Dictionaries.

PE1628.A623 1992  
423—dc20

92-851  
CIP

Manufactured in the United States of America



development. **2.a.** Having or showing qual-  
 character, such as courage, generosity, or hon-  
 b. Proceeding from or indicative of such a  
 magnanimity: "What poor an instrument/May  
 Shakespeare). **3.** Grand and stately in appear-  
 mighty Spanish chestnut, bare now of leaves,  
 ble tree" (Richard Jeffries). **4. Chemistry.** In-  
**noble n.** **1.** A member of the nobility. **2.** A  
 used in England, worth half of a mark. [Mid-  
 Old French, from Latin *nobilis*. See **gnō-** in  
**ble-ness n.** — **no'bly adv.**

ty of the elements in Group O of the periodic  
 lum, neon, argon, krypton, xenon, and radon,  
 ic and with limited exceptions chemically in-  
 rt gas.

**nob'el-mən n.** A man of noble rank.  
 A metal or an alloy, such as gold, that is highly  
 on and corrosion.

parasitic fungus (*Botrytis cinerea*) that attacks  
 ses an increase in their sugar content. Certain  
 French Sauternes and the Hungarian Tokay,  
 such grapes.

**no'b'ly n.** **1.** Noble birth or condition. **2.** The  
 ility, especially the French nobility. [Middle  
 French, from *noble*, noble, from Latin *nobilis*.  
 French, from *noble*, noble, from Latin *nobilis*.

**no' (ō-blēzh' ) n.** Benevolent, honorable be-  
 be the responsibility of persons of high birth  
 nobility obligates : *noblesse*, nobility + *oblige*,  
 present tense of *obliger*, to obligate.]  
 (nō'bəl-wōdm'ən) n. A woman of noble

**no'd'ē, -būd'ē, -bā-dē) pron.** No person; not  
 d you to go. — **no'boddy n., pl. -ies.** A per-  
 ce or influence.

**no'd'ē) adj.** Causing injury; harmful. [Middle Eng-  
 from Latin *nocēns, nocent-*, present participle  
 See **nek-** in Appendix.]

**no'si-sēp'tiv) adj.** **1.** Causing pain. Used of a  
 d by or responding to a painful stimulus: a  
 eflex. [From NOCICEPTOR.]

**no'si-sēp'tar) n.** A sensory receptor that re-  
 tin *nocēre*, to hurt; see NOCENT + (RE)CEPTOR.]  
 The groove at either end of a bow for holding  
 The notch in the end of an arrow that fits on  
**no'ck tr.v. no'cked, no'ck-ing, no'cks. 1.** To  
 ow or an arrow). **2.** To fit (an arrow) to a  
 English *no'kke*.]

at of **nocti-**.  
**no'kt-əm'bu-lā'shən) n.** See **sleepwalking**. [NOCT(I)- +  
 walk + -ISM.] — **no'ct-əm'bu-list n.**

**no'kt-iv) pref.** Night: *noctiluca*. [New Latin, from  
 ght. See **nek'-t-** in Appendix.]

**no'kt-lū'skə) n.** Any of various bioluminescent  
 e genus *Noctiluca* that when grouped in large  
 ea phosphorescent. [New Latin *Noctiluca*, ge-  
 in *noctiluca*, lantern, moon : *nocti-*, *nocti-* +  
**leuk-** in Appendix.]

**no'kt-lū'sənt) adj.** Luminous at night.  
 ertain high clouds.

**no'kt-īd) n.** Any of numerous, usually dull-  
 moths of the family Noctuidae, having a well-  
 s for sucking nectar and larvae such as the  
 worms that are destructive to young trees and  
 lled *owllet moth*. — **no'ctuid) adj.** Of, relating  
 the family Noctuidae. [From New Latin *No-*  
 e, from *Noctua*, type genus, from Latin *noctua*,  
**no'kt-iv) -t-** in Appendix.]

**no'kt-iv) n.** A large, reddish-brown insectivorous  
 yctalus, found in Eurasia, Indonesia, and the  
 pically dwelling in the hollows of trees.  
 n *noctula*, bat, owl, from Late Latin *noctula*,  
 utive of *noctua*, night owl. See **nek'-t-** in Ap-

**no'kt-iv) n.** Any of the three canonical divisions of  
 s. [Middle English *nocturne*, from Medieval  
 n Latin, feminine of *nocturnus*, of the night.

**no'kt-iv) adj.** **1.** Of, relating to, or occurring  
 nal stillness. **2. Botany.** Having flowers that  
 nt. **3. Zoology.** Most active at night: *noctur-*  
 e English, from Old French, from Late Latin  
 latin *nocturnus*, from *nox, noct-*, night. See  
 x.] — **no'ct-iv) -ly adv.**

**no'kt-iv) n.** **1.** A painting of a night scene. **2.**  
 ital composition of a pensive, dreamy mood,  
 e piano. [French, from Old French *noctur-*

**nod (nōd) v. nod-ded, nod-ding, nods. — intr. 1.** To lower  
 and raise the head quickly, as in agreement or acknowledgment.  
**2.** To let the head fall forward when sleepy; doze momentarily:  
*nodded off on the train*. **3.** To be careless or momentarily inat-  
 tentive as if sleepy; lapse: *Even Homer nods*. **4.** To sway, move  
 up and down, or droop, as flowers in the wind. — **tr. 1.** To lower  
 and raise (the head) quickly in agreement or acknowledgment. **2.**  
 To express by lowering and raising the head: *He nodded his agree-*  
**ment**. **3.** To summon, guide, or send by nodding the head: *The*  
*chairperson nodded us into the room*. — **nod n. 1.** A forward or  
 up-and-down movement of the head, usually expressive of drowsi-  
 ness or agreement: *gave a nod of affirmation*. **2.** An indication of  
 approval or assent: *The contestant got the nod from the judges*.  
 [Middle English *nodden*; perhaps akin to Middle High German  
*notten*.] — **nod'der n.**

**nod'al (nōd'əl) adj.** Of, relating to, resembling, being, or situ-  
 ated near or at a node. — **nod'al-ly adv.**

**nod-ding pogonia (nōd'ɪŋ) n.** A North American orchid  
 (*Triphora trianthophora*) having nodding flower buds and ascend-  
 ing, pink or white flowers.

**nod-dle (nōd'əl) n.** The head. [Middle English *noddel*, back of  
 the head, perhaps from Latin *nōdulus*, lump, knob. See NODULE.]

**nod-dy (nōd'ē) n., pl. -dies. 1.** A dunce or fool; a simpleton.  
**2.** Any of several terms of the genera *Anous* and *Micranous*, found  
 in tropical waters and having a dark brown or black color with a  
 white or gray head. [Perhaps from obsolete *noddy*, foolish, possi-  
 bly from NOD.]

**node (nōd) n. 1.** A knob, knot, protuberance, or swelling. **2.a.**  
*Botany.* The point on a stem where a leaf is attached or has been  
 attached; a joint. **b. See **knot**<sup>1</sup> (sense 7). **3. Physics.** A point or  
 region of virtually zero amplitude in a periodic system. **4. Math-**  
**ematics.** The point at which a continuous curve crosses itself. **5.**  
**Computer Science.** A terminal in a computer network. **6. Astron-**  
**omy. a.** Either of two diametrically opposite points at which the  
 orbit of a planet intersects the ecliptic. **b.** Either of two points at  
 which the orbit of a satellite intersects the orbital plane of a plan-  
 et. [Middle English, lump in the flesh, from Latin *nōdus*, knot.  
 See **nod-** in Appendix.]**

**node of Ran-vier (rān'vyā, rān-vyā', rān-) n., pl. nodes of**  
**Ranvier.** A constriction in the myelin sheath, occurring at vary-  
 ing intervals along the length of a nerve fiber. [After Louis An-  
 toine Ranvier (1835–1922), French histologist.]

**no'di (nō'di) n.** Plural of **nodus**.

**no-dose (nō'dōs') adj.** Characterized by or having many nodes  
 or protuberances, jointed or knobby at intervals. — **no-dos'i-ty**  
 (-dōs'i-tē) n.

**nod-ule (nōd'ool) n. 1.** A small knotlike protuberance. **2.**  
*Anatomy.* A small mass of tissue or aggregation of cells. **3. Bot-**  
*any.* A small knoblike outgrowth, as those found on the roots of  
 many leguminous plants. **4. Mineralogy.** A small rounded lump  
 of a mineral or mixture of minerals, usually harder than the sur-  
 rounding rock or sediment. [Middle English, from Latin *nōdulus*,  
 diminutive of *nōdus*, knot. See **nod-** in Appendix.] — **nod'u-lar**  
 (nōd'ə-lər), **nod'u-lose'** (-lōs'), **nod'u-lous** (-ləs) **adj.**

**no-dus (nō'dəs) n., pl. -di (-dī).** A difficult situation or prob-  
 lem; a complication. [Latin *nōdus*, knot. See **nod-** in Appendix.]  
**NOED also N.O.E.D. abbr.** New Oxford English Dictionary.

**No-ēl also No-el (nō-ēl') n. 1.** Christmas. **2. noēl also noel.**  
 A Christmas carol. [Middle English *noel*, from Old French, vari-  
 ant of *nael*, from Latin *nātālis (diēs)*, (day) of birth, from *nātus*,  
 past participle of *nāscī*, to be born. See **gene-** in Appendix.]

**No-el-Ba-ker (nō'əl-bā'kər), Philip John. 1889–1982.** Brit-  
 ish politician who helped draft the Covenant of the League of  
 Nations (1919) and the United Nations Charter (1945). He won the  
 1959 Nobel Peace Prize.

**noēs (nōz) n.** Plural of **no**<sup>1</sup>.

**no-e-sis (nō-ēs'is) n. Psychology.** The cognitive process; cog-  
 nition. [Greek *noēsis*, understanding, from *noein*, to perceive,  
 from *nous*, mind.]

**no-et-ic (nō-ēt'ik) adj.** Of, relating to, originating in, or ap-  
 prehended by the intellect. [Greek *noētikos*, from *noēsis*, under-  
 standing. See NOESIS.]

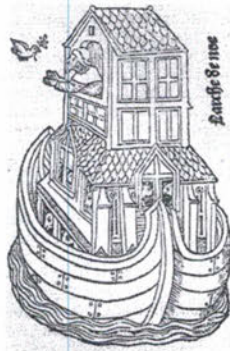
**no-fault (nō'fōlt') adj. 1.** Of, indicating, or being a system of  
 motor vehicle insurance in which accident victims are compensat-  
 ed by their insurance companies without assignment of blame.  
**2. Law.** Of, indicating, or being a type of divorce in which blame  
 is assigned to neither party.

**no-frills (nō'frīlz') adj. Informal.** Marked by the absence of  
 extra or special features; basic: *no-frills housing*; *no-frills airline*  
*service*.

**nog<sup>1</sup> (nōg) n. 1.** A wooden block built into a masonry wall to  
 hold nails that support joinery structures. **2.** A wooden peg or  
 pin. [Origin unknown.]

**nog<sup>2</sup> (nōg) n.** Eggnog.

**No-gal-ies (nō-gāl'is, -gā'lis).** A city of southern Arizona  
 south of Tucson on the Mexican border adjacent to **Nogales**,  
 Mexico. Both cities are ports of entry and tourist centers. Nogales,  
 Arizona, has a population of 15,683; Nogales, Mexico, has 14,254  
 inhabitants.



**Noah**  
 15th-century  
 French rendering  
 of Noah in his ark,  
 from *La Mer des Histoires*



**Alfred Nobel**

ā pat	oi boy
ā pay	ou out
ār care	ōō took
ā father	ōō boot
ē pet	ū cut
ē be	ūr urge
ī pit	th thin
ī pie	th this
īr pier	hw which
ō pot	zh vision
ō toe	ə about, item





At an archaeological dig

[Spanish, from Latin *sexta* (*hōra*), sixth (hour), midday, feminine of *sextus*, sixth. See *SEXT*.]

**sieve** (siv) *n.* A utensil of wire mesh or closely perforated metal, used for straining, sifting, ricing, or puréeing. — *sieve* *v.* **sieved**, **siev-ing**, **sieves**. — *tr.* To pass through a sieve. — *intr.* To use a sieve; sift. [Middle English *sive*, from Old English *sife*.]

**sieve plate** *n.* *Botany.* The perforated end wall of a sieve tube cell.

**sieve tube** *n.* *Botany.* A series of cells joined end to end, forming a tube through which nutrients are conducted in flowering plants and brown algae.

**sift** (sift) *v.* **sift-ed**, **sift-ing**, **sifts**. — *tr.* 1. To put (flour, for example) through a sieve or other straining device in order to separate the fine from the coarse particles. 2. To distinguish as if separating with a sieve: *sifted the candidates for the job*. 3. To apply by scattering with or as if with a sieve: *sift sugar on a dessert*. 4. To examine and sort carefully: *sift the evidence*. — *intr.* 1. To make use of a sieve. 2. To pass through or as if through a sieve: *a meal that sifts easily*. 3. To make a careful examination: *sifted through back issues of the magazine*. [Middle English *siften*, from Old English *siftan*.] — **sift'er** *n.*

**sig.** *abbr.* 1. Signal. 2. Signature. 3. Often **Sig.** Signor; signore.

**Sig.** *abbr.* 1. *Latin.* Signa (mark or label it). 2. *Medicine.* Signature. 3. *Latin.* Signetur (let it be marked or labeled).

**sigh** (sī) *v.* **sighed**, **sigh-ing**, **sighs**. — *intr.* 1. *a.* To exhale audibly in a long, deep breath, as in weariness or relief. *b.* To emit a similar sound: *willows sighing in the wind*. 2. To feel longing or grief; yearn: *sighing for their lost youth*. — *tr.* 1. To express with or as if with an audible exhalation. 2. *Archaic.* To lament. — **sigh** *n.* The act or sound of sighing. [Middle English *sighen*, probably back-formation from *sighte*, past tense of *siken*, to sigh, from Old English *sican*.] — **sigh'er** *n.*

♦ **sight** (sīt) *n.* 1. The ability to see. 2. The act or fact of seeing: *hoping for a sight of land; caught sight of a rare bird*. 3. Field of vision. 4. The foreseeable future; prospect: *no solution in sight*. 5. Something seen; a view. 6. Something worth seeing; a spectacle: *the sights of London*. 7. *Informal.* Something unsightly: *Your hair is a sight*. 8. *a.* A device used to assist aim by guiding the eye, as on a firearm or surveying instrument. *b.* An aim or observation taken with such a device. 9. An opportunity to observe or inspect. 10. *Upper Southern U.S.* A large number or quantity: *A sight of people were there*. — **sight** *v.* **sight-ed**, **sight-ing**, **sights**. — *tr.* 1. To perceive with the eyes; get sight of: *sighted land after 40 days at sea*. 2. To observe through a sight or an optical instrument: *sight a target*. 3. To adjust the sights of (a rifle, for example). 4. To take aim with (a firearm). — *intr.* 1. To direct one's gaze; look carefully. 2. To take aim: *sighted along the barrel of the gun*. — **idioms.** **on sight.** Immediately upon being seen: *threatened to shoot looters on sight*. **out of sight.** *Slang.* Remarkable; incredible: *The graduation party was out of sight*. **sight for sore eyes.** *Informal.* One whom it is a relief or joy to see. **sight unseen.** Without seeing the object in question: *bought the horse sight unseen*. [Middle English, from Old English *sīth*, *gesīht*, something seen. See *sek*<sup>2</sup> in Appendix.]

**sight draft** *n.* *Abbr.* **SD.** A draft or bill that is payable on demand or upon presentation. Also called *demand draft*.

**sight-ed** (sīt'ēd) *adj.* 1. Having the ability to see. 2. Having eyesight of a specified kind. Often used in combination: *keen-sighted*. — **sight'ed-ness** *n.*

**sight gag** *n.* A comic bit or effect that depends on sight rather than words.

**sight-ing** (sīt'ing) *n.* The act of catching sight of something, especially something unusual or searched for: *a sighting of a whale in the harbor; a reported sighting of a UFO*.

**sight-less** (sīt'lis) *adj.* 1. Unable to see with the eyes; blind. 2. Invisible. — **sight'less-ly** *adv.* — **sight'less-ness** *n.*

**sight-line** also **sight line** (sīt'lin') *n.* A line of sight, especially one between a spectator and the spectacle in a theater or stadium.

**sight-ly** (sīt'lē) *adj.* **-li-er**, **-li-est**. 1. Pleasing to see; visually appealing. 2. Affording a fine view; scenic. — **sight'li-ness** *n.*

**sight-read** (sīt'rēd') *v.* **-read** (-rēd'), **-read-ing**, **-reads**. — *tr.* To read or perform (music, for example) without preparation or prior acquaintance. — *intr.* To read or perform something on sight without preparation or prior acquaintance. — **sight'-read'er** *n.*

**sight rhyme** *n.* See *eye rhyme*.

**sight-see** (sīt'sē') *intr.v.* **-saw** (-sō'), **-seen** (-sēn'), **-see-ing**, **-sees**. To tour sights of interest. — **sight'se'er** *n.*

**sight-see-ing** (sīt'sē'ing) *n.* The act or pastime of visiting sights of interest. — **sightseeing** *adj.* Used or engaged in sightseeing: *a sightseeing bus; a sightseeing tour*.

**sig-il** (sij'əl, sig'īl) *n.* 1. A seal; a signet. 2. A sign or an image considered magical. [*Latin sigillum*, diminutive of *signum*, sign. See *SIGN*.]

**Sig-is-mund** (sig'is-mənd). 1368–1437. Holy Roman emperor (1433–1437) and king of Hungary (1387–1437) and Bohemia

**sigma factor** *n.* A protein component of RNA polymerase that determines the specific site on DNA where transcription begins.

**sigma hyperon** *n.* Any of three unstable subatomic particles in the baryon family, having a mass of 2,328 to 2,343 times that of the electron and a positive, neutral, or negative electric charge, but no baryon number. — **sigma hyperon** *pl.*

**sig-moid** (sig'moid') also **sig-moi-dal** (sig-moid'l) *adj.* Having the shape of the letter S. 2. Of or relating to the sigmoid flexure of the colon. [*Greek sigmoidēs*: *sigma*, sigma; see *SE* + *-oidēs*, *-oid*.]

**sigmoid flexure** *n.* An S-shaped section of the colon between the descending section and the rectum. Also called *sigmoid colon*.

**sig-moid-o-scope** (sig-moi'də-skōp') *n.* A tubular instrument for visual examination of the sigmoid flexure. — **sig-moid'o-scop'ic** (-skōp'ik) *adj.* — **sig'moid-os-co-py** (-mōi-dōs'kə-pē) *n.*

**sign** (sīn) *n.* 1. Something that suggests the presence or absence of a fact, condition, or quality. 2. *a.* An act or a gesture used to convey an idea, a desire, information, or a command: *the go-ahead sign*. *b.* Sign language. 3. *a.* A displayed symbol bearing lettering or symbols, used to identify or advertise a place of business: *a motel with a flashing neon sign outside*. *b.* A printed notice bearing a designation, direction, or command: *a sign above a door; a traffic sign*. 4. A conventional figure or device that stands for a word, a phrase, or an operation: *a sign as in mathematics or in musical notation*. 5. *pl.* **sign.** An indicator, such as a dropping or footprint, of the trail of an animal: *looking for deer sign*. 6. A trace or vestige: *no sign of life*. 7. A portentous incident or event; a presage: *took the eclipse as a sign from God*. 8. A body manifestation that serves to indicate the presence of malfunction or disease. 9. One of the 12 divisions of the zodiac, each named for a constellation and represented by a symbol. — **sign** *v.* **signed**, **sign-ing**, **signs**. — *tr.* 1. To add one's signature to. 2. To write (one's signature). 3. To approve or ratify (a document) by affixing a signature, seal, or other mark: *sign a bill into law*. 4. To hire or engage by obtaining a signature on a contract: *signed a rookie pitcher for next season; signed actors for a tour*. 5. To relinquish or transfer title to by signing: *signed away all her claims to the estate*. 6. To provide with signs or signals: *sign a new highway*. 7. To communicate with a sign by sign language: *signed his approval; sign instructions to hearing-impaired teammate*. 8. To consecrate with the sign of the cross. — *intr.* 1. To make a sign or signs; signal. 2. To use a language. 3. To write one's signature. — **phrasal verbs.** **sign in.** To record the arrival of (another or oneself) by signing a register. **sign off.** 1. To announce the end of a communication: *sign off*. 2. To stop transmission after identifying the broadcasting station. 3. *Informal.* To express approval formally or conclusively: *got the Congress to sign off on the tax proposal*. **sign on.** *Informal.* To enlist oneself, especially as an employee: *sign on politicians often sign on with top-dollar law firms* (New York Times). 2. To start transmission with an identification of the broadcasting station. **sign out.** To record the departure of (another or oneself) by signing a register. **sign up.** To agree to participate or recipient by signing one's name; enlist: *signed up for military service; signing up for a pottery course*. [Middle English *signe*, from Old French, from Latin *signum*. See *sek*<sup>2</sup> in Appendix.] — **sign'er** *n.*

**SYNONYMS:** *sign, badge, mark, token, symptom, note.* The nouns are compared as they denote an outward indication of existence or presence of something not immediately evident. *Sign* is the most general: *A high forehead is thought to be a sign of intelligence*. "The exile of Gaveston was the sign of the dawn of triumph" (John R. Green). "The V sign is the symbol of the conquerable will of the occupied territories" (Winston S. Churchill). *Badge* usually refers to something that is worn as a sign of membership, is an emblem of achievement, or is characteristic sign: *The sheriff's badge was shaped like a star*. "Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge" (Shakespeare). *Mark* refers to a visible trace or impression (a laundry mark) or an indication of a distinctive trait or characteristic: *Intolerance is the mark of a bigot*. The term can also denote a lasting effect, as of experience: *Poverty had left its mark*. *Token* usually refers to evidence or proof of something intangible: *sent flowers as a token of her affection*. *Symptom* suggests outward evidence of a process or condition, especially an adverse condition: *dying of a hundred good symptoms* (Alexander Pope); "the gale having rather increased than shown any symptoms of abating" (Frederick Marryat). *Note* applies to the sign of a particular quality or feature: "eternal note of sadness" (Matthew Arnold). See also *Synonymy gesture*.

**Si-gnac** (sēn-yāk'), *Paul.* 1863–1935. French neoclassical painter. He painted mainly landscapes and marine views, such as *Port of St. Tropez* (1916).

**sign-age** (sī'nij) *n.* 1. Signs considered as a group. 2. The design or use of signs and symbols.



sound, image, or message transmitted or received in telegraph, radio, television, or radar. — **signal** *adj.* Notably of the ordinary: a **signal** feat. See Synonyms at **noticeable**.  
**gnal** *v.* — **naled**, **-nal-ing**, **-nals** or **-nalled**, **-nal-ling**, **s.** — *tr.* 1. To make a signal to: I **signaled** the driver to proceed. 2. To relate or make known by signals: They have **signaled** their willingness to negotiate. — *intr.* To make a signal or signals. [Middle English, from Old French, from Medieval Latin *signāle*, neuter of Late Latin *signālis*, of a sign, from Latin *signum*, sign. See SIGN.] — **sig'nal-er**, **sig'nal-ler** *n.*

**nal-ize** (sig'nā-līz') *tr.v.* — **-ized**, **-iz-ing**, **-iz-es**. 1. To make remarkable or conspicuous: a life **signaled** by high accomplishments. 2. To point out particularly. — **sig'nal-i-za'tion** (-lī-zā'shən) *n.*

**nal-ly** (sig'nā-lē) *adv.* To a conspicuous degree; notably.  
**nal-ment** (sig'nəl-mənt) *n.* A detailed description of a person's appearance, as for police files. [French *signalement*, a *signaler*, to mark out, from *signal*, signal. See SIGNAL.]

**na-to-ry** (sig'nā-tōr'ē, -tōr'ē) *adj.* Bound by signed agreement: the **signatory** parties to a contract. — **signatory** *n.*, **-ries**. One that has signed a treaty or other document. [Latin *signātorius*, from *signātus*, past participle of *signāre*, to mark, from *signum*, sign. See SIGN.]

**na-ture** (sig'nā-cher) *n.* 1. **Abb.** **sig.** One's name as written by oneself. 2. The act of signing one's name. 3. A distinctive mark, characteristic, or sound indicating identity: A surprise ending is the **signature** of an O. Henry short story. 4. **Abb.** **Sig.**, **S.** **dicine.** The part of a physician's prescription containing directions to the patient. 5. **Music.** a. A sign used to indicate key. b. A sign used to indicate tempo. 6. **Printing.** a. A letter, number, symbol placed at the bottom of the first page on each sheet of printed pages of a book as a guide to the proper sequence of the sheets in binding. b. A large sheet printed with four or a multiple of four pages that when folded becomes a section of the book. [Middle English, from Old French, from Medieval Latin *signātūra*, from Latin *signātus*, past participle of *signāre*, to mark, from *signum*, sign. See SIGN.]

**board** (sɪn'bɔːrd, -bɔːrd) *n.* A board bearing a sign.  
**net** (sɪg'nɪt) *n.* 1. A seal, especially one used officially to mark documents. 2. The impression made with such a seal.  
**signet** *tr.v.* — **-net-ed**, **-net-ing**, **-nets**. To mark or endorse with a signet. [Middle English, from Old French, diminutive of *seal*, sign. See SIGN.]

**net ring** *n.* A finger ring bearing an engraved signet. Also called *seal ring*.

**nif-i-cance** (sɪg'nɪf'ɪ-kəns) also **sig-nif-i-can-cy** (-kən-si) *n.* 1. The state or quality of being significant. See Synonyms at **importance**. 2. A meaning that is expressed. 3. A covert or implied meaning. See Synonyms at **meaning**.

**nificance level** *n.* **Statistics.** See **level of significance**.  
**nif-i-cant** (sɪg'nɪf'ɪ-kənt) *adj.* 1. Having or expressing a meaning; meaningful. 2. Having or expressing a covert meaning; suggestive: a **significant** glance. See Synonyms at **expressive**. 3. Having or likely to have a major effect; important: a **significant** change in the tax laws. 4. Fairly large in amount or quantity: **significant** casualties. 5. **Statistics.** Of or relating to observations whose occurrences that are too closely correlated to be attributed to chance and therefore indicate a systematic relationship. [Latin *significāns*, *significānt-*, present participle of *significāre*, to signify. See SIGNIFY.] — **sig-nif-i-cant-ly** *adv.*

**nificant digits** *pl.n.* **Mathematics.** The digits of the decimal form of a number beginning with the leftmost nonzero digit and extending to the right to include all digits warranted by the accuracy of measuring devices used to obtain the numbers. Also called **significant figures**.

**nificant other** *n.* 1. A person, such as a spouse or lover, with whom one shares a long-term sexual relationship. 2. A person, such as a family member or close friend, who is important and influential in one's life: "The most important variable in successful smoking cessation is the support of significant others in the life of a nonsmoker's life" (Carolyn Reuben).

**ni-fi-ca-tion** (sɪg'nā-fī-kā'shən) *n.* 1. The established meaning of a word. See Synonyms at **meaning**. 2. The act of signifying; indication.

**nif-i-ca-tive** (sɪg'nɪf'ɪ-kā'tɪv) *adj.* 1. Tending to signify or indicate; indicative. 2. Having meaning; significant. — **sig-nif-i-ca-tive-ness** *n.*

**ni-fy** (sɪg'nā-fī') *v.* — **-fied**, **-fy-ing**, **-fies**. — *tr.* 1. To denote; mean. See Synonyms at **mean**. 2. To make known, as with a sign or word: **signify** one's intent. — *intr.* 1. To have meaning or importance. See Synonyms at **count**. 2. **Slang.** To exchange humorous insults in a verbal game. [Middle English *signifien*, from Old French *signifier*, from Latin *significāre*: *signum*, sign; *-ficāre*, *-fy-*.] — **sig-ni-fi-a-ble** *adj.* — **sig-ni-fi-er** *n.*

**gnior** (sən-yōr', -yōr') *n.* Variant of **signor**.

**gnio-ry** (sən'yā-rē) *n.* Variant of **signory**.

**gn language** *n.* 1. A language that uses manual movements

made in token of faith in Jesus or as an invocation of God's blessing.

**si-gnor** also **si-gnior** (sən-yōr', -yōr') *n.*, *pl.* **si-gno-ri** (sən-yōr'ē, -yōr'ē) also **si-gnors** or **si-gnors**. **Abb.** **S.**, **Sig.**, **sig.** Used as a courtesy title for a man in an Italian-speaking area, equivalent to Mr. [Italian, variant of *signore*. See SIGNORE.]

**si-gno-ra** (sən-yōr'ə, -yōr'ə, -yō'rā) *n.*, *pl.* **si-gno-re** (sən-yōr'ā, -yōr'ā, -yō'rē) or **si-gno-ras**. Used as a courtesy title for a married woman in an Italian-speaking area, equivalent to Mrs. [Italian, feminine of *signore*, *signore*. See SIGNORE.]

**si-gno-re** (sən-yōr'ā, -yōr'ā, -yō'rē) *n.*, *pl.* **si-gno-ri** (sən-yōr'ē, -yōr'ē). **Abb.** **S.**, **Sig.**, **sig.** Used as a form of polite address for a man in an Italian-speaking area. [Italian, from Medieval Latin *senior*, lord, from Latin, elder. See SENIOR.]

**si-gno-ri** (sən-yō'rē, -yōr'ē) *n.* 1. A plural of **signor**. 2. A plural of **signore**.

**si-gno-ri-na** (sən'yā-rē'nā, -yō-rē'nā) *n.*, *pl.* **-ne** (-nā, -nē) or **-nas**. Used as a courtesy title for an unmarried woman in an Italian-speaking area, equivalent to Miss. [Italian, diminutive of *signora*, *signora*. See SIGNORA.]

**si-gno-ry** or **si-gnio-ry** (sən'yā-rē) *n.*, *pl.* **-ries**. See **seignory**. [Middle English *signorie*, from Old French *seigneurie*, from *seigneur*, seignior. See SEIGNIOR.]

**sign-post** (sɪn'pɒst) *n.* 1. A post supporting a sign that has information or directions. 2. An indication, a sign, or a guide.

**Sign-urd** (sɪg'ɜrd) *n.* **Mythology.** A warrior hero in Norse myth who wins an accursed hoard of gold, awakens Brynhild from her enchanted sleep, marries a princess, and is slain through Brynhild's jealous contrivance.

**Si-gurds-son** (sɪg'ɜrd-sən, -ɜrth-sɒn') *n.* **Jón.** 1811–1879. Icelandic politician and scholar who secured a constitution for his country from Denmark (1874).

**Si-ha-nouk** (sē'hā-nōk') *n.* Prince **Norodom**. Born 1922. Cambodian politician who served as prime minister (1955–1957) and became head of state in 1960. Sihanouk was deposed in 1970 and briefly returned to power (1975–1976) during the Pol Pot regime.

**Si-ha-sa-pa** (sā-hā'sə-pā) *n.*, *pl.* **Sihasapa** or **-pas**. 1. A Native American people constituting a subdivision of the Teton Sioux. 2. A member of this people. Also called *Blackfoot*, *Blackfoot Sioux*.

**si-ka** (sē'kə) *n.* A medium-sized deer (*Cervus nippon*) native to Japan and China but naturalized in Europe and other countries, having a small head, compact body, and mostly spotted reddish or chestnut coat. Several of its subspecies are endangered in the wild. [Japanese *shika*, deer.]

**Sikes-ton** (sɪk'stən). A city of southeast Missouri west-southwest of Cairo, Illinois. It is a trade and processing center. Population, 17,431.

**Sikh** (sɪk) *n.* An adherent of Sikhism. — **Sikh** *adj.* Of or relating to the Sikhs or to Sikhism. [Hindi, from Sanskrit *śiṣya*, disciple, from *śikṣati*, he wishes to learn, desiderative of *śaknoti*, is able.]

**Sikh-ism** (sɪk'ɪzəm) *n.* The doctrines and practices of a monotheistic religion founded in northern India in the 16th century and combining elements of Hinduism and Islam.

**Si Kiang** (sē' kyāng', shē'). See **Xi Jiang**.

**Sik-kim** (sɪk'ɪm). A region and former kingdom of northeast India in the eastern Himalaya Mountains between Nepal and Bhutan. Long isolated from the outside world, Sikkim was virtually a dependency of Tibet until the 19th century, when it came under British protection. The protectorate passed to India in 1949 and became an integral part of that country in 1975.

**Si-kor-sky** (sɪ-kɔr'skē), **Igor Ivan**. 1889–1972. Russian-born American aviation pioneer. He designed (1939) the first successful American helicopter.

**si-lage** (sɪ'lɪj) *n.* Fodder prepared by storing and fermenting green forage plants in a silo. [Short for **ENSILAGE**.]

**sil-ane** (sɪl'æn') *n.* Any of a group of silicon hydrides having the general formula SiH that are analogous to the paraffin hydrocarbons. [SIL(ICON) + (METH)ANE.]

**sild** (sɪld) *n.*, *pl.* **sild** or **silds**. A young herring other than a sprat that is processed as a sardine in Norway. [Norwegian and Danish, from Old Norse *sild*, herring.]

**si-lence** (sɪ'ləns) *n.* 1. The condition or quality of being or keeping still and silent. 2. The absence of sound; stillness. 3. A period of time without speech or noise. 4. Refusal or failure to speak out. — **silence** *tr.v.* — **-lenced**, **-lenc-ing**, **-lenc-es**. 1. To make silent or bring to silence: *silenced* the crowd with a gesture. 2. To curtail the expression of; suppress: *silencing* all criticism; *silenced* their opponents. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *silentium*, from *silēns*, *silent-*, present participle of *silēre*, to be silent.]

**si-lenc-er** (sɪ'lən-sər) *n.* One that silences, especially a device attached to the muzzle of a firearm to muffle the sound of firing.

**si-le-ni** (sɪ-lē'nɪ) *n.* **Greek Mythology.** Plural of **silēnus**.

**si-lent** (sɪ'lənt) *adj.* 1. Marked by absence of noise or sound; still. 2. Not inclined to speak; not talkative. 3. Unable to speak. 4. Refraining from speech: *Do be silent*. 5. Not voiced or ex-



signet ring



signpost



sika  
Cervus nippon

ā pat	oi boy
ā pay	ou out
ār cather	ōō took
ā father	ōō boot
ē pet	ū cut
ē be	ūr urge
ī pit	th thin
ī pie	th which
ī pier	hw this
ō pot	zh vision
ā toe	a about item