

ROOT OF THE DAY

jur / jus — Latin *jus, juris* — law, right; *jurare* — to swear · “law / right / oath”

judicial — jud (law/judge) + -icial = relating to courts and the giving of judgment

jurisdiction — juris (of law) + diction (speaking) = the authority to speak the law over a matter

jurisprudence — juris (of law) + prudentia (knowledge) = the theory or philosophy of law

prejudice — pre- (before) + jud (judge) = a judgment formed before the facts are known

perjury — per- (falsely) + jur (swear an oath) = the crime of lying under oath

justice — jus (right/law) + -tice = the quality of being fair and lawful; a judge

POWER WORDS

arbitrary *adj.*

“Under Article 14, State action that is arbitrary — based on whim rather than reasoned rule — is struck down as unconstitutional.”

Meaning: based on personal whim or unrestrained discretion rather than settled rule or reason

Syn: capricious · **Ant:** principled

HOOK: ARBITER decides as he pleases — arbitrary = ruled by whim, not rule

reticence *n.*

“The minister’s reticence about the leaked report only deepened public suspicion.”

Meaning: a reluctance to speak freely; reserve or restraint in expression

Syn: reserve · **Ant:** candour

HOOK: RETICENT keeps things TIGHT-lipped — unwilling to speak

dissent *n./v.*

“Democracy recognises dissent as a constitutional right, so long as it is expressed through disciplined and lawful means.”

Meaning: the holding or expression of opinions at variance with those officially held

Syn: disagreement · **Ant:** assent

HOOK: DIS (apart) + SENT (feel) — to feel apart from the majority view

clandestine *adj.*

“In non-democratic systems dissenters resort to clandestine protest, but an open society channels it into lawful debate.”

Meaning: kept secret or done secretly, especially because illicit

Syn: covert · **Ant:** overt

HOOK: CLAN-DESTINE: a hidden CLAN meeting in the dark — secret

legitimate *adj.*

“The students’ legitimate grievance about a paper leak was distinct from the unlawful methods later used to press it.”

Meaning: conforming to law or rules; able to be defended as justified

Syn: lawful · **Ant:** illegitimate

HOOK: LEGIT- from Latin *lex* (law) — legitimate = within the law

redress *n./v.*

“Every citizen has the right to approach the courts for redress of a legal wrong.”

Meaning: the setting right of a wrong; remedy or compensation for a grievance

Syn: remedy · **Ant:** injury

HOOK: RE-DRESS a wound — to set a wrong right again

prerogative *n.*

“The power to grant pardons is a constitutional prerogative of the President, not an ordinary administrative act.”

Meaning: an exclusive right or special privilege belonging to a person or office

Syn: privilege · **Ant:** obligation

HOOK: PRE-ROG: a right claimed BEFORE (pre) others can — a special privilege

coercion *n.*

“A confession obtained by coercion has no evidentiary value, for consent extracted under force is no consent at all.”

Meaning: the practice of compelling someone to act by using force, threats or intimidation

Syn: duress · **Ant:** persuasion

HOOK: CO-ERCE = force together; coercion is arm-twisting into compliance

reprehensible *adj.*

“The court called the officer’s conduct morally reprehensible and awarded exemplary damages.”

Meaning: deserving of strong criticism or condemnation; blameworthy

Syn: blameworthy · **Ant:** commendable

HOOK: RE-PREHEND (seize back) + -ible — fit to be seized and rebuked

duplicity *n.*

“Demanding accountability from others while refusing it for oneself exposes a plain duplicity.”

Meaning: deceitfulness; double-dealing that hides one’s true intentions

Syn: double-dealing · **Ant:** sincerity

HOOK: DUPL- (double) — a duplicitous person plays a double game

stringent *adj.*

“The 2024 Act prescribes stringent penalties, including fines up to Rs 1 crore, for those who leak examination papers.”

Meaning: strict, precise and demanding in requirement or standard

Syn: rigorous · **Ant:** lax

HOOK: STRING pulled tight — stringent rules are tight and strict

mandate *n./v.*

“A regulator may act only within the mandate conferred on it by the statute that created it.”

Meaning: an official authorisation or command to act in a particular way

Syn: authorisation · **Ant:** prohibition

HOOK: MAND- (order, as in command) — a mandate is an order to act



reprisal *n.*

"Whistle-blowers are protected by law against reprisal by the institutions they expose."

Meaning: an act of retaliation, especially for an injury or perceived wrong

Syn: retaliation · **Ant:** clemency

HOOK: RE-PRISE (take back) — a reprisal takes back / hits back at a wrong

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

prescribe *vs* proscribe

prescribe: to lay down a rule; to recommend or order (a remedy)

proscribe: to forbid or prohibit officially

TIP: PREscribe = PREpare/order it; PROscribe = PROhibit it. Opposite senses.

prosecute *vs* persecute

prosecute: to bring legal proceedings against someone in court

persecute: to oppress or harass, especially for beliefs or identity

TIP: proSEcute in a courtroom; perSEcute is cruel harassment (PER = thoroughly).

deprecate *vs* depreciate

deprecate: to express strong disapproval of

depreciate: to fall in value over time

TIP: depreCATE = criticise; depreCIATE = price sinks (think 'de-price').

dissent *vs* descent

dissent: disagreement with an official or majority view

descent: a downward movement; ancestry or lineage

TIP: disSENT = to SEND a contrary opinion; deSCENT = going down (think 'scent falling').

council *vs* counsel

council: an assembly or body of people who advise or govern

counsel: advice; a lawyer(s) conducting a case; to advise

TIP: counCIL = a body (like 'civic'); counSEL = to SELl advice / a lawyer.

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- **the ball is in one's court** — it is now that person's turn to act or respond
"Two ministers have opened talks; the ball is now in the court of the agitation's leaders."
- **to cross a line** — to go beyond what is ethically or legally acceptable
"The performer felt that lending his voice to a synthetic act would cross an ethical line he could not cross."
- **to jump on the bandwagon** — to join a movement or cause only once it has gained momentum
"Once the protest gathered mass, vested interests and parties jumped on the bandwagon."
- **a moot point** — a debatable, unresolved question
"Whether the ordinance was necessary is now a moot point after the Bill lapsed."
- **the letter of the law** — the exact wording rather than the intent
"The clerk followed the letter of the law but ignored its spirit."

One-word substitution

- one who gives false evidence under oath → **perjurer**
- the official power to hear and decide cases → **jurisdiction**
- a settlement of a dispute by a neutral third party chosen by the sides → **arbitration**
- a person who examines and reports on accounts → **auditor**
- one who breaks an oath or makes false statements under oath → **perjurer**
- a government by officials, marked by excessive rules → **bureaucracy**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **arbitrariness** — the quality of being based on whim or unchecked discretion rather than reason or rule
"The movement has successfully connected examination irregularities with wider anxieties about unemployment, institutional decay, arbitrariness and the shrinking space for democratic dissent." — *The Indian Express*, 25 July 2026
- **prerogative** — an exclusive right or special privilege claimed by a person or office
"On the one hand, Rahul Gandhi demanded accountability for paper leaks from the government, but on the other, he himself publicly refused to be accountable to the law, claiming it to be his 'prerogative'." — *The Indian Express*, 25 July 2026
- **reticence** — a reluctance to speak or engage; reserve
"This exposes the Opposition's duplicity and their reticence to debate the matter in Parliament." — *The Indian Express*, 25 July 2026
- **coercion** — the use of force, threats or intimidation to compel obedience
"Against this, the BJP's response has combined coercion with politically hollow and morally reprehensible rhetoric." — *The Indian Express*, 25 July 2026

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **locus standi** — the right or capacity to bring an action before a court
- **ratio decidendi** — the legal principle or reason that forms the binding basis of a decision
- **obiter dicta** — remarks made in passing in a judgment that are not binding
- **res judicata** — a matter already finally decided by a court, barring re-litigation



- **stare decisis** — the doctrine of standing by decided cases; binding precedent
- **habeas corpus** — 'you shall have the body' — a writ against unlawful detention
- **mandamus** — 'we command' — a writ ordering a public authority to perform its duty
- **certiorari** — a writ by which a higher court quashes the order of a lower body
- **amicus curiae** — 'friend of the court' — a person who assists the court though not a party
- **sub judice** — under judicial consideration and therefore not open to public comment
- **ex parte** — a proceeding brought by one party in the absence of the other
- **bona fide** — in good faith; genuine and without intent to deceive
- **caveat emptor** — 'let the buyer beware' — the buyer bears the risk of the purchase
- **ultra vires** — beyond the legal powers of a body or authority

SYNONYM CLUSTERS — LEARN THEM IN GROUPS

to CRITICISE / CONDEMN

censure · castigate · denounce · decry · reprove · reprehend

STUBBORN / UNYIELDING

obstinate · intransigent · obdurate · recalcitrant · dogged

WORDY / LONG-WINDED

verbose · prolix · loquacious · garrulous · long-winded

HONEST / UPRIGHT

candid · forthright · scrupulous · principled · above-board

to CALM / PACIFY

placate · appease · mollify · conciliate · assuage

SECRET / HIDDEN

clandestine · covert · surreptitious · furtive · cloak-and-dagger

to WORSEN / INTENSIFY

aggravate · exacerbate · inflame · compound · intensify

PREFIX & SUFFIX TOOLKIT — DECODE ANY WORD

- **circum-** = around (*circumvent*)
- **ante-** = before (*antedate*)
- **post-** = after (*post-mortem*)
- **inter-** = between (*interstate*)
- **intra-** = within (*intra-state*)
- **sub-** = under (*subpoena*)
- **super-** = above/over (*supervise*)
- **trans-** = across (*transnational*)
- **extra-** = beyond (*extradite*)
- **pro-** = forward/for (*proscribe*)
- **mal-** = bad/wrongful (*malfeasance*)
- **re-** = back/again (*remand*)
- **-cide** = killing (*regicide*)
- **-archy** = rule/government (*oligarchy*)
- **-cracy** = government by (*bureaucracy*)
- **-able** = capable of being (*justiciable*)

PRACTICE DRILL

1. ARBITRARY most nearly means:

A) arrived at by precise and careful calculation · B) based on personal whim rather than settled rule or reason · C) supported by an overwhelming popular majority · D) required strictly by the letter of the law

2. Which word is the OPPOSITE of CLANDESTINE?

A) furtive and hidden from view · B) carried out quietly at night · C) overt and openly conducted · D) sudden and wholly unplanned

3. Fill the blank: The three judges recorded their ____, refusing to join the majority opinion.

A) descent · B) dissent · C) ascent · D) decency

4. A statute that FORBIDS an activity is said to ____ it.

A) prescribe · B) subscribe · C) ascribe · D) proscribe

5. RETICENCE is best defined as:

A) a reluctance to speak out; reserve · B) a habit of loud public protest · C) careless and blunt honesty · D) a quick and violent temper

6. Analogy — SECRETIVE is to ____ as STUBBORN is to INTRANSIGENT.

A) candid · B) generous · C) surreptitious · D) fickle

7. In law, HABEAS CORPUS refers to:

A) the doctrine that binding agreements must be kept · B) an act done beyond the lawful powers of a body · C) a first-impression case accepted until it is disproved · D) a writ to produce a detained person before a court

8. Choose the ANTONYM of STRINGENT:

A) lenient · B) severe · C) binding · D) pressing

9. Fill the blank: The confession was worthless because it had been obtained through ____, not free choice.

A) consent · B) coercion · C) candour · D) clemency

Answer key: 1-B · 2-C · 3-B · 4-D · 5-A · 6-C · 7-D · 8-A · 9-B

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

From the Latin *jus, juris* — law and right — English inherited a whole courtroom. A judge exercises judicial power within a fixed jurisdiction; a jurist studies jurisprudence; a witness who swears falsely commits perjury. The editorial voice of the day warns that **dissent** is a **legitimate**, constitutional right, but that when it turns **clandestine** or is met with **coercion**, and when a leader claims accoun



*is another's duty yet his own **prerogative**, the **arbitrary** begins to crowd out the just. Justice, in the end, is only jus made **stringent** enough to bind even the powerful.*

