

ROOT OF THE DAY

cede / ceed / cess — Latin *cedere*, *cessum* — to go, to withdraw, to yield · “go; yield; give way”

precedent — pre- (before) + ced (go) = a decision that went before → the earlier ruling later courts must follow

concede — con- (wholly) + cede (yield) = to yield entirely → to admit a point or surrender a claim

secede — se- (apart) + cede (go) = to go apart → to withdraw formally from a union or federation

accede — ac- (toward) + cede (go) = to go toward → to agree to a demand, or to formally join a treaty

intercede — inter- (between) + cede (go) = to go between two parties → to plead on someone's behalf

cession — cess (yielded) + -ion = the act of yielding → the formal handing over of territory or rights to another state

POWER WORDS

impugn v.

“Counsel did not impugn the tribunal's findings of fact; he attacked only the sentence that followed from them.”

Meaning: to challenge the truth, validity or honesty of something, especially in argument

Syn: to call into question · **Ant:** to vouch for

HOOK: The order under challenge is literally called the 'impugned order' — impugn = to fight (pugn, as in pugnacious) against a claim.

abrogate v.

“Parliament may abrogate an outdated statute outright, but it cannot abrogate a right that forms part of the basic structure.”

Meaning: to repeal or formally do away with a law, right or agreement

Syn: to repeal · **Ant:** to enact

HOOK: ab- (away) + rog (ask, propose a law) = to ask a law away — the mirror image of proposing one.

onerous adj.

“Critics called the compliance conditions onerous enough to deter precisely the small insurers the reform was meant to attract.”

Meaning: involving a heavy burden, effort or obligation

Syn: burdensome · **Ant:** undemanding

HOOK: Latin onus = a load or burden — the same onus as in 'onus of proof'.

germane adj.

“The judge ruled the witness's political affiliation was not germane to the question of negligence.”

Meaning: relevant and appropriate to the matter at hand

Syn: pertinent · **Ant:** extraneous

HOOK: Originally 'having the same parents' (germane = akin) — a germane point is one related by blood to the issue.

vitiate v.

“Consent obtained by coercion is not free consent, and a contract so procured stands vitiated from the outset.”

Meaning: to spoil or destroy the legal force or quality of something

Syn: to invalidate · **Ant:** to validate

HOOK: Latin vitium = a fault or defect (as in 'vice'); to vitiate is to inject the fatal flaw.

peremptory adj.

“The High Court issued a peremptory direction requiring the State to file its counter-affidavit within a week, leaving no room for further adjournment.”

Meaning: admitting no refusal, delay or debate; final and absolute

Syn: imperative · **Ant:** discretionary

HOOK: per- (through) + emere (to take) = it takes the matter clean through; nothing may be argued back.

specious adj.

“The argument was specious: it looked principled until you noticed it proved far too much.”

Meaning: superficially plausible but in fact wrong

Syn: plausible but false · **Ant:** sound

HOOK: From species, appearance — a specious claim has the appearance of truth and nothing behind it.

untenable adj.

“Once the second affidavit was produced, the State's position became untenable.”

Meaning: incapable of being defended against objection

Syn: indefensible · **Ant:** tenable

HOOK: From tenere, to hold — an untenable position is one you cannot hold under attack.

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

accede vs **exceed**

accede: to agree to a demand, or to formally join a treaty (verb)

exceed: to go beyond a limit, quantity or authority (verb)

TIP: ACcede = Agree/Accept; EXceed = go EXtra, past the limit. Both hide the root cede, 'to go'.

statute vs **statue**

statute: a written law passed by a legislature (noun)

statue: a carved or cast figure of a person or animal (noun)

TIP: A statuTe is a Text; a statue just stands there in stone.

adverse vs **averse**

adverse: unfavourable, harmful or hostile in effect (adj.)

averse: strongly disinclined or unwilling (adj.)

TIP: ADverse conditions ADd trouble; you are Averse when you'd rather Avoid. Things are adverse; people are averse.

precedent vs **president**

precedent: an earlier ruling or event used as a guide for later ones (noun)

president: the elected head of a state, company or body (noun)

TIP: PreCEDent contains cede — it went before. A preSIDENT SITs (sid-, to sit) at the head.

censure vs **ensor**

censure: to express formal, severe disapproval of someone (verb/noun)

ensor: to suppress or cut objectionable parts of a work (verb/noun)

TIP: CenSURE is a SURE, official scolding; a cenSOR takes the scissorS to content.

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- **in the dock** — on trial, or facing public blame and scrutiny
“With the paper-leak amendment now law, examination agencies as well as touts find themselves in the dock.”
- **throw the book at someone** — to punish or charge someone as severely as the rules allow
“The amendment lets special courts throw the book at organised leak syndicates rather than treat them as ordinary cheats.”
- **a level playing field** — a situation in which everyone competes on equal terms
“Aspirants argue that a leaked paper destroys the level playing field an entrance test is supposed to guarantee.”
- **toe the line** — to conform to a rule or authority
“Backbenchers who refused to toe the line lost the whip's protection.”

One-word substitution

- an earlier decision treated as a rule for deciding later similar cases → **precedent**
- the formal withdrawal of a state or group from a federation or union → **secession**
- a neutral person chosen by disputing parties to decide the dispute bindingly → **arbitrator**
- the practice of favouring one's relatives in appointments to office → **nepotism**
- a direct vote by all electors on a single important public question → **plebiscite**
- a person who is engaged in a lawsuit as a party to it → **litigant**



- **a storm in a teacup** — great fuss over a trivial matter
“The dissent called the controversy a storm in a teacup.”

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **ouster** — the act of removing or shutting something out; in law, a clause or provision that excludes a court's jurisdiction
“The Cauvery scheme turns on the ouster of the Supreme Court's ordinary jurisdiction, with Article 262 sending inter-state water disputes to a tribunal instead.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief — ‘Cauvery-Mekedatu dispute, Article 262’, 31 Jul 2026
- **encumbrance** — a legal claim, charge or liability attached to property that restricts its transfer or use
“Each BHAVYA-Rasayan chemical park must be built on a minimum contiguous, encumbrance-free parcel of land.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief — ‘BHAVYA-Rasayan chemical parks scheme’, 31 Jul 2026
- **intractable** — extremely hard to control, manage or resolve
“The disarmament agreement was described as a potential turning point in one of the world's most intractable conflicts.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief — ‘Gaza peace deal and the International Stabilisation Force’, 31 Jul 2026
- **superintendence** — the power of overall supervision and control of an activity or body
“Article 324 vests the superintendence, direction and control of elections in an independent Election Commission of India.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief — ‘Supreme Court on the CEC Appointment Act, 2023’, 31 Jul 2026

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **ratio decidendi** — the reason for the decision — the binding legal principle a judgment rests on
- **obiter dicta** — things said by the way — judicial observations that persuade but do not bind
- **res judicata** — a matter already judged; it cannot be litigated again between the same parties
- **ultra vires** — beyond the powers — an act outside the authority conferred by law, and therefore void
- **locus standi** — a place to stand — the legal right of a person to bring a case before a court
- **mens rea** — guilty mind — the mental element (intention or knowledge) required for a crime
- **prima facie** — on its first appearance — enough to establish a case unless rebutted
- **actus reus** — guilty act — the prohibited conduct element of an offence
- **stare decisis** — to stand by things decided — the doctrine binding courts to precedent
- **amicus curiae** — friend of the court — a person who assists the court on a question of law

RECALL CHECK — WORDS FROM EARLIER

amnesty (learnt 21 days ago) — meaning: _____

moratorium (learnt 21 days ago) — meaning: _____

reciprocal (learnt 21 days ago) — meaning: _____

indigenisation (learnt 21 days ago) — meaning: _____

PRACTICE DRILL

- In a judgment, the phrase 'the impugned order' refers to the order that is:
A) being challenged before the court · B) being passed by the court today · C) already fully complied with · D) kept sealed from the parties
- If consent to a contract is obtained by coercion, the contract is best described as:
A) ratified · B) vitiated · C) novated · D) discharged
- 'Precedent', 'secede' and 'cession' all share a root meaning:
A) to hold · B) to speak · C) to go or yield · D) to bind
- An objection that an amendment is 'not germane' to the Bill means the amendment is:
A) unconstitutional in substance · B) not relevant to the Bill's subject · C) moved by the wrong member · D) too costly to implement
- A 'peremptory' direction of a court is one that:
A) may be complied with at leisure · B) applies only to future cases · C) allows no refusal, delay or debate · D) requires the consent of both parties
- Land described as 'encumbrance-free' is land that:
A) carries no legal charge or claim on it · B) has never been cultivated · C) lies outside any municipal limit · D) is owned jointly by several persons
- An 'ouster clause' in a statute typically:
A) removes an officer from public employment · B) excludes the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts · C) extends the statute to more states · D) cancels an earlier notification
- Choose the correct sentence:
A) India acceded to the treaty in 1968. · B) India exceeded to the treaty in 1968. · C) India acceded the treaty limit of 1968. · D) India exceeded to the treaty terms in 1968.
- A creditor's 'forbearance' to sue means that the creditor:
A) has lost the right to sue by lapse of time · B) has assigned the debt to a third party · C) voluntarily refrains from enforcing the right to sue · D) has already obtained a decree for the debt
- The phrase 'in the dock' most nearly means:
A) safely secured in harbour · B) facing trial or public blame · C) next in line for promotion · D) waiting for documents to clear

Answer key: 1-A · 2-B · 3-C · 4-B · 5-C · 6-A · 7-B · 8-A · 9-C · 10-B

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

Everything today comes from Latin *cedere* — to go, to yield. A court's precedent is simply the ruling that went before; a state that secedes goes apart; a nation that accedes to a treaty goes toward it, and a cession of territory is a yielding of it. Watch what happens when a legislature refuses to yield: it may **abrogate** an old statute, circumscribe a power by drawing a line around it, or insert an ouster clause so that the ordinary courts must give way. Advocates then **impugn** that clause as inimical to independence, **specious** in its reasoning, arguing that consent so extracted is vitiated and the defence **untenable** — while the bench, exercising a plenary power, decides whether it is **germane** enough to quash the **peremptory** order.

