

ROOT OF THE DAY

tract / trah — Latin *trahere* (past participle *tractus*) — to draw, to drag, to pull · “draw, pull”

detract — de- (away) + tract (draw) = to draw away from; to reduce the worth or credit of something

protract — pro- (forward) + tract (draw) = to draw out forward; to prolong a dispute or process beyond its natural length

retract — re- (back) + tract (draw) = to draw back; to withdraw a statement, offer or accusation

extract — ex- (out) + tract (draw) = to draw out; to obtain something, often with effort or against resistance

distract — dis- (apart) + tract (draw) = to draw apart; to pull attention away from what matters

contract — con- (together) + tract (drawn) = drawn together; an agreement that binds parties, or to shrink in size

POWER WORDS

rapprochement *n.*

“A timely renewal of the Ganga Waters Treaty would mark a fresh *rapprochement* between New Delhi and Dhaka on a long-running river dispute.”

Meaning: the re-establishment of friendly relations, especially between states

Syn: reconciliation · **Ant:** estrangement

HOOK: French *rapprocher* (to bring near again) → bringing two estranged sides close once more

beleaguered *adj.*

“For a beleaguered economy with thin foreign-exchange reserves, a \$1.2 billion tranche buys time but not lasting stability.”

Meaning: beset by difficulties; under persistent pressure or attack

Syn: embattled · **Ant:** secure

HOOK: Dutch *belegeren* (to besiege) → a city surrounded by an army that will not leave

nebulous *adj.*

“Rival operators called the satellite-spectrum rules *nebulous*, but the department insisted that every applicant faced the same clear conditions.”

Meaning: vague, hazy or ill-defined

Syn: indistinct · **Ant:** precise

HOOK: nebula (mist, cloud) → an idea with no sharper outline than a cloud

bolster *v.*

“Shallow-water anti-submarine craft like INS Mangrol bolster coastal defence where larger warships cannot safely operate.”

Meaning: to support, strengthen or reinforce

Syn: reinforce · **Ant:** undermine

HOOK: a bolster is a long pillow → propping something up so it does not sag

inalienable *adj.*

“The right to assemble peaceably is not inalienable in the absolute sense, since Article 19(3) permits reasonable restrictions in the interests of public order.”

Meaning: that cannot be taken away from or given away by its holder

Syn: inviolate · **Ant:** forfeitable

HOOK: in- (not) + alienare (to transfer to another) → a right that cannot be handed over

propitious *adj.*

“With the treaty expiring in December 2026, officials on both sides see the coming months as a propitious time to settle a new formula.”

Meaning: giving or indicating a good chance of success; favourable

Syn: auspicious · **Ant:** inauspicious

HOOK: propitius (favourable, of the gods) → the omens are on your side

parsimonious *adj.*

“The IMF releases its money in tranches, so a parsimonious lender can withhold the next instalment if the agreed reforms stall.”

Meaning: extremely unwilling to spend money or resources; stingy

Syn: frugal · **Ant:** lavish

HOOK: parsimonia (thrift) → spending so sparingly that it borders on miserliness

brinkmanship *n.*

“New Delhi chose a measured statement over brinkmanship, refusing to answer the PERM suspension with threats of its own.”

Meaning: the practice of pushing a dangerous situation to the edge of conflict to gain an advantage

Syn: sabre-rattling · **Ant:** conciliation

HOOK: brink (edge of a cliff) + -manship → the art of walking right up to the edge

disparate *adj.*

“Reservation in local bodies cannot rest on disparate guesses; the triple test demands a dedicated commission and hard data.”

Meaning: essentially different in kind; not able to be compared

Syn: dissimilar · **Ant:** uniform

HOOK: dis- (apart) + parare (to prepare) → things prepared separately that never match

insidious *adj.*

“Untreated mental illness is insidious, worsening quietly over months before family or teachers notice that anything is wrong.”

Meaning: proceeding gradually and subtly, but with harmful effects

Syn: stealthy · **Ant:** overt

HOOK: insidiae (an ambush) → harm that lies in wait rather than charging openly

obstreperous *adj.*

“The police may regulate an obstreperous crowd that blocks a metro station, but they may not ban every protest in advance.”

Meaning: noisy, unruly and difficult to control

Syn: boisterous · **Ant:** docile

HOOK: ob (against) + strepere (to make a noise) → shouting against all order

pragmatic *adj.*

“The PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana takes a pragmatic route, merging existing schemes in 100 lagging districts instead of launching a new bureaucracy.”

Meaning: dealing with things sensibly and realistically, based on practical rather than theoretical considerations

Syn: practical · **Ant:** idealistic

HOOK: Greek *pragma* (deed, thing done) → judged by what actually works

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

council *vs* **counsel**

council: an advisory or governing body of people

counsel: advice; or a lawyer who argues a case in court

TIP: A COUNCIL is a group that sits; COUNSEL is the advice (or the advocate) that speaks.

biannual *vs* **biennial**

biannual: occurring twice a year

biennial: occurring once every two years

TIP: BiANNUal = twice in ANNUm; BiENNial lasts two yEars, like a biennale.

amoral *vs* **immoral**

amoral: lacking any moral sense; unconcerned with right and wrong

immoral: knowingly violating accepted moral principles

TIP: A- means without (no morals at all); IM- means against (breaking known morals).

averse *vs* **adverse**

averse: having a strong dislike of or opposition to something (of persons)

adverse: harmful or unfavourable (of conditions or effects)

TIP: People are AVERSE to risk; weather and verdicts are ADVERSE.

canvas *vs* **canvass**

canvas: a strong cloth used for tents or painting

canvass: to seek votes or opinions from people

TIP: The extra S in canvaSS is for Soliciting Support.

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- a level playing field — a situation in which everyone has the same rules and the same chance of success

One-word substitution

- a person who collects and studies coins and medals → **numismatist**
- a government or society controlled by the wealthy → **plutocracy**



"Terrestrial telecom companies argued that administratively allotted satellite spectrum denied them a level playing field."

- **to tighten the purse strings** — to spend less money; to impose financial restraint
"Every IMF review asks Pakistan to tighten the purse strings, trimming subsidies before the next tranche is released."
- **to toe the line** — to accept and obey the rules or the authority of a group
"Companies that wish to sell products made from Indian biological resources must toe the line on benefit-sharing under the Biological Diversity Act."
- **water under the bridge** — past events that are no longer worth worrying about
"Negotiators hope that the old quarrels over Farakka are water under the bridge as talks on the treaty's renewal begin."

- a place where weapons and military equipment are stored → **arsenal**
- a person who flatters the powerful in order to gain favour → **sycophant**
- the killing of one's own mother → **matricide**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **erstwhile** — former; that was previously but is no longer
"The release notes that the new ship carries forward the legacy of the erstwhile INS Mangrol (M85), a minesweeper that served the Indian Navy until 7 April 2004." — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (INS Mangrol commissioning), 10 Oct 2026
- **irritant** — a persistent source of annoyance or friction, especially between states
"Before 1996, sharing at Farakka was governed by short-term arrangements — a 1975 interim accord, the 1977 agreement with its guarantee clause, and later memoranda — and the issue was a recurring irritant." — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (Ganga Waters Treaty renewal), 10 Oct 2026
- **contemporaneous** — existing or carried out at the same time; current rather than outdated
"What the courts are asking, case after case, is for the State to walk through that door with quantifiable, contemporaneous data gathered through a lawful process — a dedicated commission for local bodies, and proof of inadequate representation for jobs under Article 16(4)." — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (50% reservation ceiling), 10 Oct 2026
- **untoward** — unexpected and unfortunate or harmful
"Justice Mohana asked who would be responsible if anything untoward happened." — CLAT Gurukul daily brief (Supreme Court on the right to protest), 10 Oct 2026

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **caveat emptor** — let the buyer beware; the buyer bears the risk of checking the quality of goods
- **mutatis mutandis** — with the necessary changes having been made; applied with suitable alterations
- **pari passu** — on an equal footing; ranking equally, as creditors sharing without preference
- **bona vacantia** — ownerless goods; property with no owner, which passes to the State
- **ex officio** — by virtue of one's office or position
- **ad litem** — for the purposes of the suit; as a guardian appointed to represent a minor in litigation
- **nunc pro tunc** — now for then; an order given retrospective effect from an earlier date
- **per se** — by itself; in itself, without reference to anything else
- **pro rata** — in proportion; divided according to each party's share
- **quo warranto** — 'by what authority'; a writ questioning a person's right to hold a public office
- **certiorari** — 'to be certified'; a writ by which a higher court quashes the order of a lower court or tribunal
- **sui generis** — of its own kind; unique and not fitting any existing category
- **inter se** — among or between themselves

RECALL CHECK — WORDS FROM EARLIER

assiduous (learnt 7 days ago) — meaning: _____

obviate (learnt 21 days ago) — meaning: _____

PRACTICE DRILL

1. 'Protract' most nearly means:
A) to withdraw a statement already made · B) to draw attention away from a task · C) to prolong beyond the usual length · D) to obtain something with effort
2. Choose the best fit: The new ship carries forward the legacy of the _____ INS Mangrol, a minesweeper that served until 2004.
A) erstwhile · B) untoward · C) propitious · D) obstreperous
3. 'Parsimonious' most nearly means:
A) vague and ill-defined · B) different in kind · C) harmful in a gradual way · D) extremely unwilling to spend
4. Most investors are _____ to risk when market conditions are _____.
A) adverse ... adverse · B) averse ... adverse · C) adverse ... adverse · D) averse ... averse
5. Creditors who rank 'pari passu' are those who:
A) must check goods before buying them · B) share on an equal footing without preference · C) hold office by virtue of their position · D) take property that has no owner
6. A person who collects and studies coins and medals is a/an:
A) sycophant · B) philatelist · C) plutocrat · D) numismatist
7. 'Nebulous' most nearly means:
A) vague or hazy · B) noisy and unruly · C) favourable and promising · D) realistic and practical
8. Choose the best fit: The triple test requires _____ data on backwardness, gathered by a dedicated commission, not figures from decades ago.
A) disparate · B) parsimonious · C) contemporaneous · D) inalienable

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

The Latin **trahere**, 'to draw', runs through the day's news: India refused to **protract** a quarrel with Washington through **brinkmanship**, choosing a **calm** statement that did not **retract** its concerns. Further east, a renewed Ganga treaty could turn a recurring **irritant** into a real **rapprochement** with Dh Pakistan, still a **beleaguered** borrower, must satisfy a **parsimonious** IMF before each tranche, while at home the courts ask States for **contemporane** data, not **nebulous** claims, before they stretch reservation past fifty per cent.

