

ROOT OF THE DAY

fid — Latin *fidere / fides* — to trust, faith · “trust, faith”

fiduciary — fid (trust) + -ary (relating to) = holding something in trust for another

confide — con- (with) + fid (trust) = to trust someone with a secret

fideli — fid (faith) + -ity (state) = faithfulness, loyalty

perfidy — per- (through, against) + fid (faith) = a breach of faith, treachery

infidel — in- (not) + fid (faith) = one without the accepted faith

affidavit — af- (to) + fid (faith) = a sworn statement pledged in good faith

diffident — dif- (apart from) + fid (trust) = lacking self-trust, shy

POWER WORDS

malfeasance *n.*

“The commission's report accused three officials of malfeasance in awarding the tender to a shell company.”

Meaning: wrongdoing or misconduct, especially by a public official acting in an official capacity

Syn: misconduct · **Ant:** probity

HOOK: MAL (bad) + FEASANCE (doing) = bad-doing in office

complicity *n.*

“By funding the operation, the parent firm crossed from neutrality into active complicity.”

Meaning: involvement as a partner or accomplice in a wrongful act

Syn: collusion · **Ant:** innocence

HOOK: an ACCOMPLICE shows COMPLICITY

abeyance *n.*

“Pending the constitutional reference, the trial was kept in abeyance for nearly a decade.”

Meaning: a state of temporary suspension or disuse

Syn: suspension · **Ant:** resumption

HOOK: put it 'a-BAY' — parked in a bay, waiting

sagacity *n.*

“The senior counsel argued with a quiet sagacity that disarmed the opposing bench.”

Meaning: acute practical wisdom and sound judgement

Syn: sagesse · **Ant:** folly

HOOK: a SAGE has SAGACITY

acquiescence *n.*

“The court held that mere acquiescence in an illegal demolition cannot cure its unconstitutionality.”

Meaning: silent or passive acceptance, agreement without protest

Syn: assent · **Ant:** resistance

HOOK: sounds like 'a-quiet-scene' — you go quiet and let it pass

egregious *adj.*

“The bench called the overnight demolition an egregious breach of its stay order.”

Meaning: outstandingly and conspicuously bad; flagrant

Syn: flagrant · **Ant:** trivial

HOOK: e-GREG-ious: a GREGarious crowd all gasps at how bad it is

impunity *n.*

“Selective enforcement lets the powerful flout the same laws with impunity.”

Meaning: exemption from punishment or the harmful consequences of an action

Syn: immunity · **Ant:** accountability

HOOK: IM- (not) + PUNI (punish) = no punishment

recalcitrance *n.*

“His recalcitrance towards the high command's decision split the party unit.”

Meaning: stubborn refusal to obey authority or accept discipline

Syn: obstinacy · **Ant:** compliance

HOOK: a RECALCITRANT mule kicks back — 'calc' from Latin for heel

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

acquiesce vs **acquire**

acquiesce: to accept passively without protest

acquire: to gain or come to possess something

TIP: acquiESce goes quiet and gives in; acquiRE reaches out and takes.

impartial vs **impassive**

impartial: unbiased, favouring no side

impassive: showing no emotion or feeling

TIP: imPARTial takes no PART; imPASSive shows no PASSion.

ostensible vs **ostentatious**

ostensible: apparent but not necessarily real

ostentatious: showy, designed to impress

TIP: ostenSIBLE is the visible pretext; ostentaTIOUS is loud and flashy.

complicit vs **complacent**

complicit: involved in wrongdoing with others

complacent: smugly self-satisfied (spelt complacent)

TIP: compliCit shares in the crime; complaCent is lazily pleased with itself.

culpable vs **capable**

culpable: deserving blame

capable: having the ability to do something

TIP: CULPable comes from culpa = fault; CAPable comes from capax = able.

redress vs **readdress**

redress: to remedy a wrong

readdress: to address or tackle again

TIP: reDRESS sets a wrong right; reADDRESS simply takes up the matter afresh.



IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- **turn a blind eye** — to deliberately ignore wrongdoing one is aware of
“Regulators cannot turn a blind eye to insider trading and still claim to protect investors.”
- **the letter of the law** — the exact literal wording of a law, as opposed to its spirit
“He complied with the letter of the law while defeating its very purpose.”
- **a cat's paw** — a person used by another to do unpleasant or risky work
“The junior officer was merely a cat's paw for those who really engineered the scam.”
- **a red line** — a limit or boundary that must not be crossed; a point beyond which one will retaliate
“Iran called any move to shut the Strait of Hormuz a 'red line', warning it would retaliate.”

One-word substitution

- one who acts on behalf of another as a trusted guardian of their interests → **fiduciary**
- a state in which something is temporarily suspended or set aside → **abeyance**
- freedom from punishment or the consequences of one's actions → **impunity**
- one who deliberately looks away from wrongdoing so as not to notice it → **connivance (party to it by connivance)**
- a person who refuses to obey or is stubbornly resistant to authority → **recalcitrant**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **malfeasance** — wrongdoing or misconduct by a person in office
“Two statements seemed to capture the core pathology of contemporary politics: the return of malfeasance, or evil without agents.” — *The Indian Express*, 17 Jul 2026
- **acquiescence** — silent acceptance without protest
“A seemingly neutral stance in the presence of sustained injustice can mean acquiescence, and eventually complicity.” — *The Indian Express*, 17 Jul 2026
- **sagacity** — acute practical wisdom and sound judgement
“This is not an era of war, he intones with sagacity, without ever naming who the actors are who start the wars.” — *The Indian Express*, 17 Jul 2026

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **fiduciary duty** — a legal obligation to act solely in another party's best interests
- **prima facie** — on the face of it; based on the first impression, accepted as correct until disproved
- **mens rea** — the guilty mind; the mental element of intention or knowledge in a crime
- **actus reus** — the guilty act; the physical element that constitutes a criminal offence
- **sub judice** — under judicial consideration and therefore not to be publicly commented upon
- **suo motu** — on its own motion; action taken by a court without any party's request
- **ultra vires** — beyond the legal power or authority conferred
- **bona fide** — in good faith; genuine and without intention to deceive
- **mala fide** — in bad faith; done with dishonest intent
- **locus standi** — the right or capacity to bring an action before a court

PRACTICE DRILL

1. Choose the word closest in meaning to **MALFEASANCE**:
A) diligence · B) misconduct · C) generosity · D) prudence
2. Select the best **ANTONYM** for **IMPUNITY**:
A) immunity · B) exemption · C) accountability · D) pardon
3. 'The trial was kept in _____ pending the reference.' Fill the blank:
A) abeyance · B) acquittal · C) arraignment · D) adjudication
4. **SAGE** is to **SAGACITY** as **COWARD** is to:
A) bravery · B) cowardice · C) wisdom · D) loyalty
5. Which word means 'apparent but not necessarily real'?
A) ostentatious · B) ostensible · C) obstinate · D) ominous
6. Pick the **ODD ONE OUT**:
A) recalcitrant · B) obdurate · C) intransigent · D) compliant

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

Latin *fides*, faith or trust, is the quiet root beneath a courtroom's biggest words. A *fiduciary* is literally one entrusted with faith, bound to act with impartiality rather than self-interest; break that bond and mere **acquiescence** can slide into **complicity** and outright **malfeasance**. When an office-holder acts with **impunity** and **egregious** disregard for duty, the law brands the conduct culpable and offers the wronged a route of redress. It takes the **sagacity** of an impartial bench to keep such matters from lingering in perpetual **abeyance**.

