New Oxford American Dictionary

Third Edition

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New Oxford American Dictionary

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Edited by

Angus Stevenson

Christine A. Lindberg

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Elizabeth J. Jewell

Frank Abate

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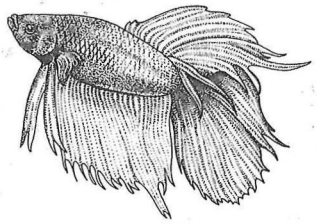
fight·ing chance ▶ n. a possibility of success if great effort is made: *they still have a fighting chance of clinching the title.*

figh t·ing fish (also **Siamese fighting fish**) ▶ n. a small labyrinth fish native to Thailand, the males of which fight vigorously. It has been bred in a variety of colors for fighting and for aquariums. ● *Betta splendens*, family Belontiidae.



fighting fish

fight·ing words ▶ plural n. informal words indicating a willingness to fight or challenge someone. ■ words expressing an insult, esp. of an ethnic, racial, or sexist nature.

fig leaf ▶ n. a leaf of a fig tree, often depicted as concealing the genitals in paintings and sculpture. ■ a thing designed to conceal a difficulty or embarrassment: *the amendment was just a fig leaf designed to cover the cracks in the party.*
– ORIGIN early 16th cent.: with reference to the story of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:7).

fig·ment /ˈfigmənt/ ▶ n. a thing that someone believes to be real but that exists only in their imagination: *it really was Ross and not* ***a figment of her*** *overheated* ***imagination.***
– ORIGIN late Middle English (denoting an invented statement or story): from Latin *figmentum*, related to *fingere* 'form, contrive.' Compare with FEIGN and FICTION. The current sense dates from the early 17th cent.

fi·gu·ra /fiˈgyŏŏrə/ ▶ n. (pl. **figurae** /-ˌrē/) (in literary theory) a person or thing representing or symbolizing a fact or ideal.
– ORIGIN mid 20th cent.: Latin, literally 'figure' (representing an early use of *figure* to denote an emblem or type).

fig·ur·al /ˈfigyərəl/ ▶ adj. **1** another term for FIGURATIVE (sense 1)). ■ (in postmodernist writing) relating to or denoting a form of signification that relies on imagery and association rather than on rational and linguistic concepts.
2 Art another term for FIGURATIVE (sense 2)).
– ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, or from late Latin *figuralis*, from *figura* 'form, shape' (see FIGURE).

fig·u·rant /ˈfigyərənt, ˌfigyəˈräNt/ ▶ n. (fem. **figurante** /ˌfigyəˈräntē, -ˈräNt/) a supernumerary actor.
– ORIGIN French, present participle of *figurer* 'to figure.'

fig·u·ra·tion /ˌfigyəˈrāsHən/ ▶ n. **1** ornamentation by means of figures or designs. ■ Music use of florid counterpoint: *the figuration of the accompaniment comes out too strongly.*
2 allegorical representation: *the figuration of "The Possessed" is much more complex* | *the opening parable may be read as a figuration of the main idea behind the novel.*
– ORIGIN Middle English (in the senses 'outline' and 'making of arithmetical figures'): from Latin *figuratio(n-)*, from *figurare* 'to form or fashion,' from *figura* (see FIGURE).

fig·ur·a·tive /ˈfigyərətiv/ ▶ adj. **1** departing from a literal use of words; metaphorical: *gold, in the figurative language of the people, was "the tears wept by the sun."*
2 (of an artist or work of art) representing forms that are recognizably derived from life.
– DERIVATIVES **fig·ur·a·tive·ly** adv., **fig·ur·a·tive·ness** n.
– ORIGIN Middle English: from late Latin *figurativus*, from *figurare* 'to form or fashion,' from *figura* (see FIGURE).

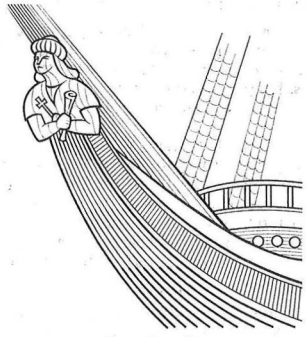
fig·ure /ˈfigyər/ ▶ n. **1** a number, esp. one that forms part of official statistics or relates to the financial performance of a company: *official census figures* | *a figure of 30,000 deaths annually from snakebite.* ■ a numerical symbol, esp. any of the ten in Arabic notation: *the figure 7.* ■ one of a specified number of digits making up a larger number, used to give a rough idea of the order of magnitude: *their market price runs into five figures* | [in combination] *a six-figure salary.* ■ an amount of money: *a figure of two thousand dollars.* ■ (**figures**) arithmetical calculations: *she has no* ***head for figures.***
2 a person's bodily shape, esp. that of a woman and when considered to be attractive: *she had always been so proud of her figure.* ■ a person seen indistinctly, esp. at a distance: *a backpacked figure appeared in the distance.* ■ a person of a particular kind, esp. one who is important or distinctive in some way: *Williams became something of a cult figure.* ■ a representation of a human or animal form in drawing or sculpture: *starkly painted figures.*
3 a shape defined by one or more lines in two dimensions (such as a circle or a triangle), or one or more surfaces in three dimensions (such as a sphere or a cuboid), either considered mathematically in geometry or used as a decorative design: *a red ground with white and blue geometric figures.* ■ a diagram or illustrative drawing, esp. in a book or magazine: *figure 1 shows an ignition circuit.* ■ Figure Skating a movement or series of movements following a prescribed pattern and often beginning and ending at the same point. ■ a pattern formed by the movements of a group of people, for example in square dancing or synchronized swimming, as part of a longer dance or display. ■ archaic the external form or shape of a thing.
4 Music a short succession of notes producing a single impression.
5 Logic the form of a syllogism, classified according to the position of the middle term.
▶ v. [no obj.] **1** be a significant and noticeable part of something: *the issue of nuclear policy* ***figured prominently in the talks.*** ■ (of a person) play a significant role in a situation or event: *he* ***figured largely in opposition to the bill.*** ■ (of a fictional character) play a part in a novel, play, or movie: *the four characters who* ***figure in*** *Ridley's play.*
2 [with obj.] calculate or work out (an amount or value) arithmetically.
3 [with clause] informal think, consider, or expect to be the case: *I* ***figure that*** *wearing a suit makes you look like a bank clerk* | [with obj.] *for years, teachers had figured him for a dullard.* ■ (of a recent event or newly discovered fact) be logical and unsurprising: *well, she supposed* ***that figured.***
4 [with obj.] represent (something) in a diagram or picture: *varieties of this Cape genus are figured from drawings made there.* ■ (usu. as adj. **figured**) embellish (something) with a pattern: *the floors were covered with figured linoleum.*
– PHRASES **figure of fun** a person who is considered ridiculous. **figure of speech** a word or phrase used in a nonliteral sense to add rhetorical force to a spoken or written passage: *calling her a crab is just a figure of speech.* **lose** (or **keep**) **one's figure** lose (or retain) a slim and attractive bodily shape.
– PHRASAL VERBS **figure on** informal count or rely on something happening or being the case in the future: *anyone thinking of salmon fishing should figure on paying $200 a day.* **figure something out** informal solve or discover the cause of a problem: *he was trying to figure out why the camera wasn't working.* **figure someone out** reach an understanding of a person's actions, motives, or personality.
– DERIVATIVES **fig·ure·less** adj.
– ORIGIN Middle English (in the senses 'distinctive shape of a person or thing,' 'representation of something material or immaterial,' and 'numerical symbol,' among others): from Old French *figure* (noun), *figurer* (verb), from Latin *figura* 'shape, figure, form'; related to *fingere* 'form, contrive.'

fig·ured bass ▶ n. Music a bass line with the intended harmonies indicated by figures rather than written out as chords, typical of continuo parts in baroque music.

fig·ure eight (Brit. **figure of eight**) ▶ n. an object or movement having the shape of the number eight.

fig·ure-ground ▶ adj. [attrib.] Psychology & Art relating to or denoting the perception of images by the distinction of objects from a background from which they appear to stand out, esp. in contexts where this distinction is ambiguous.

fig·ure·head /ˈfigyərˌhed/ ▶ n. **1** a nominal leader or head without real power.



figurehead 2

2 a carving, typically a bust or a full-length figure, set at the prow of an old-fashioned sailing ship.

fig·ure-hug·ging ▶ adj. (of a garment) fitting closely to the contours of a woman's body: *a low-cut, figure-hugging dress.*

fig·ure of mer·it ▶ n. a numerical expression representing the performance or efficiency of a given device, material, or procedure.

fig·ure skat·ing ▶ n. the competitive sport of ice skating in prescribed patterns (*figures*) and choreographed free skating.
– DERIVATIVES **fig·ure skat·er** n.

fig·ur·ine /ˌfigyəˈrēn/ ▶ n. a statuette, esp. one of a human form.
– ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from French, from Italian *figurina*, diminutive of *figura*, from Latin *figura* (see FIGURE).

fig wasp ▶ n. a tiny Old World wasp that lays its eggs inside the flower of the wild fig. It was introduced into the New World to effect cross-fertilization of the cultivated fig. ● *Blastophaga psenes*, family Agaonidae, superfamily Chalcidoidea.

fig·wort /ˈfigˌwərt, -ˌwôrt/ ▶ n. a widely distributed herbaceous plant with purplish-brown two-lobed flowers. It was formerly considered to be effective in the treatment of scrofula. ● Genus *Scrophularia*, family Scrophulariaceae (the **figwort family**): several species. Plants of this family have distinctive two-lobed flowers and include the snapdragons, toadflaxes, foxgloves, mulleins, monkey flowers, and speedwells.
– ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from obsolete *fig* 'piles' + WORT. The word originally denoted the pilewort, or lesser celandine, which was used as a treatment for piles; the current sense dates from the late 16th cent.

Fi·ji /ˈfējē/ a republic in the South Pacific consisting of a group of more than 800 islands, of which about a hundred are inhabited; pop. 944,700 (est. 2009); capital, Suva; languages, English (official), Fijian, and Hindi.

> First visited by Abel Tasman in 1643, the Fiji Islands became a British Crown Colony in 1874 and independent within the Commonwealth of Nations in 1970. In 1987, following a coup, Fiji became a republic and withdrew from the Commonwealth.

Fi·ji·an /ˌfējēən, fiˈjēən/ ▶ adj. of or relating to Fiji, its people, or language.
▶ n. **1** a native or inhabitant of Fiji, or a person of Fijian descent.
2 the Austronesian language of the indigenous people of Fiji.

fil·a·beg /ˈfilə,beg/ ▶ n. variant spelling of FILIBEG.

fil·a·gree /ˈfilə,grē/ ▶ n. variant spelling of FILIGREE.

fil·a·ment /ˈfiləmənt/ ▶ n. a slender threadlike object or fiber, esp. one found in animal or plant structures: *a filament of cellulose.* ■ a conducting wire or thread with a high melting point, forming part of an electric bulb or vacuum tube and heated or made incandescent by an electric current. ■ Botany the slender part of a stamen that supports the anther. ■ Astronomy a narrow streamer from the sun's chromosphere or in its corona. ■ Astronomy a narrow streamer of gas in an interstellar cloud or nebula.
– DERIVATIVES **fil·a·men·ta·ry** /ˌfilə'mentərē/ adj., **fil·a·ment·ed** adj., **fil·a·men·tous** /-ˈmentəs/ adj.
– ORIGIN late 16th cent.: from French, or from modern Latin *filamentum*, from late Latin *filare* 'to spin,' from Latin *filum* 'thread.'

fi·lar·i·a /fəˈle(ə)rēə/ ▶ n. (pl. **filariae** /-ˈle(ə)rē,ē, -ē,ī/) a threadlike parasitic nematode worm transmitted by biting flies and mosquitoes, causing filariasis and related diseases. ● Superfamily Filarioidea, class Phasmida.
– DERIVATIVES **fi·lar·i·al** /-ˈle(ə)rēəl/ adj.
– ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from modern Latin *Filaria* (former genus name), from Latin *filum* 'thread.'

fil·a·ri·a·sis /ˌfilə'rīəsəs/ ▶ n. Medicine a tropical disease caused by the presence of filarial worms, esp. in the lymph vessels where heavy infestation can result in elephantiasis.

fil·a·ture /ˈfiləˌCHər, -CHŏŏr/ ▶ n. the process of obtaining silk thread from silkworm cocoons. ■ an establishment where such activity takes place.
– ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: from French, from Italian *filatura*, from *filare* 'to spin.'

fil·bert /ˈfilbərt/ ▶ n. **1** a cultivated hazel tree that bears edible oval nuts. ● Genus *Corylus*, family Betulaceae: several species, in particular the **giant filbert** (*Corylus maxima*). ■ the nut of this tree.
2 (also **filbert brush**) a brush with bristles forming a flattened oval head, used in oil painting.
– ORIGIN Middle English *fylberd*, from Anglo-Norman French *philbert*, dialect French *noix de*