

ROOT OF THE DAY

pon / pos / posit — *Latin ponere, positum* — to place, to put, to set down · “place; put; set”

depose — de- (down) + pos (place) = to set down → to set down evidence on oath out of court, and separately to put a ruler down from his throne
impose — im- (on) + pos (place) = to place upon → to lay a tax, a duty or a condition on somebody who must then bear it
interpose — inter- (between) + pos (place) = to place between → to step in between two parties, as a court interposes to stay a proceeding
repose — re- (again) + pos (place) = to place back → to rest; also to place trust in somebody, as confidence is reposed in a trustee
juxtapose — juxta (beside) + pos (place) = to place side by side → to set two things next to each other so the difference shows
exponent — ex- (out) + pon (put) = to put forth → one who sets out and argues for a doctrine, as a judge is an exponent of a principle
apposite — ap- (to, near) + posit (placed) = placed alongside → strikingly apt to the matter in hand, as an apposite precedent fits the facts exactly

POWER WORDS

demur *v.*

“Counsel demurred to the *plaint*, saying that even on the facts pleaded no cause of action arose.”

Meaning: to raise an objection, especially that the other side's case fails even if its facts are accepted

Syn: to object · **Ant:** to concede

HOOK: From Latin *demorari*, to delay: you hold the matter up instead of letting it pass.

countervailing *adj.*

“The Court weighed the right to privacy against the countervailing interest of the State in detecting crime.”

Meaning: acting with equal force in the opposite direction, so as to offset something

Syn: offsetting · **Ant:** reinforcing

HOOK: *contra* (against) + *valere* (to be strong): a strength set against a strength.

vicarious *adj.*

“The employer was held vicariously liable for the driver's negligence in the course of his employment.”

Meaning: borne by one person for the act of another, by reason of their relationship

Syn: substituted · **Ant:** personal

HOOK: Latin *vicarius*, a substitute, from *vici* (a turn): one stands in the other's turn.

adumbrate *v.*

“The judgment *adumbrates* a wider principle without deciding the question that would settle it.”

Meaning: to sketch in outline, or to foreshadow something not yet fully worked out

Syn: to foreshadow · **Ant:** to spell out

HOOK: *ad-* + *umbra* (shadow): you throw the shadow of the idea before the idea itself arrives.

anodyne *adj.*

“The Ministry issued an *anodyne* statement that offended nobody and answered nothing.”

Meaning: so bland and inoffensive as to say nothing of substance

Syn: innocuous · **Ant:** provocative

HOOK: Greek *an-* (without) + *odyne* (pain): a painkiller of a sentence, and about as nourishing.

circumvent *v.*

“The scheme was struck down as a device to circumvent the ceiling fixed by the statute.”

Meaning: to get around a rule or an obstacle without openly breaking it

Syn: to bypass · **Ant:** to comply with

HOOK: *circum-* (around) + *venire* (to come): you come around the wall rather than through it.

encroachment *n.*

“A State law on a Union List subject is void as an encroachment on Parliament's exclusive field.”

Meaning: a gradual intrusion into territory, a right or a field that belongs to another

Syn: an incursion · **Ant:** a withdrawal

HOOK: Old French *encrochier*, to seize with a hook (*croc*): you hook in a little of what is not yours.

disingenuous *adj.*

“It is *disingenuous* to plead ignorance of a notification the company itself had asked for.”

Meaning: pretending to be frank while concealing what one really knows or intends

Syn: insincere · **Ant:** candid

HOOK: *dis-* (not) + *ingenuus* (frank, freeborn): frankness with the frankness taken out.

intransigent *adj.*

“Both sides remained intransigent, and the mediation collapsed within a fortnight.”

Meaning: refusing to compromise or to shift from a stated position

Syn: unyielding · **Ant:** accommodating

HOOK: *in-* (not) + *transigere* (to come to terms): one who will not come to terms.

inexorable *adj.*

“Once limitation had run, the bar was inexorable and no equity could soften it.”

Meaning: impossible to stop or to persuade out of its course

Syn: relentless · **Ant:** yielding

HOOK: *in-* (not) + *exorare* (to win over by pleading): no amount of pleading moves it.

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

equable *vs* **equitable**

equable: even and steady, not given to sharp change (adj.)

equitable: fair and just, or relating to the rules of equity (adj.)

TIP: An equable climate never swings; an equitable order is fair. Only the second belongs in a judgment.

prospective *vs* **perspective**

prospective: looking to the future; operating only from a date onwards (adj.)

perspective: a point of view, or the depiction of depth in a drawing (n.)

TIP: An overruling may be given prospective effect; a writer offers a perspective. Never write ‘from a prospective of’.

notable *vs* **notorious**

notable: worth noticing, distinguished (adj.)

notorious: widely known for something bad (adj.)

TIP: A notable judgment is admired; a notorious offender is not. ‘Notorious possession’ in property law is the rare neutral use, meaning open and known to all.

veracity *vs* **voracity**

veracity: truthfulness; the quality of telling what is so (n.)

voracity: greed; an enormous appetite for food or for gain (n.)

TIP: *VER*acity holds the Latin *verus*, true; *VOR*acity holds *vorare*, to devour. Courts doubt veracity, never voracity.

defer *vs* **differ**

defer: to postpone, or to yield to another's judgment (v.)

differ: to be unlike, or to disagree (v.)

TIP: A High Court defers to a Supreme Court ruling and may differ from a coordinate Bench. Deference yields; difference disagrees.

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION



Idioms in context

- **to hold water** — of an argument or an explanation, to stand up to scrutiny
“The plea of alibi does not hold water, since the call records place him at the spot.”
- **a stalking horse** — something put forward to conceal the real purpose behind it
“The public-interest petition was a stalking horse for a commercial rivalry.”
- **to carry the day** — to win the argument or the contest in the end
“The narrower reading of the section carried the day before the larger Bench.”
- **a rap on the knuckles** — a mild reprimand that stops well short of punishment
“The officer escaped with a rap on the knuckles and no entry in his service record.”

One-word substitution

- the party who takes a decided case to a higher court for review → **appellant**
- one who helps or encourages another to commit an offence without being the principal offender → **abettor**
- a right to use another person's land for a limited purpose, such as a path or a drain → **easement**
- one who abandons the faith, party or principles he once professed → **apostate**
- the allowance a court orders one spouse to pay the other after separation or divorce → **alimony**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **qualification** — a condition that limits an otherwise general rule and cuts down its reach
“Article 311 is the qualification on that pleasure, and it has two distinct limbs.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 25 Sep 2026 — ‘SC on Article 311(1): rank decides removal’
- **deliberative** — concerned with debating and weighing a matter before a decision is taken
“The United Nations General Assembly is the principal deliberative organ of the UN, in which all member states have one vote each — the sovereign-equality principle that makes a state of eleven thousand people the formal equal of a state of a billion.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 25 Sep 2026 — ‘FIPIC: second Foreign Ministers’ Meeting at UNGA-81’
- **asymmetry** — a want of correspondence between two sides, so that what holds one way does not hold the other
“Note the asymmetry that matters: the delegated power moves the effective rate down from the statutory ceiling; it does not let the executive exceed what Parliament has authorised.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 25 Sep 2026 — ‘Customs duty cut on crude edible oils’
- **interoperability** — the capacity of two separate systems or forces to work together as one
“Training two armies to slot such a package together is a demanding test of interoperability: shared battle procedures, compatible communications, common map references and mutually intelligible staff work.” — CLAT Gurukul Daily Brief, 25 Sep 2026 — ‘Yudh Abhyas 2026: India-US army exercise’

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **nudum pactum** — a bare promise; an agreement unsupported by consideration, which the law will not enforce
- **novus actus interveniens** — a new intervening act; an independent event that breaks the chain of causation between the wrong and the damage
- **forum non conveniens** — an inconvenient forum; a court may decline to hear a case better tried elsewhere
- **locus poenitentiae** — a place for repentance; the window in which a party may still draw back before the act is complete
- **mala in se** — wrongs in themselves; conduct condemned as immoral quite apart from any statute, such as murder
- **mala prohibita** — wrongs because prohibited; conduct that is an offence only because a statute forbids it
- **ex aequo et bono** — according to what is equitable and good; deciding on fairness rather than strict law, only if the parties agree
- **jus soli** — the right of the soil; citizenship acquired by birth within the territory of a State
- **expressum facit cessare tacitum** — what is expressed puts an end to what is implied; an express term displaces an implied one on the same point
- **inter partes** — between the parties; a decision binding only on those before the court, unlike one good against the world

PRACTICE DRILL

1. 'Depose', 'impose' and 'interpose' are built on a root that means:
A) to carry or to bring · B) to bind or to tie fast · C) to place or to put · D) to seize or to take hold
2. A defendant who demurs to the plaint:
A) objects that it discloses no case even if every fact is true · B) admits the facts and asks for further time to file a defence · C) applies to have the suit moved to another competent court · D) seeks leave to lead additional evidence at the appeal stage
3. In 'Note the asymmetry that matters', the writer is pointing to something that is:
A) settled by long and unbroken usage · B) repeated in the same way on both sides · C) measured with unusual precision · D) unequal in the two directions
4. A scheme designed to circumvent a statutory ceiling is one that:
A) openly defies the ceiling and invites a prosecution · B) gets around the ceiling without breaching its words · C) asks the legislature to raise the ceiling by amendment · D) applies the ceiling strictly to every affected person
5. An employer answerable for his driver's negligence in the course of employment is liable:
A) vicariously, for the act of another · B) personally, for his own want of care · C) criminally, as an abettor of the act · D) not at all, the driver alone answering
6. In 'the principal deliberative organ of the UN', deliberative describes a body that:
A) enforces decisions taken by some other organ · B) is chosen from a deliberately narrow membership · C) debates and weighs a matter before deciding · D) meets only when an emergency has arisen
7. Choose the correct sentence:
A) The court doubted the voracity of the sole eyewitness. · B) The court doubted the veracity of the sole eyewitness. · C) The witness displayed remarkable veracity at the dinner table. · D) His voracious appetite alarmed everybody at the table.
8. The maxim that a bare promise unsupported by consideration creates no obligation is:
A) novus actus interveniens · B) forum non conveniens · C) locus poenitentiae · D) nudum pactum

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

Everything today is placed somewhere. A rule is imposed, trust is reposed in the officer who administers it, and a court interposes when the placing goes wrong; the apposite precedent is the one set right beside the facts. The **intransigent** litigant demurs, adumbrates a grievance he will not state plainly, and puts up an **anodyne** affidavit that is a stalking horse for something else. It is **disingenuous** to circumvent a ceiling and then call the **encroachment** an accident, and a **countervailing** plea will hold water once the **inexorable** bar of limitation has run; the **vicarious** liability of his employer carries the day.

