

# New Oxford American Dictionary

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# Dictionary

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# New Oxford American Dictionary

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Angus Stevenson  
Christine A. Lindberg

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Elizabeth J. Jewell  
Frank Abate

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**ortho-don-tics** /ˈɔrθəˈdɒntiks/ (also **orthodontia** /ˈɔrθəˈdɒntiə/) ► **plural n.** [treated as sing.] the treatment of irregularities in the teeth (esp. of alignment and occlusion) and jaws, including the use of braces.

**DERIVATIVES** **ortho-don-tic adj.**, **ortho-don-ti-cal-ly** /-tɪk(ə)l/ **adv.**, **ortho-don-tist** /-tɪst/ **n.**

**ORIGIN** early 20th cent.: from **ORTHO-** 'straight' + Greek *odont-* 'tooth'.

**ortho-dox** /ˈɔrθəˈdɒks/ ► **adj.** 1 (of a person or their views, esp. religious or political ones, or other beliefs or practices) conforming to what is generally or traditionally accepted as right or true; established and approved: *the orthodox economics of today* | *orthodox medical treatment* | *orthodox Hindus*. ■ (of a person) not independent-minded; conventional and unoriginal: *a relatively orthodox artist*.

2 (of a thing) of the ordinary or usual type; normal: *they avoided orthodox jazz venues*.

3 (usu. **Orthodox**) (of the Jews or Judaism) strictly keeping to traditional doctrine and ritual.

4 (usu. **Orthodox**) of or relating to the Orthodox Church.

**DERIVATIVES** **ortho-dox-ly adv.**

**ORIGIN** late Middle English: from Greek *orthodoxos* (probably via ecclesiastical Latin), from *orthos* 'straight or right' + *doxa* 'opinion'.

**Ortho-dox Church** a Christian church or federation of churches originating in the Greek-speaking church of the Byzantine Empire, not accepting the authority of the pope, and using ancient forms of service.

The chief Orthodox churches (often known collectively as the **Eastern Orthodox Church**) include the national churches of Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia. The term is also used by other ancient churches, mainly of African or Asian origin, e.g., the Coptic, Syrian, and Ethiopian churches.

**Ortho-dox Ju-da-ism** a major branch within Judaism that teaches strict adherence to rabbinical interpretation of Jewish law and its traditional observances.

**ortho-dox-y** /ˈɔrθəˈdɒksɪ/ ► **n.** (pl. **orthodoxies**) 1 authorized or generally accepted theory, doctrine, or practice: *monetarist orthodoxy* | *he challenged many of the established orthodoxies*. ■ the quality of conforming to such theories, doctrines, or practices: *writings of unimpeachable orthodoxy*.

2 the whole community of Orthodox Jews or Orthodox Christians.

**ORIGIN** mid 17th cent.: via late Latin from late Greek *orthodoxia* 'sound doctrine', from *orthodoxos* (see **ORTHODOX**).

**ortho-drom-ic** /ˈɔrθəˈdrɒmɪk/ ► **adj.** Physiology (of an impulse) traveling in the normal direction in a nerve fiber. The opposite of **ANTIDROMIC**.

**ORIGIN** 1940s: from **ORTHO-** 'right, correct' + Greek *dromos* 'running' + *-ic*.

**ortho-e-py** /ˈɔrθəˈeɪpɪ/ ► **n.** the correct or accepted pronunciation of words. ■ the study of correct or accepted pronunciation.

**DERIVATIVES** **ortho-e-py-ic** /ˈɔrθəˈeɪpɪk/ **adj.**, **ortho-e-pist** /-pɪst/ **n.**

**ORIGIN** mid 17th cent.: from Greek *orthopeia* 'correct speech', from *orthos* 'right or straight' + *epos*, *epe* 'word'.

**ortho-gen-e-sis** /ˈɔrθəˈɡenɪsɪs/ ► **n.** Biology, chiefly historical a theory that variations in evolution follow a particular direction and are not merely sporadic and fortuitous.

**DERIVATIVES** **ortho-gen-e-sist n.**, **ortho-gen-et-ic** /-jəˈnetɪk/ **adj.**, **ortho-gen-et-ic-ly** /-jəˈnetɪk(ə)l/ **adv.**

**orthog-na-thous** /ˈɔrθəˈɡnəθəs/ ► **adj.** Anatomy (esp. of a person) having a jaw that does not project or recede, so that the facial profile is nearly vertical.

**ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: from **ORTHO-** 'straight' + Greek *gnathos* 'jaw' + *-ous*.

**orthog-o-nal** /ˈɔrθəˈɡɒnəl/ ► **adj.** 1 of or involving right angles; at right angles.

2 statistics (of variates) statistically independent.

■ (of an experiment) having variates that can be treated as statistically independent.

**DERIVATIVES** **orthog-o-nal-i-ty** /ˈɔrθəˈɡɒnəlɪti/ **n.**, **orthog-o-nal-ly adv.**

**ORIGIN** late 16th cent.: from French, based on Greek *orthogonios* 'right-angled'.

**orthog-o-nal pro-jection** ► **n.** Engineering a system of making engineering drawings showing two or more views of an object at right angles to each other on a single drawing. ■ a drawing made using this method.

**ortho-graph-ic pro-jection** /ˈɔrθəˈɡrafɪk/ ► **n.** a method of projection in which an object is depicted on a surface mapped using parallel lines to project

its shape onto a plane. ■ a drawing or map made using this method.

**orthog-ra-phy** /ˈɔrθəˈɡrafɪ/ ► **n.** (pl. **orthographies**) 1 the conventional spelling system of a language. ■ the study of spelling and how letters combine to represent sounds and form words.

2 another term for **ORTHOGRAPHIC PROJECTION**.

**DERIVATIVES** **orthog-ra-pher** /-fər/ **n.**

(sense 1), **orthog-graph-ic** /ˈɔrθəˈɡrafɪk/ **adj.**, **orthog-graph-i-cal** /ˈɔrθəˈɡrafɪkəl/ **adj.**

**orthog-graph-i-cal-ly** /ˈɔrθəˈɡrafɪk(ə)l/ **adv.**

**ORIGIN** late Middle English: via Old French and Latin from Greek *orthographia*, from *orthos* 'correct' + *-graphia* 'writing'.

**orth-ker-a-tol-o-gy** /ˈɔrθəˈkɛrətələdʒi/ ► **n.**

the temporary reshaping of the cornea (usually overnight) with specially made rigid contact lenses, in order to correct myopia.

**orth-mo-lec-u-lar** /ˈɔrθəˈmɒləkyələr/ ► **adj.** pertaining to a theory that illness can be treated and health maximized by creating the optimal molecular environment for the cells of the body through the introduction of natural substances: *orthomolecular nutrition/psychiatry/oncology*.

**ORIGIN** 1968: coined by Linus Pauling.

**orth-mor-phic** /ˈɔrθəˈmɒrfɪk/ ► **adj.** see **CONFORMAL**.

**Orth-nec-ti-da** /ˈɔrθəˈnektɪdə/ Zoology a minor phylum of mesozoan worms that are internal parasites of a range of marine invertebrates.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-nec-tid n.** & **adj.**

**ORIGIN** modern Latin (plural), from Greek *orthos* 'straight' + *nektes* 'swimming' (see **NEKTON**).

**orth-nor-mal** /ˈɔrθəˈnɔrməl/ ► **adj.** Mathematics

both orthogonal and normalized.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-nor-mal-i-ty** /-nɔrməlɪti/ **n.**, **orth-nor-mal-i-za-tion** /-nɔrməlɪˈzæʃən/ **n.**

**orth-pe-dics** /ˈɔrθəˈpedɪks/ (Brit. **orthopaedics**) ► **plural n.** [treated as sing.] the branch of medicine dealing with the correction of deformities of bones or muscles, [originally relating specifically to children].

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-pe-dic adj.**, **orth-pe-di-cal-ly** /-ɪk(ə)l/ **adv.**, **orth-pe-dist** /-dɪst/ **n.**

**ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: from French *orthopédie*, from Greek *orthos* 'right or straight' + *paideia* 'rearing of children'.

**orth-phos-phor-ic acid** /ˈɔrθəˈfɒsˌfɒrɪk/, -ˈfær-/ ► **n.** another term for **PHOSPHORIC ACID**.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-phos-phate** /-ˈfæsət/ **n.**

**orth-pox-vi-rus** /ˈɔrθəˈpɒksˌvɪrəs/ ► **n.** any of a set of viruses pathological in humans and animals that includes the cowpox, smallpox, and monkeypox viruses. ■ Genus *Orthopoxvirus*, family *Poxviridae*.

**orth-psy-chi-a-try** /ˈɔrθəˈsɪkiətri/ ► **n.** the branch of psychiatry concerned with the study and prevention of mental or behavioral disorders, with emphasis on child development and family life.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-psy-chi-at-ric** /-sɪkəˈatrɪk/ **adj.**, **orth-psy-chi-a-trist** /-trɪst/ **n.**

**orth-pter** /ˈɔrθˌptɛər/ ► **n.** another term for **ORNITHOPTER**.

**Orth-pter-a** /ˈɔrθˌptɛərə/ Entomology an order of insects that comprises the grasshoppers, crickets, katydids, etc. They have a saddle-shaped thorax, hind legs that are typically long and modified for jumping, and a characteristic song that the male produces by stridulation. ■ (as plural noun) **orthoptera** insects of this order.

**ORIGIN** modern Latin (plural), from **ORTHO-** 'straight' + Greek *pteros* 'wing'.

**orth-pter-an** /ˈɔrθˌptɛərən/ Entomology ► **n.** an insect of the order Orthoptera, such as a grasshopper or cricket.

► **adj.** relating to or denoting orthopterans.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-pter-ous** /-tərəs/ **adj.**

**orth-pter-oid** /ˈɔrθˌptɛərəɪd/ ► **adj.** Entomology of or relating to a group of insect orders that are related to the grasshoppers and crickets, including also the stoneflies, stick insects, earwigs, cockroaches, mantises, and termites.

**orth-ptics** /ˈɔrθˌptɪks/ ► **plural n.** [treated as sing.] the study or treatment of disorders of vision, esp. of eye movements or eye alignment.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-ptic adj.**, **orth-ptist** /-tɪst/ **n.**

**ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: from **ORTHO-** 'correct' + Greek *optikos* (see **OPTIC**).

**orth-py-rox-ene** /ˈɔrθəˈpɪrɒksən/ ► **n.** a mineral of the pyroxene group crystallizing in the orthorhombic system.

**orth-rex-i-a** /ˈɔrθəˈrɛksɪə/ ► **n.** an obsession with eating foods that one considers healthy. ■ (also **orthorexia nervosa** /ˌnɔrˈvɒsə/) a medical condition in which the sufferer systematically avoids specific foods in the belief that they are harmful.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-rex-ic adj.** & **n.**

**ORIGIN** 1990s: from **ortho-** + Greek *orexia* 'appetite', after *anorexia*.

**orth-rhom-bic** /ˈɔrθəˈrɒmbɪk/ ► **adj.** of or denoting a crystal system or three-dimensional geometric arrangement having three unequal axes at right angles.

**orth-sis** /ˈɔrθəˈsɪs/ ► **n.** (pl. **orthoses** /-ˈsɛz/) Medicine the correction of disorders of the limbs or spine by use of braces and other devices to correct alignment or provide support. ■ a brace or other such device; orthotic.

**ORIGIN** 1950s: from Greek *orthosis* 'making straight', from *orthoun* 'set straight'.

**orth-stat-ic** /ˈɔrθəˈstatɪk/ ► **adj.** Medicine relating to or caused by an upright posture.

**orth-ti-chy** /ˈɔrθəˈtɪkɪ/ ► **n.** (pl. **orthostichies**) Botany (in phyllotaxis) a vertical row of leaves arranged one directly above another. Contrasted with **PARASTICHY**.

**ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: from **ORTHO-** 'upright, straight' + Greek *stikhos* 'row, rank'.

**orth-tic** /ˈɔrθəˈtɪk/ ► **adj.** relating to orthotics; ► **n.** an artificial support or brace for the limbs or spine.

**orth-tics** /ˈɔrθəˈtɪks/ ► **plural n.** [treated as sing.] the branch of medicine that deals with the provision and use of artificial devices such as splints and braces.

**DERIVATIVES** **orth-tist n.**

**orth-trop-ic** /ˈɔrθəˈtrɒpɪk/, -ˈtrɒp/ ► **adj.** 1 Botany (of a shoot, stem, or axis) growing vertically.

2 Engineering (of a material) having elastic properties in two or three planes perpendicular to each other.

**orth-ro-pous** /ˈɔrθəˈrɒpəs/ ► **adj.** Botany (of a plant ovule) having the nucleus straight, i.e., not inverted, so that the micropyle is at the end opposite the base.

**or-to-lan** /ˈɔrtələn/ (also **ortolanbunting**) ► **n.** a small Eurasian songbird that was formerly eaten as a delicacy, the male having an olive-green head and yellow throat. ■ *Emberizahortulana*, family *Emberizidae* (subfamily *Emberizinae*).

**ORIGIN** early 16th cent.: from French, from Provençal, literally 'gardener', based on a diminutive of Latin *hortus* 'garden'.

**Or-ru-ro** /ˈɔrɒrɒ/ a city in western Bolivia; pop. 216,714 (2009). It is the center of an important mining region, with rich deposits of tin, zinc, silver, copper, and gold.

**ORV** ► **abbr.** off-road vehicle.

**Or-vie-to** /ˈɔrˌvɛtə/ a town in Umbria, in central Italy in the middle of a wine-producing area; pop. 21,059 (2008).

**Or-vie-to** /ˈɔrˌvɛtə/ ► **n.** a white wine made near Orvieto.

**Or-well** /ˈɔrwel/, George (1903–50), British novelist and essayist, born in India; pseudonym of *Eric Arthur Blair*. His work is characterized by his concern about social injustice. His best-known works are *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

**DERIVATIVES** **Or-well-i-an** /ˈɔrwelɪən/ **adj.**

**-ory** ► **suffix** (forming nouns) denoting a place for a particular function: *dormitory* | *repository*.

**ORIGIN** from Latin *-oria*, *-orium*, sometimes via Anglo-Norman French *-orie*, Old French *-oire*.

**-ory** ► **suffix** forming adjectives (and occasionally nouns) relating to or involving a verbal action: *compulsory* | *directory* | *mandatory*.

**ORIGIN** from Latin *-orius*, sometimes via Anglo-Norman French *-orice*.

**or-yx** /ˈɔrɪks/ ► **n.** any of several species of antelopes native to arid regions of Africa and Asia, having dark markings on the face and long, pointed horns.

■ Genus *Oryx*, family *Bovidae*: several species, including the **Arabian oryx** (*O. leucorox*). See also **GEMSBOK**, **SCIMITAR ORYX**.

**ORIGIN** late Middle English: via Latin from Greek *oryx* 'stonemason's pickaxe' (because of its pointed horns).

**or-zo** /ˈɔrzə/ ► **n.** a variety of pasta shaped like grains of barley or rice.

**ORIGIN** Italian, literally 'barley'.

**OS** ► **abbr.** (in calculating dates) Old Style.

■ Computing operating system. ■ Ordinary Seaman.

■ (in the UK) Ordnance Survey. ■ (as a size of clothing) outside. ■ out of stock. ■ overseas.

**Os** ► **symbol** the chemical element osmium.

**PRONUNCIATION KEY** ˈə go, up; ɔr over, fur; a hat; ʌ ate; ʌ car; e let; ɛ see; i fit; ɪ by; NG sing; ɔ go; ɔ law, far; o toy; ɔ good; ɔ go; ou out; TH thin; TH then; ZH vision

DERIVATIVES **Pe-ro-nism** /-nizəm/ **n.**, **Pe-ro-nist** /-nist/ **adj.** & **n.**

**per-o-ne-al** /perə'neəl/ **adj.** Anatomy relating to or situated in the outer side of the calf of the leg.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from modern Latin *peroneus* 'peroneal muscle' (based on Greek *peronē* 'pin, fibula') + **-AL**.

**per-o-rate** /perə'rāt/ **v.** [no obj.] formal speak at length: *he reportedly would perorate against his colleague*. ■ archaic sum up and conclude a speech: *the following innocent conclusion with which she perorates*.

ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from Latin *perorare* 'spoken at length', from the verb *perorare*, from *per-* 'through' + *orare* 'speak'.

**per-o-ration** /perə'rāʃən/ **n.** the concluding part of a speech, typically intended to inspire enthusiasm in the audience.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin *peroratio* (*n.*), from *perorare* 'speak at length' (see **PERORATE**).

**pe-rovsk-ite** /pə'rəvskit/ **n.** a yellow, brown, or black mineral consisting largely of calcium titanate. ■ any of a group of related minerals and ceramics having the same crystal structure as this.

ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from the name of L. A. Perovskiy (1792–1856), Russian mineralogist, + **-ITE**.

**per-ox-i-dase** /pə'rəksə'dās/ **n.** Biochemistry an enzyme that catalyzes the oxidation of a particular substrate by hydrogen peroxide.

**per-ox-ide** /pə'rəksid/ **n.** Chemistry a compound containing two oxygen atoms bonded together in its molecule or as the anion O<sub>2</sub><sup>2-</sup>. ■ hydrogen peroxide, esp. as used as a bleach for the hair: [as modifier] *a peroxide blonde*.

■ **v.** [with obj.] bleach (hair) with peroxide.

ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from **PER-** (sense 2) + **OXIDE**.

**per-ox-i-some** /pə'rəksisəm/ **n.** Biology a small organelle that is present in the cytoplasm of many cells and that contains the reducing enzyme catalase and usually some oxidases.

DERIVATIVES **per-ox-i-so-mal** /-rəksisəmāl/ **adj.**

ORIGIN 1960s: from **PEROXIDE** + **-SOME**.

**perp** /pərp/ **n.** informal the perpetrator of a crime.

ORIGIN 1980s: abbreviation.

**perp.** **abbr.** perpendicular.

**per-pend** /pə'pend/ **n.** a vertical layer of mortar between two bricks.

**per-pen-dic-u-lar** /pərpəndikjələr/ **adj.** 1 at an angle of 90° to a given line, plane, or surface: *dormers and gables that extend perpendicular to the main roofline*. ■ at an angle of 90° to the ground; vertical: *the perpendicular cliff*. ■ (of something with a slope) so steep as to be almost vertical: *guest houses seem to cling by faith to the perpendicular hillside*.

2 (**Perpendicular**) denoting the latest stage of English Gothic church architecture, prevalent from the late 14th to mid 16th centuries and characterized by broad arches, elaborate fan vaulting, and large windows with vertical tracery: *the handsome Perpendicular church of St. Andrew*.

■ **n.** a straight line at an angle of 90° to a given line, plane, or surface: *at each division, draw a perpendicular representing the surface line*. ■ (usu. **the perpendicular**) perpendicular position or direction: *the wall declines from the perpendicular a little inward*. ■ an instrument for indicating the vertical line from any point, as a spirit level or plumb line.

DERIVATIVES **per-pen-dic-u-lar-i-ty** /-dikjələrə'ti/ **n.**, **per-pen-dic-u-lar-ly** **adv.**

ORIGIN late Middle English (as an adverb meaning 'at right angles'): via Old French from Latin *perpendicularis*, from *perpendicularis* 'plumb line', from *per-* 'through' + *pendere* 'to hang'.

**per-pe-trate** /pə'pətrāt/ **v.** [with obj.] carry out or commit (a harmful, illegal, or immoral action): *a crime has been perpetrated against a sovereign state*.

DERIVATIVES **per-pe-tration** /pə'pətrāʃən/ **n.**, **per-pe-tra-tor** /-trātər/ **n.**

ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from Latin *perpetrare* 'performed', from the verb *perpetrare*, from *per-* 'to completion' + *patrare* 'bring about'. In Latin the act perpetrated might be good or bad; in English the verb was first used in the statutes referring to crime, hence the negative association.

**USAGE** To perpetrate something is to commit it: *the gang perpetrated outrages against several citizens*. To perpetuate something is to cause it to continue or to keep happening: *the stories only serve to perpetuate the legend that the house is haunted*.

**per-pet-u-al** /pə'petchūəl/ **adj.** 1 never ending or changing: *deep caves in perpetual darkness*.

■ [attrib.] denoting a position, job, or trophy held

for life rather than a limited period, or the person holding it: *a perpetual secretary of the society*. ■ (of an investment) having no fixed maturity date; irredeemable: *a perpetual bond*.

2 occurring repeatedly, so frequent as to seem endless and uninterrupted: *their perpetual money worries*. ■ (of a plant) blooming or fruiting several times in one season: *he grows perpetual carnations*.

DERIVATIVES **per-pet-u-al-ly** **adv.**

ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *perpetuel*, from Latin *perpetualis*, from *perpetuus* 'continuing throughout', from *perpes*, *perpet-* 'continuous'.

**per-pet-u-al cal-en-dar** **n.** a calendar that can be adjusted to show any combination of day, month, and year, and is therefore usable year after year. ■ a set of tables from which the day of the week can be reckoned for any date.

**per-pet-u-al check** **n.** Chess the situation of play when a draw is obtained by repeated checking of the king.

**per-pet-u-al mo-tion** **n.** a state in which movement or action is or appears to be continuous and unceasing. ■ the motion of a hypothetical machine that, once activated, would run forever unless subject to an external force or to wear.

**per-pet-u-ate** /pə'petchūəd/ **v.** [with obj.] make (something, typically an undesirable situation or an unfounded belief) continue indefinitely: *the law perpetuated the interests of the ruling class*.

■ preserve (something valued) from oblivion or extinction: *how did these first humans survive to perpetuate the species?*

DERIVATIVES **per-pet-u-ance** /-dʒəns/ **n.**, **per-pet-u-a-tion** /pə'petchūə'shən/ **n.**, **per-pet-u-a-tor** **n.**

ORIGIN early 16th cent.: from Latin *perpetuat-* 'made permanent', from the verb *perpetuare*, from *perpetuus* 'continuing throughout' (see **PERPETUAL**).

**USAGE** See usage at **PERPETRATE**.

**per-pet-u-ity** /pə'piti(y)ʊti/ **n.** (pl. **perpetuities**) 1 a thing that lasts forever or for an indefinite period, in particular: ■ a bond or other security with no fixed maturity date. ■ Law a restriction making an estate inalienable perpetually or for a period beyond certain limits fixed by law. ■ Law an estate so restricted.

2 the state or quality of lasting forever: *he did not believe in the perpetuity of military rule*.

PHRASES **in (or for) perpetuity** forever: *all the Bonapartes were banished from France in perpetuity*.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *perpetuite*, from Latin *perpetuitas*, from *perpetuus* 'continuing throughout' (see **PERPETUAL**).

**per-pet-u-um mo-bi-le** /pə'petchūəm'məbəl/ **n.** 1 Music a piece of fast-moving instrumental music consisting mainly of notes of equal length.

2 another term for **PERPETUAL MOTION**.

ORIGIN Latin, literally 'continuously moving (thing)', on the pattern of *primum mobile*.

**Per-pi-gnan** /pərpə'nyən/ a city in southern France, in the northeastern foothills of the Pyrenees, close to the border with Spain; pop. 117,500 (2006).

**per-plex** /pə'pleks/ **v.** [with obj.] (of something complicated or unaccountable) cause (someone) to feel completely baffled: *she was perplexed by her husband's moodiness*. ■ dated complicate or confuse (a matter): *they were perplexing a subject plain in itself*.

ORIGIN late 15th cent. (as the adjective *perplexed*): from the obsolete adjective *perplex* 'bewildered', from Latin *perplexus* 'entangled', based on *plexus* 'interwoven', from the verb *plectere*.

**per-plexed** /pə'plekst/ **adj.** completely baffled; very puzzled: *she gave him a perplexed look*.

DERIVATIVES **per-plex-ed-ly** /-pleksidli/ **adv.**

**per-plex-ing** /pə'pleksɪŋ/ **adj.** completely baffling; very puzzling: *a perplexing problem*.

DERIVATIVES **per-plex-ing-ly** **adv.**

**per-plex-i-ty** /pə'pleksiti/ **n.** (pl. **perplexities**) 1 inability to deal with or understand something complicated or unaccountable: *she paused in perplexity*. ■ (usu. **perplexities**) a complicated or baffling situation or thing: *the perplexities of international relations*.

2 archaic an entangled state: *the dense perplexity of dwarf palm, garlanded creepers, glossy undergrowth*.

ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *perplexite* or late Latin *perplexitas*, from Latin *perplexus* 'entangled, confused' (see **PERPLEX**).

**per pro.** /pə'prə/ **abbr.** per procuracionem (used when signing a letter on behalf of someone else; now usually abbreviated to **pp**).

ORIGIN Latin.

**per-qui-site** /pə'kwɔzɪt/ **n.** formal another term for **PERK**. ■ a thing regarded as a special right or privilege enjoyed as a result of one's position: *the wife of a president has all the perquisites of stardom*.

■ historical a thing that has served its primary use and is then given to a subordinate or employee as a customary right.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from medieval Latin *perquisitum* 'acquisition', from Latin *perquirere* 'search diligently for', from *per-* 'thoroughly' + *quaerere* 'seek'.

**USAGE** *Perquisite* and *prerequisite* are sometimes confused. *Perquisite* usually means 'an extra allowance or privilege': *he had all the perquisites of a movie star, including a stand-in*. *Prerequisite* means 'something required as a condition': *passing the examination was one of the prerequisites for a teaching position*.

**Per-rault** /pə'rō/, Charles (1628–1703), French writer. He is noted for *Mother Goose Tales* (1697).

**Per-ri-er** /perə'ri/ (also **Perrier water**) **n.** trademark an effervescent natural mineral water sold as a drink.

ORIGIN from the name of a spring at Vergèze, France, from which this water comes.

**Per-rin** /perən, pə'rən/, Jean Baptiste (1870–1942), French physical chemist. He provided the definitive proof of the existence of atoms, proved that cathode rays are negatively charged, and investigated Brownian motion. Nobel Prize for Physics (1926).

**per-ron** /perən, pə'rən/ **n.** Architecture an exterior set of steps and a platform at the main entrance to a large building such as a church or mansion.

ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French, literally 'large stone', from Latin *petra* 'stone'.

**Per-ry** /perə/, Fred (1909–95), US tennis player, born in Britain; full name *Frederick John Perry*. His record of winning three consecutive singles titles at Wimbledon (1934–36) was unequalled until 1979 when it was broken by Björn Borg.

**per-ry** /perə/ **n.** (pl. **perries**) an alcoholic drink made from the fermented juice of pears.

ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *pere*, from an alteration of Latin *pirum* 'pear'.

**pers.** **abbr.** person. ■ personal.

**per se** /pə'sə/ **adv.** by or in itself or themselves; intrinsically: *it is not these facts per se that are important*.

ORIGIN Latin.

**per-se-cute** /pə'səkyūt/ **v.** [with obj.] subject (someone) to hostility and ill-treatment, esp. because of their race or political or religious beliefs: *his followers were persecuted by the authorities*. ■ harass or annoy (someone) persistently: *Hilda was persecuted by some of the other girls*.

DERIVATIVES **per-se-cu-tor** /-kyūtər/ **n.**, **per-se-cu-to-ry** /-kyūtəri/ **adj.**

ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *persecuter*, from Latin *persecut-* 'followed with hostility', from the verb *persequi*, from *per-* 'through, utterly' + *sequi* 'follow, pursue'.

**per-se-cu-tion** /pə'səkyūʃən/ **n.** hostility and ill-treatment, esp. because of race or political or religious beliefs: *her family fled religious persecution*. ■ persistent annoyance or harassment: *his persecution at the hands of other students*.

**per-se-cu-tion com-plex** **n.** an irrational and obsessive feeling or fear that one is the object of collective hostility or ill-treatment on the part of others.

**Per-se-ids** /pə'seɪdz/ Astronomy an annual meteor shower radiating from a point in the constellation Perseus, reaching a peak about August 12.

**Per-seph-o-ne** /pə'sefəni/ Greek Mythology a goddess, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. Roman name **PROSERPINA**.

She was carried off by Hades and made queen of the underworld. Demeter, vainly seeking her, refused to let the earth produce its fruits until her daughter was restored to her, but because Persephone had eaten some pomegranate seeds in the other world, she was obliged to spend part of every year there. Her story symbolizes the return of spring and the life and growth of grain.

**Per-sep-o-lis** /pə'sepəlɪs/ a city in ancient Persia, northeast of Shiraz. It was founded in the late 6th century BC by Darius I as the ceremonial capital of Persia under the Achaemenid dynasty.

**Per-se-us** /pə'seəs, -syūs/ 1 Greek Mythology the son of Zeus and Danae, a hero celebrated for many achievements. Riding the winged horse Pegasus, he cut off the head of the Gorgon Medusa and gave it to Athena; he also rescued and married Andromeda, and became king of Tiryns in Greece.

2 Astronomy a large northern constellation that includes a dense part of the Milky Way. It contains several star clusters and the variable star Algol. ■ (as genitive **Persei** /pə'seɪ/) used with a preceding