

ROOT OF THE DAY

ced / cess / ceed — Latin *cedere* — to go, to yield · “go / yield”

accede — ac- (to) + cede (yield) = to agree, to give in to a demand

secession — se- (apart) + cess (go) = a going apart; formal withdrawal

precedent — pre- (before) + ced (go) = a case that goes before and guides later ones

cessation — cess (go/stop) = a ceasing; a stopping (e.g. cessation of hostilities)

antecedent — ante- (before) + ced (go) = that which goes before

concede — con- (fully) + cede (yield) = to admit or grant, often reluctantly

POWER WORDS

reprisal *n.*

“The government promised there would be no reprisals against the demonstrators once the strike was called off.”

Meaning: an act of retaliation for a perceived wrong

Syn: retaliation · **Ant:** pardon

HOOK: RE- (back) + PRISE (seize) — to seize back at someone.

culpable *adj.*

“The inquiry sought to establish whether any officer was culpable for the excessive use of force.”

Meaning: deserving blame; responsible for a fault

Syn: blameworthy · **Ant:** blameless

HOOK: CULPA (Latin, ‘fault’) — full of fault.

stonewall *v.*

“Accused of stonewalling the discussion, the treasury benches insisted they were merely following procedure.”

Meaning: to obstruct or delay by refusing to cooperate

Syn: obstruct · **Ant:** cooperate

HOOK: Build a STONE WALL across the road.

plurilateral *adj.*

“India remained wary of plurilateral trade pacts negotiated by a self-selected group of members.”

Meaning: involving several parties, but not all

Syn: multiparty · **Ant:** bilateral

HOOK: PLURI (several) + LATERAL (sided).

forbearance *n.*

“Faced with provocation, the officers were urged to show forbearance rather than answer the crowd with force.”

Meaning: patient self-restraint; tolerance under provocation

Syn: restraint · **Ant:** retaliation

HOOK: FOR-BEAR — to bear with, to hold yourself back.

expedient *adj.*

“Dissolving the committee was politically expedient, but it did nothing to address the underlying grievance.”

Meaning: convenient and practical, though possibly improper

Syn: opportune · **Ant:** inexpedient

HOOK: Cousin of EXPEDITE — what speeds your ends, not what is right.

vindicate *v.*

“The successful launch vindicated the decision to open the space sector to private enterprise.”

Meaning: to clear of blame, or to justify by the outcome

Syn: justify · **Ant:** incriminate

HOOK: VINDICT- (to claim/avenge) — your claim is proved right.

circumspect *adj.*

“Diplomats were circumspect about the ceasefire, wary of promising what could not be delivered.”

Meaning: cautious; weighing all the circumstances

Syn: wary · **Ant:** reckless

HOOK: CIRCUM (around) + SPECT (look) — look around before you leap.

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON’T MIX THESE UP

prescribe *vs* **proscribe**

prescribe: to recommend or lay down as a rule

proscribe: to forbid or prohibit

TIP: proSCRIBE = scribble it OUT (ban it); preSCRIBE = write a rule or remedy.

eminent *vs* **imminent**

eminent: distinguished, famous

imminent: about to happen very soon

TIP: IMminent = IMmediate; eMinent = a Man of note.

censure *vs* **ensor**

censure: to formally rebuke or blame

ensor: to suppress objectionable material

TIP: cenSOR wields Scissors (cut content); cenSURE is Sure disapproval.

principal *vs* **principle**

principal: chief or main; the head of a school

principle: a fundamental rule or truth

TIP: principLE = a ruLE; principAL is the main one (an A-lister).

counsel *vs* **council**

counsel: advice, or a lawyer arguing a case

council: an assembly or governing body

TIP: counSEL = to adviSE / a lawyer; counCIL = a Committee.

deprecate *vs* **depreciate**

deprecate: to express strong disapproval of

depreciate: to fall in value over time

TIP: depreCIATE = value goes down (money); depreCATE = to ‘pray against’, i.e. disapprove.

mala fide *vs* **bona fide**

mala fide: in bad faith; with dishonest intent

bona fide: in good faith; genuine

TIP: MALA = MALevolent (bad); BONA = BONus (good).

affect *vs* **effect**

affect: to influence (verb)

effect: a result or consequence (noun)

TIP: Affect = Action (verb); Effect = the End result (noun).

statute *vs* **statue**

statute: a written law enacted by a legislature

statue: a carved or cast figure

TIP: statuTE = writTen law; statuE = a sculpTure.

adverse *vs* **averse**

adverse: unfavourable or harmful

averse: strongly disinclined or opposed to

TIP: aDVerse = a DisaDVantage; aVerse = you want to aVoid it.



IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- **open a window (for talks)** — to create an opportunity for dialogue
“By agreeing to meet the ministers, the activist opened a window for talks.”
- **toe the line** — to conform to rules or accepted authority
“Backbenchers who refused to toe the line were quietly dropped.”
- **the writing on the wall** — a clear sign of impending trouble
“When the funding dried up, the writing on the wall was plain for all to see.”
- **cross the Rubicon** — to pass a point of no return
“In ordering the crackdown, the administration crossed the Rubicon.”
- **a Gordian knot** — an intractable, tangled problem
“The paper-leak crisis had become a Gordian knot of exams, trust and law.”

One-word substitution

- one who opposes war and violence → **pacifist**
- government by the wealthy few → **plutocracy**
- a person who cannot be corrected or reformed → **incorrigible**
- words a character speaks to themselves on stage → **soliloquy**
- present in all places at the same time → **omnipresent**
- the practice of spying or using spies → **espionage**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **impasse** — a deadlock; a position from which there is no way forward
“The impasse in the Rajya Sabha continued for a third consecutive day.” — *The Indian Express*, 23 July 2026
- **cognizance** — the act of a court taking judicial notice of a matter
“The Gujarat High Court took suo motu cognizance of the alleged police flogging.” — *The Indian Express*, 23 July 2026
- **loggerheads** — in sharp disagreement; at odds
“India and key WTO members remain at loggerheads on plurilateral pacts.” — *The Indian Express*, 23 July 2026
- **precarity** — the condition of insecure, unstable existence
“The poet's verses carry the relentless soundtrack of the gig economy — a chronicle of precarity.” — *The Indian Express*, 23 July 2026

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **suo motu** — on its own motion — a court acting without any petition
- **mala fide** — in bad faith; with a dishonest or improper motive
- **prima facie** — on the face of it; based on the first impression
- **audi alteram partem** — hear the other side — the rule of a fair hearing
- **ultra vires** — beyond the powers conferred on an authority
- **ratio decidendi** — the binding legal reason behind a decision
- **obiter dicta** — remarks 'said in passing' that are not binding
- **locus standi** — the right or standing to bring an action
- **res judicata** — a matter already finally decided by a court
- **mens rea** — the guilty mind; criminal intent
- **amicus curiae** — 'friend of the court'; a neutral adviser
- **sub judice** — under judicial consideration; still before a court

PRACTICE DRILL

1. Which word means 'cautious, weighing all the circumstances'?
A) circumspect · B) expedient · C) culpable · D) eminent
2. The High Court took ____ of the matter on its own motion.
A) locus standi · B) ratio decidendi · C) cognizance · D) obiter dicta
3. 'Se- (apart) + cede (go)' most nearly gives us:
A) accede · B) secession · C) precedent · D) cessation
4. Select the term that means 'in bad faith':
A) bona fide · B) prima facie · C) res judicata · D) mala fide
5. 'The successful launch ____ the decision to privatise the sector.'
A) vindicated · B) proscribed · C) deprecated · D) stonewalled
6. 'After three days, the negotiations reached an ____.'
A) antecedent · B) amicus · C) impasse · D) reprisal

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

When Parliament reached an impasse, its managers chose **forbearance** over **reprisal**, and a narrow window for talks finally opened. Rather than **stonewall** the House, the wiser voices stayed **circumspect**, conceding that a precedent of dialogue would ultimately **vindicate** them. From the Latin *cedere* — to go, to yield — we *accede*, we *concede*, and sometimes we watch a faction *secede*; each is only a different way of giving ground. The **culpable** choice is rarely the **expedient** one, and it is **forbearance**, not **fury**, that the record will in the end reward.

