



RANDOM HOUSE
WEBSTER'S
unabridged
dictionary



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SECOND EDITION

RANDOM HOUSE
REFERENCE

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gender-specific (jen'dər spi sif'ik), *adj.* for, characteristic of, or limited to either males or females: *Left-handedness is not gender-specific.*

gene (jēn), *n.* the basic physical unit of heredity; a linear sequence of nucleotides along a segment of DNA that provides the coded instructions for synthesis of RNA, which, when translated into protein, leads to the expression of hereditary characters. [1911; < G. Gen. (1909), appar. abstracted from *gen -oem*; introduced by Danish geneticist Wilhelm L. Johannsen (1857-1927)]

Gene (jēn), *n.* a male given name, form of **Eugene**.

geneal. genealogy.

genealogical relationship, *Historical Ling.* See **genealogical tree**.

genealogical tree. See **family tree**. [1805-15]

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an international organization formed in 1948 to establish common rules governing tariffs and to eliminate restrictive trade practices. *Abbr.*: GATT

General American, any form of American English speech considered to show few regional peculiarities, usually including all dialects except for eastern New England, New York City, Southern, and South Midland (no longer in technical use). *Abbr.*: GA [1930-35, *Amer.*]

General Assembly, 1. the legislature in some states of the U.S. 2. the main deliberative body of the United Nations, composed of delegations from member nations. [1610-20, *Amer.*]

General average, *Insurance*. any damage or loss to a ship or its cargo voluntarily sustained, as freight jettisoned in a storm, by all parties to a voyage (distinguished from particular average). *Abbr.*: G.A. [1690-1700]

General aviation, aviation including business flying, sports flying, and crop dusting.

General Court, 1. the state legislature of Massachusetts or New Hampshire. 2. (in colonial New England) any of various local assemblies having both legislative and judicial powers. [1620-30, *Amer.*]

General court-martial, a court-martial having the authority to try any offense against military law and to impose a sentence of dishonorable discharge or of death when provided by law. [1805-15]

General-cy (jen'ər əl sē), *n.* the office or tenure of a general. [1860-65; *GENERAL* + *-cy*]

General delivery, 1. a postal service that delivers mail to a specific post office where it is held for pickup by the addressee. 2. the postal department that handles such mail. [1830-40, *Amer.*]

General discharge, *Mil.* 1. a discharge from military service of a person who has served honorably but who has not met all the conditions of an honorable discharge. 2. a certificate of such a discharge.

General election, 1. *U.S. Politics*. a. a regularly scheduled local, state, or national election in which voters elect officeholders. *Cf.* **primary** (def. 15). b. a state or national election, as opposed to a local election. 2. *Brit.* an election, which must be held at any time within five years of the last election, in which constituents elect members of the House of Commons. *Cf.* **by-election**. [1710-20, *Amer.*]

General headquarters, *U.S. Army*. the headquarters of the commanding officer of a large military force. *Abbr.*: GHQ, G.H.Q. [1855-60]

Generalissimo (jen'ər ə līs'ə mō'), *n.* pl. *-mos*. (in certain countries) the supreme commander of the armed forces. [1615-25; < It, superl. of *generale* *GENERAL*]

Generalist (jen'ər ə list), *n.* a person whose knowledge, aptitudes, and skills are applied to a field as a whole or to a variety of different fields (opposed to *specialist*). [1605-15; *GENERAL* + *-ist*]

General-ity (jen'ər ə lītē), *n.* pl. *-ties*. 1. an indefinite, unspecific, or undetailed statement: *to speak in generalities*. 2. a general principle, rule, or law. 3. the greater part or majority: *the generality of people*. 4. the state or quality of being general. [1400-50; late ME *generalite* < L *generalitās*. See *GENERAL*, *-ity*]

Generalism, *cliche*, *platitudin*, *banality*.

Generalization (jen'ər ə lə zā'shən), *n.* 1. the act or process of generalizing. 2. a result of this process; a general statement, idea, or principle. 3. *Logic*. a. a proposition asserting something to be true either of all members of a certain class or of an indefinite part of that class. b. the process of obtaining such propositions. 4. *Psychol.* a. Also called **stimulus generalization**, the act or process of responding to a stimulus similar to but distinct from the conditioned stimulus. b. Also called **response generalization**, the act or process of making a different but similar response to the same stimulus. c. Also called **mediated generalization**, the act or process of responding to a stimulus not physically similar to the conditioned stimulus and not previously encountered in conditioning. d. the act or process of perceiving similarity or relation between different stimuli, as between words, colors, sounds, lights, or feelings; the formation of a general notion. [1755-65; *GENERALIZE* + *-ation*]

Generalize (jen'ər ə līz'), *v.* *-ized, -izing*. —*v.t.* 1. to infer (a general principle, trend, etc.) from particular facts, statistics, or the like. 2. to infer or form (a general principle, opinion, conclusion, etc.) from only a few facts, examples, or the like. 3. to give a general rather than a specific or special character or form to. 4. to make general; bring into general use or knowledge. —*v.i.* 5. to form general principles, opinions, etc. 6. to deal, think, or speak in generalities. 7. to make general inferences. Also, *esp. Brit.*, **general-ize**. [1745-55; *GENERAL* + *-ize*] —**general-izable**, *adj.* —**general-izer**, *n.*

Generalized coordinates, *Physics*, the least number of coordinates needed to specify the state of a given system. [1880-85]

Generalized other, *Sociol.* an individual's internalized impression of societal norms and expectations.

General linguistics, the study of the characteristics of language in general rather than of a particular language; theoretical, rather than applied, linguistics.

General-ly (jen'ər ə lē), *adv.* 1. usually; commonly; ordinarily: *He generally comes home at noon*. 2. with respect to the larger part; for the most part: *a generally accurate interpretation of the facts*. 3. without reference to or disregarding particular persons, things, situations, etc., that may be an exception: *generally speaking*. [1250-1300; ME; see *GENERAL*, *-ly*]

General-ly. See **often**. —**Ant.** 1. seldom.

General-obligation bond (jen'ər ə ob'lī gā'shən), a bond issued by a state or city and backed by general tax revenue and the issuer's credit. *Cf.* **revenue bond**.

General officer, *Mil.* an officer ranking above colonel. [1635-45, *Amer.*]

General of the air force, the highest ranking officer in the U.S. Air Force.

General of the armies, *U.S. Army*. a special rank held by John J. Pershing, equivalent to general of the army.

General of the army, *U.S. Army*. the highest ranking military officer; the next rank above general. *Cf.* **fleet admiral**. [1940-45]

General orders, *Mil.* 1. a set of permanent orders from a headquarters establishing policy for a command or announcing official acts. 2. a set of permanent orders governing the duties and behavior of sentries on routine guard duty. *Cf.* **special order**. [1865-70]

General paralysis, *Pathol.* a syphilitic brain disorder characterized by chronic inflammation and degeneration of cerebral tissue resulting in mental and physical deterioration. Also called **general paresis**. [1890-95]

General partner, a partner with unlimited liability for the debts of the partnership. *Cf.* **special partner**. [1885-90, *Amer.*]

General partnership, a partnership in which each of the partners is fully liable for the firm's debts. *Cf.* **limited partnership**.

General Postal Union, former name of **Universal Postal Union**. *Abbr.*: GPU

General post office, (in the U.S. postal system) the main post office of a city, county, etc., that also has branch post offices. *Abbr.*: G.P.O., GPO [1650-60]

General practice. See **family practice**. [1815-25]

General practitioner, a medical practitioner whose practice is not limited to any specific branch of medicine or class of diseases. *Abbr.*: G.P. [1880-85]

General precession, *Astron.* the precession that results from both lunisolar precession and planetary precession; precession of the equinoxes.

General-purpose (jen'ər əl pūr'pəs), *adj.* useful in many ways; not limited in use or function: *a good general-purpose dictionary*. [1890-95]

General quarters, *Mil.* a condition of readiness for combat on a warship, during which crew members remain at their battle stations and have guns and ammunition ready for immediate loading.

General relativity, *Physics*. See under **relativity** (def. 2).

General rule, *Law*. See under **rule** (def. 10).

General semantics, a philosophical approach to language, developed by Alfred Korzybski, exploring the relationship between the form of language and its use and attempting to improve the capacity to express ideas. [1930-35]

General Services Administration, *U.S. Govt.* an independent agency, created in 1949, that manages federal property, records, construction, etc. *Abbr.*: GSA

General sessions, a court of general jurisdiction in criminal cases in some U.S. states. [1685-95]

Generalship (jen'ər əl ship'), *n.* 1. skill as commander of a large military force or unit. 2. the rank or functions of a general. 3. management or leadership. [1585-95; *GENERAL* + *-ship*]

General solution, *Math.* a solution to a differential equation that contains arbitrary, unevaluated constants. *Cf.* **particular solution**.

General staff, *Mil.* a group of officers who are without command and whose duty is to assist high commanders in planning and carrying out orders.

General store, a store, usually in a rural area, that sells a wide variety of merchandise, as clothing, food, or hardware, but is not divided into departments. [1625-35, *Amer.*]

General strike, a mass strike in all or many trades and industries in a section or in all parts of a country. [1800-10, *Amer.*]

General theory of relativity, *Physics*. See under **relativity** (def. 2). [1930-35]

Generate (jen'ər ə rāt'), *v.* *-ated, -ating*. —*v.t.* 1. to bring into existence; cause to be; produce. 2. to create a vital or natural process. 3. to create and distribute vitally and profusely: *He generates ideas that we all should consider. A good diplomat generates good will*. 4. to reproduce; procreate. 5. to produce by a chemical process. 6. *Math.* a. to trace (a figure) by the motion of a point, straight line, or curve. b. to act as base for all the elements of a given set: *The number 2 generates the set 2, 4, 8, 16*. 7. *Ling.* to produce or specify (a grammatical sentence or other construction or set of constructions) by the application of a rule or set of rules in general grammar. —*v.i.* 8. to reproduce; propagate. [1350-1400; ME < L *generātus* produced, ptp. of *generāre* to beget; see *GENUS*]

Generation (jen'ər ə rā'shən), *n.* 1. the entire body of individuals born and living at about the same time: *the postwar generation*. 2. the term of years, roughly 30 among human beings, accepted as the average period between the birth of parents and the birth of their offspring. 3. a group of individuals, most of whom are the same approximate age, having similar ideas, problems, attitudes, etc. *Cf.* **Beat Generation**, **Lost Generation**. 4. a group of individuals belonging to a specific category at the same time: *Chaplin belonged to the generation of silent-screen stars*. 5. a single step in natural descent, as of human beings, animals, or plants. 6. a form, type,

CONCISE PRONUNCIATION KEY: act, cāpe, dāre, pāt; set, ēqual; if, icē; ox, ōver, ōrder, oil, bōth, bōst; out, up, ūrge; child; sing; shoe; thin; that; zh as in treasure. a = a as in alone, e as in system, i as in easily, o as in gallop, u as in circus. * as in fire (fīr), hour (ōur), and n can serve as a syllable, as in cradle (krād'l) and button (but'n). See the full key inside the front cover.