

ROOT OF THE DAY

fer / lat — *Latin ferre, latum — to bear, to carry, to bring · “carry; bear; bring”*

refer — re- (back) + fer (carry) = to carry back → to send a question or a matter to another authority for decision, as a Bench refers a point of law to a larger Bench

confer — con- (together) + fer (bring) = to bring together → to grant a power or a right on someone, as a statute confers jurisdiction; also, to consult together

infer — in- (into) + fer (carry) = to carry into the mind → to draw a conclusion from facts already proved, as a court infers intention from conduct

transfer — trans- (across) + fer (carry) = to carry across → to pass property, a case or an officer from one person or place to another

proffer — pro- (forward) + fer (bring) = to bring forward → to put something forward for acceptance, as counsel proffers a document in evidence

sufferance — suf- (under) + fer (bear) = a bearing-under → tolerance by silence rather than by grant; a tenant at sufferance stays on only because nobody has turned him out

relate — re- (back) + lat (carry) = carried back → to connect one fact to another; the same lat- gives translate, a text carried across into another tongue

POWER WORDS

estoppel *n.*

“The plea of estoppel failed because no representation had been made to the buyer before he paid.”

Meaning: a bar that prevents a person from denying what his own earlier words or conduct led another to believe and act upon

Syn: a preclusion · **Ant:** an open plea

HOOK: From Old French estouper, to stop up: your own earlier conduct stops your mouth.

abridge *v.*

“Article 13 declares void any law that takes away or abridges the rights conferred by Part III.”

Meaning: to cut down or curtail, especially a right or a freedom

Syn: to curtail · **Ant:** to enlarge

HOOK: From Latin brevis, short: to make the right shorter than it was.

supervening *adj.*

“Performance was excused on the ground of supervening impossibility under Section 56 of the Contract Act.”

Meaning: arising later and changing a situation that already existed

Syn: intervening · **Ant:** pre-existing

HOOK: super- (over) + venire (to come): an event that comes over the top of the bargain after it was struck.

obfuscate *v.*

“The affidavit obfuscates the one question the Court asked, which was who authorised the payment.”

Meaning: to make something deliberately unclear or hard to understand

Syn: to becloud · **Ant:** to clarify

HOOK: ob- + fuscus (dark): to throw darkness over the point.

abdicate *v.*

“A legislature may delegate details, but it cannot abdicate its essential legislative function.”

Meaning: to give up a power, office or duty formally or by default

Syn: to renounce · **Ant:** to retain

HOOK: ab- (away) + dicare (to proclaim): to proclaim the office away from yourself.

enjoin *v.*

“The High Court enjoined the municipality from demolishing the shops until the appeal was heard.”

Meaning: to order somebody by law to do something, or more often to stop doing it

Syn: to restrain · **Ant:** to permit

HOOK: in- + jungere (to join): the court joins a command on to you — the same jungere gives injunction.

rescind *v.*

“A contract induced by fraud is voidable, and the innocent party may rescind it on discovering the truth.”

Meaning: to cancel an agreement or an order so that it ceases to have effect

Syn: to revoke · **Ant:** to affirm

HOOK: re- (back) + scindere (to cut): you cut the agreement back off.

indefeasible *adj.*

“The Court called the right to move it under Article 32 an indefeasible part of the Constitution's scheme.”

Meaning: incapable of being annulled, defeated or taken away

Syn: inviolable · **Ant:** forfeitable

HOOK: in- (not) + defeasible (able to be defeated): nothing can defeat it.

hortatory *adj.*

“The Directive Principles are hortatory rather than enforceable, yet they guide the making of law.”

Meaning: urging or exhorting a course of conduct without compelling it

Syn: exhortative · **Ant:** mandatory

HOOK: Latin hortari, to urge: a hortatory clause urges, it does not order.

opprobrium *n.*

“The conviction carried moral opprobrium far beyond the short sentence actually imposed.”

Meaning: harsh public disgrace and criticism attaching to conduct thought shameful

Syn: obloquy · **Ant:** acclaim

HOOK: ob- + probrium (a shameful act): the shame the public fastens on to you.

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

rebut *vs* **refute**

rebut: to offer evidence or argument against a claim, whether or not it succeeds (v.)

refute: to disprove a claim conclusively, so that it can no longer be maintained (v.)

TIP: You may rebut and still lose; you refute only when the claim is destroyed. A rebuttable presumption can be answered, not necessarily defeated.

official *vs* **officious**

official: relating to a post of authority, or authorised by it (adj./n.)

officious: interfering and self-important in offering help or advice nobody sought (adj.)

TIP: An official act carries authority; an officious clerk carries only himself.

moot *vs* **mute**

moot: open to argument, or no longer of practical effect; also a practice court exercise (adj./n.)

mute: silent, or unable to speak; as a verb, to muffle a sound (adj./v.)

TIP: A moot point is arguable; a mute witness says nothing. Never write 'a mute point'.

collaborate *vs* **corroborate**

collaborate: to work jointly with another person on a task (v.)

corroborate: to confirm or support a statement with independent evidence (v.)

TIP: CoLLABORATE shares LABOUR; coRRORBORATE gives a statement ROBUR, Latin for strength. Witnesses corroborate; co-authors collaborate.

deduce *vs* **deduct**

deduce: to reach a conclusion by reasoning from what is known (v.)

deduct: to subtract an amount from a total (v.)

TIP: You deduce a fact and deduct a sum. Both are de- + ducere, to lead down, but only one leads to an inference.

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION



Idioms in context

- **a dead letter** — a law or rule still on the statute book but never enforced in practice
“Without a single prosecution in twelve years, the section has become a dead letter.”
- **to beg the question** — to assume as proved the very point that is in dispute
“To say the notice is valid because the officer issued it validly is to beg the question.”
- **to have an axe to grind** — to have a private interest that colours what one says
“The witness had an axe to grind, having lost the same tender the previous year.”
- **to clutch at straws** — to rely in desperation on something very unlikely to help
“Arguing limitation at the appellate stage was clutching at straws.”

One-word substitution

- one appointed by a court to manage the estate of a person who has died without leaving a will → **administrator**
- a person who lends money at an exorbitant rate of interest → **usurer**
- the person to whom money or movable property is left by a will → **legatee**
- one who attacks cherished beliefs and long-established institutions → **iconoclast**
- a written order of a court requiring a person to appear before it on a stated day → **summons**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **transgressed** — gone beyond a limit or boundary that a rule, a law or a scientific model has set
“Its central finding: seven of the nine Planetary Boundaries are now transgressed, all seven at their highest recorded levels.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 24 Sep 2026 — ‘Planetary Health Check 2026: seven of nine boundaries breached’
- **repugnancy** — direct inconsistency between two laws, such that both cannot stand together
“The Seventh Schedule sets out three lists and Article 246 allocates them: Parliament over List I, State legislatures over List II, both over List III, with Union law prevailing on repugnancy.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 24 Sep 2026 — ‘Seven-judge Bench reserves verdict on State surcharge on sales tax’
- **creditworthiness** — the extent to which a borrower can be trusted to repay what is owed, in full and on time
“A credit rating agency assesses creditworthiness: the likelihood that a borrower repays what it owes, on time and in full.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 24 Sep 2026 — ‘Fitch lifts India FY27 growth forecast to 6.9 per cent’
- **discrepancy** — a difference between two things that ought to agree, such as two entries of the same fact
“A notice that does not tell the recipient which discrepancy is alleged is vulnerable precisely on that ground.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 24 Sep 2026 — ‘Supreme Court flags mechanical ECI notices in the Delhi SIR’

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **de novo** — anew, from the beginning; a trial de novo is a fresh trial in which earlier findings count for nothing
- **in rem** — against the thing; a right or judgment good against the world at large, as opposed to one binding only named parties
- **onus probandi** — the burden of proof; the duty of the party who asserts a fact to establish it
- **casus omissus** — a case omitted; a situation the statute has not covered, which the court may not supply by rewriting the text
- **in pari materia** — upon the same subject; two statutes on the same matter are read together so that their language is given a consistent meaning
- **ut res magis valeat quam pereat** — so that the thing may rather have effect than perish; prefer the construction that makes a provision workable
- **reddendo singula singulis** — rendering each to each; each phrase in a list is attached to the word it was meant for, not to all of them
- **contemporanea expositio** — contemporaneous exposition; how a statute was understood and applied when it was made is a guide to its meaning
- **ex debito justitiae** — as a debt of justice; relief granted as a matter of right, not as an indulgence of the court
- **animus possidendi** — the intention to possess; the mental element that turns mere occupation into possession in adverse-possession claims

PRACTICE DRILL

1. ‘Refer’, ‘infer’ and ‘transfer’ are built on a root that means:
A) to hold or to keep · B) to place or to set down · C) to carry or to bear · D) to speak or to declare
2. A party who is estopped from denying a fact is one who:
A) is barred by his own earlier conduct from taking that stand · B) has been given leave to amend his pleadings once more · C) must prove that fact before any other issue is taken up · D) may raise the point only at the stage of final arguments
3. In ‘seven of the nine Planetary Boundaries are now transgressed’, the limits have been:
A) measured for the very first time · B) revised upwards by the authors · C) accepted by the States concerned · D) crossed and left behind
4. A court that enjoins a party from selling the land has:
A) valued the land for the purpose of stamp duty · B) ordered that party not to sell it · C) allowed the sale on terms to be settled later · D) sent the question of title to a larger Bench
5. A provision is read so that it works rather than fails, under the maxim:
A) ut res magis valeat quam pereat · B) casus omissus · C) in pari materia · D) ex debito justitiae
6. Choose the correct sentence:
A) Two rival firms agreed to corroborate on a single tender. · B) The letter was produced to collaborate the witness's account. · C) The two witnesses collaborated each other's version of the night. · D) A second witness corroborated the complainant's account of the night.
7. In ‘with Union law prevailing on repugnancy’, repugnancy describes two laws that are:
A) identical in wording though different in purpose · B) in conflict, so that both cannot stand together · C) valid only once the President has given assent · D) to be read together as one continuous scheme
8. A right described as indefeasible is one that:
A) arises only after a formal demand has been made · B) may be enforced by the State and by nobody else · C) cannot be taken away or defeated by another claim · D) lapses if it is not exercised within three years

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

Everything today is carried: from Latin *ferre* come the question a Bench refers, the jurisdiction a statute confers, the intention a judge infers from conduct, and the tenant at sufferance who is only borne with. A party who has abdicated his own case will proffer a document that obfuscates the issue, clutch at straws, and then beg the question the court actually asked. Estoppel answers him, because his earlier conduct is carried forward against him; a supervening event might have n the bargain, but nothing here abridges the other side's indefeasible right. What began as a dead letter of a plea ends in opprobrium, and the court enjoins pressing it again.

