

ROOT OF THE DAY

dict / dic — Latin *dicere* — to say, to speak — “say / speak”

verdict — ver- (true) + dict (say) = a 'true saying' — the jury's declared finding

jurisdiction — juris- (law) + dict (say) = the authority to 'speak the law' over a matter or territory

dictum — dict (say) = a thing said — a judge's incidental remark, as in obiter dictum

indict — in- (against) + dict (say) = to 'speak against' formally — to charge with a crime

edict — e- (out) + dict (say) = an order 'spoken out' to all — an official proclamation

interdict — inter- (between) + dict (say) = a prohibition 'spoken between' parties — a court order barring an act

contradict — contra- (against) + dict (say) = to 'speak against' — to assert the opposite

POWER WORDS

ambit *n.*

“The new data-protection statute falls squarely within the ambit of the right to privacy under Article 21.”

Meaning: the scope, range, or extent that something covers

Syn: scope / purview · **Ant:** exclusion

HOOK: AMBIT sounds like 'ambition's orbit' — the orbit a rule sweeps around.

tenuous *adj.*

“The prosecution's link between the accused and the weapon was too tenuous to secure a conviction.”

Meaning: weak, flimsy, or slight; lacking a firm basis

Syn: flimsy / slight · **Ant:** robust / solid

HOOK: TENUOUS is thin as a 'tenu-thread' — stretch it and it snaps.

salutary *adj.*

“The judgment had a salutary effect, deterring officials from repeating the same overreach.”

Meaning: producing a beneficial or wholesome effect, though often unwelcome

Syn: beneficial / wholesome · **Ant:** harmful / detrimental

HOOK: SALUTARY shares roots with 'salute' and 'salud' (health) — it is good for you, like bitter medicine.

mitigate *v.*

“Genuine remorse can mitigate a sentence, though it never erases the guilt.”

Meaning: to make less severe, serious, or painful

Syn: alleviate / lessen · **Ant:** aggravate / exacerbate

HOOK: MITIGATE = 'make-it-gate' smaller — shrink the harm. Do NOT confuse with 'militate' (to weigh against).

ostensible *adj.*

“The ostensible reason for the transfer was efficiency, but everyone suspected it was punishment.”

Meaning: stated or appearing to be true, though not necessarily so

Syn: apparent / professed · **Ant:** genuine / actual

HOOK: OSTENSIBLE = 'on-the-surface visible' — what is shown, not what is real.

redress *n. / v.*

“Article 32 lets a citizen approach the Supreme Court directly to seek redress for a violated fundamental right.”

Meaning: remedy or compensation for a wrong; to set a wrong right

Syn: remedy / reparation · **Ant:** injury / wrong

HOOK: REDRESS = to 're-dress' a wound — bandage the harm and set it right.

egregious *adj.*

“The court called the warrantless raid an egregious breach of natural justice.”

Meaning: conspicuously and outrageously bad; flagrant

Syn: flagrant / glaring · **Ant:** trivial / negligible

HOOK: E-GREG-ious = standing OUT from the flock (Latin grex = flock) — for all the wrong reasons.

latitude *n.*

“The statute gives officials wide latitude in deciding which cases to pursue.”

Meaning: freedom to act or choose; scope allowed

Syn: leeway / discretion · **Ant:** restriction / constraint

HOOK: LATITUDE on a map = how much room you have to roam.

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

mitigate *vs* **militate**

mitigate: to make less severe (a punishment, harm)

militate: (with 'against') to be a strong factor in preventing

TIP: You MITIGATE a sentence; facts MILITATE AGAINST a claim.

principle *vs* **principal**

principle: a rule or fundamental truth

principal: chief / most important; a school head; a sum of money

TIP: A principle is a rule; the principal is your pAL.

ostensible *vs* **ostentatious**

ostensible: apparent or stated, though not necessarily true

ostentatious: showy; designed to impress or attract notice

TIP: ostensible = on the surface; ostentatious = flashy.

prosecute *vs* **persecute**

prosecute: to bring legal proceedings against in court

persecute: to oppress or harass, often for beliefs

TIP: proSECute = a legal sequence in court; perSECute = to seek to harm.



IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- **the letter of the law** — the exact, literal wording of a law, as opposed to its underlying spirit or intent
“He obeyed the letter of the law while cheerfully flouting its spirit.”
- **a moot point** — an issue that is open to debate, or one that has become irrelevant in practice
“Whether the clause was fair is now a moot point, since the statute has been repealed.”
- **throw the book at (someone)** — to charge or punish someone as severely as the rules allow
“The judge threw the book at the repeat offender, imposing the maximum penalty.”
- **to set a precedent** — to establish a pattern or ruling that others may follow
“The verdict set a precedent for future privacy claims.”

One-word substitution

- a person who speaks or knows many languages → **polyglot**
- an official appointed to investigate citizens' complaints against the government → **ombudsman**
- a written statement of facts confirmed by oath, for use as evidence in court → **affidavit**
- a right that cannot be taken away → **inalienable**
- a government run by the wealthy → **plutocracy**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **delimitation** — the act of fixing or redrawing the boundaries of electoral constituencies
“NCP(SP) leader Supriya Sule signalled that her party may back the delimitation Bill only if it guarantees a 50% increase in Lok Sabha seats across all states.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief, 16 Jul 2026
- **deterrence** — the discouragement of an action (such as an attack) through fear of the consequences
“A robust sea leg underpins a credible second-strike capability — the cornerstone of deterrence theory.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief, 16 Jul 2026
- **mandamus** — a judicial writ commanding a public authority to perform a duty it is legally bound to do
“That case transformed the Court into a continuing supervisor of forests, issuing directions over decades in what is known as a continuing mandamus.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief, 16 Jul 2026
- **proportionate** — corresponding in degree or size; not excessive relative to its aim
“Any restriction that does survive must also be reasonable and proportionate, not excessive or arbitrary.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief, 16 Jul 2026

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **prima facie** — on the face of it; based on first impression
- **mens rea** — the guilty mind; criminal intent
- **actus reus** — the guilty act; the physical element of a crime
- **ultra vires** — beyond one's legal power or authority
- **locus standi** — the right to bring an action; legal standing
- **sub judice** — under judicial consideration; not to be discussed publicly
- **obiter dictum** — a judge's incidental remark; not binding
- **ratio decidendi** — the binding legal reason for a decision
- **suo motu** — on its own motion; a court acting by itself
- **ex parte** — for one party only, in the other's absence

PRACTICE DRILL

1. The case rested on a single hearsay witness; the link to the accused was too ___ to convict.
A) salutary · B) ostensible · C) tenuous · D) egregious
2. Choose the word CLOSEST in meaning to AMBIT.
A) verdict · B) remedy · C) delay · D) scope
3. In which sentence is 'mitigate' used CORRECTLY?
A) Community service can mitigate the harshness of the sentence. · B) The lawyer mitigated against the new rule in court. · C) She mitigated the heavy door open with her shoulder. · D) The family mitigated to a new city last winter.
4. Choose the ANTONYM of EGREGIOUS.
A) flagrant · B) trivial · C) glaring · D) monstrous
5. An official order issued by a ruler and proclaimed to all is best called an _____.
A) affidavit · B) verdict · C) edict · D) dictum
6. Article 32 allows a citizen to approach the Supreme Court directly to seek ___ for a violated fundamental right.
A) latitude · B) censorship · C) deterrence · D) redress

Answer key: 1-C · 2-D · 3-A · 4-B · 5-C · 6-D

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

When the prosecutor's **ostensible** mountain of proof collapsed into a **tenuous** thread of gossip, the judge lost patience. She branded the police's warrantless search an **egregious** overreach that fell well outside the lawful **ambit** of their powers. Yet the officer's frank apology did **mitigate** the fallout, and the court's firm order handed the wronged citizen swift **redress**. The ruling proved **salutary** — a healthy jolt that taught the department to speak the truth, not merely say what sounded convenient.

