

# The New Oxford American Dictionary

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of the visual pigment rhodopsin and is released by the action of light.

—ORIGIN 1950s: shortening of RHODOPSIN.

**opsonin** |'apsə'nɪn| *n.* Biochemistry an antibody or other substance that binds to foreign microorganisms or cells, making them more susceptible to phagocytosis.

—DERIVATIVES **opsonic** |'apsə'nɪk| *adj.*

—ORIGIN early 20th cent.: from Latin *opsonare* 'buy provisions' (from Greek *opsōnein*) + *-in*¹.

**opsonize** |'apsə'nɪz| *v.* [trans.] Medicine make (a foreign cell) more susceptible to phagocytosis.

—DERIVATIVES **opsonization** |'apsə'nɪzə'shən| *n.* **opt** |'æpt| *v.* [intrans.] make a choice from a range of possibilities: *consumers will opt for low-priced goods* | [with infinitive] *students opting to continue with physics*.

► **opt out** choose not to participate in or carry on with something: *they opted out of the medical plan*.

—ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from French *opter*, from Latin *optare* 'choose, wish.'

**opt.** *abbr.* **abbr.** **optative.** **optical.** **optician.** **optics.** **optional.**

**optative** |'æptə'tɪv| Grammar *adj.* relating to or denoting a mood of verbs in Greek and other languages, expressing a wish, equivalent to English expressions *if only*.

► *n.* a verb in the optative mood.

■ (the optative) the optative mood.

—DERIVATIVES **optatively** *adv.*

—ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from French *optatif*, *-ive*, from late Latin *optativus*, from *optat-* 'chosen,' from the verb *optare* (see **OPT**).

**optic** |'æptɪk| *adj.* of or relating to the eye or vision.

► *n.* 1 a lens or other optical component in an optical instrument.

2 archaic humorous the eye.

—ORIGIN late Middle English: from French *optique* or medieval Latin *opticus*, from Greek *optikos*, from *optos* 'seen.'

**optical** |'æptɪkəl| *adj.* 1 of or relating to sight, esp. in relation to the physical action of light: *optical illusions*. ■ constructed to assist sight. ■ devised on the principles of optics.

2 Physics operating in or employing the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum: *optical telescopes*.

■ Electronics (of a device) requiring electromagnetic radiation for its operation: *integrated optical circuits*.

—DERIVATIVES **optically** |'ɪk(ə)lɪ| *adv.*

**optical activity** *n.* Chemistry the property (displayed by solutions of some compounds, notably many sugars) of rotating the plane of polarization of plane-polarized light.

**optical art** *n.* another term for **OP ART**.

**optical axis** *n.* Physics a line passing through the center of curvature of a lens or spherical mirror and parallel to the axis of symmetry.

■ Crystallography a direction in a doubly refracting crystal along which a light ray does not undergo double refraction.

**optical bench** *n.* a straight rigid bar, typically marked with a scale, to which lenses, light sources, and other optical components can be attached.

**optical brightener** *n.* a fluorescent substance added to detergents in order to produce a whitening effect on laundry.

**optical character recognition** (*abbr.*: **OCR**) *n.* the identification of printed characters using photoelectric devices and computer software.

**optical density** *n.* Physics the degree to which a refractive medium retards transmitted rays of light.

**optical disk** *n.* see **DISK** (sense 1).

**optical double** *n.* Astronomy two stars that are in the same line of sight as seen from the earth, but that may be at far different distances. See also **DOUBLE STAR**.

**optical fiber** *n.* a thin glass fiber through which light can be transmitted.

**optical glass** *n.* a very pure kind of glass used for lenses.

**optical illusion** *n.* an experience of seeming to see something that does not exist or that is other than it appears.

■ something that deceives one's eyes and causes such an experience.

**optical isomer** *n.* Chemistry each of two or more forms of a compound that have the same structure but are mirror images of each other and typically differ in optical activity.

—DERIVATIVES **optical isomerism** *n.*

**optical microscope** *n.* a microscope using visible light, typically viewed directly by the eye.

**optical path** *n.* Physics the distance of the path that in a vacuum would contain the same number of wavelengths as the actual path taken by a ray of light traveling through a medium.

**optical rotation** *n.* Chemistry the rotation of the

plane of polarization of plane-polarized light by an optically active substance.

**optical scanner** *n.* Electronics a device that performs optical character recognition and produces coded signals corresponding to the characters identified.

**optic axis** *n.* another term for **OPTICAL AXIS**.

**optic chiasma** *n.* (also **optic chiasm**) Anatomy the X-shaped structure formed at the point below the brain where the two optic nerves cross over each other.

**optic cup** *n.* Anatomy a cuplike outgrowth of the brain of an embryo that develops into the retina.

**optic disk** *n.* (also **optic disc**) Anatomy the raised disk on the retina at the point of entry of the optic nerve, lacking visual receptors and so creating a blind spot.

**optician** |'æptɪʃən| *n.* a person qualified to make and supply eyeglasses and contact lenses for correction of vision.

■ rare a person who makes or sells optical instruments.

—ORIGIN late 17th cent.: from French *opticien*, from medieval Latin *optica* 'optics.'

**optic lobe** *n.* Anatomy a lobe in the midbrain from which the optic nerve partly arises.

**optic nerve** *n.* Anatomy each of the second pair of cranial nerves, transmitting impulses to the brain from the retina at the back of the eye.

**optics** |'æptɪks| *n.* plural *n.* [usu. treated as sing.] the scientific study of sight and the behavior of light, or the properties of transmission and deflection of other forms of radiation.

**optic tract** *n.* Anatomy the pathway between the optic chiasma and the brain.

**optima** |'æptə'mə| plural form of **OPTIMUM**.

**optimal** |'æptə'məl| *adj.* best or most favorable; optimum: *seeking the optimal solution*.

—DERIVATIVES **optimality** |'æptə'mælɪtɪ| *n.*; **optimally** |-(ə)lɪ| *adv.*

—ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from Latin *optimus* 'best' + *-AL*.

**optimism** |'æptə'mɪzəm| *n.* 1 hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something: *the talks had been amicable, and there were grounds for optimism*.

2 Philosophy the doctrine, esp. as set forth by Leibniz, that this world is the best of all possible worlds.

■ the belief that good must ultimately prevail over evil in the universe.

—DERIVATIVES **optimist** *n.*

—ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: from French *optimisme*, from Latin *optimum* 'best thing' (see **OPTIMUM**).

**optimistic** |'æptə'mɪstɪk| *adj.* hopeful and confident about the future: *the optimistic mood of the sixties* | *he was optimistic about the deal*.

■ involving an overestimate: *previous estimates may be wildly optimistic*.

—DERIVATIVES **optimistically** |'ɪk(ə)lɪ| *adv.*

**optimize** |'æptə'maɪz| *v.* [trans.] make the best or most effective use of (a situation, opportunity, or resource): *to optimize viewing conditions the microscope should be correctly adjusted*.

■ Computing rearrange or rewrite data to improve efficiency of retrieval or processing.

—DERIVATIVES **optimization** |'æptə'maɪzə'shən| *n.*; **optimizer** *n.*

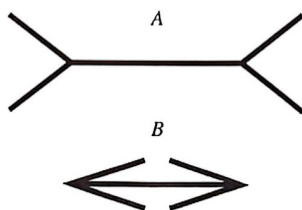
—ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from Latin *optimus* 'best' + *-IZE*.

**optimum** |'æptə'məm| *adj.* most conducive to a favorable outcome; best: *the optimum childbearing age*.

► *n.* (pl. **optima** |-mə| or **optimums**) the most favorable conditions or level for growth, reproduction, or success.

—ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from Latin, neuter (used as a noun) of *optimus* 'best.'

**option** |'æpsən| *n.* 1 a thing that is or may be chosen: *choose the cheapest options for supplying energy*.



(horizontal line A appears to be longer than horizontal line B, but in fact, they are of equal length).

optical illusion

■ [in sing.] the freedom, power, or right to choose something: *she was given the option of resigning or being dismissed* | *he has no option but to pay up*. ■ a right to buy or sell a particular thing at a specified price within a set time: *Columbia Pictures has an option on the script* | [with infinitive] *an option to buy the land*.

2 Football an offensive play in which the ball carrier has the option to run, pass, hand off, or lateral.

► *v.* [trans.] buy or sell an option on (something): *his second script will have been optioned by the time you read this*.

■ Sports transfer a player (to a minor league team) with an option to recall him.

—PHRASES **keep (or leave) one's options open** not commit oneself. **not be an option** not be feasible: *traveling by road is not an option here*.

—ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from French, or from Latin *optio(n-)*, from the stem of *optare* 'choose.' The verb dates from the 1930s.

**optional** |'æpsənəl| *adj.* available to be chosen but not obligatory: *a wide range of optional excursions is offered*.

—DERIVATIVES **optionality** |'æpsənə'lɪtɪ| *n.*; **optionally** *adv.*

**optocoupler** |'æptə'kʌplər| *n.* Electronics a device containing light-emitting and light-sensitive components, used to couple isolated circuits.

**optoelectronics** |'æptə'lekt'rɒnɪks; -ɛ,lek-| *n.* plural *n.* [treated as sing.] the branch of technology concerned with the combined use of electronics and light.

■ [treated as pl.] circuitry constructed using this technology.

—DERIVATIVES **optoelectronic** *adj.*

**optometer** |'æptə'mɪtər| *n.* an instrument for testing the refractive power of the eye.

—ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: from Greek *optos* 'seen' + *-METER*.

**optometrist** |'æptə'mɪtrɪst| *n.* a person who practices optometry.

**optometry** |'æptə'mɪtrɪ| *n.* the practice or profession of examining the eyes for visual defects and prescribing corrective lenses.

—DERIVATIVES **optometric** |'æptə'metrɪk| *adj.*

**optophone** |'æptə'fəʊn| *n.* an instrument that scans printed characters and converts them into sound, thus enabling the blind to read by ear.

—ORIGIN early 20th cent.: from Greek *optos* 'seen' + *-PHONE*.

**opt-out** *n.* an instance of choosing not to participate in something: *opt-outs from key parts of the treaty*.

**optronics** |'æpt'rɒnɪks| *n.* plural *n.* [treated as sing.] short for **OPTOELECTRONICS**.

—DERIVATIVES **optronic** *adj.*

**opulent** |'æpyələnt| *adj.* ostentatiously rich and luxurious or lavish: *the opulent comfort of a limousine*.

■ wealthy: *his more opulent tenants*.

—DERIVATIVES **opulence** *n.*; **opulently** *adv.*

—ORIGIN mid 16th cent. (in the sense 'wealthy, affluent'): from Latin *opulent-* 'wealthy, splendid,' from *opes* 'wealth.'

**Opuntia** |'ɒpʊnʃɪə| *n.* a cactus of a genus that comprises the prickly pears. See illustration at **PRICKLY PEAR**.

• Genus *Opuntia*, family Cactaceae.

—ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from Latin, a name given to a plant growing around *Opus* (stem *Opunt-*), a city in Locris in ancient Greece. The term was later used as a genus name.

**opus** |'ɒpəs| *n.* (pl. **opuses** or **opera** |'æp(ə)rə|)

1 Music a separate composition or set of compositions by a particular composer, usually ordered by date of publication: *The Gambler was Prokofiev's sixth opera, despite its early opus number*. See also **OP**.

2 any artistic work, esp. one on a large scale: *he was writing an opus on Mexico*.

—ORIGIN early 18th cent.: from Latin, literally 'work.'

**opuscule** |'ɒpəskʊl| (also **opusculum** |'ɒpəskʊlə|) *n.* (pl. **opuscules** or **opuscula** |-kʊlə|)

rare a small or minor literary or musical work.

—ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from French, from Latin *opusculum*, diminutive of *opus* 'work.'

**Opus Dei** |'ɒpəs 'daɪ| *n.* (**Opus Dei**) a Roman Catholic organization of laymen and priests founded in Spain in 1928 with the aim of reestablishing Christian ideals in society.

—ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from medieval Latin, literally 'work of God.'

**OR** *abbr.* **operational research.** ■ **Oregon** (in official postal use). ■ **Military, Brit.** other ranks (as opposed to commissioned officers).

**or**¹ |ɔr| *conj.* 1 used to link alternatives: *a cup of tea or coffee* | *are you coming or not?* | *she couldn't read or write* | *I either take taxis or walk everywhere* | *it doesn't matter whether the theory is right or wrong*.

**precipitous** |pri'sipjəs| ▶adj. 1 dangerously high or steep: *the precipitous cliffs of the North Atlantic coast.*  
 ■ (of a change to a worse situation or condition) sudden and dramatic: *the end of the war led to a precipitous decline in exports.*

2 (of an action) done suddenly and without careful consideration: *precipitous intervention.*

-DERIVATIVES **precipitously** adv.; **precipitousness** n.

-ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from obsolete French *précipiteux*, from Latin *praeceps*, *praecip(it)*- 'steep, headlong'; (see **PRECIPITATE**).

USAGE: See **usage** at **PRECIPITATE**.

**précis** |prə'se; 'præs| ▶n. (pl. same) a summary or abstract of a text or speech.

▶v. (**préciser** |prə'se; 'præs|, **précised** |prə'sed; 'præs|, **précising** |prə'seɪŋ; 'præsɪŋ|) [trans.] make a précis of (a text or speech).

-ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: from French *précis*, literally 'precise' (adjective used as a noun).

**precise** |pri'sis| ▶adj. marked by exactness and accuracy of expression or detail: *precise directions* | *I want as precise a time of death as I can get.*

■ (of a person) exact, accurate, and careful about details: *the director was precise with his camera positions.*  
 ■ [attrib.] used to emphasize that one is referring to an exact and particular thing: *at that precise moment the car stopped.*

-PHRASES **to be precise** used to indicate that one is now giving more exact or detailed information: *there were not many—five, to be precise.*

-DERIVATIVES **preciseness** n.

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *precis*, from Latin *prae-* 'cut short', from the verb *praecidere*, from *prae* 'in advance' + *caedere* 'to cut.'

**precisely** |pri'sisli| ▶adv. in exact terms; without vagueness: *the guidelines are precisely defined.*

■ exactly (used to emphasize the complete accuracy or truth of a statement): *at 2:00 precisely, the phone rang* | *kids will love it precisely because it will irritate their parents.*  
 ■ used as a reply to assert emphatic agreement with or confirmation of a statement: *"You mean it was a conspiracy?" "Precisely."*

**precisian** |pri'siʒən| ▶n. chiefly archaic a person who is rigidly precise or punctilious, esp. as regards religious rules.

-DERIVATIVES **precisianism** |-i'zəm| n.

**precision** |pri'siʒən| ▶n. the quality, condition, or fact of being exact and accurate: *the deal was planned and executed with military precision.*

■ [as adj.] marked by or adapted for accuracy and exactness: *a precision instrument.*  
 ■ technical refinement in a measurement, calculation, or specification, esp. as represented by the number of digits given: *this has brought an unprecedented degree of precision to the business of dating rocks* | *a precision of six decimal figures.*  
 Compare with **ACCURACY**.

-ORIGIN mid 18th cent.: from French *précision* or Latin *praecisio*(n-), from *praecidere* 'cut off' (see **PRECISE**).

**preclassical** |pre'klæsəkəl| ▶adj. of or relating to a time before a period regarded as classical, esp. in music, literature, or history.

**preclinical** |pre'klinikəl| ▶adj. medicine relating to or denoting a stage preceding a clinical stage, in particular:

■ relating to or denoting the first, chiefly theoretical, stage of a medical education: *preclinical students.*  
 ■ relating to or denoting the stage in a disease prior to the appearance of symptoms that make a diagnosis possible.  
 ■ relating to or denoting the stage of drug testing that precedes the clinical stage.

**preclude** |pri'klood| ▶v. [trans.] prevent from happening; make impossible: *the secret nature of his work precluded official recognition.*

■ (**preclude someone from**) (of a situation or condition) prevent someone from doing something: *his difficulties preclude him from leading a normal life.*

-DERIVATIVES **preclusion** |-kloodʒən| n.; **preclusive** |-kloodiv; -ziv| adj.

-ORIGIN late 15th cent. (in the sense 'bar (a route or passage)'): from Latin *praeccludere*, from *prae* 'before' + *cludere* 'to shut.'

**precocial** |pri'kōʃəl| Zoology ▶adj. (of a young bird or other animal) hatched or born in an advanced state and able to feed itself almost immediately. Also called **nidifugous**. Often contrasted with **ALTRICIAL**.  
 ■ (of a particular species) having such young.

▶n. a precocial bird.

-ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from modern Latin *Praecoces* (the name of a former division of birds, plural of Latin *praecox* 'mature before its time') + -IAL.

**precocious** |pri'kōʃəs| ▶adj. (of a child) having de-

veloped certain abilities or proclivities at an earlier age than usual: *he was a precocious, solitary boy.*

■ (of behavior or ability) indicative of such development: *a precocious talent for computing.* ■ (of a plant) flowering or fruiting earlier than usual.

-DERIVATIVES **precociously** adv.; **precociousness** n.; **precociously** |pri'kōʃəsli| n.

-ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from Latin *praecox*, *praecoc-* (from *praecoquere* 'ripen fully', from *prae* 'before' + *coquere* 'to cook') + -IOUS.

**precognition** |,prɛkə'niʃən| ▶n. 1 foreknowledge of an event, esp. foreknowledge of a paranormal kind.

2 Law, chiefly Scottish the preliminary examination of witnesses, esp. to decide whether there are grounds for a trial.

-DERIVATIVES **precognitive** |prɛ'kəgnɪv| adj. (sense 1).

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin *praecognitio*(n-), based on Latin *cognoscere* 'know.'

**precoital** |pre'kōɪtəl; ,prɛkō'etl| ▶adj. occurring before or as a preliminary to sexual intercourse.

-DERIVATIVES **precoitally** adv.

**pre-Columbian** |,kə'lʌmbiən| ▶adj. of or relating to the history and cultures of the Americas before the arrival of Columbus in 1492.

**preconceived** |,prɛkən'seɪvd| ▶adj. (of an idea or opinion) formed before having the evidence for its truth or usefulness: *the same set of facts can be tailored to fit any preconceived belief.*

**preconception** |,prɛkən'sepʃən| ▶n. a preconceived idea or prejudice.

**preconcert** |,prɛkən'sɔ:t| ▶v. [trans.] archaic arrange or organize (something) in advance: [as adj.] (**preconcerted**) a preconcerted signal.

**precondition** |,prɛkən'diʃən| ▶n. a condition that must be fulfilled before other things can happen or be done: *a precondition for peace.*

▶v. [trans.] 1 (usu. **be preconditioned**) condition (an action) to happen in a certain way: *inquiries are always preconditioned by cultural assumptions.*

■ condition or influence (a person or animal) by exposing them to stimuli or information prior to the relevant behavioral situation: [with obj. and infinitive] *the anthropologist is not preconditioned to interact with those he studies* | [as n.] (**preconditioning**) the protective effect of preconditioning.

2 bring (something) into the desired state for use: [as adj.] (**preconditioned**) preconditioned paper.

**pre-Conquest** ▶adj. occurring or existing before the Norman conquest of England.

**preconscious** |pre'kəŋʃəs| ▶adj. Psychoanalysis of or associated with a part of the mind below the level of immediate conscious awareness, from which memories and emotions that have not been repressed can be recalled: *beliefs and values that are on a preconscious level.*

▶n. (**one's/the preconscious**) Psychology the part of the mind in which preconscious thoughts or memories reside.

-DERIVATIVES **preconsciousness** n.

**precook** |pre'kook| ▶v. [trans.] cook in advance: [as adj.] (**precooked**) precooked frozen dinners.

**precordium** |pre'kōrdiəm| ▶n. Anatomy the region or the thorax immediately in front of the heart.

-DERIVATIVES **precordial** |-kōrdiəl| adj.

-ORIGIN late 19th cent.: singular of Latin *praecordia* 'diaphragm, entrails.'

**precursor** |pre'kɔ:sə; pri'kər-| ▶n. a person or thing that comes before another of the same kind; a forerunner: *a three-stringed precursor of the violin* | [as adj.] precursor cells.

■ Biochemistry a substance from which another is formed, esp. by metabolic reaction: *pepsinogen is the inactive precursor of pepsin.*

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin *praecursor*, from *praecurs-* 'preceded', from *praecurrere*, from *prae* 'beforehand' + *currere* 'to run.'

**precursory** |pri'kɔ:səri| ▶adj. preceding something in time, development, or position; preliminary: *precursory seismic activity.*

-ORIGIN late 16th cent.: from Latin *praecursorius*, from *praecurs-* 'preceded' (see **PRECURSOR**).

**precut** |pre'kət| ▶v. [trans.] [usu. as adj.] (**precut**) cut into the desired shape or sections in advance: *precut pieces of cloth.*

**pred.** ▶abbr. predicate.

**predacious** |pri'dæʃəs| (also **predaceous**) ▶adj. (of an animal) predatory: *predacious insects.*

-DERIVATIVES **predaciousness** n.; **predacity** |-pri'dæʃəsli| n.

-ORIGIN early 18th cent.: from Latin *praeda* 'booty' + -ACIOUS.

**predate** |pre'dat| ▶v. [trans.] exist or occur at a date earlier than (something): *this letter predates her illness.*

**predation** |pri'dæʃən| ▶n. Zoology the preying of one animal on others: *an effective defense against predation.*  
 -ORIGIN late 15th cent. (in the Latin sense): from Latin *praedatio*(n-) 'taking of booty', from the verb *praedari* 'seize as plunder', from *praeda* 'booty.' The current sense dates from the 1930s.

**predator** |'predətər| ▶n. an animal that naturally preys on others: *wolves are major predators of rodents*

■ figurative a rapacious, exploitative person or group: *her wealth made her vulnerable to predators.* ■ figurative a company that tries to take over another.

-ORIGIN 1920s: from Latin *praedator* 'plunderer', from *praedat-* 'seized as plunder', from the verb *praedari* (see **PREDATION**).

**predatory** |'predə,tɔ:rē| ▶adj. relating to or denoting an animal or animals preying naturally on others: *predatory birds.*

■ figurative seeking to exploit or oppress others: *a life destroyed by predatory biographers and yellow journalists.*

-DERIVATIVES **predatorily** |,predə'tɔ:rəli| adv.; **predatoriness** n.

-ORIGIN late 16th cent. (in the sense 'relating to plundering'): from Latin *praedatorius*, from *praedator* 'plunderer' (see **PREDATOR**).

**predatory pricing** ▶n. the pricing of goods or services at such a low level that other suppliers cannot compete and are forced to leave the market.

**predecease** |,predi'seɪs| formal ▶v. [trans.] die before (another person): *typically someone related by blood or marriage: his second wife predeceased him.*

**predecessor** |'predə,sesər| ▶n. a person who held a job or office before the current holder: *the new president's foreign policy is very similar to that of his predecessor.*

■ a thing that has been followed or replaced by another: *the chapel was built in 1864 on the site of its predecessor.*

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin *praedecessor*, from Latin *prae* 'beforehand' + *decessor* 'retiring officer' (from *decedere* 'depart').

**predefined** |,predi'faind| ▶adj. defined, limited, or established in advance: *predefined styles for tables, outlines, paragraphs, and graphics.*

**predella** |pri'delə| ▶n. 1 a step or platform on which an altar is placed.

2 a raised shelf above an altar.

■ a painting or sculpture on this, typically forming an appendage to an altarpiece.

-ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from Italian, literally 'stool.'

**predestination** |,prɛdestə'nɛʃən| ▶n. a person who believes in the doctrine of predestination.

▶adj. upholding, affirming, or relating to the doctrine of predestination.

**predestinate** ▶v. |,prɛ'destə,nat| [trans.] predestine.

▶adj. predestined.

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from ecclesiastical Latin *praedestinatus* 'made firm beforehand', from the verb *praedestinare*, from *prae* 'in advance' + *destinare* 'establish.'

**predestination** |,prɛdestə'næʃən| ▶n. (as a doctrine in Christian theology) the divine foreordaining of all that will happen, esp. with regard to the salvation of some and not others. It has been particularly associated with the teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo and of Calvin.

-ORIGIN Middle English: from ecclesiastical Latin *praedestinatio*(n-), from *praedestinare* 'make firm beforehand' (see **PREDESTINATE**).

**predestine** |pre'destɪn| ▶v. [trans.] (usu. **be predestined**) (of God) destine (someone) for a particular fate or purpose: *Calvinists believed that every person was predestined by God to go to heaven or to hell.*

■ determine (an outcome or course of events) in advance by divine will or fate: *she was certain that fate was with her and everything was predestined* | [as adj.] (**predestined**) our predestined end.

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *predestiner* or ecclesiastical Latin *praedestinare* (see **PREDESTINATE**).

**predetermine** |,predi'tɜ:mən| ▶v. [trans.] establish or decide in advance: *closed questions almost predetermine the response given* | [as adj.] (**predetermined**) a predetermined level of spending.

■ (usu. **be predetermined**) predestine (an outcome or course of events): *a strong sense that life had been predetermined.*

-DERIVATIVES **predeterminable** adj.; **predeterminate** |-tɜ:mənət| adj.; **predetermination** |-tɜ:mənə'siʃən| n.

-ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from late Latin *praedeterminare*, from *prae* 'beforehand' + *determinare* 'limit, settle.'

**predeterminer** |,prɛdi'tɜ:mənər| ▶n. Grammar a word or phrase that occurs before a determiner, typi-

one or something using force: *the seizure of the Assembly building* | *the Nazi seizure of power*.

■ the action of confiscating or impounding property by warrant of legal right.

2 a sudden attack of illness, esp. a stroke or an epileptic fit: *the patient had a seizure*.

**sejant** |'sejənt| ▶adj. [usu. postpositive] Heraldry (of an animal) sitting upright.

–ORIGIN late 15th cent.: alteration of an Old French variant of *seant* 'sitting', from the verb *seoir*, from Latin *sedere* 'sit.'

**Selm** |səm| (also **Seym**) ▶n. the lower house of parliament in Poland.

–ORIGIN Polish.

**Sekhmet** |'sekmet| Egyptian Mythology a ferocious lioness-goddess, counterpart of the gentle cat-goddess Bastet and wife of Ptah at Memphis.

**Sekt** |zekt| ▶n. a German sparkling white wine.

–ORIGIN German.

**Seikulovich**, Mladen, see **MALDEN**.

**sel.** ▶abbr. ■ select. ■ selected. ■ selection; selections.

**selachian** |sə'lækɪən| Zoology ▶n. an elasmobranch fish of a group that comprises the sharks and dogfishes.

•The former group Selachii, subclass Elasmobranchii: now treated as one, two, or three superorders.

▶adj. of or relating to the selachians.

–ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from modern Latin *Selachii* (from Greek *selakhos* 'shark') + -AN.

**seladang** |sə'lādāŋ| ▶n. another term for GAUR.

–ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from Malay.

**selaginella** |sə'læjə'nələ| ▶n. a creeping mosslike plant of a genus that includes the lesser club mosses.

•Genus *Selaginella*, family Selaginellaceae.

–ORIGIN modern Latin, diminutive of Latin *selago* 'club moss.'

**selah** |'sələ; 'sel-| ▶exclam. (in the Bible) occurring frequently at the end of a verse in Psalms and Habakkuk, probably as a musical direction.

–ORIGIN from Hebrew *selāh*.

**Selcraig** |'sel,kraig| see **SELKIRK**.

**seldom** |'seldəm| ▶adv. not often; rarely: *Islay is seldom visited by tourists* | *he was seldom absent* | [in combination] *an old seldom-used church*.

▶adj. [attrib.] dated not common; infrequent: *a great but seldom pleasure*.

–ORIGIN Old English *seldan*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *zelden* and German *selten*, from a base meaning 'strange, wonderful.'

**select** |sə'lekt| ▶v. [trans.] carefully choose as being the best or most suitable: *students must select their own program* | [with obj. and infinitive] *he has been selected to take part* | [intrans.] *you can select from a range of quality products*.

■ [intrans.] (select for/against) Biology (in terms of evolution) determine whether (a characteristic or organism) will survive: *a phenotype can be selected against*. ■ use a mouse or keystrokes to mark (something) on a computer screen for a particular operation.

▶adj. (of a group of people or things) carefully chosen from a larger number as being the best or most valuable: *he joined his select team of young Intelligence operatives*.

■ (of a place or group of people) only used by or consisting of a wealthy or sophisticated elite; exclusive: *the opera was seen by a small and highly select audience*.

–DERIVATIVES **selectable** adj.; **selectness** n.

–ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from Latin *select-* 'chosen,' from the verb *selegere*, from *se-* 'apart' + *legere* 'choose.'

**select committee** ▶n. a small legislative committee appointed for a special purpose: [in titles] *the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence*.

**selectee** |sə'lek'tē| ▶n. a person who is selected.

■ a conscript.

**selection** |sə'lekʃən| ▶n. 1 the action or fact of carefully choosing someone or something as being the best or most suitable: *such men decided the selection of candidates* | *they objected to his selection*.

■ a number of carefully chosen things: *the publication of a selection of his poems*. ■ a range of things from which a choice may be made: *the restaurant offers a wide selection of hot and cold dishes*. ■ a horse or horses tipped as worth bets in a race or meeting.

2 Biology a process in which environmental or genetic influences determine which types of organism thrive better than others, regarded as a factor in evolution. See also **NATURAL SELECTION**.

–ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from Latin *selectio(n)-*, from *selegere* 'select by separating off' (see **SELECT**).

**selectional** |sə'lekʃənəl| ▶adj. Linguistics denoting or relating to the process by which only certain words or structures can occur naturally, normally, or correctly in the context of other words.

–DERIVATIVES **selectionally** adv.

**selection pressure** ▶n. Biology an agent of differential mortality or fertility that tends to make a population change genetically.

**selection rule** ▶n. Physics a rule that describes whether particular quantum transitions in an atom or molecule are allowed or forbidden.

**selective** |sə'lektɪv| ▶adj. relating to or involving the selection of the most suitable or best qualified: *the mini-cow is the result of generations of selective breeding*.

■ (of a person) tending to choose carefully: *he is very selective in his reading*. ■ (of a process or agent) affecting some things and not others: *modern pesticides are more selective in effect*. ■ chiefly Electronics operating at or responding to a particular frequency.

–DERIVATIVES **selectively** adv.

**selective attention** ▶n. Psychology the capacity for or process of reacting to certain stimuli selectively when several occur simultaneously.

**selectiveness** |sə'lektivnis| ▶n. another term for **SELECTIVITY**.

**selective service** ▶n. service in the armed forces under conscription.

**selectivity** |sə'lektivɪti| ▶n. the quality of carefully choosing someone or something as the best or most suitable: *provision is organized on the principle of selectivity*.

■ the property of affecting some things and not others. ■ Electronics the ability of a device to respond to a particular frequency without interference from others.

**selectman** |sə'lektmən| ▶n. (pl. -men) a member of the local government board of a New England town.

**selector** |sə'lektər| ▶n. a person or thing that selects something, in particular:

■ a device for selecting a particular gear or other setting of a machine or device.

**Selene** |sə'leɪni| Greek Mythology the goddess of the moon who fell in love with Endymion.

–ORIGIN from Greek *selēnē* 'moon.'

**selenic acid** |sə'lenɪk; -lɪ-| ▶n. Chemistry a crystalline acid analogous to sulfuric acid, made by oxidizing some selenium compounds.

•Chem. formula: H<sub>2</sub>SeO<sub>4</sub>.

–DERIVATIVES **selenate** |sə'leɪnət| n.

**selenite** |sə'leɪnɪt| ▶n. a form of gypsum occurring as transparent crystals or thin plates.

–ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: via Latin from Greek *selēnites lithos* 'moonstone,' from *selēnē* 'moon' + *lithos* 'stone.'

**selenium** |sə'leɪniəm| ▶n. the chemical element of atomic number 34, a gray crystalline nonmetal with semiconducting properties. (Symbol: **Se**)

–DERIVATIVES **selenide** |sə'leɪnɪd; -nɪd| n.

–ORIGIN early 19th cent.: modern Latin, from Greek *selēnē* 'moon.'

**selenium cell** ▶n. a photoelectric device containing a piece of selenium.

**seleno-** ▶comb. form of, relating to, or shaped like the moon: *selenography*.

–ORIGIN from Greek *selēnē* 'moon.'

**selenodont** |sə'leɪnə'dənt| ▶adj. Zoology (of molar teeth) having crescent-shaped ridges on the grinding surfaces, characteristic of the ruminants.

■ (of an ungulate) having such teeth.

–ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from **SELENO-** 'moon-shaped' + Greek *odont-* 'tooth.'

**selenography** |sə'leɪnə'grəfi| ▶n. the scientific mapping of the moon; lunar geography.

–DERIVATIVES **selenographer** |-fər| n.; **selenographic** |sə'leɪnə'græfɪk| adj.; **selenographical** |sə'leɪnə'græfɪkəl| adj.

**selenology** |sə'leɪnələʒi| ▶n. the scientific study of the moon.

–DERIVATIVES **selenologist** |-jɪst| n.

**Selnes** |'seləs|, Monica (1973–), US tennis player, born in Yugoslavia. She was the youngest woman to win a grand slam singles title (French Open 1990). She went on to win there again and at the US Open in 1991 and 1992 and at the Australian Open 1991–93 and 1996. Stabbed on the court by a fan of Steffi Graf in 1993, she returned to play in 1995.

**Seleucid** |sə'li(y)ʊsɪd| ▶adj. relating to or denoting a dynasty ruling over Syria and a great part of western Asia from 311 to 65 BC. Its capital was at Antioch.

▶n. a member of this dynasty.

–ORIGIN from *Seleucus* Nicator (the name of the founder, one of Alexander the Great's generals) + -ID<sup>3</sup>.

**self** |self| ▶n. (pl. **selves** |selvz|) a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, esp. considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action: *our alienation from our true selves* | [in sing.] *guilt can be turned against the self* | *language is an aspect of a person's sense of self*.

■ [with adj.] a person's particular nature or personality; the qualities that make a person individual or

unique: *by the end of the round he was back to his old self* | *Paula seemed to be her usual cheerful self*.

■ one's own interests or pleasure: *to love in an impassive way implies the total surrender of self*.

▶pron. (pl. **selves**) oneself, in particular:

■ [with adj.] (one's self) used ironically to refer in specified glowing terms to oneself or someone else: *the only side worth supporting is your own sweet self*.

▶adj. [attrib.] (of a trimming or cover) of the same material and color as the rest of the item: *a dress with self belt*.

▶v. [trans.] chiefly Botany self-pollinate; self-fertilize: [as n.] (**selfing**) *the flowers never open and pollination is normally by selfing*.

■ [usu. as adj.] (**selfed**) Genetics cause (an animal or plant) to breed with or fertilize one of the same hybrid origin or strain: *progeny were derived from selfed crosses*.

–ORIGIN Old English, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *zelf* and German *selbe*. Early use was emphatic, expressing the sense '(I) myself,' '(he) himself,' etc. The verb dates from the early 20th cent.

**self-** ▶comb. form of or directed toward oneself or itself: *self-hatred*.

■ by one's own efforts; by its own action: *self-acting*.

■ on, in, for, or relating to oneself or itself: *self-adhesive*.

**self-abandonment** (also **self-abandon**) ▶n. the action of completely surrendering oneself to a desire or impulse.

–DERIVATIVES **self-abandoned** adj.

**self-abasement** ▶n. the belittling or humiliation of oneself.

**self-abnegation** ▶n. the denial or abasement of oneself: *she turned the letter into a groveling form of self-abnegation*.

**self-absorption** ▶n. 1 preoccupation with one's own emotions, interests, or situation.

2 Physics the absorption by a body of radiation which it has itself emitted.

–DERIVATIVES **self-absorbed** adj.

**self-abuse** |sə'byʊs| ▶n. behavior that causes damage or harm to oneself.

■ used euphemistically to refer to masturbation.

**self-accusation** ▶n. the action of accusing oneself, stemming from feelings of guilt.

–DERIVATIVES **self-accusatory** adj.

**self-acting** ▶adj. archaic (of a machine or operation) acting without external influence or control; automatic.

**self-actualization** ▶n. the realization or fulfillment of one's talents and potentialities, esp. considered as a drive or need present in everyone.

**self-addressed** ▶adj. (esp. of an envelope) bearing one's own address: *enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope*.

**self-adhesive** ▶adj. coated with a sticky substance; adhering without requiring moistening.

**self-adjusting** ▶adj. (chiefly of machinery) adjusting itself to meet varying requirements.

–DERIVATIVES **self-adjustment** n.

**self-admiration** ▶n. the admiration of oneself; pride.

–DERIVATIVES **self-admiring** adj.

**self-advancement** ▶n. the advancement or promotion of oneself or one's interests: *a positive step in women's self-advancement*.

**self-advertisement** ▶n. the active publicization of oneself: *he turned the group into a vehicle for self-advertisement*.

–DERIVATIVES **self-advertiser** n.; **self-advertising** adj.

**self-advocacy** ▶n. the action of representing oneself or one's views or interests.

**self-affirmation** ▶n. the recognition and assertion of the existence and value of one's individual self.

**self-aggrandizement** ▶n. the action or process of promoting oneself as being powerful or important.

–DERIVATIVES **self-aggrandizing** adj.

**self-alienation** ▶n. the process of distancing oneself from one's own feelings or activities, such as may occur in mental illness or as a symptom of emotional distress.

**self-aligning** ▶adj. (of a bearing or machine part) capable of aligning itself automatically.

**self-analysis** ▶n. the analysis of oneself, in particular one's motives and character.

–DERIVATIVES **self-analyzing** adj.

**self-annihilation** ▶n. the annihilation or obliteration of self, esp. as a process of mystical contemplation.

**self-appointed** ▶adj. [attrib.] having assumed a position or role without the endorsement of others: *self-appointed experts*.

See page xxxviii for the **Key to Pronunciation**