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dis·tin·gué (dēs'tāng-gā', dīs'-, dī-stāng/gā) *adj.* Distinguished in appearance, manner, or bearing. [French, past participle of *distinguer*, to distinguish, from Old French. See **DISTINGUISH**.]

dis·tin·guish (dī-stīng/gwīsh) *v.* -guished, -guish·ing, -guish·es —*tr.* 1. To perceive as being different or distinct. 2. To perceive distinctly; discern: *distinguished the masts of ships on the horizon*. 3. To make noticeable or different; set apart. 4. To cause (oneself) to be eminent or recognized: *They have distinguished themselves as dedicated social workers*. —*intr.* To perceive or indicate differences; discriminate: *distinguish between right and wrong*. [Alteration of obsolete *distingue*, from Middle English *distinguen*, from Old French *distinguer*, from Latin *distinguerē*, to separate. See **steig-** in Appendix I.] —**dis·tin·guish·a·ble** *adj.* —**dis·tin·guish·a·bly** *adv.*

dis·tin·guished (dī-stīng/gwīsh't) *adj.* 1. Characterized by excellence or distinction; eminent. 2. Dignified in conduct or appearance.

Dis·tin·guished Conduct Medal (dī-stīng/gwīsh't) *n.* *Abbr.* DCM A British military decoration for distinguished conduct in the field.

Distinguished Flying Cross *n.* *Abbr.* DFC 1. A U.S. military decoration awarded for heroism or extraordinary achievement in aerial combat. 2. A British military decoration awarded to officers of the Royal Air Force for extraordinary achievement.

Distinguished Service Cross *n.* *Abbr.* DSC 1. A U.S. Army decoration awarded for exceptional heroism in combat. 2. A British military decoration awarded to officers of the Royal Navy for gallantry in action.

Distinguished Service Medal *n.* *Abbr.* DSM 1. A U.S. military decoration awarded for distinguished performance in a duty of great responsibility. 2. A British military decoration awarded to noncommissioned officers and men in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines for distinguished conduct in war.

Distinguished Service Order *n.* *Abbr.* DSO A British military decoration for gallantry in action.

dis·tort (dī-stōrt') *tr.v.* -tort·ed, -tort·ing, -torts 1. To twist out of a proper or natural relation of parts; misshape. 2. To give a false or misleading account of; misrepresent. 3. To cause to work in a twisted or disorderly manner; pervert. [Latin *distorquere*, *distort-*: *dis-*, apart; see **DIS-** + *torquere*, to twist; see **terk-** in Appendix I.] —**dis·tort·er** *n.*

Synonyms *distort, twist, deform, contort, warp* These verbs mean to alter the form or character of something, usually disadvantageously. To *distort* is to change the physical shape of something, as by torsion or exaggeration of certain features, or to misconstrue the meaning of something: "The human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things" (Francis Bacon). *Twist* applies to distortion of form or meaning: *twisted his mouth in pain*; *accused me of twisting her words*. *Deform* refers to change that disfigures and often implies the loss of desirable qualities such as beauty: *erosion that deformed the landscape*. *Contort* implies violent change that produces unnatural or grotesque effects: *contorted her face with rage*. *Warp* can refer to turning from a flat or straight form or from a true course or direction: *floorboards that had warped over the years*; *judgment warped by prejudice*.

dis·tor·tion (dī-stōr'shən) *n.* 1a. The act or an instance of distorting. b. The condition of being distorted. 2. A statement that twists fact; a misrepresentation. 3. A change in the shape of an image resulting from imperfections in an optical system, such as a lens. 4. *Electronics* a. An undesired change in the waveform of a signal. b. A consequence of such a change, especially a lack of fidelity in reception or reproduction. 5. *Psychology* The modification of unconscious impulses into forms acceptable by conscious or dreaming perception. —**dis·tor·tion·al**, **dis·tor·tion·ar·y** *adj.*

dis·tor·tive (dī-stōr'tiv) *adj.* Serving to distort: *harsh and distortive peaks in the recorded music*; *a robust forissimo without distortive vibration*.

dis·tract (dī-strākt') *tr.v.* -tract·ed, -tract·ing, -tracts 1. To cause to turn away from the original focus of attention or interest; divert. 2. To pull in conflicting emotional directions; unsettle. [Middle English *distraction*, from Latin *distrahere*, *distract-*, to pull away: *dis-*, apart; see **DIS-** + *trahere*, to draw.] —**dis·tract·i·bil·i·ty** *n.* —**dis·tract·i·ble** *adj.* —**dis·tract·ing·ly** *adv.* —**dis·tract·ive** *adj.*

dis·tract·ed (dī-strākt'ēd) *adj.* 1. Having the attention diverted. 2. Suffering conflicting emotions; distraught. —**dis·tract·ed·ly** *adv.*

dis·tract·er also **dis·tract·or** (dī-strākt'ər) *n.* One of the incorrect answers presented as a choice in a multiple-choice test.

dis·trac·tion (dī-strākt'shən) *n.* 1. The act of distracting or the condition of being distracted. 2. Something, especially an amusement, that distracts. 3. Extreme mental or emotional disturbance; obsession: *loved the puppy to distraction*.

dis·trac·tor (dī-strākt'ər) *n.* Variant of **distracter**.

dis·train (dī-strān') *v.* -trained, -train·ing, -trains *Law* —*tr.* 1. To seize and hold (property) to compel payment or reparation, as of debts. 2. To seize the property of (a person) in order to compel payment of debts; distress. —*intr.* To levy a distress. [Middle English *distreinen*, from Old French *distreindre*, *distreign-*, from Medieval Latin *distringere*, *distinct-*, from Latin, to hinder: *dis-*, apart; see **DIS-** + *stringere*, to draw tight; see **streig-** in Appendix I.] —**dis·train·a·ble** *adj.* —**dis·train·ment** *n.* —**dis·train·or**, **dis·train·er** *n.*

dis·train·ee (dīs'trā-nē') *n.* *Law* One that has been distrained.

dis·traint (dī-strānt') *n.* *Law* The act or process of distraining; distress. [From **DISTRAIN** (on the model of such pairs as *constrain*, *constrain*).]

dis·trait (dī-strā') *adj.* Inattentive or preoccupied, especially because

of anxiety: "When she did not occupy her accustomed chair at the seminar, Freud felt uneasy and distraught" (Times Literary Supplement). [Middle English, from Old French, past participle of *distraire*, to distract, from Latin *distrahere*. See **DISTRACT**.]

dis·traught (dī-strōt') *adj.* 1. Deeply agitated, as from emotional conflict. 2. Mad; insane. [Middle English, alteration of *distraict*, past participle of *distraicten*, to distract. See **DISTRACT**.]

dis·tress (dī-strēs') *tr.v.* -tressed, -tress·ing, -tress·es 1. To cause strain, anxiety, or suffering to. See synonyms at **trouble**. 2. *Law* To hold the property of (a person) against the payment of debts. 3. To mar or otherwise treat (an object or fabric, for example) to give the appearance of an antique or of heavy prior use: "There are the fakes—new rugs which have been intentionally distressed for an older look" (Hatfield MA Valley Advocate). 4. *Archaic* To constrain or overcome by harassment. ♦ *n.* 1. Anxiety or mental suffering. 2a. Severe strain resulting from exhaustion or an accident. b. Acute physical discomfort. c. Physical deterioration, as of a highway, caused by hard use over time: *pavement distress*. 3. The condition of being in need of immediate assistance: *a motorist in distress*. 4. *Law* a. The act of distraining or seizing to compel payment. b. The goods thus seized. [Middle English *distressen*, from Old French *distresser*, from *distresse*, constraint, from Vulgar Latin **districtia*, from Latin *districtus*, past participle of *distringere*, to hinder. See **DISTRAIN**.] —**dis·tress·ing·ly** *adv.*

dis·tressed (dī-strēs't) *adj.* 1. Suffering distress: *the distressed parents of wayward youths*. 2. Damaged or previously used: *distressed merchandise*. 3. Having been foreclosed and offered for sale, usually at a price below market value: *distressed real estate*. 4. Intentionally marred or faded to convey an antique or used look: *distressed furniture*; *distressed denim*.

dis·tress·ful (dī-strēs'fəl) *adj.* Causing or experiencing distress. —**dis·tress·ful·ly** *adv.* —**dis·tress·ful·ness** *n.*

distress signal *n.* An international signal used by a distressed ship or aircraft to request help, as by radio broadcasts, flags, or flares.

dis·trib·u·tar·y (dī-strīb'yə-tēr'ē) *n., pl.* -ies A branch of a river that flows away from the main stream.

dis·trib·ute (dī-strīb'yūt) *v.* -ut·ed, -ut·ing, -utes —*tr.* 1. To divide and dispense in portions. 2a. To supply (goods) to retailers. b. To deliver or pass out: *distributing handbills on the street*. 3a. To spread or diffuse over an area; scatter: *distribute grass seed over the lawn*. b. To apportion so as to be evenly spread throughout a given area: *180 pounds of muscle that were well distributed over his 6-foot frame*. 4. To separate into categories; classify. 5. *Logic* To use (a term) so as to include all individuals or entities of a given class. —*intr.* *Mathematics* To be distributive. [Middle English *distributen*, from Latin *distribuere*, *distribūt-*: *dis-*, apart; see **DIS-** + *tribuere*, to give; see **TRIBUTE**.]

Synonyms *distribute, divide, dispense, dole, deal, ration* These verbs mean to give out in portions or shares. *Distribute* is the least specific: *The government distributed land to settlers*. *Divide* implies giving out portions, often equal, on the basis of a plan or purpose: *The estate will be divided among the heirs*. *Dispense* stresses the careful determination of portions, often according to measurement or weight: *The pharmacist dispensed the medication*. *Dole*, often followed by *out*, implies careful, usually sparing measurement of portions. It can refer to the distribution of charity: *The city doled out surplus milk to the needy*. It can also suggest lack of generosity: *The professor doled out meager praise to the students*. *Deal* implies orderly, equitable distribution, often piece by piece: *I dealt five cards to each player*. *Ration* refers to equitable division in limited portions of scarce, often necessary, items: *The government rationed fuel during the war*.

dis·tri·bu·tion (dīs'trī-byū'shən) *n.* 1. The act of distributing or the condition of being distributed; apportionment. 2. Something distributed; an allotment. 3. The act of dispersing or the condition of being dispersed; diffusion. 4a. The geographic occurrence or range of an organism. b. The geographic occurrence or range of a custom, usage, or other feature. 5. Division into categories; classification. 6. The process of marketing and supplying goods, especially to retailers. 7. A spatial or temporal array of objects or events: *the distribution of theaters on Broadway*. 8. *Law* The division of an estate or property among rightful heirs. 9. *Statistics* A set of numbers and their frequency of occurrence collected from measurements over a statistical population. 10. *Mathematics* A generalized function used in the study of partial differential equations. —**dis·tri·bu·tion·al** *adj.*

dis·trib·u·tive (dī-strīb'yū-tiv) *adj.* 1a. Of, relating to, or involving distribution. b. Serving to distribute. 2. *Mathematics* Of or relating to a rule that the same product results in multiplication when performed on a set of numbers as when performed on members of the set individually. If $a \times (b + c) = a \times b + a \times c$, then $\times$ is distributive over $+$. 3. *Grammar* Referring to each individual or entity of a group separately rather than collectively, as every in the sentence *Every employee attended the meeting*. ♦ *n.* A distributive word or term. —**dis·trib·u·tive·ly** *adv.* —**dis·trib·u·tive·ness** *n.*

distributive education *n.* An educational program in which students receive both classroom instruction and on-the-job training.

dis·trib·u·tor (dī-strīb'yū-tər) *n.* 1. One that distributes, especially a device that applies electric current in proper sequence to the spark plugs of an engine. 2. One that markets or sells merchandise, especially a wholesaler. —**dis·trib·u·tor·ship** *n.*

dis·trict (dīs'trīkt) *n.* 1. A division of an area, as for administrative purposes. 2. A region or locality marked by a distinguishing feature: *went to the lake district for their vacation*. ♦ *tr.v.* -trict·ed, -trict·ing, -tricts To mark off or divide into districts. [French, from Old French,



distortion
St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, Austria, reflected in a glass building

ă pat	oi boy
à pay	ou out
âr care	ōo took
ā father	ōo boot
è pet	ū cut
é be	ûr urge
ī pit	th thin
ī pie	th this
īr pier	hw which
ô pot	zh vision
ô toe	ə about, item
ô paw	♦ regionalism

Stress marks: ' (primary);
' (secondary), as in
dictionary (dīk'shə-nēr'ē)