ROOT OF THE DAY

leg/lex — *Latin lex (genitive legis) — law · "law"*

legal — leg (law) + -al (adj. suffix) = of or pertaining to law
legislate — leg (law) + -islate (to carry or enact) = to enact a law
legitimate — leg (law) + -itimate = lawful, conforming to the law
lexicon — lex (law/word) + -icon = the vocabulary of a language or domain (law's 'word-list')
illegitimate — il- (not) + legitimate = not sanctioned by law or custom
privilege — privi- (private) + leg (law) = a law for one individual; a special right

POWER WORDS

adjudicate *v.*

"The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission was constituted to adjudicate grievances that would otherwise clog the civil courts."

Meaning: to make a formal legal judgment or decision; to act as judge in a dispute
Syn: arbitrate, determine, pronounce · **Ant:** defer, abstain
HOOK: AD + JUDge + icate — a judge (judex) pronouncing on a matter

abrogation *n.*

"The abrogation of Article 370 fundamentally altered the constitutional relationship between the Centre and the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir."

Meaning: the formal repeal or annulment of a law, right, or agreement
Syn: annulment, rescission, revocation · **Ant:** enactment, ratification, confirmation
HOOK: AB (away) + ROGATION (asking/law) — asking for the law to go away

efficacy *n.*

"The Parliamentary Standing Committee questioned the efficacy of the new drug pricing policy in making essential medicines affordable."

Meaning: the ability to produce a desired or intended result; effectiveness
Syn: effectiveness, potency, utility · **Ant:** inefficacy, futility, impotence
HOOK: EFFI (effect) + CACY — capacity to have effect

contravene *v.*

"The state regulation contravened Section 18 of the Essential Commodities Act and was accordingly struck down by the High Court."

Meaning: to act in conflict with; to violate or go against a law, rule, or principle
Syn: violate, infringe, transgress · **Ant:** comply, conform, observe
HOOK: CONTRA (against) + VENE (come) — come against a law

circumspect *adj.*

"A minister exercising delegated legislative power must be circumspect, operating strictly within the boundaries set by the parent statute."

Meaning: wary and unwilling to take risks; considering all circumstances before acting
Syn: cautious, prudent, guarded · **Ant:** reckless, heedless, imprudent
HOOK: CIRCUM (around) + SPECT (look) — look around in all directions before acting

promulgate *v.*

"The President promulgated the ordinance while Parliament was not in session, invoking Article 123 of the Constitution."

Meaning: to make a decree, law, or rule publicly known; to put into effect by formal proclamation
Syn: proclaim, enact, gazette · **Ant:** repeal, suppress, withhold
HOOK: PRO (forth) + MULGATE — push it out into the public

derogation *n.*

"A derogation from the principle of natural justice, even if statutorily permitted, must be construed strictly."

Meaning: the partial repeal or limiting of a law; a departure from a standard or right
Syn: curtailment, diminution, restriction · **Ant:** augmentation, reinforcement
HOOK: DE (down/away) + ROGATION — partially whittling away a law (contrast abrogation = total repeal)

indemnity *n.*

"The consumer forum granted indemnity to the complainant, directing the insurance company to compensate all losses arising from the defective product."

Meaning: security or protection against loss, damage, or legal liability; compensation for harm suffered
Syn: compensation, reparation, restitution · **Ant:** liability, exposure
HOOK: IN + DAMNUM (loss) — freedom from (in-) loss (damnum)

redress *n./v.*

"Citizens seeking redress for administrative lapses may approach the ombudsman before filing a writ petition."

Meaning: remedy or compensation for a wrong or grievance; to set right what is unjust
Syn: remedy, reparation, rectification · **Ant:** wrong, injustice, aggravation
HOOK: RE (again) + DRESS (set straight) — straighten out the wrong again

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

mitigate *vs* militate

mitigate: to lessen the severity, seriousness, or painfulness of something
militate: to be a powerful factor in preventing something (always followed by 'against')
TIP: mitiGATE = open the gate to relief; militATE = military-style opposition — it militates AGAINST

eminent *vs* imminent

eminent: famous and respected, especially in a profession; of great distinction
imminent: about to happen very soon; impending
TIP:

prescribe *vs* proscribe

prescribe: to recommend or mandate a course of action; to lay down as a rule
proscribe: to formally forbid something; to ban
TIP: preSCRIBE = write a prescription (positive); proSCRIBE = PRO-hibit (negative ban)

negligence *vs* negligibility

negligence: failure to take proper care; a legal tort (breach of duty of care causing harm)
negligibility: the quality of being so small or unimportant as to be safely ignored
TIP: negligENCE is the legal wrong; negligiBILITY is about an amount being trivially small

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- **the letter of the law** — the strict, literal interpretation of a legal text, without regard for its spirit or underlying intent
  "The administrator followed the letter of the law to deny the claim, even though the policy's evident purpose was to provide relief in exactly such circumstances."
- **a double-edged sword** — something that has both a favourable and an unfavourable side; a measure that can work both for and against

One-word substitution

- a rule that has the force of law but is issued by the executive without legislative approval → **ordinance**
- the body of law enacted by a legislature → **statute**
- one who files a formal complaint before a court or tribunal → **cor**
- one who pleads cases in a court of law → **advocate**
- one who settles disputes outside of court → **arbitrator**

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"Mandatory minimum sentencing proved a double-edged sword: it curbed judicial discretion in favour of consistency but also produced disproportionate outcomes in borderline cases."

- **beyond reproach** — so morally correct that no criticism is possible
  "The conduct of public officials exercising delegated powers must be beyond reproach, lest it invite judicial scrutiny under Article 14."
- **the letter of the law** — the strict literal interpretation of a legal rule, without regard to its spirit or intent
  "The court applied the letter of the law, refusing to read any implied right into the statute's text."

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **adjudicated** — formally decided by a court or tribunal
  "The matter was adjudicated by a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, which held that the state's reservation policy exceeded constitutionally permissible limits." — *The Hindu, 24 Oct 2026*
- **promulgated** — officially brought into force by proclamation
  "The ordinance promulgated by the Governor was challenged in the High Court on the ground that the state legislature was not in recess at the time." — *Indian Express, 23 Oct 2026*
- **efficacious** — capable of producing the desired therapeutic or policy effect
  "The health ministry's panel concluded that the revised drug protocol was more efficacious than the earlier standard of care, recommending its immediate adoption under the National Essential Medicines List." — *Mint, 22 Oct 2026*
- **egregious** — outstandingly bad; shockingly flagrant
  "The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission termed the e-commerce platform's refusal to honour its own warranty scheme 'egregious' and awarded exemplary costs of ₹5 lakh." — *Live Law, 21 Oct 2026*

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **prima facie** — at first sight; accepted as correct until disproved — a prima facie case is one sufficient to go to trial
- **res judicata** — a matter already judged — a final court decision bars relitigation of the same matter between the same parties
- **ultra vires** — beyond the powers — an act performed outside the legal authority conferred on an authority is ultra vires and void
- **audi alteram partem** — hear the other side — a fundamental principle of natural justice requiring that no person be condemned unheard
- **caveat emptor** — let the buyer beware — the buyer assumes the risk of quality; now significantly modified by consumer protection statutes
- **ex parte** — on behalf of one party only — an ex parte order is passed without hearing the other side (e.g., in urgent injunctions)
- **amicus curiae** — friend of the court — a person not party to a case who assists the court by offering information or expertise
- **locus standi** — the right to stand before a court — the capacity of a party to bring an action or challenge a decision
- **sub judice** — under judicial consideration — a matter under trial or pending before a court; cannot be publicly commented upon prejudicially
- **stare decisis** — to stand by decisions — the doctrine of precedent; courts must follow prior rulings on the same legal question

PRACTICE DRILL

1. The state government issued an executive order that directly contradicted a provision of the central consumer protection legislation. Which word best describes the state order's relationship to the central Act?

A) A. Adjudicating the central Act · B) B. Contravening the central Act · C) C. Promulgating the central Act · D) D. Derogating from rectitude

2. A consumer forum awarded ₹10 lakh over and above the actual loss suffered, specifically to deter similar corporate misconduct in the future. Such an award is best described as:

A) A. Ex parte compensation · B) B. Ultra vires redress · C) C. Punitive damages · D) D. Pro bono indemnity

3. Which of the following sentences uses 'mitigate' CORRECTLY?

A) A. The new evidence militates against the conviction. · B) B. His remorse mitigated the sentence imposed by the court. · C) C. Long delays militate the hardship faced by litigants. · D) D. The ordinance mitigated against the proposed amendment.

4. The principle that a final decision by a competent court prevents the same parties from re-agitating the same issue in another proceeding is called:

A) A. Audi alteram partem · B) B. Stare decisis · C) C. Res judicata · D) D. Locus standi

5. A drug is described as 'efficacious' in a health policy document. The word most nearly means:

A) A. Approved by a regulatory authority · B) B. Capable of producing the intended therapeutic result · C) C. Affordable and accessible to the public · D) D. Free from significant side effects

6. An advocate who is not a party to the dispute but is invited by the court to assist on a complex constitutional point appears in the capacity of:

A) A. Complainant · B) B. Locus standi holder · C) C. Amicus curiae · D) D. Principal agent

7. The Governor of a state issued an ordinance while the legislature was in session. A lawyer argues the ordinance is 'ultra vires'. The lawyer means that the ordinance is:

A) A. Egregiously worded and needs to be promulgated afresh · B) B. Beyond the constitutional powers of the Governor · C) C. In derogation of a fundamental right but still valid · D) D. Subject to ratification by the President

8. Choose the sentence where 'proscribe' is used correctly:

A) A. The physician proscribed a three-day course of antibiotics. · B) B. The Constitution proscribes untouchability under Article 17. · C) C. The statute proscribes that all contracts be in writing. · D) D. The court proscribed immediate relief pending the hearing.

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

At the root of today's words lies the Latin lex — law — the same root that gives us legislate, legitimate, and privilege. When a government promulgates an ordinance, it enacts a lex outside Parliament; if that ordinance contravenes a statute it may be struck down as ultra vires — beyond the powers the Constitution confers. A citizen harmed by such overreach may seek **redress** *before a tribunal, which will* **adjudicate** *the matter applying the principle of audi alteram partem, ensuring neit is condemned unheard. Where the wrongdoing is egregious, the court may go further and award punitive damages — not merely to compensate, but to signal t rectitude in governance is not optional.*

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