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from a momentary input signal until reset by another signal. ■ **v.** 1 fasten with a latch. 2 Electronics (of a device) become fixed in a particular state. 3 (**latch on**) informal understand the meaning of something. 4 (**latch on to**) informal attach oneself to (someone) as a constant companion. ► take up (an idea or trend) enthusiastically. 5 (**latch on**) (of a breastfeeding baby) manage to get its mouth into the correct position around the nipple.

— PHRASES **on the latch** chiefly Brit. (of a door or gate) closed but not locked.

— ORIGIN OE *læccan* 'take hold of, grasp', of Gmc origin.

latchet /'lætʃɪt/ ■ **n.** archaic a narrow thong or lace for fastening a shoe or sandal.

— ORIGIN ME: from OFr. *latchet*, var. of *lacet*, from *laz* 'lace'.

latchkey ■ **n.** (pl. **latchkeys**) a key of an outer door of a house.

latchkey child ■ **n.** a child who is alone at home after school until a parent returns from work.

late ■ **adj.** 1 acting, arriving, or happening after the expected or usual time. 2 belonging or taking place far on in a particular time or period. 3 far on in the day or night. 4 (**the/one's late**) (of a specified person) no longer alive. ► no longer having the specified status; former. 5 (**latest**) of most recent date or origin. ■ **adv.** 1 after the expected or usual time. 2 towards the end of a period. 3 far on in the day or night. 4 (**later**) at a time in the near future; afterwards. 5 (**late of**) formerly but not now living or working in a specified place or institution. ■ **n.** (**the latest**) the most recent news or fashion.

— PHRASES **at the latest** no later than the time specified. **late in the day** (or **N. Amer. game**) at a late stage in proceedings. **of late** recently.

— DERIVATIVES **lateness** **n.**

— ORIGIN OE *læt* (adj.), *late* (adv.), of Gmc origin.

latecomer ■ **n.** a person who arrives late.

lateen sail /'leɪtɪn/ ■ **n.** a triangular sail on a long yard at an angle of 45° to the mast.

— ORIGIN C16: from Fr. (*voile*) *Latine* 'Latin (sail)', so named because it was common in the Mediterranean.

late Latin ■ **n.** Latin of about AD 200–600.

lately ■ **adv.** recently; not long ago.

latent ■ **adj.** existing but not yet developed, manifest, or active: *her latent talent*.

— DERIVATIVES **latency** **n.** **latently** **adv.**

— ORIGIN ME: from L. *latens*, *latere* 'be hidden'.

latent heat ■ **n.** Physics the heat required to convert a solid into a liquid or vapour, or a liquid into a vapour, without change of temperature.

latent image ■ **n.** Photography an image on film that has not yet been made visible by developing.

latent period ■ **n.** Medicine the period between infection and the onset of symptoms.

— **later** ■ **comb. form** denoting a person who worships a specified thing: *idolater*.

— ORIGIN from Gk *-latrēs* 'worshipper'.

lateral ■ **adj.** 1 of, at, towards, or from the side or sides.

2 Phonetics (of a consonant, especially the English clear /l/) pronounced with partial closure of the air passage by the tongue, which allows the breath to flow on one or both sides of the point of contact. ■ **n.** 1 a side part of something, especially a shoot or branch growing out from the side of a stem. 2 Phonetics a lateral consonant. 3 American Football a pass thrown sideways or back.

— DERIVATIVES **laterally** **adv.**

— ORIGIN ME: from L. *lateralis*, from *latus*, *later-* 'side'.

laterality ■ **n.** dominance of one side of the brain in controlling particular activities or functions, or of one of a pair of organs such as the eyes or hands.

lateralize or **lateralise** ■ **v.** (**be lateralized**) Physiology & Medicine be localized to one or other side of the brain.

— DERIVATIVES **lateralization** **n.**

lateral line ■ **n.** Zoology a visible line along the side of a fish, consisting of a series of sense organs which detect pressure and vibration.

lateral thinking ■ **n.** chiefly Brit. the solving of problems by an indirect and creative approach.

— DERIVATIVES **lateral thinker** **n.**

lateral ventricle ■ **n.** Anatomy each of the first and second ventricles in the centre of each cerebral hemisphere of the brain.

laterite /'lætəraɪt/ ■ **n.** a reddish clayey material, hard when dry, forming a topsoil in some tropical regions and sometimes used for building.

— DERIVATIVES **lateritic** /-'rɪtɪk/ **adj.**

— ORIGIN C19: from L. *later* 'brick' + *-ite*.

latex /'leɪtɛks/ ■ **n.** (pl. **latexes** or **latices** /-'tɪsɪz/) 1 a milky fluid found in many plants, notably the rubber tree, which coagulates on exposure to the air. 2 a synthetic product resembling this, used to make paints, coatings, etc.

— ORIGIN C17 (denoting various bodily fluids): from L., lit. 'liquid, fluid'.

lath /lɑːθ, ləθ/ ■ **n.** (pl. **laths** /lɑːθs, ləθz, ləθs/) a thin, flat strip of wood, especially one of a series forming a foundation for the plaster of a wall. ■ **v.** cover with laths.

— ORIGIN OE *lætt*, of Gmc origin; rel. to **LATTICE**.

lathe /leɪð/ ■ **n.** a machine for shaping wood or metal by means of a rotating drive which turns the piece being worked on against changeable cutting tools.

— ORIGIN ME: prob. from Old Dan. *lad* 'structure, frame', perh. from ON *hlath* 'pile, heap', rel. to **LADE**.

lather /'leɪðə, 'ləðə/ ■ **n.** 1 a frothy white mass of bubbles produced by soap when mixed with water.

2 heavy sweat visible on a horse's coat as a white foam. 3 (**a lather**) informal a state of agitation or nervous excitement.

■ **v.** 1 form or cause to form a lather. ► rub with soap until a lather is produced. 2 cover or spread liberally with (a substance). 3 informal thrash (someone).

— DERIVATIVES **lathery** **adj.**

— ORIGIN OE *læthor*, *læthran* (v.), of Gmc origin.

lathi /'leɪtɪ/ ■ **n.** (pl. **lathis**) (in the Indian subcontinent) a long metal-bound bamboo stick used as a weapon, especially by police.

— ORIGIN from Hindi *lāthī*.

latices plural form of **LATEX**.

latifundium /'leɪtɪfʌndɪəm, 'leɪtɪ/ ■ **n.** (pl. **latifundia**) a large landed estate or ranch in ancient Rome or in Spain or Latin America.

— ORIGIN C17: from L., from *latus* 'broad' + *fundus* 'landed estate'.

Latin ■ **n.** 1 the language of ancient Rome and its empire. 2 a native or inhabitant of a country whose language developed from Latin, e.g. a Latin American.

■ **adj.** 1 relating to the Latin language. 2 relating to or denoting countries using languages that developed from Latin, especially Latin America. 3 relating to or denoting the Western or Roman Catholic Church. 4 historical relating to ancient Latium in Italy.

— DERIVATIVES **Latinism** **n.** **Latinist** **n.** **Latinity** **n.**

— ORIGIN from L. *Latinus* 'of Latium'.

Latina /lə'ti:nə/ ■ **n.** fem. of **LATINO**.

Latin American ■ **adj.** relating to Latin America, the parts of the American continent where Spanish or Portuguese is the main national language. ■ **n.** a native or inhabitant of Latin America.

Latinate /'leɪtɪneɪt/ ■ **adj.** (of language) having the character of Latin.

Latin Church ■ **n.** the Roman Catholic Church as distinguished from Orthodox and Uniate Churches.

Latin cross ■ **n.** a plain cross in which the vertical part below the horizontal is longer than the other three parts.

Latinize or **Latinise** ■ **v.** 1 give a Latin or Latinate form to (a word). ► archaic translate into Latin. 2 cause to conform to the ideas and customs of the ancient Romans or the Latin Church.

— DERIVATIVES **Latinization** **n.** **Latinizer** **n.**

Latino /lə'ti:nəʊ/ ■ **n.** (pl. **Latinos**) chiefly N. Amer. a Latin American inhabitant of the United States.

— ORIGIN from Latin Amer. Sp.

latish (also **lateish**) ■ **adj.** & **adv.** fairly late.

latissimus /lə'tɪsɪməs/ (also **latissimus dorsi** /'dɔːsɪ, -sɪ:/) ■ **n.** (pl. **latissimi** /lə'tɪsɪməɪ, -mɪ:/) Anatomy either of a pair of large, roughly triangular muscles covering

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