

RANDOM HOUSE WEBSTER'S *unabridged dictionary*

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latch (lach), *n.* **1.** a device for holding a door, gate, or the like, closed, consisting basically of a bar falling or sliding into a catch, groove, hole, etc. —*v.t.* **2.** to close or fasten with a latch. —*v.i.* **3.** to close tightly so that the latch is secured: *The door won't latch.* **4. latch on, a.** to grab or hold on, as to an object or idea, esp. tightly or tenaciously. **b.** to include or add in; attach: *If we latch the tax on, the bill will come to over $100.* **5. latch onto,** *Informal.* **a.** to take possession of; obtain; get. **b.** to acquire understanding of; comprehend. **c.** to attach oneself to; join in with: *The stray dog latched onto the children and wouldn't go home.* [bef. 950; 1930–35 for def. 5; ME *lacchen*, OE *læccan* to take hold of, catch, seize; akin to Gk *lázesthai* to take]

latch•et (lach′it), *n. Archaic.* a strap or lace used to fasten a shoe. [1300–50; ME *lachet* < MF, dial. var. of *lacet*. See LACE, -ET]

latch′ hook′, a hand-held tool similar to a latch needle, used for drawing loops of yarn through canvas or similar material to make rugs and the like.

latch•ing (lach′ing), *n.* any of the loops by which a bonnet is attached to a sail. [1325–75; ME; see LATCH, -ING¹]

latch•key (lach′kē′), *n., pl.* **-keys.** a key for releasing a latch or springlock, esp. on an outer door. [1815–25; LATCH + KEY¹]

latch′key child′, a child who must spend at least part of the day alone and unsupervised, as when the parents are away at work. Also called **door-key child.** [1940–45; so called because such a child is provided with a key for getting into the home after school]

latch′ nee′dle, a part of a knitting machine consisting of a thin shaft with a hook on one end and a pivoting latch that closes over the hook so that yarn can be drawn through the developing knitting to make a stitch.

latch•string (lach′string′), *n.* a string passed through a hole in a door, for raising the latch from the outside. [1785–95; LATCH + STRING]

late (lāt), *adj.*, **lat•er** or **lat•ter, lat•est** or **last,** *adv.* **lat•er, lat•est.** —*adj.* **1.** occurring, coming, or being after the usual or proper time: *late frosts; a late spring.* **2.** continued until after the usual time or hour; protracted: *a late business meeting.* **3.** near or at the end of day or well into the night: *a late hour.* **4.** belonging to the time just before the present moment; most recent: *a late news bulletin.* **5.** immediately preceding the present one; former: *the late attorney general.* **6.** recently deceased: *the late Mr. Phipps.* **7.** occurring at an advanced stage in life: *a late marriage.* **8.** belonging to an advanced period or stage in the history or development of something: *the late phase of feudalism.* **9. of late,** lately; recently: *The days have been getting warmer of late.* —*adv.* **10.** after the usual or proper time, or after delay: *to arrive late.* **11.** until after the usual time or hour; until an advanced hour, esp. of the night: *to work late.* **12.** at or to an advanced time, period, or stage: *The flowers keep their blossoms late in warm climates.* **13.** recently but no longer: *a man late of Chicago, now living in Philadelphia.* [bef. 900; ME; OE *læt* slow, late; c. G *lass* slothful, ON *latr*, Goth *lats* slow, lazy, L *lassus* tired] —**late′ness,** *n.*

—**Syn. 1.** tardy; slow, dilatory; delayed, belated. **4.** See **modern.**

late′ blight′, *Plant Pathol.* a disease of plants, esp. potatoes, celery, etc., characterized by spotting, blighting, and withering or decay of the entire plant, caused by any of several fungi, as *Phytophthora infestans* or *Septoria apii.* [1900–05]

late′ bloom′er, a person whose talents or capabilities are slow to develop: *A late bloomer, she wrote her first novel when she was almost 50.*

late-bloom•ing (lāt′blōō′ming), *adj.* **1.** of or characteristic of a late bloomer: *late-blooming brilliance.* **2.** late in coming about or showing full development: *the country's late-blooming interest in soccer.* [1965–70]

late′ charge′, a penalty charge in addition to the regularly scheduled payment, as of a loan, if such payment has not been made when due.

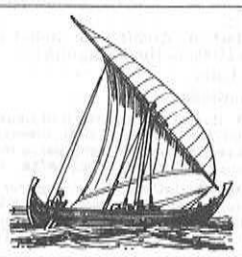
late•com•er (lāt′kum′ər), *n.* a person who arrives late: *The latecomers were seated after the overture.* [1865–70; LATE + COMER]

lat•ed (lā′tid), *adj. Literary.* belated. [1585–95; LATE + -ED²]

la•teen (la tēn′, lə-), *adj.* pertaining to or having a lateen sail or sails. [1720–30; < F (*voile*) *latine* Latin (sail)]

la•teen-rigged (la tēn′rigd′, lə-), *adj.* having lateen sails. [1875–80]

lateen′ sail′, a triangular sail set on a long sloping yard, used esp. on the Mediterranean Sea. [1720–30]



lateen sail

CONCISE ETYMOLOGY KEY: <, descended or borrowed from; >, whence; b., blend of, blended; c., cognate with; cf., compare; deriv., derivative; equiv., equivalent; imit., imitative; obl., oblique; r., replacing; s., stem; sp., spelling, spelled; resp., respelling, respelled; trans., translation; ?, origin unknown; *, unattested; ‡, probably earlier than. See the full key inside the front cover.

Late′ Greek′, the Greek of the early Byzantine Empire and of patristic literature, from about A.D. 100 to 700. *Abbr.:* LGk

Late′ Lat′in, the Latin of the late Western Roman Empire and of patristic literature, from about A.D. 150 to 700. *Abbr.:* LL

late•ly (lāt′lē), *adv.* of late; recently; not long since: *He has been very grouchy lately.* [bef. 1000; ME *latli*; OE *lætlice*; see LATE, -LY]

lat•en (lāt′n), *v.t., v.i.* to make or become late. [1875–80; LATE + -EN¹]

la•ten•cy (lāt′n sē), *n., pl.* **-cies. 1.** the state of being latent. **2.** *Computers.* the time required to locate the first bit or character in a storage location, expressed as access time minus word time. **3.** See **latent period.** [1630–40; LAT(ENT) + -ENCY]

la′tency pe′riod, **1.** *Psychoanal.* the stage of personality development, extending from about four or five years of age to the beginning of puberty, during which sexual urges appear to lie dormant. **2.** *Pathol.* See **latent period** (def. 1). [1905–10]

La Tène (*Fr.* la ten′), **1.** *Archaeol.* designating the period or culture of the late Iron Age typified by the structural remains, swords, tools, utensils, etc., found at La Tène. Cf. **Hallstattan. 2.** a shallow area at the E end of the Lake of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, where these remains were found. [1885–90]

late-night (lāt′nit′), *adj.* of or occurring late at night: *a late-night TV talk show.* [1880–85]

la•ten•si•fy (lā ten′sə fī′), *v.t.,* **-fied, -fy•ing.** *Photog.* to increase the developability of (the latent image on a film or plate) after exposure. [1935–40; LA(TENT) + (IN)TENSIFY, modeled on *latensification*, b. LATENT and INTENSIFICATION] —**la•ten•si•fi•ca•tion** (lā ten′sə fi kā′shən), *n.*

la•tent (lāt′nt), *adj.* **1.** present but not visible, apparent, or actualized; existing as potential: *latent ability.* **2.** *Pathol.* (of an infectious agent or disease) remaining in an inactive or hidden phase; dormant. **3.** *Psychol.* existing in unconscious or dormant form but potentially able to achieve expression: *a latent emotion.* **4.** *Bot.* (of buds that are not externally manifest) dormant or undeveloped. [1610–20; < L *latent-* (s. of *latēns*) prp. of *latēre* to lie hidden; see -ENT] —**la′tent•ly,** *adv.*

—**Syn. 1.** dormant, quiescent, veiled, LATENT, POTENTIAL refer to powers or possibilities existing but hidden or not yet actualized. LATENT emphasizes the hidden character or the dormancy of what is named: *latent qualities, defects, diseases.* That which is POTENTIAL exists in an as yet undeveloped state, but is thought of as capable of coming into full being or activity at some future time: *potential genius, tragedy.* POTENTIAL may be applied also to tangibles: *High-tension wires are a potential source of danger.* —**Ant. 1.** open, active.

la′tent ambigu′ity, *Law.* uncertainty that arises when a seemingly clear written instrument is matched against an extrinsic fact, as when a description of something being sold fits two different items. [1840–50]

la′tent con′tent, *Psychoanal.* the hidden meaning of a fantasy or dream, discoverable by analysis of the content of the dream.

la′tent func′tion, *Sociol.* any function of an institution or other social phenomenon that is unintentional and often unrecognized. Cf. **manifest function.** [1945–50]

la′tent heat′, *Physics.* heat absorbed or radiated during a change of phase at constant temperature and pressure. Cf. **heat of fusion, heat of vaporization.** [1750–60]

la′tent im′age, *Photog.* an invisible image, produced on a sensitized emulsion by exposure to light, that will emerge in development.

la′tent pe′riod, **1.** Also, **latency period.** *Pathol.* the interval between exposure to a carcinogen, toxin, or disease-causing organism and development of a consequent disease. **2.** *Physiol.* the interval between stimulus and reaction. Also called **latency.** [1830–40]

la′tent root′, *Math., Now Rare.* See **characteristic root** (def. 2). [1880–85]

la′tent strabis′mus, *Ophthalm.* the tendency, controllable by muscular effort, for one or both eyes to exhibit strabismus.

lat•er•ad (lat′ə rad′), *adv. Anat.* toward the side. [1805–15; < L *later-* (s. of *latus* side) + -AD⁹]

lat•er•al (lat′ər əl), *adj.* **1.** of or pertaining to the side; situated at, proceeding from, or directed to a side: *a lateral view.* **2.** pertaining to or entailing a position, office, etc., that is different but equivalent or roughly equivalent in status, as distinguished from a promotion or demotion: *a lateral move.* **3.** *Phonet.* articulated so that the breath passes on either or both sides of the tongue, as *l.* —*n.* **4.** a lateral part or extension, as a branch or shoot. **5.** *Mining.* a small drift off to the side of a principal one. **6.** *Phonet.* a lateral speech sound. **7.** *Football.* See **lateral pass.** —*v.i.* **8.** *Football.* to throw a lateral pass. **9.** to move laterally or sideways: *migrating birds lateraling down into Cape May.* —*v.t.* **10.** *Football.* to throw (the ball) in a lateral pass. [1590–1600; < L *laterālis* of the side, equiv. to *later-* (s. of *latus*) side + *-ālis* -AL¹] —**lat′er•al•ly,** *adv.*

lat′eral bud′, *Bot.* See **axillary bud.** [1890–95]

lat′eral canal′, **1.** a canal running parallel to a stream that is inconvenient or impossible to navigate. **2.** one of a number of irrigation canals distributing water from a main canal.

lat′eral chain′, *Chem.* See **side chain.**

lat′eral fis′sure, *Anat.* the fissure separating the frontal, temporal, and parietal lobes of the cerebrum. Also called **fissure of Sylvius, Sylvian fissure.**

lat•er•al•i•ty (lat′ə ral′i tē), *n.* **1.** the use of one hand in preference to the other. Cf. **handedness. 2.** the dominance or superior development of one side of the body or brain. [1640–50; LATERAL + -ITY]

lat•er•al•i•za•tion (lat′ər ə lə zā′shən), *n.* functional specialization of the brain, with some skills, as language, occurring primarily in the left hemisphere and others, as the perception of visual and spatial relationships, occurring primarily in the right hemisphere. [1885–90; LATERAL + -IZATION]

lat′eral line′, the line, or system of lines, of sensory structures along the head and sides of fishes and amphibians, by which the animal is believed to detect water current and pressure changes and vibrations. See diag. under **fish.** [1865–70]

lat′eral lisp′, *Phonet.* See under **lisp** (def. 2).

lat′eral magnifica′tion, *Optics.* the ratio of the height of the image to the height of the object in a lens or other optical system. Also called **transverse magnification.**

lat′eral mer′istem, meristem located along the sides of a part, as a stem or root.

lat′eral moraine′, *Geol.* a moraine formed at the side of a glacier.

lat′eral pass′, *Football.* a short pass thrown or tossed parallel to the line of scrimmage or slightly backward from the position of the passer. [1930–35]

lat′eral resist′ance, *Naval Archit.* resistance to sidewise motion caused by wind pressure, supplied by the immersed portion of a hull of a vessel.

lat′eral sys′tem, a system of coding navigational aids by shape, color, and number, according to the side of a channel they occupy and their relative position along that side. Cf. **cardinal system.** [1880–85]

Lat•er•an (lat′ər ən), *n.* the church of St. John Lateran, the cathedral church of the city of Rome; the church of the pope as bishop of Rome.

La′teran Coun′cil, *Rom. Cath. Ch.* any of the five ecumenical councils (1123, 1139, 1179, 1215, 1512–17) held in the Lateran Palace.

Lat′eran Pal′ace, a palace in Rome used as the papal residence from the 4th century A.D. to the removal of the papal court to Avignon, rebuilt in 1586, and now a museum for classical and Christian antiques.

Lat′er Han′, the Han dynasty after the interregnum A.D. 9–25. Cf. **Han** (def. 1), **Earlier Han.**

lat•er•i•grade (lat′ər i grād′), *adj.* having a sideways manner of moving, as a crab. [1750–60; *lateri-* (comb. form of L *latus*, s. *later-*) side, flank (see -I-) + -GRADE]

lat•er•ite (lat′ə rīt′), *n. Geol.* **1.** a reddish ferruginous soil formed in tropical regions by the decomposition of the underlying rocks. **2.** a similar soil formed of materials deposited by water. **3.** any soil produced by the decomposition of the rocks beneath it. [1800–10; < L *later* brick, tile + -ITE¹] —**lat•er•it•ic** (lat′ə rit′ik), *adj.*

lat•er•i•tious (lat′ə rish′əs), *adj.* of the color of brick; brick-red. Also, **lat′er•i′ceous.** [1650–60; < L *lateritius* of brick, equiv. to *later* brick + *-icius* adj. suffix denoting materials; see -ITIOUS]

lat•est (lā′tist), *adj. a superl. of* **late** *with* **later** *as compar.* **1.** most recent; current: *latest fashions.* **2.** last. —*adv.* **3. at the latest,** not any later than (a specified time): *Be at the airport by 7 o'clock at the latest.* —*n.* **4. the latest,** the most recent news, development, disclosure, etc.: *This is the latest in personal computers.* [1375–1425; late ME; see LATE, -EST]

late′ wood′, summerwood. [1925–30]

la•tex (lā′teks), *n., pl.* **lat•i•ces** (lat′ə sēz′), **la•tex•es. 1.** a milky liquid in certain plants, as milkweeds, euphorbias, poppies, or the plants yielding India rubber, that coagulates on exposure to air. **2.** *Chem.* any emulsion in water of finely divided particles of synthetic rubber or plastic. [1655–65; < NL, special use of L *latex* water, juice, liquid]

la′tex paint′, paint that has a latex binder and can be removed while it is wet by applying water. Also called **rubber-base paint, water-base paint.** [1950–55]

lath (lath, läth), *n., pl.* **laths** (lathz, laths, läthz, läths), *v.* —*n.* **1.** a thin, narrow strip of wood, used with other strips to form latticework, a backing for plaster or stucco, a support for slates and other roofing materials, etc. **2.** a group or quantity of such strips. **3.** work consisting of such strips. **4.** wire mesh or the like used in place of wooden laths as a backing for plasterwork. **5.** a thin, narrow, flat piece of wood used for any purpose. —*v.t.* **6.** to cover or line with laths. [bef. 1000; ME *la(th)the*; r. ME *latt*, OE *lætt*; c. G *Latte*, D *lat*] —**lath′-like′,** *adj.*

lathe (lāth), *n., v.,* **lathed, lath•ing.** —*n.* **1.** a machine for use in working wood, metal, etc., that holds the material and rotates it about a horizontal axis against a tool that shapes it. —*v.t.* **2.** to cut, shape, or otherwise treat on a lathe. [1300–50; ME: frame, stand, lathe; cf. ON *hlath* stack (see LADE), Dan *-lad* in *væverlad* weaver's batten, *savelad* saw bench]



woodworking lathe (def. 1)
A, headstock; B, tool rest; C, tailstock; D, motor

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