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St ► abbreviation ■ Saint: *St George*. ■ (usu. **St.**) Street: *10 Downing St.* ■ (also **ST**) Physics stakes.

st ► abbreviation ■ stone (in weight). ■ Cricket (on scorecards) stumped by.

-st ► suffix variant spelling of **-est**².

Sta. ► abbreviation railway station.

stab ► verb (**stabs, stabbing, stabbed**) [with obj.] thrust a knife or other pointed weapon into (someone) so as to wound or kill: *he stabbed her in the stomach*. ■ [no obj.] make a thrusting gesture or movement at something with a pointed object: *she stabbed at the earth with the fork* | [with obj.] *she stabbed the air with her forefinger*. ■ [no obj.] (**stab into/through**) (of a sharp or pointed object) violently pierce: *a sharp end of wicker stabbed into his sole*. ■ [no obj.] (of a pain or painful thing) cause a sudden sharp sensation: *a stitch stabbed at her side* | (as adj. **stabbing**) *I felt a stabbing pain in my chest*.

► **noun** 1 a thrust with a knife or other pointed weapon: [as modifier] *multiple stab wounds*. ■ a wound made by stabbing: *she had a deep stab in the back*. ■ a thrusting movement with a finger or other pointed object: *impatient stabs of his finger*. ■ a sudden sharp feeling or pain: *she felt a stab of jealousy*.

2 (**stab at**) informal an attempt to do (something): *Meredith made a feeble stab at joining in*.

— PHRASES **stab someone in the back** betray someone. ■ **a stab in the dark** see **DARK**.

— DERIVATIVES **stabber** noun.

— ORIGIN late Middle English: of unknown origin.

Stabat Mater /ˈstɑːbət ˈmɑːtə/ ► **noun** a medieval Latin hymn on the suffering of the Virgin Mary at the Crucifixion.

— ORIGIN from the opening words *Stabat mater dolorosa* 'Stood the mother, full of grief'.

stabbing ► **noun** an act or instance of wounding or killing someone with a knife: *the fatal stabblings of four women*.

stabilator /ˈstɛbɪlətə/ ► **noun** a combined stabilizer and elevator at the tail of an aircraft.

stabile /ˈstɛbəl/ ► **noun** Art a free-standing abstract sculpture or structure, typically of wire or sheet metal, in the style of a mobile but rigid and stationary.

— ORIGIN 1940s: from Latin *stabilis* 'stable', influenced by **MOBILE**.

stability ► **noun** [mass noun] the state of being stable: *there are fears for the political stability of the area*. — ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *stablete*, from Latin *stabilitas*, from *stabilis* 'stable'.

stabilize (also **stabilise**) ► **verb** make or become unlikely to give way or overturn: [with obj.] *the craft was stabilized by throwing out the remaining ballast*. ■ make or become unlikely to change, fail, or decline: [with obj.] *an emergency program designed to stabilize the economy* | [no obj.] *his condition appears to have stabilized*.

— DERIVATIVES **stabilization** noun.

stabilizer (also **stabiliser**) ► **noun** 1 a thing used to keep something steady or stable, in particular: ■ the horizontal tailplane of an aircraft. ■ a gyroscopic device used to reduce the rolling of a ship. 2 (**stabilizers**) Brit. a pair of small supporting wheels fitted on either side of the rear wheel of a child's bicycle.

2 a substance which prevents the breakdown of emulsions, especially in foods and paints.

stable¹ ► **adjective** (**stabler, stablest**) (of an object or structure) not likely to give way or overturn; firmly fixed: *specially designed dinghies that are very stable*. ■ (of a patient or their medical condition) not deteriorating in health after an injury or operation: *he is now in a stable condition in hospital*. ■ sane and sensible; not easily upset or disturbed: *the officer concerned is mentally and emotionally stable*. ■ not likely to change or fail; firmly established: *a stable relationship | prices have remained relatively stable*. ■ not liable to undergo chemical decomposition, radioactive decay, or other physical change.

— DERIVATIVES **stably** adverb.

— ORIGIN Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French, from Latin *stabilis*, from the base of *stare* 'to stand'.

stable² ► **noun** a building set apart and adapted for keeping horses. ■ an establishment where racehorses are kept and trained. ■ the racehorses of a particular training establishment. ■ an organization or establishment training or producing a particular type of person or product: *the player comes from the same stable as Agassi*.

► **verb** [with obj.] put or keep (a horse) in a stable. ■ put or base (a train) in a depot.

— PHRASES **shut (or bolt) the stable door after the horse has bolted** Brit. try to avoid or prevent something undesirable when it is already too late to do so. — DERIVATIVES **stableful** noun (pl. **stablefuls**). — ORIGIN Middle English: shortening of Old French *estable* 'stable, pigsty', from Latin *stabulum*, from the base of *stare* 'to stand'.

stable boy ► **noun** a boy or man employed in a stable.

stable companion ► **noun** another term for **STABLEMATE**.

stable equilibrium ► **noun** a state in which a body tends to return to its original position after being disturbed.

stable fly ► **noun** a bloodsucking fly related to the housefly, that bites large mammals including humans. ■ *Stomoxys calcitrans*, family Muscidae.

Stableford /ˈstɛɪb(ə)lfɔːd/ ► **noun** [mass noun] [usu. as modifier] a form of stroke-play golf in which points are awarded according to the number of strokes taken to complete each hole: *a Stableford competition*.

— ORIGIN named after Frank B. Stableford (1870–1959), the American doctor who devised it.

stable girl ► **noun** a girl or woman employed in a stable.

stable lad ► **noun** Brit. a person employed in a stable.

stableman ► **noun** (pl. **stablemen**) chiefly US a person employed in a stable.

stablemate ► **noun** a horse, especially a racehorse, from the same establishment as another. ■ a person or product from the same organization or background as another: *the Daily Mirror and its Scottish stablemate the Daily Record*.

stable vice ► **noun** see **VICE¹**.

stabling ► **noun** [mass noun] accommodation for horses.

stablish ► **verb** archaic form of **ESTABLISH**.

stab stitch ► **noun** [mass noun] a needlework stitch in which the stitches on the visible surface of the cloth are smaller than those underneath.

staccato /stəˈkɑːtəʊ/ chiefly Music ► **adverb** & **adjective** with each sound or note sharply detached or separated from the others: [as adj.] *a staccato rhythm*. Compare with **LEGATO**, **MARCATO**.

► **noun** (pl. **staccatos**) a piece or passage marked to be performed staccato. ■ a series of short, sharp sounds or words: *her heels made a rapid staccato on the polished boards*.

— ORIGIN Italian, literally 'detached'.

staccato mark ► **noun** a dot or stroke above or below a note indicating that it is to be played staccato.

stack ► **noun** 1 a pile of objects, typically one that is neatly arranged: *a stack of boxes*. ■ (**a stack of/stacks of**) informal a large quantity of something: *there's stacks of work for me now*. ■ a rectangular or cylindrical pile of hay or straw or of grain in sheaf. ■ a vertical arrangement of hi-fi or guitar amplification equipment. ■ a number of aircraft flying in circles at different altitudes around the same point while waiting for permission to land at an airport. ■ a pyramidal group of rifles. ■ (**the stacks**) units of shelving in part of a library normally closed to the public, used to store books compactly. ■ Computing a set of storage locations which store data in such a way that the most recently stored item is the first to be retrieved.

2 a chimney, especially one on a factory, or a vertical exhaust pipe on a vehicle. ■ (also **sea stack**) Brit. a column of rock standing in the sea, remaining after erosion of cliffs.

3 Brit. a measure for a pile of wood of 108 cu. ft (3.06 cubic metres).

► **verb** [with obj.] 1 arrange (a number of things) in a pile, typically a neat one: *the books had been stacked up in neat piles | she stood up, beginning to stack the plates*. ■ fill or cover (a place or surface) with stacks of things: *he spent most of the time stacking shelves*. ■ cause (an aircraft) to fly in circles while waiting for permission to land at an airport: *I hope we aren't stacked for hours over Kennedy*.

2 shuffle or arrange (a pack of cards) dishonestly so as to gain an unfair advantage. ■ (**be stacked against/in favour of**) used to refer to a situation which is such that an unfavourable or a favourable outcome is overwhelmingly likely: *the odds were stacked against Fiji in the World Cup*.

3 [no obj.] (in snowboarding) fall over.

— PHRASAL VERBS **stack up** 1 (or **stack something up**) form or cause to form a large quantity; build up: *cars stack up behind every bus*. 2 N. Amer. informal

measure up; compare: *our rural schools stack up well against their urban counterparts*. ■ [usu. with negative] make sense: *to blame the debacle on the antics of a rogue trader is not credible—it doesn't stack up*.

— DERIVATIVES **stackable** adjective, **stacker** noun.

— ORIGIN Middle English: from Old Norse *stakkr* 'haystack', of Germanic origin.

stacked ► **adjective** 1 (of a number of things) put or arranged in a stack or stacks: *the stacked chairs*. ■ (of a place or surface) filled or covered with goods: *the stacked shelves*. ■ having sections that are arranged vertically: *full-sized washer/dryers are replacing stacked units*. ■ (of a heel) made from thin layers of material glued one on top of the other.

2 (of a pack of cards) shuffled or arranged dishonestly so as to gain an unfair advantage.

3 informal (of a woman) having large breasts.

4 Computing (of a task) placed in a queue for subsequent processing. ■ (of a stream of data) stored in such a way that the most recently stored item is the first to be retrieved.

stackyard ► **noun** a farmyard or enclosure where stacks of hay, straw, or grain in sheaf are stored.

staddle ► **noun** a platform or framework supporting a stack or rick. ■ (also **staddle stone**) a stone, especially one resembling a mushroom in shape, supporting a framework or rick.

— ORIGIN Old English *stathol* 'base, support', of Germanic origin; related to the verb **STAND**.

stadium ► **noun** (pl. **stadiums** or **stadia** /ˈstɛɪdiə/) 1 an athletic or sports ground with tiers of seats for spectators. ■ (in ancient Rome or Greece) a track for a foot race or chariot race.

2 (pl. **stadia**) an ancient Roman or Greek measure of length, about 185 metres (originally the length of a stadium).

— ORIGIN late Middle English (in sense 2): via Latin from Greek *stadion*. Sense 1 dates from the mid 19th cent.

stadtholder /ˈstɑːdhəʊldə, ˈstɑːt-/ (also **stadholder**) ► **noun** (from the 15th century to the late 18th century) the chief magistrate of the United Provinces of the Netherlands.

— DERIVATIVES **stadtholdership** noun.

— ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from Dutch *stadhouder* 'deputy', from *stad* 'place' + *houder* 'holder', translating medieval Latin *locum tenens*.

Staël, Mme de, see **DE STAËL**.

staff¹ ► **noun** 1 [treated as sing. or pl.] all the people employed by a particular organization: *a staff of 600 | hospital staff were not to blame*. ■ the teachers in a school or college: [as modifier] *a staff meeting*. 2 [treated as sing. or pl.] a group of officers assisting an officer in command of an army formation or administration headquarters. ■ (usu. **Staff**) short for **STAFF SERGEANT**.

3 a long stick used as a support when walking or climbing or as a weapon. ■ a rod or sceptre held as a sign of office or authority. ■ short for **FLAGSTAFF**. ■ Surveying a rod for measuring distances or heights. ■ Brit. a spindle in a watch. ■ Brit. a token in the form of a rod given to a train driver as authority to proceed over a single-track line.

4 Music another term for **STAVE** (sense 2 of the noun).

► **verb** [with obj.] provide (an organization, business, etc.) with staff: *legal advice centres are staffed by volunteer lawyers* | (as adj. **staffed**) *all units are fully staffed*.

— PHRASES **the staff of life** a staple food, especially bread.

— ORIGIN Old English *staf* (in sense 3 of the noun), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *staf* and German *Stab*.

staff² ► **noun** [mass noun] a mixture of plaster of Paris, cement, or a similar material, used for temporary building work.

— ORIGIN late 19th cent.: of unknown origin.

Staffa /ˈstɑːfə/ a small uninhabited island of the Inner Hebrides, west of Mull. It is the site of Fingal's Cave and is noted for its basalt columns.

staffage /stɑːfɑːʒ/ ► **noun** [mass noun] accessory items in a painting, especially figures or animals in a landscape picture.

— ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from German, from *staffieren* 'decorate', perhaps from Old French *estoffer*, from *estoffe* 'stuff'.

staff association ► **noun** an association of employees performing some of the functions of a trade union, such as representing its members in discussions with management.

staff college ► **noun** a college at which military officers are trained for staff duties.

United Presbyterian Church a Presbyterian Church in Scotland formed in 1847. In 1900 it joined with the Free Church of Scotland to form the United Free Church.

United Provinces historical 1 the seven provinces united in 1579 and forming the basis of the republic of the Netherlands.
2 an Indian administrative division formed by the union of Agra and Oudh and called Uttar Pradesh since 1950.

United Provinces of Central America a former federal republic in Central America, formed in 1823 to unite the states of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, all newly independent from Spain. The federation collapsed in 1838.

United Reformed Church a Church formed in 1972 by the union of the Congregational Church in England and Wales with the Presbyterian Church in England. Most of the Churches of Christ in the UK joined the union in 1981.

USAGE The correct term is **United Reformed Church**, although it is sometimes called **United Reform Church** in general use.

United States (abbrev.: **US** or **USA**) a country occupying most of the southern half of North America and including also Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands; pop. 304,059,724 (est. 2008); capital, Washington DC. Full name **United States of America**.

The US is a federal republic comprising fifty states and the Federal District of Columbia. It originated in the American War of Independence, the successful rebellion of the British colonies on the east coast in 1775–83. The original thirteen states which formed the Union drew up a federal constitution in 1787, and George Washington was elected the first President in 1789. In the 19th century the territory of the US was extended across the continent through the westward spread of pioneers and settlers (at the expense of the American Indian peoples), and acquisitions such as that of Texas and California from Mexico in the 1840s. After a long period of isolation in foreign affairs the US participated on the Allied side in both world wars, and came out of the Cold War as the world's leading military and economic power.

unit holder ► noun chiefly Brit. a person with an investment in a unit trust.

unitize (also **unitise**) ► verb [with obj.] form into a unit; unite into a whole. ■ (usu. as adj. **unitized**) package (cargo) into unit loads: a **unitized load**. ■ convert (an investment trust) into a unit trust.

unit-linked ► adjective Brit. denoting or relating to a life assurance policy or other investment in which the premiums or payments are invested in a unit trust.

unit matrix ► noun another term for **IDENTITY MATRIX**.

unit membrane ► noun Biology a lipoprotein membrane which encloses many cells and cell organelles and is composed of two electron-dense layers enclosing a less dense layer.

unit train ► noun N. Amer. a train transporting a single commodity.

unit trust ► noun Brit. a trust formed to manage a portfolio of stock exchange securities, in which small investors can buy units.

unit vector ► noun Mathematics a vector which has a magnitude of one.

unity ► noun (pl. **unities**) [mass noun] 1 the state of being united or joined as a whole: *European unity* | *ways of preserving family unity*. ■ the state of forming a complete and harmonious whole, especially in an artistic context: *the repeated phrase gives the piece unity and cohesion*. ■ [count noun] a thing forming a complex whole: *they speak of the three parts as a unity*.
2 Mathematics the number one.

3 [count noun] each of the three dramatic principles requiring limitation of the supposed time of a drama to that occupied in acting it or to a single day (**unity of time**), use of one scene throughout (**unity of place**), and concentration on the development of a single plot (**unity of action**).

— ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *unite*, from Latin *unitas*, from *unus* 'one'.

Univ. ► abbreviation University.

univalent ► adjective 1 /juːˈnɪvəl(ə)nt/ Biology (of a chromosome) remaining unpaired during meiosis.
2 /juːˈnɪvəl(ə)nt/ Chemistry another term for **MONOVALENT**.

► noun /juːˈnɪvəl(ə)nt/ Biology a univalent chromosome.

univalve Zoology ► adjective having one valve or shell.
► noun another term for **GASTROPOD**.

univariate /juːniˈvɜːriət/ ► adjective Statistics involving one variate or variable quantity.

Universal a US film production company formed in 1912.

universal ► adjective relating to or done by all people or things in the world or in a particular group; applicable to all cases: *universal adult suffrage* | *the incidents caused universal concern*. ■ Logic denoting a proposition in which something is asserted of all of a class. Contrasted with **PARTICULAR**. ■ Linguistics denoting or relating to a grammatical rule, set of rules, or other linguistic feature that is found in all languages. ■ (of a tool or machine) adjustable to or appropriate for all requirements.

► noun a thing having universal effect, currency, or application, in particular: ■ Logic a universal proposition. ■ Philosophy a term or concept of general application. ■ Philosophy a nature or essence signified by a general term. ■ Linguistics a universal grammatical rule or linguistic feature.

— DERIVATIVES **universality** noun.

— ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from Latin *universalis*, from *universus* (see **UNIVERSE**).

universal compass ► noun a pair of compasses with legs that may be extended for large circles.

universal donor ► noun a person of blood group O, who can in theory donate blood to recipients of any ABO blood group.

universal indicator ► noun [mass noun] Chemistry a mixture of dyes that changes colour gradually over a range of pH and is used (especially as indicator paper) in testing for acids and alkalis.

universalist ► noun 1 Christian Theology a person who believes that all humankind will eventually be saved.
2 a person advocating loyalty to and concern for others without regard to national or other allegiances.

► adjective 1 Christian Theology relating to universalists.
2 universal in scope or character.

— DERIVATIVES **universalism** noun, **universalistic** adjective.

universalize (also **universalise**) ► verb [with obj.] give a universal character or application to (something, especially something abstract): *theories that universalize experience*. ■ bring into universal use; make available for all: *attempts to universalize basic education*.

— DERIVATIVES **universalizability** noun, **universalization** noun.

universal joint (also **universal coupling**) ► noun a coupling or joint which can transmit rotary power by a shaft at any selected angle.

universally ► adverb by everyone; in every case: *progress is not always universally welcomed*.

Universal Postal Union (abbrev.: **UPU**) an agency of the United Nations that regulates international postal affairs.

Universal Product Code ► noun more formal term for **BARCODE**.

universal quantifier ► noun Logic a formal expression used in asserting that a stated general proposition is true of all the members of the delineated universe or class.

universal recipient ► noun a person of blood group AB, who can in theory receive donated blood of any ABO blood group.

universal set ► noun Mathematics & Logic the set containing all objects or elements and of which all other sets are subsets.

universal suffrage ► noun [mass noun] the right of almost all adults to vote in political elections.

Universal Time (also **Universal Time Coordinated**) another term for **GREENWICH MEAN TIME**.

universe ► noun 1 (the universe) all existing matter and space considered as a whole; the cosmos. The universe is believed to be at least 10 billion light years in diameter and contains a vast number of galaxies; it has been expanding since its creation in the Big Bang about 13 billion years ago.
2 a particular sphere of activity or experience: *the front parlour was the hub of her universe*.

3 (Logic also **universe of discourse**) another term for **UNIVERSAL SET**.

— ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *univers* or Latin *universum*, neuter of *universus* 'combined into one, whole', from *uni-* 'one' + *versus* 'turned' (past participle of *vertere*).

United Presbyterian Church | unknown

university ► noun (pl. **universities**) a high-level educational institution in which students study for degrees and academic research is done: *I went to university at the Sorbonne* | *his daughter is at university*.

— PHRASES **the university of life** the experience of life regarded as a means of instruction.
— ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *universite*, from Latin *universitas* 'the whole', in late Latin 'society, guild', from *universus* (see **UNIVERSE**).

University of the Third Age ► noun an organization providing courses of education for retired or elderly people.

univocal /juːniˈvəʊk(ə)l, juːˈnɪvək(ə)l/ ► adjective Philosophy & Linguistics (of a word or term) having only one possible meaning; unambiguous: *a univocal set of instructions*.

— DERIVATIVES **univocality** noun, **univocally** adverb.

Unix /ˈjuːnɪks/ ► noun [mass noun] Computing, trademark an operating system analogous to DOS and Windows, supporting multiple concurrent users.

— ORIGIN 1970s: from *uni-* 'one' + a respelling of *-ics*, on the pattern of an earlier less compact system called *Multics*.

unjoin ► verb [with obj.] archaic detach; separate.

unjoined ► adjective not joined together.

unjoint ► verb [with obj.] rare separate or dislocate the joints of.

unjointed ► adjective lacking a joint or joints; consisting of a single piece: *a flat, unjointed surface*.

unjust ► adjective not based on or behaving according to what is morally right and fair: *resistance to unjust laws*.

— DERIVATIVES **unjustly** adverb, **unjustness** noun.

unjustifiable ► adjective not able to be shown to be right or reasonable: *an unjustifiable restriction on their freedom*.

— DERIVATIVES **unjustifiably** adverb [sentence adverb] *they seemed, unjustifiably, to be taking things out on the students*.

unjustified ► adjective 1 not shown to be right or reasonable: *unjustified price increases*.
2 Printing (of printed text) not justified.

unkempt /ʌnˈkempt/ ► adjective (especially of a person) having an untidy or dishevelled appearance: *they were unwashed and unkempt*.

— DERIVATIVES **unkemptness** noun.

— ORIGIN late Middle English: from *un-* 'not' + *kempt* 'combed' (past participle of archaic *kemb*, related to *comb*).

unkept ► adjective 1 (of a commitment or undertaking) not honoured or fulfilled: *unkept appointments and broken promises*.
2 not tidy or cared for.

unkillable ► adjective not able to be killed.

unkind ► adjective inconsiderate and harsh to others: *you were terribly unkind to her* | *he was the butt of some unkind jokes* | *it was unkind of her to criticize*.

— DERIVATIVES **unkindly** adverb.

unkindness ► noun [mass noun] inconsiderate and harsh behaviour: *she had had enough of her father's unkindness*.

unking ► verb [with obj.] archaic remove (a monarch) from power.

unkink ► verb straighten or become straight.

unknit ► verb (**unknits, unknitting, unknitted**) [with obj.] separate (things that are joined, knotted, or interlocked).

unknot ► verb (**unknits, unknitting, unknotted**) 1 [with obj.] release or untie the knot or knots in: *he swiftly unknotted his tie*.
2 [no obj.] (of a muscle) relax after being tense and hard: *his shoulders unknotted*.

unknowable ► adjective not able to be known: *the total cost is unknowable*.

— DERIVATIVES **unknowability** noun.

unknowing ► adjective not knowing or aware: *the lions moved stealthily towards their unknowing victims*.

► noun [mass noun] literary lack of awareness or knowledge.

— DERIVATIVES **unknowingly** adverb, **unknowingness** noun.

unknown ► adjective not known or familiar: *exploration into unknown territory* | *his whereabouts are unknown to his family*. ■ (of a performer or artist) not well known or famous.

► noun an unknown person or thing: *she is a relative unknown*. ■ (**the unknown**) that which is unknown: *our fear of the unknown*. ■ Mathematics an unknown

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