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Shorter Oxford English Dictionary © Oxford University Press 2007

1 2 3 4

spiny pocket mouse
spiny rat
spiny shark
Spion Kop
spir-
spira-
spirable
spiracle
spiracular
spiraculate
spiraea
spiral
spiral arm
spiral balance
spiral bevel gear
spiral binding
spiral-bound
spiral cleavage
spiral divergence
spiral galaxy
spiral gear
spiraliform
spiral instability
spirality

spiral 'spair(ə)l  noun. M17.

1 A continuous flat curve traced by a point moving round a fixed point in the same plane at a steadily increasing or diminishing distance. M17.
equiangular spiral, loxodromic spiral, parabolic spiral, etc.

2 A three-dimensional curve traced by a point moving round and simultaneously advancing along a cylinder or cone; a helix. L17.
b The pitch of such a curve, esp. in the rifling of a gun barrel. M19.
c Amer. Football. A kick or pass in which the ball in flight spins round its long axis. L19.
d Aeronautics. A continuous banking turn accompanying a descent or (rarely) ascent. E20.

3 Each of the separate turns or coils of a spiral object. Cf. **spire** noun³ 1. E18.

4 A thing having a spiral form; *spec.* (a) a spiral spring; (b) Astronomy a spiral galaxy. E19.
M. Atwood The peel falls from her...hands in a long pale spiral. N. Sherry They climbed in long spirals, up into the mountains.

5 A progressive increase or decrease, esp. one in which two factors each respond to the stimulus provided by the other. L19.
B. Bainbridge The downward spiral in prices. Community Librarian The...spiral of low use, opening hours reduction, further decreasing use.
vicious spiral: see *vicious* adjective.

ORIGIN: from spiral adjective¹.