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— **ORIGIN** Old English *hwæs*, genitive of *hwā* 'who' and *hwæt* 'what'.

whosoever ► **relative pronoun & determiner** formal whoever's: [as determiner] the story will have been told you by your fathers, whosoever sons you are.

whoever ► **relative pronoun & determiner** rare belonging to or associated with whichever person; whoever's: [as pronoun] the choice, whoever it was, is interesting.

whoso ► **pronoun** archaic term for **WHOEVER**: *whoso took such things into account was a fool*.

— **ORIGIN** Middle English: shortening Old English *swā hwā swā* 'so who so'.

whosoever ► **pronoun** formal term for **WHOEVER**: a belief that whosoever steals will be blinded.

who's who ► **noun** a list or directory of facts about notable people.

wh-question ► **noun** a question in English introduced by a *wh*-word, that requires information in answer, rather than *yes* or *no*.

whump /wʌmp, wʊmp/ ► **noun** a dull or muffled thudding sound: the whump of a distant explosion.

► **verb** [no obj., with adverbial] make a whump: he pitched a snowball that whumped into the car.

■ [with obj.] strike (something) heavily with a whump: she began whumping him on his lower back.

— **ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: imitative.

whup /wʌp/ ► **verb** (whups, whupping, whupped) [with obj.] M. Amer. informal beat; thrash: they would whup him and send him home.

■ defeat convincingly: if you lined up our guys against the 49ers, they'd get whupped.

— **ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: variant of **WHIP**.

wh-word ► **noun** Grammar any of a class of English words used to introduce questions and relative clauses. The main *wh*-words are *why*, *who*, *which*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *how*.

why ► **interrogative adverb** for what reason or purpose: why did he do it?

■ [with negative] used to make or agree to a suggestion: why don't I give you a lift?

► **relative adverb** (with reference to a reason) on account of which; for which: the reason why flu jabs need repeating every year is that the virus changes.

■ the reason for which: each has faced similar hardships, and perhaps that is why they are friends.

► **exclamation** 1 expressing surprise or indignation: why, that's absurd!

2 used to add emphasis to a response: 'You think so?' 'Why, yes.'

► **noun** (pl. *whys*) a reason or explanation: the whys and wherefores of these procedures need to be explained to students.

— **PHRASES** **why so?** for what reason or purpose?

— **ORIGIN** Old English *hwī*, *hwī* 'by what cause', instrumental case of *hwæt* 'what', of Germanic origin.

Whyalla /waɪ'ala/ a steel-manufacturing town on the coast of South Australia, on the Spencer Gulf; pop. 21,614 (2001).

whydah /'wɪdə/ (also **whyda**) ► **noun** an African weaver bird, the male of which has a black back and a very long black tail used in display flight.

■ Genus *Vidua*, family *Piccolidae*: several species.

■ another term for **WIDOWBIRD**.

— **ORIGIN** late 18th cent. (originally *widow-bird*): alteration by association with *Whidah* (now *Ouidah*), a town in Benin.

Whymper /'wɪmpə/, Edward (1840–1911), English mountaineer. After seven attempts he finally succeeded in climbing the Matterhorn in 1865, but on the way down four of his fellow climbers fell to their deaths.

WI ► **abbreviation** for ■ West Indies. ■ Wisconsin (in official postal use). ■ Brit. Women's Institute.

wibble ► **verb** [no obj.] Brit. informal 1 wobble; quiver.

2 speak or write, especially at great length.

— **DERIVATIVES** **wibbly** adjective.

— **ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: independent usage of the first element of the reduplication *wibble-wobble*.

Wicca /'wɪkə/ ► **noun** [mass noun] the religious cult of modern witchcraft, especially an initiatory tradition founded in England in the mid 20th century and claiming its origins in pre-Christian pagan religions.

— **DERIVATIVES** **Wiccan** adjective & noun.

— **ORIGIN** representing Old English *wicca* 'witch'.

Wichita /'wɪtʃɪtə/ a city in southern Kansas, on the River Arkansas; pop. 344,284 (2000).

wick ► **noun** a strip of porous material up which liquid fuel is drawn by capillary action to the flame

in a candle, lamp, or lighter.

■ Medicine a gauze strip inserted in a wound to drain it.

► **verb** [with obj.] absorb or draw off (liquid) by capillary action: garments that wick moisture away from the skin [as adj. **wicking**] fabric with good wicking properties.

— **PHRASES** **dip one's wick** vulgar slang (of a man) have sexual intercourse. **get on someone's wick** Brit. informal annoy someone.

— **ORIGIN** Old English *wēce*, of West Germanic origin; related to Dutch *wiek* and German *Wische* 'wick yarn'.

wick ► **noun** 1 [in place names] a town, hamlet, or district: Hampton Wick | Warwick.

2 dialect a dairy farm.

— **ORIGIN** Old English *wic* 'dwelling place', probably based on Latin *vicus* 'street, village'.

wick ► **adjective** N. English quick, lively, or active: Martha's approaching her century and as wick as a flea.

— **ORIGIN** mid 18th cent.: variant of **WICK**.

wicked ► **adjective** (**wickedest**, **wickedest**) 1 evil or morally wrong: a wicked and unscrupulous politician.

■ intended to or capable of harming someone or something: [in combination] he pulled the long, wicked-looking dagger from his sheath. ■ informal extremely unpleasant: despite the sun, the wind outside was wicked.

2 playfully mischievous: a wicked sense of humour.

3 informal excellent; wonderful: Sophie makes wicked cakes.

— **PHRASES** **no rest (or peace) for the wicked** humorous the speaker's heavy workload or lack of tranquillity is due to their sinful life. [ORIGIN with biblical allusion to Isa. 48:22, 57:21.]

— **DERIVATIVES** **wickedly** adverb, **wickedness** noun.

— **ORIGIN** Middle English: probably from Old English *wicca* 'witch' + **ED**.

wicker ► **noun** [mass noun] pliable twigs, typically of willow, plaited or woven to make items such as furniture and baskets: [as modifier] a wicker chair.

— **ORIGIN** Middle English: of Scandinavian origin; compare with Swedish *vikar* 'willow'; related to *vika* 'to bend'.

wickerwork ► **noun** [mass noun] wicker.

■ furniture or other items made of wicker.

wicket ► **noun** 1 Cricket each of the sets of three stumps with two balls across the top at either end of the pitch, defended by a batsman.

■ the prepared strip of ground between two sets of stumps. ■ the dismissal of a batsman: each of ten dismissals regarded as marking a division of a side's innings: *Darlington won by four wickets*.

2 (also **wicket door** or **wicket gate**) a small door or gate, especially one beside or in a larger one.

■ N. Amer. an opening in a door or wall, often fitted with glass or a grille and used for selling tickets or a similar purpose.

3 N. Amer. a croquet hoop.

— **PHRASES** **at the wicket** Cricket 1 batting: the batsman remained at the wicket. 2 by the wicketkeeper: he was caught at the wicket chasing a wide one. **keep wicket** Cricket be a wicketkeeper. **lose a wicket** Cricket (of the batting side) have a batsman dismissed. **a sticky wicket** Cricket a pitch that has been drying after rain and is difficult to bat on. ■ informal a tricky or awkward situation: I might be on a sticky wicket if I used that line. **over the wicket** Cricket (referring to which side of the wicket a bowler runs when bowling) to the left of the wicket if a right-handed bowler and the right of the wicket if a left-handed bowler. **round the wicket** Cricket (referring to which side of the wicket a bowler runs when bowling) to the right of the wicket if a right-handed bowler and the left of the wicket if a left-handed bowler. **take a wicket** Cricket (of a bowler or a fielding side) dismiss a batsman.

— **ORIGIN** Middle English (in the sense 'small door or grille'): from Anglo-Norman French and Old Northern French *wiket*; origin uncertain, usually referred to the Germanic root of Old Norse *vikja* 'to turn, move'. Cricket senses date from the late 17th cent.

wicketkeeper ► **noun** Cricket a fielder stationed close behind a batsman's wicket and typically equipped with gloves and pads.

— **DERIVATIVES** **wicketkeeping** noun.

wickiup /'wɪkiʌp/ ► **noun** an American Indian hut consisting of an oval frame covered with brushwood or grass.

— **ORIGIN** Algonquian.

Wicklow /'wɪkləʊ/ a county of the Republic of Ireland, in the east, in the province of Leinster.

■ its county town, on the Irish Sea; pop. 7,600 (est. 2002).

widdershins /'wɪdʒɪnz/ (also **withershins**) ► **adverb** chiefly Scottish in a direction contrary to the sun's course, considered as unlucky; anticlockwise.

— **ORIGIN** early 16th cent.: from Middle Low German *widdersins*, from Middle High German *widersinnes*, from *wider* 'against' + *sin* 'direction'; the second element was associated with Scots *sin* 'sun'.

widdle Brit. informal ► **verb** [no obj.] urinate.

► **noun** an act of urinating.

■ [mass noun] urine.

— **ORIGIN** 1950s: alteration of **PIDDLE**.

wide ► **adjective** (**wider**, **widest**) 1 of great or more than average width: a wide road.

■ (after a measurement and in questions) from side to side: it measures 15 cm long by 12 cm wide | how wide do you think this house is? ■ open to the full extent: his eyes were wide with fear. ■ considerable: tax revenues have undershot Treasury projections by a wide margin.

2 including a great variety of people or things: a wide range of opinion | his wide circle of friends.

■ spread among a large number of people or over a large area: the government's desire for wider share ownership. ■ considering or dealing with the more general aspects of a situation, issue, etc.: the wider implications of the dispute. ■ [in combination] extending over the whole of: an industry-wide trend.

3 at a considerable or specified distance from an intended point or target: the ball was wide of the leg stump.

■ (especially in soccer) at or near the side of the field: he played in a wide left position.

► **adverb** 1 to the full extent: his eyes opened wide | the door was wide open.

2 far from a particular or intended point or target: his final touchline conversion drifted wide.

■ (especially in football) at or near the side of the field: he will play wide on the right.

► **noun** (also **wide ball**) Cricket a ball that is judged to be too wide of the stumps for the batsman to play, for which an extra is awarded to the batting side.

— **PHRASES** **give someone/thing a wide berth** see **BERTH**. **wide awake** fully awake. **wide of the mark** a long way away from an intended target. ■ inaccurate: *Dickie's memory is somewhat wide of the mark*.

— **DERIVATIVES** **wideness** noun, **widish** adjective.

— **ORIGIN** Old English *wid* 'spacious, extensive', wide 'over a large area', of Germanic origin.

wide-angle ► **adjective** (of a lens) having a short focal length and hence a field covering a wide angle.

wide area network (abbrev. **WAN**) ► **noun** a computer network in which the computers connected may be far apart, generally having a radius of more than 1 km.

wideawake ► **noun** a soft felt hat with a low crown and wide brim.

— **ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: punningly so named, because the hat does not have a 'nap' or glossy surface.

wide ball ► **noun** see **WIDE**.

wide-band ► **adjective** (of a radio, or other device or activity involving broadcasting) having or using a wide band of frequencies or wavelengths.

widebody ► **adjective** (also **wide-bodied**) 1 (of a large jet airliner) having a wide fuselage.

2 chiefly US (of a tennis racket) having a wide head.

► **noun** (pl. **widebodies**) 1 a large jet airliner with a wide fuselage.

2 US a tennis racket with a wide head.

3 US informal a large, heavily built person, especially one who plays a team sport.

wide boy ► **noun** Brit. informal a man involved in petty criminal activities.

wide-eyed ► **adjective** having one's eyes wide open as a result of surprise, fear, etc.

■ inexperienced; innocent: a wide-eyed country boy.

widely ► **adverb** 1 far apart; with a wide space or interval between: a tall man with widely spaced eyes.

■ to a large degree in nature or character (used to describe considerable variation or difference): *lending policies vary widely between different banks* [as submodifier] people in widely different circumstances.

2 over a large area or range; extensively: *Deborah has travelled widely* [as submodifier] she was widely read.

■ by many people or in many places: *credit cards are widely accepted*.

widen ► **verb** make or become wider: [with obj.] we should widen the scope of our investigation | [no obj.] his grin widened | the lane widened out into a small clearing.

— **DERIVATIVES** **widener** noun.

wideout ► **noun** American Football a wide receiver.

wide-ranging ► **adjective** covering an extensive range: a wide-ranging discussion.