ROOT OF THE DAY

mort / mori — *Latin mors, mortis (death), mori (to die) and mortuus (dead) · "death"*

mortal — Latin mortalis, from mors, mortis (death) = subject to death
immortal — Latin immortalis: in- (not) + mortalis (subject to death) = never dying
moribund — Latin moribundus, from mori (to die) = at the point of death
mortgage — Old French mort gage (dead pledge), a rendering of Medieval Latin mortuum vadium = a pledge that 'dies' when the debt is paid or the land is lost
amortise — Old French amortir (to deaden, extinguish), from Latin ad (to) + mors (death) = to kill off a debt by instalments
mortify — Late Latin mortificare: mors (death) + facere (to make) = to put to death; now, to humiliate
post-mortem — Latin post (after) + mortem (death) = after death; an examination of a body to find the cause of death
mortuary — Latin mortuarius (of the dead), from mortuus (dead) = a place where bodies are kept before burial or cremation

POWER WORDS

moribund *adj.*
"With no new members for twenty years, the once-powerful trade body is now moribund."
Meaning: at the point of death; (of an institution or practice) in terminal decline and lacking vitality
Syn: dying, declining, stagnant · **Ant:** flourishing, thriving, vigorous
HOOK: Latin mori (to die): a moribund body is already halfway to the mortuary

mortify *v.*
"The minister was mortified when the court read out his own earlier speech against the very ordinance he now defended."
Meaning: to cause someone to feel deeply ashamed or humiliated; (older use) to subdue the body by self-denial
Syn: humiliate, shame, embarrass · **Ant:** gratify, flatter, honour
HOOK: mortificare = to put to death; embarrassment so great you could die of it

amortise *v.*
"The airline will amortise the cost of the new fleet over fifteen years."
Meaning: to reduce or pay off a debt by regular instalments; to write off the cost of an asset gradually over a period
Syn: pay off, write down, liquidate · **Ant:** accumulate, accrue
HOOK: Old French amortir = to deaden: each instalment kills a little of the debt

escheat *n./v.*
"Because the landowner died without a will and without any legal heir, his estate passed to the State by escheat."
Meaning: the reversion of property to the State when its owner dies leaving no will and no legal heir; under Article 296 such property vests in the State or the Union
Syn: reversion, forfeiture to the State · **Ant:** inheritance, succession
HOOK: Old French escheoir (to fall to one's share), from Latin ex- + cadere (to fall): the estate falls to the State

probate *n.*
"The executor could not transfer the flat until the High Court granted probate of the will."
Meaning: the copy of a will certified under the seal of a competent court, with a grant of administration of the testator's estate (s 2(f), Indian Succession Act, 1925); the process of proving a will
Syn: proof of a will, validation · **Ant:** intestacy, invalidation
HOOK: Latin probatum (a thing proved), from probare (to prove): the will is proved before it is obeyed

codicil *n.*
"A codicil signed a month before her death added a gift of books to the village library."
Meaning: a document made in relation to a will that explains, alters or adds to its provisions and is treated as part of the will
Syn: supplement, addendum, rider · **Ant:** original will, revocation
HOOK: Latin codicillus, a little writing-tablet (diminutive of codex): a small book added to the big one

atrophy *n./v.*
"Rights that citizens never exercise tend to atrophy, however firmly they are written into the Constitution."
Meaning: to waste away through lack of use or nourishment; a gradual decline in effectiveness
Syn: wither, decay, deteriorate · **Ant:** strengthen, develop, flourish
HOOK: Greek a- (without) + trophe (nourishment): no food, no growth

decrepit *adj.*
"The district court still sits in a decrepit colonial building with a leaking roof."
Meaning: worn out or weakened by age, use or neglect
Syn: dilapidated, ramshackle, feeble · **Ant:** sturdy, robust, well-kept
HOOK: Latin decrepitus (very old), linked with crepare (to creak): so old that it creaks

lugubrious *adj.*
"The commentator's lugubrious tone made a routine rate hike sound like a national catastrophe."
Meaning: looking or sounding sad and dismal, often in an exaggerated way
Syn: mournful, doleful, gloomy · **Ant:** cheerful, jovial, buoyant
HOOK: Latin lugubris, from lugere (to mourn): mourning dress worn for a minor loss

elegiac *adj.*
"The retiring judge's farewell speech was elegiac, mourning a Bar that no longer read the old reports."
Meaning: expressing sorrow or nostalgic regret, especially for something lost or past
Syn: mournful, plaintive, wistful · **Ant:** celebratory, joyful, exultant
HOOK: Greek elegos, a song of lament: an elegy for the dead, an elegiac mood for the lost

CONFUSABLE PAIRS — DON'T MIX THESE UP

moribund *vs* **morbid**
moribund: dying; in terminal decline
morbid: having an unhealthy interest in death or disturbing subjects; (medicine) diseased
TIP: A moribund industry is dying; a morbid reader only enjoys reading about dying.

decease *vs* **disease**
decease: death (formal and legal)
disease: an illness or disorder of body or mind
TIP: The deceased person's estate is probated; a disease is treated in hospital. Decease ends life; disease harms it.

testament *vs* **testimony**
testament: a will (last will and testament); also something that serves as proof
testimony: a formal statement given by a witness, especially on oath in court
TIP: A testator leaves a testament; a witness gives testimony.

bequest *vs* **behest**
bequest: property or money left to someone by will
behest: a command or urgent request (usually 'at the behest of')
TIP: A bequest comes from a will; a behest comes from someone's will to command.

IDIOMS & ONE-WORD SUBSTITUTION

Idioms in context

- **on its last legs** — near the end of its life or usefulness; about to fail or collapse

One-word substitution

- a notice of a person's death in a newspaper, usually with a short a the life → **obituary**

NAME: _____ ROLL NO: _____ BATCH: _____

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"By the time the regulator stepped in, the cooperative bank was already on its last legs."

- **sound the death knell** — to signal or cause the end or failure of something
  "Critics warned that the new licensing rule would sound the death knell for small publishers."
- **flog a dead horse** — to waste effort on a matter that is already settled or cannot succeed
  "Arguing the review petition again after the curative petition failed was simply flogging a dead horse."
- **dead in the water** — unable to move forward or make progress; having no chance of success
  "Without the States' consent, the proposed river-linking scheme is dead in the water."

- the painless ending of the life of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful condition → **euthanasia**
- a speech or piece of writing that praises a person, especially one who has just died → **eulogy**
- a monument built in honour of a person or group whose remains are buried elsewhere → **cenotaph**
- a medical examination of a dead body to find the cause of death → **autopsy**

WORDS IN THE WILD — FROM TODAY'S NEWSPAPER

- **genuineness** — the quality of being real and authentic, not forged or false
  "It instead asked the government to explain how the process works: how a person declares themselves as belonging to an OBC or ST category, whether a caste certificate must be attached, who issues such a certificate, and how its genuineness is checked." — *CLAT Gurukul daily brief (Supreme Court on caste self-declaration in Census 2027), 13 Oct 2026*
- **mortality** — the number or rate of deaths in a population or from a particular cause
  "A home-centred approach links several Sendai targets at once: safer housing reduces mortality (target a) and the number affected (target b), cuts economic loss (target c), and makes warnings meaningful (target g)." — *CLAT Gurukul daily brief (International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction 2026 and the Sendai Framework), 13 Oct 2026*
- **translocated** — moved from one place to another; (of wild animals) captured and released in a new habitat
  "A boma is a fenced acclimatisation enclosure where translocated animals settle in, are monitored and adjust to local prey before a full release into the open landscape." — *CLAT Gurukul daily brief (Project Cheetah reaches Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve), 8 Oct 2026*
- **circumvention** — the act of getting round a rule or restriction by a clever or indirect method, without openly breaking it
  "No; circumvention through multiple transactions is a violation." — *CLAT Gurukul daily brief (RBI curbs on forex derivatives: rebooking ban and hedging limits), 12 Oct 2026*

LEGAL & LATIN TERMS EVERY ASPIRANT MUST KNOW

- **de cujus** — the deceased person whose estate or succession is in question (short for 'is de cujus successione agitur')
- **in articulo mortis** — at the point or moment of death
- **in extremis** — in extreme circumstances; especially, at the point of death
- **sine prole** — without issue (children); used in pedigrees and succession, often abbreviated s.p.
- **felo de se** — 'felon of himself': one who takes his own life; the old common-law treatment of suicide as a crime
- **rigor mortis** — the stiffening of the body after death, used by forensic experts to estimate the time of death
- **mortuum vadium** — 'dead pledge': a pledge of land whose income goes to the creditor without reducing the debt; the source of the word mortgage
- **vivum vadium** — 'living pledge': a pledge of land whose income is applied to pay off the debt itself
- **de bonis non** — (administration) 'of the goods not administered': a grant to complete the administration of an estate after the original executor or administrator dies or is removed
- **hereditas jacens** — 'a lying inheritance': in Roman law, an estate after the owner's death and before the heir has accepted it

RECALL CHECK — WORDS FROM EARLIER

convict (learnt 7 days ago) — meaning: _____

nefarious (learnt 21 days ago) — meaning: _____

exonerate (learnt 45 days ago) — meaning: _____

PRACTICE DRILL

1. With no new members for two decades and no elections held, the once-powerful association is now ____.
A) elegiac · B) lugubrious · C) macabre · D) moribund

2. When a person dies leaving no will and no legal heir, the property passes to the State by ____.
A) probate · B) codicil · C) escheat · D) amortisation

3. A later document that explains, alters or adds to the provisions of an existing will is a ____.
A) codicil · B) probate · C) caveat · D) legacy

4. Choose the word closest in meaning to MORTIFY.
A) pacify · B) humiliate · C) glorify · D) immortalise

5. The company will ____ the cost of the software over five years, writing off a part of it each year.
A) mortify · B) atrophy · C) amortise · D) escheat

6. Choose the word most nearly OPPOSITE in meaning to LUGUBRIOUS.
A) mournful · B) funereal · C) sombre · D) cheerful

7. Rights that citizens never exercise tend to ____, however firmly they are written into law.
A) amortise · B) atrophy · C) escheat · D) probate

8. Splitting one large hedge into several small contracts to stay under a limit is a clear case of ____.
A) circumvention · B) genuineness · C) translocation · D) mortality

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

ETYMOLOGY TRAIL

From Latin mors, death, came the mortal who dies and the immortal who does not; mori, to die, gave the **moribund**, *and mortuus, dead, the mortuary and the post-mortem. A 'dead pledge' became the mortgage, a debt killed by instalments is amortised, and shame that could kill us mortifies. When death comes,* **pr**
proves the will, a **codicil** *amends it, and with no heir the estate falls to the State by* **escheat**; *unused rights* **atrophy**, *old courts grow* **decrepit**, *and farewe*
elegiac *or merely* **lugubrious**. *In the news: disaster mortality, translocated cheetahs, a certificate's genuineness and the circumvention of a hedging limit.*

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