

ROOT OF THE DAY

voc / vok — *Latin vocare (past participle vocatus) — to call; vox, vocis — voice · “call, voice”*

advocate — ad- (to) + voc (call) + -ate = one called to another's side; a person who pleads a case in court

revoke — re- (back) + vok (call) = to call back; to cancel a licence, order or resolution

irrevocable — ir- (not) + re- (back) + voc (call) + -able = that cannot be called back; final and unalterable

vociferous — voc (voice) + fer (carry) + -ous = carrying a loud voice; vehement and insistent in protest

evoke — e- (out) + vok (call) = to call out; to bring a feeling or memory to mind

provoke — pro- (forth) + vok (call) = to call forth a reaction, usually anger; to incite

POWER WORDS

sacrosanct *adj.*

“Legislators sometimes treat their privileges as sacrosanct, as though no court could ever examine them.”

Meaning: regarded as too important or valuable to be interfered with

Syn: inviolate · **Ant:** expendable

HOOK: sacer (holy) + sanctus (made holy) → doubly holy, so untouchable

vacillate *v.*

“Governments that vacillate on adaptation finance leave island nations to face rising seas alone.”

Meaning: to waver between different opinions or actions; to be indecisive

Syn: waver · **Ant:** resolve

HOOK: vacillare (to sway) → swaying back and forth

venal *adj.*

“A procurement system that rewards the venal official over the honest supplier corrupts the whole defence chain.”

Meaning: open to bribery; willing to act dishonestly for money

Syn: corruptible · **Ant:** incorruptible

HOOK: venum (sale) → a person who is for sale

punitive *adj.*

“Critics argued that the Assembly's resolution was punitive rather than protective of its proceedings.”

Meaning: inflicting or intended as punishment

Syn: penal · **Ant:** lenient

HOOK: punire (to punish) → aimed at punishing

fiat *n.*

“A national transport plan cannot be achieved by executive fiat; it needs every ministry to share its data.”

Meaning: a formal authorisation or decree; an arbitrary order

Syn: decree · **Ant:** consensus

HOOK: fiat = Latin 'let it be done'

equanimity *n.*

“Health workers must screen travellers with equanimity, neither panicking nor letting a single case slip past.”

Meaning: mental calmness and composure, especially in a difficult situation

Syn: composure · **Ant:** agitation

HOOK: aequus (even) + animus (mind) → an even mind

inviolable *adj.*

“A free press is not inviolable, but any restriction on it must answer to Article 19(2).”

Meaning: never to be broken, infringed or dishonoured

Syn: unassailable · **Ant:** vulnerable

HOOK: in- (not) + violare (to harm) → cannot be harmed

belie *v.*

“The calm wording of the ministry's statement belied the danger the injured seafarers had faced.”

Meaning: to fail to give a true impression of; to contradict or show to be false

Syn: disguise · **Ant:** reveal

HOOK: be- + lie → to tell a lie about what lies beneath

acrimony *n.*

“The privilege dispute began in acrimony between a State Assembly and a newspaper, then sat unheard for twenty-three years.”

Meaning: bitterness or ill feeling, especially in speech or debate

Syn: rancour · **Ant:** goodwill

HOOK: acer (sharp, sour) → a sour, sharp-tongued quarrel

laconic *adj.*

“The Bench's laconic order closed the reference in a few lines and left every question of law open.”

Meaning: using very few words; concise to the point of seeming curt

Syn: terse · **Ant:** verbose

HOOK: Laconia (Sparta) → Spartans famously spoke in few words

precipitate *adj.*

“A precipitate stay would have halted the High Court's hearing before any evidence was examined.”

Meaning: done suddenly and without careful consideration; rash

Syn: hasty · **Ant:** deliberate

HOOK: praeceps (headlong) → rushing in head first

recrimination *n.*

“Climate talks often stall in mutual recrimination over who caused the warming and who should pay for it.”

Meaning: an accusation made in response to an accusation from someone else

Syn: counter-accusation · **Ant:** reconciliation

HOOK: re- (back) + criminare (accuse) → accusing back

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

venal *vs* **venial**

venal: open to bribery; corrupt

venial: (of a fault) slight and pardonable

TIP: VENAL is for sale (venum); VENIAL can be forgiven — the extra I stands for Indulgence.

elicit *vs* **illicit**

elicit: to draw out a response or information

illicit: forbidden by law or custom

TIP: E-licit = Extract; IL-licit = ILlegal.

principal *vs* **principle**

principal: main or most important; the head of an institution

principle: a fundamental truth or rule

TIP: The princiPAL is your PAL at the top; a princiPLE is a ruLE.

censure *vs* **ensor**

censure: to express severe formal disapproval

ensor: to examine and suppress objectionable material

TIP: A House may cenSURE a member (a SURE rebuke); a cenSOR cuts the SORce text.

imminent *vs* **eminent**

imminent: about to happen

eminent: famous and respected within a field

TIP: IMMinent = IMMEDIATE; Eminent = Esteemed.

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION



Idioms in context

- **to hang in the balance** — to be in an uncertain state, with the outcome still undecided
“With the reference closed as infructuous, the clash between privilege and press freedom still hangs in the balance.”
- **a sword of Damocles** — a constant threat of danger hanging over someone
“Rising seas hang like a sword of Damocles over low-lying atolls such as Tuvalu.”
- **to bite the bullet** — to face a painful or difficult situation with courage
“Ministries will have to bite the bullet and give up planning in separate silos.”
- **to turn a blind eye** — to pretend not to notice something wrong
“A court cannot turn a blind eye to an allegation that tribal consent was improperly recorded.”

One-word substitution

- the act of giving false evidence while under oath → **perjury**
- the killing of one's own brother → **fratricide**
- the period between infection and the appearance of the first symptoms → **incubation period**
- a speech made without any preparation → **extempore**
- a person whose profession is working at sea → **seafarer (mariner)**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **infructuous** — (of a case) no longer serving any purpose because the grievance has ceased to exist; moot
“A case becomes infructuous — the Indian term for moot — when the grievance no longer exists.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (SC legislative privilege reference), 7 Oct 2026
- **maintainability** — whether a case is legally fit to be heard by a court at all, as distinct from its merits
“Procedure questions: Know the difference between refusing to stay proceedings and deciding a case on merits; between maintainability (can the court hear it?) and the merits (who is right?); and between Article 226 (High Court) and Article 32 (Supreme Court) writ jurisdiction.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (Great Nicobar PIL), 7 Oct 2026
- **commensurate** — corresponding in size, degree or extent; proportionate
“Yadav also argued that there can be no “one-size-fits-all” pathway to climate action, stressing that local studies and assessments are needed to identify solutions, and that “these solutions, in turn, indicate the mitigation and adaptation measures required and the commensurate resources required for the same.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (pre-COP31 Fiji), 7 Oct 2026
- **elusive** — difficult to find, catch or detect
“Neutrinos are among the most elusive particles in nature.” — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (Nobel Prize 2026), 7 Oct 2026

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **locus standi** — the right or capacity to bring an action or appear before a court
- **res judicata** — a matter already finally decided by a competent court, which cannot be re-litigated
- **ultra vires** — beyond the legal power or authority of the body acting
- **functus officio** — having performed its office; an authority whose power over a matter is exhausted
- **obiter dictum** — a remark by a judge made in passing, not essential to the decision and not binding
- **ratio decidendi** — the legal reasoning on which a judgment rests; the binding part of a precedent
- **audi alteram partem** — hear the other side; no one should be condemned unheard
- **nemo iudex in causa sua** — no one should be a judge in their own cause
- **suo motu** — on its own motion, without a formal application by a party
- **amicus curiae** — a friend of the court; a person who assists the court on a point of law
- **stare decisis** — to stand by decided cases; the doctrine of binding precedent
- **actus reus** — the guilty act; the physical element of a crime
- **mens rea** — the guilty mind; the mental element of a crime

RECALL CHECK — WORDS FROM EARLIER

assiduous (learnt 7 days ago) — meaning: _____

PRACTICE DRILL

1. 'Irrevocable' most nearly means:
A) easily cancelled · B) loudly protested · C) incapable of being reversed · D) called into question
2. A case in which the grievance no longer exists, so that a court's decision would serve no purpose, is said to be:
A) infructuous · B) maintainable · C) sub judice · D) res judicata
3. The maxim 'nemo iudex in causa sua' means:
A) hear the other side · B) let the decision stand · C) the guilty mind · D) no one should be a judge in their own cause
4. Choose the best fit: The minister asked for resources _____ with the scale of the adaptation challenge.
A) elusive · B) commensurate · C) laconic · D) venial
5. 'Vacillate' most nearly means:
A) to act decisively · B) to waver between choices · C) to cancel an order · D) to accuse in return
6. Choose the best fit: The official's _____ habits made every contract he signed suspect.
A) venial · B) laconic · C) sacrosanct · D) venal
7. The act of giving false evidence while under oath is:
A) perjury · B) fratricide · C) censure · D) recrimination
8. 'Vociferous' most nearly means:
A) quiet and restrained · B) rash and hasty · C) loud and insistent · D) calm and composed

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

The Latin **“vocare”**, ‘to call’, gives the courtroom much of its voice. An **“advocate”** is called to a client's side, and a **“vociferous”** newspaper may **“provoke”** a legislature that treats its privileges as **“sacrosanct”**. When the Assembly chose to **“revoke”** its resolution, the case turned **“infructuous”** and the Bench's **“laconic”** order made nothing **“irrevocable”** — the clash between press and privilege still hangs in the balance.

