

T. Millspaugh

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it takes either a singular or plural verb, depending on the number of the noun in the prepositional phrase that follows: *A small percentage of the workers are unskilled. A large percentage of the crop has spoiled.*

per-centile (pər-sen'til) *n.* One of a set of points on a scale arrived at by dividing a group into parts in order of magnitude.

per-cep-ti-ble (pər-sēp'tə-bəl) *adj.* Capable of being perceived. — **per-cep-ti-bil'i-ty** *n.*

per-cep-tion (pər-sēp'shən) *n.* 1. The process, act, or result of perceiving. 2a. Insight or knowledge gained by perceiving. b. The capacity for such insight. [*Lat. percipere, percept-, perceive.*]

per-cep-tive (pər-sēp'tiv) *adj.* 1. Of or relating to perception. 2a. Having the ability to perceive. b. Marked by discernment; insightful. — **per-cep-tive-ly** *adv.*

per-cep-tu-al (pər-sēp'chōō-əl) *adj.* Of or involving perception.

perch (purch) *n.* 1. A rod or branch serving as a roost for a bird. 2a. A place for resting or sitting. b. A secure position. [*Lat. pertica, stick, pole.*] — **perch** *v.*

perch (purch) *n., pl. perch* or *-es* 1. An edible freshwater fish. 2. Any of various similar or related fishes. [*Gk. perke.*]

per-chance (pər-chāns') *adv.* Perhaps.

per-cep-ti-ent (pər-sēp'tē-ant) *adj.* Having the power of perceiving. [*Lat. percipere, perceive.*] — **per-cep-ti-ence** *n.*

per-co-late (pūr'kə-lāt') *v.* -lat-ed, -lat-ing 1. To pass or cause to pass through a porous substance. 2. To make (coffee) in a percolator. [*Lat. percolare.*] — **per-co-la-tion** *n.*

per-co-la-tor (pūr'kə-lā'tar) *n.* A coffee pot in which boiling water is filtered repeatedly through a basket of ground coffee.

per-cus-sion (pər-kūsh'ən) *n.* 1. The striking together of two bodies, esp. when noise is produced. 2. The sound, vibration, or shock caused by percussion. 3. The act of detonating a percussion cap in a firearm. 4. *Mus.* Percussion instruments or their players. [*Lat. percussere, percuss-, strike hard.*] — **per-cus-sive** *adj.*

percussion cap *n.* A thin metal cap containing gunpowder or another detonator that explodes on being struck.

percussion instrument *n.* An instrument, such as a drum, piano, or maraca, in which sound is produced by one object striking another or by being scraped or shaken. — **per-cus-sion-ist** *n.*

per di-em (pər dē'əm, dī'əm) *adv.* Per day. *n.* An allowance for daily expenses. [*Lat., by the day.*]

per-di-tion (pər-dish'ən) *n.* 1. Eternal damnation. 2. Hell. [*Lat. perdere, lose: per-, completely + dare, give.*]

per-e-gri-nate (pēr'f-grē-nāt') *v.* -nat-ed, -nat-ing. To journey or travel from place to place. [*Lat. peregrinus, foreigner.*] — **per-e-gri-na-tion** *n.*

per-e-grine falcon (pēr'ə-grīn, -grēn') *n.* A large, widely distributed falcon much used in falconry.

per-emp-to-ry (pə-rēmp'tə-rē) *adj.* 1. Precluding further debate or action: a *peremptory decree*. 2. Not allowing contradiction or refusal; imperative. 3. Imperious; dictatorial.

[*Lat. peremptorius.*] — **per-emp-to-ri-ly** *adv.* — **per-emp-to-ri-ness** *n.*

per-en-ni-al (pə-rēn'ē-əl) *adj.* 1. Lasting through the year or many years. 2a. Lasting indefinitely; enduring. b. Recurring regularly. 3. *Bot.* Living three or more years. *n.* *Bot.* A perennial plant. [*Lat. perennis.*] — **per-en-ni-al-ly** *adv.*

per-fect (pūr'fikt) *adj.* 1. Lacking nothing essential. 2. Being without defect or blemish: a *perfect specimen*. 3. Completely suited for a particular purpose; ideal. 4. Accurate; exact. 5. Complete; utter: a *perfect fool*. 6. *Gram.* Of or constituting a verb form expressing action completed prior to a fixed point of reference in time. *n.* *Gram.* 1. The perfect tense. 2. A verb in this tense. *v.* (pər-fēkt'). To bring to perfection or completion. [*Lat. perficere, ppart. of perficere, finish.*] — **per-fect'i-bil'i-ty** *n.* — **per-fect'i-ble** *adj.* — **per-fect-ly** *adv.* — **per-fect-ness** *n.*

Syns: perfect, consummate, faultless, flawless, impeccable **Ant:** imperfect **adj.**

Usage: Perfect has often been described as an absolute term, hence not allowing modification by *quite* and other qualifiers of degree. But the qualification of perfect has numerous reputable precedents. Perfect freely allows comparison in examples such as *There could be no more perfect spot for the picnic*, where it is used to mean "ideal for the purposes."

per-fec-tion (pər-fēk'shən) *n.* 1. The quality or condition of being perfect. 2. The act or process of perfecting. 3. One considered perfect.

per-fec-tion-ism (pər-fēk'shō-niz'm) *n.* A propensity for being displeased with anything not perfect or not meeting very high standards. — **per-fec-tion-ist** *adj. & n.*

per-fi-dy (pūr'fī-dē) *n., pl. -dies.* Deliberate breach of faith; treachery. [*Lat. perfidus, treacherous.*] — **per-fid'i-ous** (pər-fīd'ē-əs) *adj.* — **per-fid'i-ous-ly** *adv.*

per-for-rate (pūr'fō-rāt') *v.* -rat-ed, -rat-ing 1. To pierce, punch, or bore a hole or holes in. 2. To pierce or stamp with rows of holes to allow easy separation. [*Lat. perforare.*] — **per-for-a-tion** *n.*

per-force (pər-fōrs', -fōrs') *adv.* By necessity; by force of circumstance.

per-form (pər-fōrm') *v.* 1. To begin and carry through to completion; do. 2. To carry out; fulfill. 3. To give a public performance (of). [*OFr. performir.*] — **per-form'er** *n.*

per-form-ance (pər-fōrm'əns) *n.* 1. The act or manner of performing. 2. A presentation, as of a play or dance, before an audience. 3. Something performed; accomplishment.

per-fume (pūr'fyōōm', pər-fyōōm') *n.* 1. A fragrant substance, esp. a volatile liquid distilled from flowers or prepared synthetically. 2. A pleasing scent or odor. See **Syns at fragrance**. *v.* (pər-fyōōm') -fumed, -fum-ing. To fill with fragrance. [*Ital. parfumare, fill with smoke.*]

per-fum-er-y (pər-fyōō'mə-rē) *n., pl. -ies* 1. Perfumes. 2. An establishment that makes or sells perfume.

per-func-to-ry (pər-fūŋk'tō-rē) *adj.* Done routinely and with little care. [*Lat. perfungi, get through with.*] — **per-func-to-ri-ly** *adv.* — **per-func-to-ri-ness** *n.*

Perga-mum (pūr'gə-məm) An ancient Greek