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RANDOM HOUSE
NEW YORK

Random House Webster's College Dictionary
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level crossing to lexis

unbroken by irregularities. **20.** the interconnected horizontal mine workings at a particular elevation or depth: *the 1500-foot level*. —*v.t.* **21.** to make (a surface) level, even, or flat; make horizontal. **22.** to raise or lower to a particular level or position. **23.** to bring (something) to the level of the ground: *to level trees*. **24. Informal.** to knock down (a person). **25.** to make equal, as in status or condition. **26.** to make even or uniform, as coloring. **27.** to aim or point (a weapon, criticism, etc.) at a mark or objective. **28.** to find the relative elevation of different points in (land), as with a surveyor's level. —*v.i.* **29.** to bring things or persons to a common level. **30.** to aim a weapon, criticism, etc., at a mark or objective. **31.** to speak truthfully and openly (often fol. by *with*). **32.** a. to take a level in surveying. b. to use a leveling instrument. **33. level off**, a. (of an aircraft) to maintain a constant altitude after a climb or descent. b. to become stable; reach a constant or limit. c. to make even or smooth. —*Idiom.* **34. find one's (own) level**, to attain a position or status that matches one's ability. **35. one's level best**, one's very best; one's utmost. **36. on the level**, honest; sincere; reliable. [1300–50; ME, var. of *livel* < MF < VL **libellum*, for L *libella* plummet line, level, dim. of *libra* balance, scales (see **CATTLE**)] —*lev/ēl-y*, *adv.* —*lev/ēl-ness*, *n.*

lev/ēl cross/ing, *n.* Brit. GRADE CROSSING. [1835–45]

lev/ēl-er (lēv'ə lār), *n.* **1.** a person or thing that levels. **2.** a person or thing that promotes the abolition of inequalities or other distinctions between people. Also, *esp. Brit., leveller*. [1590–1600]

lev/ēl-head-ed (lēv'əl hed'id), *adj.* having common sense and sound judgment; sensible. [1875–80, Amer.] —*lev/ēl-head-ed-ly*, *adv.* —*lev/ēl-head-ed-ness*, *n.*

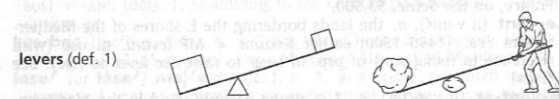
lev/ēl-ing rod, *n.* ROD (def. 15). [1900–05]

lev/ēl-er (lēv'ə lār), *n.* **1. Chiefly Brit.** LEVELER. **2. (cap.)** a member of a radical group organized during the English Civil War, advocating political equality and religious tolerance. [1590–1600]

lev/ēl play/ing field, *n.* a state of equality; an equal opportunity. [1980–85]

Le-ven (lēv'an), *n.* Loch, a lake in E. Scotland: ruins of a castle in which Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned.

lev-er (lēv'ər, lēv'ər), *n.* **1.** a rigid bar that pivots about one point and that is used to move an object at a second point by a force applied at a third. **2.** a means or agency of persuading or of achieving an end. —*v.t.* **3.** to move or lift with or as if with a lever. —*v.i.* **4.** to use a lever. [1250–1300; ME *leviere*, *levour* for **lever* < AF; OF *levier* = *lev(er)* to lift (< L *levāre* to lighten, lift) + *-ier* -IER']



levers (def. 1)

lev-er-age (lēv'ər ij, lēv'rij; lēv'ər ij, -vrij), *n., v., -aged, -ag-ing.* —*n.* **1.** the action of a lever. **2.** the mechanical advantage or power gained by using a lever. **3.** power or ability to act effectively or to influence people. **4.** the use of a small initial investment to gain a relatively high return. —*v.t.* **5.** to exert power or influence on. **6.** to provide with leverage. **7.** to speculate in (invested funds) by using leverage. [1715–25]

lev/eraged buy/out, *n.* the purchase of a company with borrowed money, using the company's assets as collateral, and often discharging the debt and realizing a profit by liquidating the company. *Abbr.:* LBO

lev-er-et (lēv'ər it), *n.* a young hare. [1400–50; late ME < AF, dim. of *levre*, OF *levure* < L *leporum*, acc. of *lepus* hare; see **-ET**]

Le-ver-ku-sen (lēv'ər koo'zan), *n.* a city in North Rhine-Westphalia, in W Germany, on the Rhine. 161,832.

Lev-er-tov (lēv'ər tōf', -tof'), *n.* Denise, 1923–97, U.S. poet, born in England.

Le-vi (lēv'i, lāv'ē), *n.* **1.** a son of Jacob and Leah. Gen. 29:34. **2.** one of the 12 tribes of Israel, traditionally descended from him. **3.** original name of MATTHEW (def. 1). **4.** a Levite.

lev-i-a-ble (lēv'ē ə bəl), *adj.* **1.** capable of being levied. **2.** liable or subject to a levy. [1475–85]

lev-i-a-than (li vī'ə than), *n.* **1. (often cap.)** (in the Bible) a sea monster. **2.** any huge marine animal, as the whale. **3.** something of immense size or power. [1350–1400; ME < LL < Heb *lūyāthān*]

lev-i-er (lēv'ē ə r), *n.* a person who levies. [1485–95]

lev-i-gate (lēv'i gāt'), *v.t., -gat-ed, -gat-ing.* to rub, grind, or reduce to a fine powder, with or without the addition of a liquid. [1605–15; < L *levigatus*, ptp. of *levigare* to smooth, pulverize = *lev(is)* smooth + *-igare* v. suffix (cf. **FUMIGATE**)] —*lev/i-ga/tion*, *n.*

Le-vi-Mon-tal-ci-ni (lēv'ē mon'tal chē'nē, lāv'ē-), *n.* Rita, born 1909, Italian neurophysiologist: Nobel prize for physiology or medicine 1986.

lev-i-rate (lēv'ər it, -ə rāt', lēv'ər it, -və rāt'), *n.* Judaism. the custom of marriage between a man and his brother's widow, required in Biblical law under certain circumstances. Deut. 25:5–10. [1715–25; < L *levir* husband's brother (akin to OE *tācor*, Gk *dāēr*, Skt *devar*) + *-ATE*] —*lev-i-rat-ic* (lēv'ə rat'ik, lēv'ə-), *lev/i-rat/i-cal*, *adj.*

Le-vi's (lēv'iz), (*used with a pl. v.*) Trademark. a brand of jeans, esp. blue jeans.

Lé-vi-Strauss (lāv'ē straus'), *n.* Claude, born 1908, French anthropologist, born in Belgium: founder of structural anthropology.

lev-i-tate (lēv'i tāt'), *v., -tat-ed, -tat-ing.* —*v.i.* **1.** to rise or float in the air, esp. as a result of a supernatural power. —*v.t.* **2.** to cause to

rise or float in the air. [1665–75; LEVIT(Y) + *-ATE*, ON *gravitate*] —*lev/i-ta/tion*, *n.* —*lev/i-ta/tor*, *n.* —*lev/i-ta-tor-y*, *adj.*

Le-vi-te (lēv'it), *n.* **1.** a member of the tribe of Levi, pointed to assist the Temple priests. **2.** a descendant of Levi, having honorific religious duties. [1250–1300; ME < Gk *Leuitēs* Levite < *Leuf* (< Heb *Lēvī* Levi, Levite)]

Le-vi-ti-cal (li vit'i kəl), *adj.* **1.** of or pertaining to the Levites or pertaining to Leviticus or the law (*Levitic law*) *com-* *parative*. [1525–35] —*Le-vi-ti-cal-ly*, *adv.*

Le-vi-ti-cus (li vit'i kəs), *n.* the third book of the Bible, chiefly concerning the priests and Jewish ceremonial observances. *Leviticus* (*liber*) Levitical (book) < Gk *Leuitikos*. See **LEVITICUS**.

Lev-it-town (lēv'it toun'), *n.* a town on W Long Island, N.Y. 57,045.

lev-i-ty (lēv'i tē), *n., pl. -ties*. **1.** lightness of mind, character, or behavior, esp. when inappropriate. **2.** an instance or example of lightness. [1555–65; < L *levitās* < *levis* light]

Lev-kas (lēf kās'), *n.* an island in the Ionian group, off the coast of Greece. 114 sq. mi. (295 sq. km).

levo-, a combining form meaning "left," "levorotatory" [repr. L *laevus* left, on the left; see **-O-**]

le-vo-do-pa (lēvə dō'pə), *n.* L-DOPA. [1965–70]

le-vo-ro-ta-to-ry (lēv'ə rō'tə tōr'ē, -tōr'ē) also *le-vo-ro-ta-tō-ry* (lēv'ə rō'tə tōr'ē, -tōr'ē), *adj.* relating to the levorotation of polarization of light: *levorotatory crystals*. *Symbol:* l-

lev-y (lēv'ē), *n., pl. levies*, *v., lev-ied, lev-y-ing.* —*n.* **1.** a tax or collecting, as of a tax, by authority or force. **2.** the troops or collected. **3.** the conscription of troops. **4.** the troops or levied. **5.** to impose (a tax, fine, etc.): *to levy a duty on* (a tax) *conscript* (troops). **7.** to start or wage (war). —*v.i.* **8.** to attach property by judicial order. [1375–1425; late ME *levien* use of fem. ptp. of *lever* to raise; see **LEVEE**]

lewd (lōd), *adj., -er, -est*. **1.** inclined to, characterized by, or tending to lust or lechery; lascivious. **2.** obscene or indecent, as language. **3.** Obs. [bef. 900; ME *leud*, *lewede*, OE *lāwede* lawless] —*lewd-ly*, *adv.* —*lewd-ness*, *n.*

Le-wes (lōw'is), *n.* a city in East Sussex, in SE England. 84,400.

lew-is (lōw'is), *n.* a device for lifting a dressed stone, consisting of number of pieces fitting together to fill a dovetailed recess in the stone. [1730–40; perh. after the surname of the inventor]

Lew-is (lōw'is), *n.* **1. (Cecil) Day, Day-Lewis, Cecil**, 2. Clive Hamilton, 1898–1963, English novelist and dramatist, born 1918, U.S. physician: Nobel prize 1995. **4. (Clive) Hamilton**, 1898–1963, English novelist and dramatist, born 1918, U.S. physician: Nobel prize 1995. **5. John L. Lewis**, 1885–1951, U.S. writer: Nobel prize 1930. **6. Meriwether**, 1774–1809, U.S. labor leader. **7. Meriwether**, 1774–1809, U.S. labor leader of the Lewis and Clark expedition 1804–06. **8. Meriwether**, 1884–1957, English writer and painter, born in the U.S. **9. Meriwether**, 1884–1957, English writer and painter, born in the U.S.

Lew-i-sham (lōw'is sham), *n.* a borough of Greater London. 231,600.

lew-is-ite (lōw'is sīt'), *n.* a pale yellow, odorless, crystalline solid, C₂H₃AsCl₄, used as a vesicant in World War I. [1920–25; after Lee Lewis (1878–1943), U.S. chemist who developed it]

Lew-is with Har'ris, *n.* the northernmost island of the Shetland Isles, in NW Scotland. 825 sq. mi. (2135 sq. km). Also called **Har'ris**.

lex (leks), *n., pl. le-ges (lē'jēz; Lat. *le'ges*). *LAW*. [1490–1500]*

lex-, **1.** lexical. **2.** lexicon.

lex-eme (lek'sēm), *n.* a minimal lexical unit in a language, or idiomatic phrase, esp. an abstract form underlying inflected forms. [1935–40; LEX(ICAL) or LEX(ICON) + *-EME*]

lex-i-cal (lek'si kəl), *adj.* **1.** of or pertaining to the words of a language, esp. as distinguished from its grammatical or syntactic aspects. **2.** of, pertaining to, or of the nature of words. [1830–40] —*lex/i-cal-i-ty*, *n.* —*lex/i-cal-ly*, *adv.*

lex/i-cal mean/ing, *n.* the meaning of a base morpheme independent of its use within a construction. Compare **BASE MORPHEME**. [1930–35]

lexicog-, **1.** lexicographer. **2.** lexicographic. **3.** lexicography.

lex-i-cog-ra-pher (lek'si kog'rə fər), *n.* a writer, editor, or compiler of a dictionary. [1650–60; < LGK *lexikographos*. See **-GRAPHER**]

lex-i-cog-ra-phy (lek'si kog'rə fē), *n.* **1.** the writing, compiling of dictionaries. **2.** the principles and procedures of writing, editing, or compiling dictionaries. [1670–80]

graph/ic (-kə graf'ik), *lex/i-co-graph/i-cal*, *adj.* —*lex/i-cal-ly*, *adv.*

lex-i-col-o-gy (lek'si kol'ə jē), *n.* the study of the formation, use, and of words. [1820–30] —*lex/i-co-log/i-cal*, *lex/i-co-log/i-cal*, *adj.* —*lex/i-col/o-gist*, *n.*

lex-i-con (lek'si kon', -kan), *n., pl. -ca* (-ka), *-cons*. **1.** a dictionary, esp. of Greek, Latin, or Hebrew. **2.** the vocabulary of a particular language, field, social class, person, etc. **3.** the theory of words or morphemes in a given language. [1555–65; < MGK, Gk *lexikón*, n. use of neut. of *lexikós* of words]

lex-i-co-sta-tis-tics (lek'si kō stə tis'tiks), *n.* (used with *the*) the statistical study of the vocabulary of a language or of historical purposes. [1955–60]

Lex-ing-ton (lek'sing tan), *n.* **1.** a town in E Massachusetts. **2.** Boston: first battle of the American Revolution fought here. 1775. 29,479. **3.** a city in N Kentucky. 239,942.

lex-is (lek'sis), *n.* the vocabulary of a language, esp. as a

violin-maker (vī'ə lin/mā'kər), *n.* a person who designs and constructs violins, esp. professionally. [1675-85]

Viollet-le-Duc (vyō' lē'lə dyk'), *n.* Eugène Emmanuel, 1814-79, French architect and writer.

violon-cello (vē'ə lən chel'ō, vī'-), *n.*, *pl.* -los. CELLO. [1715-25; < lt] —vi'ol-on-cel'list, *n.*

VIP or **V.I.P.** (vē'i'pē'), *informal.* very important person. [1940-45]

viper (vī'pər), *n.* 1. any venomous snake of the cosmopolitan family Viperidae, characterized by a pair of hollow fangs that can be erected for biting and injecting venom: includes the adders, puff adders, and pit vipers. 2. a number of various other venomous or supposedly venomous snakes. 3. a malignant, spiteful, or treacherous person. [1520-30; < L *vīpera*, haplographical var. of **vīvipera*, *n.* use of fem. of **vīviper*, later (as re-formation) *vīviparus vīviparous*] —vi'per-ish, *adj.*

vi-per-ine (vī'pər in, -pə rīn'), *adj.* viperous.

vi-per-ous (vī'pər əs), *adj.* 1. resembling a viper. 2. pertaining to or characteristic of vipers. 3. venomous. [1525-35] —vi'per-ous-ly, *adv.*

vir-a-go (vī rā'gō, -rā'-), *n.*, *pl.* -goes, -gos. 1. a loud-voiced, ill-tempered, scolding woman; shrew. 2. *Archaic.* a woman of strength or spirit. [bef. 1000; ME, OE < L *virāgō* = *vir* man + *-āgō* suffix expressing association of some kind, here resemblance]

vi-ral (vī'rāl), *adj.* of, pertaining to, or caused by a virus. [1935-40]

vir-e-lay or **vir-e-lai** (vī'rə lā'), *n.*, *pl.* -lays or -lais. an old French form of short poem, composed of short lines running on two rhymes and having two opening lines recurring at intervals. [1350-1400; ME < OF *virelai*]

vir-e-mia (vī rē'mē ə), *n.* the presence of a virus in the blood. [1945-50; *vir*(us) + *-emia*] —vi're-mic, *adj.*

vir-e-o (vīr'ē ō'), *n.*, *pl.* **vir-e-os**. any of various small, insectivorous, typically dull-plumaged songbirds of the family Vireonidae, of the New World, having a slightly hooked bill. [1825-35; < NL; L *virēō* (Pliny), prob. the greenfinch, der. of *virēre* to be green]

vir-es-cence (vī res'əns, -vī-), *n.* Bot. the state of becoming somewhat green due to the abnormal presence of chlorophyll. [1885-90]

vir-es-cent (vī res'ənt, -vī-), *adj.* 1. turning green. 2. tending to a green color; greenish. [1820-30; < L *virēscēt*, *virēscēs*, *prp.* of *virēscere* to become green, inchoative der. of *virēre* to be green]

vir-ga (vūr'gə), *n.* (used with a *sing.* or *pl. v.*) streaks of water drops or ice particles falling out of a cloud and evaporating before reaching the ground. [1935-40; < L: rod, streak]

vir-gate¹ (vūr'git, -gāt), *adj.* shaped like a rod or wand; long, slender, and straight. [1815-25; < L *virgātus*; see **vir-ga**, -ATE¹]

vir-gate² (vūr'git, -gāt), *n.* an early English measure of land, equal to about 30 acres (12 hectares). [1645-55; < ML *virgāta* (*terrae*) measure (of land), fem. of L *virgātus* pertaining to a rod; see **vir-gate**¹]

Vir-gil (vūr'jəl), *n.* (Publius Vergilius Maro) 70-19 B.C., Roman poet: author of *The Aeneid*. —**Vir-gil-i-an** (vūr jil'ē ən, -jil'yən), *adj.*

vir-gin (vūr'jin), *n.* 1. a person who has never had sexual intercourse. 2. an unmarried girl or woman. 3. the Virgin, Mary, the mother of Jesus. 4. *Informal.* any person who is uninitiated, uninitiated, or the like. 5. an animal, esp. a female, that has not copulated. 6. a female insect that lays viable eggs without male fertilization. b. the female resulting from such an egg. 7. (*cap.*) Virgo. —*adj.* 8. being a virgin. 9. of, pertaining to, or characteristic of a virgin. 10. pure; unsullied. 11. first: the senator's virgin speech. 12. without alloy or modification: virgin gold. 13. not previously exploited or used: virgin timberlands. 14. Zool. not fertilized. 15. (esp. of olive oil) obtained by the first light pressing and without the application of heat. [1150-1200; ME *virgine* < AF, OF < L *virgin-*, *s.* of *virgō*]

vir-gin-al¹ (vūr'jə nəl), *adj.* 1. pertaining to, characteristic of, or befitting a virgin. 2. continuing in a state of virginity. 3. pure; unsullied. 4. Zool. not fertilized. [1400-50; late ME < L] —**vir-gin-al-ly**, *adv.*

vir-gin-al² (vūr'jə nəl), *n.* Often, **vir-gin-als**, a rectangular harpsichord with the strings stretched parallel to the keyboard, the earlier types placed on a table: popular in the 16th and 17th centuries. [1520-30; appar. identical with **vir-gin-al**¹] —**vir-gin-al-ist**, *n.*

vir-gin birth¹, *n.* 1. the theological doctrine that the conception and birth of Christ did not impair the virginity of Mary. 2. **PARTHENOGENESIS**.

Vir-gin-i-a (vər jin'yə), *n.* 1. a state in the E United States, on the Atlantic coast: part of the historical South. 6,733,996; 40,815 sq. mi. (105,710 sq. km). *Cap.*: Richmond. *Abbr.*: VA, Va. 2. (*italics*) MERRIMACK (def. 2). —**Vir-gin-i-an**, *n.*, *adj.*

Vir-gin-i-a Beach¹, *n.* a city in SE Virginia. 430,385.

Vir-gin-i-a Cit'y, *n.* a mining town in W Nevada: famous for the discovery of the rich Comstock silver lode 1859.

Vir-gin-i-a creep-er, *n.* a North American climbing plant, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, of the grape family, having palmate leaves, usu. with five leaflets, and bluish black berries. [1660-70, Amer.]

Vir-gin-i-a fence¹, *n.* SNAKE FENCE. Also called **Vir-gin-i-a rail fence**¹.

Vir-gin-i-a ham¹, *n.* a ham from a hog fed on corn and peanuts, cured in hickory smoke. [1625-35, Amer.]

Vir-gin-i-a pine¹, *n.* a pine, *Pinus virginiana*, of the eastern U.S., that grows in poor soil and has needles in groups of two.

Vir-gin-i-a rail¹, *n.* a small, long-billed North American rail, *Rallus limicola*, having blackish and reddish brown plumage. [1775-85]

Vir-gin-i-a reel¹, *n.* an American country dance in which the partners start by facing each other in two lines. [1810-20, Amer.]

Vir-gin Is/lands, *n.pl.* a group of islands in the West Indies, E of

Puerto Rico: comprises the Virgin Islands of the United States and the British Virgin Islands. *Abbr.*: VI, V.I.

Vir-gin Is/lands Na'tional Park¹, *n.* a national park on St. John Island, Virgin Islands. 23 sq. mi. (59 sq. km).

Vir-gin Is/lands of the Unit'ed States¹, *n.pl.* a group of islands in the West Indies, including St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix: purchased from Denmark 1917. 110,000; 133 sq. mi. (345 sq. km). *Cap.*: Charlotte Amalie. Formerly, **Danish West Indies**.

vir-gin-i-ty (vər jin'i tē), *n.* 1. the condition of being a virgin. 2. the condition of being pure or unused. 3. *Informal.* any naive or uninformed state. [1250-1300; ME < AF, OF < L]

Vir-gin Mar'y, *n.* 1. MARY (def. 1). 2. a Bloody Mary made without vodka or other liquor. [1250-1300]

vir-gin's-bow/er, *n.* any of several climbing varieties of clematis, as *Clematis virginiana*, of E North America, with branching clusters of small white flowers. [1590-1600]

Vir-go (vūr'gō), *n.*, *gen.* **Vir-gi-nis** (vūr'jə nis) for 1. 1. the Virgin, a zodiacal constellation between Leo and Libra, containing the bright star Spica. 2. a. the sixth sign of the zodiac. b. a person born under this sign, usu. between August 23 and September 22. [bef. 1000; ME, OE < L: maiden]

vir-gule (vūr'gyool), *n.* 1. a short oblique stroke (/) between two words indicating that the appropriate one may be chosen to complete the sense of the text: the defendant and/or his/her attorney. 2. a dividing line, as in dates, fractions, a run-in passage of poetry to show verse division, etc. Also called **diagonal**. [1830-40; < F *virgule* comma, little rod < L *virgula*, dim. of *virga* rod]

vi-ri-cide (vī'rī sīd'), *n.* VIRUCIDE. —vi'rī-cīd'al, *adj.*

vir-i-des-cent (vī'rī des'ənt), *adj.* slightly green; greenish. [1840-50; < L *virid*(is) green (see **VERT**)] —vi'rī-des'cence, *n.*

vir-rid-i-an (və rid'ē ən), *n.* a long-lasting, bluish green pigment, consisting of a hydrated oxide of chromium. [1880-85; < L]

vir-rid-i-ty (və rid'i tē), *n.* 1. greenness; verdure. 2. youth; inexperience. [1400-50; late ME < L *viriditas* = *viridi*(s) green + *-itas* -rv¹]

vir-ile (vī'rēl; esp. Brit. -il), *adj.* 1. having or exhibiting masculine strength; masculine; manly. 2. characterized by a vigorous, masculine spirit. 3. pertaining to or characteristic of a man, esp. in a copulative function. [1480-90; < L *virilis* manly = *vir* man (akin to OE *wer* man; see **WEREWOLF**) + *-ilis* -ile¹]

vir-il-ism (vī'rē līz'əm), *n.* the condition in a female of having male secondary sex characteristics. [1895-1900]

vir-il-i-ty (və ril'i tē), *n.* the state or quality of being virile; manly character, vigor, or spirit; masculinity. [1580-90; < L]

vir-il-ize (vī'rē līz'), *v.t.*, *-ized*, *-iz-ing*. to induce or promote the development of male secondary sex characteristics in (a female); masculinize. —vi'rīl-i-za'tion, *n.*

vi-ri-on (vī'rē ōn', vī'rē-), *n.* the infectious form of a virus as it exists outside the host cell, consisting of a core of DNA or RNA, a protein coat, and, in some species, an external envelope. [1960-65; < F *virion* (1959) = *vir*(en) viral (see **VIRUS**, -IAN) + *-on* -on¹]

vi-roid (vī'roid), *n.* an infectious agent of plants similar to a virus but consisting of only a short, single strand of RNA without a protein coat.

vir-ol-o-gy (vī rol'ə jē, -vī-), *n.* the study of viruses and viral diseases. [1930-35] —vi'ro-log'i-cal (-rə loj'i kəl), *adj.* —**vi-rol'o-gist**, *n.*

v. irr., irregular verb.

vir-tu or **ver-tu** (vər tōō', vūr'tōō'), *n.* 1. excellence or merit in objects of art, curios, and the like. 2. (used with a *pl. v.*) such objects or articles collectively. 3. a taste for such objects. [1715-25; < lt *virtū*, *ver-tū* VIRTUE]

vir-tu-al (vūr'chōō əl), *adj.* 1. being such in force or effect, though not actually or expressly such: reduced to virtual poverty. 2. a. noting an optical image formed by the apparent convergence of rays geometrically, but not actually, prolonged, as the image formed by a mirror (opposed to *real*). b. noting a focus of a system forming virtual images. 3. a. temporarily simulated or extended by computer software: virtual memory on a hard disk. b. of, existing on, or by means of computers: virtual discussions on the Internet. [1350-1400; ME < ML *virtuālis* = L *virtu*(s) VIRTUE + *-ālis* -al¹] —**vir-tu-al-i-ty**, *n.*

vir-tu-al-ly (vūr'chōō ə lē), *adv.* for the most part; almost wholly; just about. [1400-50] —**Usage.** See **LITERALLY**.

vir-tual real-ity, *n.* a realistic simulation of an environment, including three-dimensional graphics, by a computer system using interactive software and hardware. [1985-90]

vir-tue (vūr'chōō), *n.* 1. conformity of one's life and conduct to moral and ethical principles; moral excellence; rectitude. 2. a particular moral excellence. 3. chastity; virginity: to lose one's virtue. 4. a good or admirable quality or property. 5. effective force; power or potency. 6. virtues, an order of angels. Compare **ANGEL** (def. 1). 7. mainly excellence; valor. —*Idiom.* 8. by or in virtue of, by reason of; because of. 9. make a virtue of necessity, to make the best of a difficult or unsatisfactory situation. [1175-1225; *vertu* < OF < L *virtū*tem, acc. of *virtūs* desirable male qualities, worth, virtue = *vir* man (see **VIRILE**) + *-tū*s abstract *n.* suffix] —**Syn.** See **GOODNESS**.

vir-tu-os-i-ty (vūr'chōō ōs'i tē), *n.* 1. the character, ability, or skill of a virtuoso. 2. a fondness for or interest in virtu. [1665-75]

vir-tu-o-so (vūr'chōō ō'sō), *n.*, *pl.* -sos, -si (-sē), *adj.* —*n.* 1. a person who has special knowledge or skill in a field. 2. a person who excels in musical technique or execution. 3. a person who has a cultivated appreciation of artistic excellence. —*adj.* 4. of, pertaining to, or