

## ROOT OF THE DAY

**spec/spic** — Latin *specere* — to look, to see · “look / see”

**inspect** — in- (into) + spect (look) = to look into closely; to examine

**prospect** — pro- (forward) + spect (look) = a looking forward; an outlook or expectation

**retrospective** — retro- (back) + spect (look) + -ive = looking back on the past

**circumspect** — circum- (around) + spect (look) = looking all around before acting; cautious and prudent

**conspicuous** — con- (fully) + spic (look) + -uous = fully in view; standing out so as to be clearly seen

**perspicacious** — per- (through) + spic (look) + -acious = seeing through things; keenly perceptive

**specious** — spec (appear) + -ious = having a fair appearance while being actually false or misleading

## POWER WORDS

**sovereignty** *n.*

“The Delhi High Court grounded its ruling in sovereignty, holding that a State’s power to admit or exclude a foreigner is a core attribute of nationhood.”

**Meaning:** the supreme and independent authority of a state to govern itself

**Syn:** self-rule · **Ant:** subjugation

**HOOK:** sovereign = supreme ruler; sovereignty = the supremacy itself

**justiciable** *adj.*

“Counsel argued that whether the library deserved space in the Central Vista was a policy question, not a justiciable one.”

**Meaning:** capable of being decided by a court of law

**Syn:** triable · **Ant:** non-justiciable

**HOOK:** justice + -able → fit for a court to decide

**ostensible** *adj.*

“The ostensible reason for the eviction was redevelopment, but critics suspected the library was simply overlooked in the plan.”

**Meaning:** stated or appearing to be true, but not necessarily so

**Syn:** apparent · **Ant:** actual

**HOOK:** to ostend = to show; ostensible = what is shown on the surface

**perfunctory** *adj.*

“Activists complained that complaints over PwD property rights were handled in a perfunctory manner, with little real follow-up.”

**Meaning:** carried out with minimum effort or care, as a routine duty

**Syn:** cursory · **Ant:** thorough

**HOOK:** per + functus (done) → done just to get through it

**augment** *v.*

“The reintroduction drive sought to augment West Bengal’s tiger numbers after surveys found reserves nearly empty.”

**Meaning:** to make something greater by adding to it

**Syn:** bolster · **Ant:** diminish

**HOOK:** augere (to increase) → to add to, enlarge

**onerous** *adj.*

“Learning a wholly new language in Class 9 would be onerous for pupils who had never studied a second Indian tongue.”

**Meaning:** involving a heavy or oppressive burden

**Syn:** burdensome · **Ant:** undemanding

**HOOK:** onus (burden) → full of burden

**discretion** *n.*

“Admission at a port of entry rests on the discretion of the immigration authority, not on the mere possession of a visa.”

**Meaning:** the freedom to decide or act according to one’s own judgment

**Syn:** latitude · **Ant:** obligation

**HOOK:** a discreet officer exercises discretion — freedom to choose

**moot** *v.*

“The Supreme Court mooted treating English as an indigenous language, questioning its label as foreign.”

**Meaning:** to raise a question or point for discussion

**Syn:** propose · **Ant:** settle

**HOOK:** a moot court raises debatable points to argue

**salutary** *adj.*

“The Court viewed phased relief for Class 6 students as a salutary measure that would lighten their academic load.”

**Meaning:** producing a beneficial or wholesome effect

**Syn:** beneficial · **Ant:** harmful

**HOOK:** from salus (health) → health-giving, wholesome

**mitigate** *v.*

“Making the Class 10 examination an internal assessment was meant to mitigate the pressure of a sudden language switch.”

**Meaning:** to make something less severe, serious or painful

**Syn:** alleviate · **Ant:** aggravate

**HOOK:** mitis (mild) → to make milder

**equitable** *adj.*

“The Odisha guidelines aim at an equitable share of ancestral property for persons with disabilities, who have long been excluded.”

**Meaning:** fair and impartial; treating everyone justly

**Syn:** fair · **Ant:** inequitable

**HOOK:** equity = fairness; equitable = governed by fairness

**redress** *n.*

“A visually impaired man fought thirty-five years for redress of his denied inheritance before the new guidelines were framed.”

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

**Syn:** remedy · **Ant:** injury

**HOOK:** re- (again) + dress (set straight) → to set a wrong straight

## CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON’T MIX THESE UP

**indigenous** *vs* **indigent**

**indigenous:** native to a particular place

**indigent:** very poor; needy

**TIP:** IndigeNOUS = of the Native place; indigENT = in want (poor).

**eminent** *vs* **imminent**

**eminent:** famous and respected; distinguished

**imminent:** about to happen very soon

**TIP:** Eminent = Esteemed; Imminent = Impending (any moment now).

**discreet** *vs* **discrete**

**discreet:** careful and tactful; not drawing attention

**discrete:** separate and distinct

**TIP:** Discreet = Tactful; discretE = sEparatE (the e’s stand apart).

**statute** *vs* **statue**

**statute:** a written law passed by a legislature

**statue:** a carved or cast figure of a person or animal

**TIP:** A statuTE is a law you read; a statuE is a figure you see in a park.

**principal** *vs* **principle**

**principal:** chief or most important; the head of a school

**principle:** a fundamental rule or belief

**TIP:** The principAL is your PAL (and the main one); a principLE is a ruLE.



## IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

### Idioms in context

- **the thin end of the wedge** — a small change or demand that is likely to lead to far greater, more serious ones  
“Critics feared that evicting one heritage library was the thin end of the wedge for the whole quarter.”
- **to pass muster** — to be accepted as adequate or satisfactory on inspection  
“The reintroduction plan barely passed muster with ecologists, who called it bureaucratic rather than scientific.”
- **to hold water** — to be sound, logical and able to withstand scrutiny  
“The claim that a visa guarantees entry simply did not hold water before the High Court.”
- **to cut the Gordian knot** — to solve a difficult problem with one decisive action  
“Rather than litigate for years, the parties cut the Gordian knot with a single settlement.”

### One-word substitution

- a foreign national who is not a citizen of the country where they are present → **alien**
- the branch of science that deals with the study of animals → **zoology**
- a system of government in which officials administer by fixed rules and routine → **bureaucracy**
- a decision against which no appeal is possible → **final / unappealable**
- one who presides over a court → **judge**

## WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **cognisance** — the taking of notice of a matter, especially a court's act of taking it up for consideration  
“By taking suo motu cognisance of the library's eviction, the Supreme Court acted without waiting for a formal petition.” — *The Hindu*, 5 Oct 2026 (Central Secretariat Library)
- **inherent** — existing as a permanent, essential or inseparable attribute of something  
“The Delhi High Court held that a valid visa confers no inherent right on a foreigner to enter India.” — *The Hindu*, 5 Oct 2026 (Delhi HC visa ruling)
- **indigenous** — originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native  
“The Court mooted treating English as indigenous, challenging its long-standing label as a foreign language.” — *The Hindu*, 5 Oct 2026 (CBSE three-language policy)
- **cushioned** — lessened or softened the unpleasant effect of something  
“A weaker rupee cushioned the domestic slide in gold even as Comex gold fell 6.8% in September.” — *The Hindu Moneywise*, 5 Oct 2026 (gold and silver returns)

## LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **suo motu** — on its own motion; a court taking up a matter without a formal petition
- **prima facie** — on the first appearance; sufficient to establish a fact unless rebutted
- **ultra vires** — beyond the legal power or authority of a person or body
- **ratio decidendi** — the legal reasoning that is the binding basis of a court's decision
- **obiter dicta** — remarks made by a judge in passing that are not binding as precedent
- **res judicata** — a matter already finally decided by a competent court and not open to relitigation
- **locus standi** — the right or capacity to bring an action before a court
- **mens rea** — the guilty mind; the mental element or criminal intent behind an act
- **actus reus** — the guilty act; the physical element of a criminal offence
- **audi alteram partem** — hear the other side; no one should be condemned unheard
- **stare decisis** — to stand by decided cases; the doctrine of binding precedent
- **ex post facto** — a law applied to acts committed before it was passed; retrospective in effect
- **de facto** — in fact or in practice, whether or not by legal right

## PRACTICE DRILL

1. 'Perspicacious' most nearly means:  
A) cheerfully hopeful · B) involving a heavy burden · C) keenly perceptive and discerning · D) fair and impartial
2. Which breakdown of 'circumspect' is correct?  
A) retro (back) + spect (look) = looking back on the past · B) per (through) + spect (look) = seeing through a deception · C) con (fully) + spic (look) = standing out plainly · D) circum (around) + spect (look) = looking all around; cautious
3. An argument that looks sound but is actually false and misleading is best called:  
A) specious · B) salutary · C) equitable · D) onerous
4. The Latin phrase 'suo motu' means:  
A) on the first appearance · B) on its own motion, without a petition · C) beyond one's legal authority · D) a matter already decided
5. Choose the best fit: A weaker rupee \_\_\_\_\_ the fall in domestic gold prices in September.  
A) augmented · B) mooted · C) cushioned · D) redressed
6. The word meaning 'native to a particular place' is:  
A) indigent · B) indigenous · C) ingenuous · D) imminent
7. A measure that produces a beneficial, wholesome effect is described as:  
A) perfunctory · B) precarious · C) ostensible · D) salutary
8. To 'mitigate' a student's academic load is to:  
A) make it less severe · B) increase it steadily · C) ignore it entirely · D) transfer it to another

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

## ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

The Latin verb **specere**, 'to look', opens a whole vocabulary of seeing. To **inspect** is to look into a thing, while a **prospect** is a looking forward and a **retrospective** a looking back. The careful mind is **circumspect**, looking all around before it acts, and the sharp one is **perspicacious**, seeing straight through a deception. Yet appearances deceive: a **specious** claim merely looks true, which is why a good advocate stays **circumspect** and tests whether an argument is truly **justifiable** or only **ostensible**.

