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perimeter /pəˈrɪmɪtə/ ■ **n.** 1 the continuous line forming the boundary of a closed geometrical figure. 2 the outermost parts or boundary of an area or object. 3 Basketball an area away from the basket, beyond the reach of the defensive team. 4 an instrument for measuring the extent and characteristics of a person's field of vision.

– DERIVATIVES **perimetric** *adj.* **perimetry** *n.*
– ORIGIN ME: via L. from Gk *perimetros*, based on *peri-* 'around' + *metron* 'measure'.

perimysium /pəˈrɪmɪsɪəm/ ■ **n.** Anatomy the sheath of connective tissue surrounding a bundle of muscle fibres.

– DERIVATIVES **perimysial** *adj.*
– ORIGIN C19: mod. L., from Gk *peri-* 'around' + *mus* 'muscle'.

perinatal ■ *adj.* Medicine relating to the time immediately before and after a birth.

– DERIVATIVES **perinatally** *adv.* **perinatologist** *n.*
perinatology *n.*

perineum /pəˈrɪniəm/ ■ **n.** (pl. **perineae**) Anatomy the area between the anus and the scrotum or vulva.

– DERIVATIVES **perineal** *adj.*
– ORIGIN ME: from late L., from Gk *perinaion*.

perineurium /pəˈrɪnjuəriəm/ ■ **n.** Anatomy the sheath of connective tissue surrounding a bundle of nerve fibres within a nerve.

– DERIVATIVES **perineurial** *adj.*
– ORIGIN C19: mod. L., from Gk *peri-* 'around' + *neuron* 'sinew'.

period ■ **n.** 1 a length or portion of time. > a major division of geological time that is a subdivision of an era and is itself subdivided into epochs. 2 each of the set divisions of the day in a school. 3 (also **menstrual period**) a monthly flow of blood and other material from the lining of the uterus, occurring in women of childbearing age when not pregnant. 4 *N. Amer.* a full stop. 5 Physics the interval of time between successive occurrences of the same state in an oscillatory or cyclic phenomenon. 6 Mathematics the interval between successive equal values of a periodic function. 7 Chemistry a set of elements occupying a horizontal row in the periodic table. 8 Astronomy the time taken by a celestial object to rotate about its axis, or to make one circuit of its orbit. 9 Rhetoric a complex sentence, especially one consisting of several clauses, constructed as part of a formal speech or oration. ■ *adj.* belonging to or characteristic in style of a past historical time: *period furniture*.

– DERIVATIVES **periodization** or **periodisation** *n.*
periodize or **periodise** *v.*
– ORIGIN ME: from OFr. *periode*, via L. from Gk *periodos* 'orbit, recurrence, course'.

periodate /pəˈrɪədeɪt/ ■ **n.** Chemistry a salt or ester of periodic acid.

periodic /pɪərɪˈdɪk/ ■ *adj.* 1 appearing or occurring at intervals. 2 Chemistry relating to the periodic table of the elements or the pattern of chemical properties which underlies it. 3 relating to a rhetorical period.

– DERIVATIVES **periodicity** *n.*

periodic acid /pəˈrɪəˈdɪk/ ■ **n.** Chemistry a hygroscopic solid acid with strong oxidizing properties.

– ORIGIN C19: from sense 2 of **PER-** + **IODIC ACID**.

periodical ■ *adj.* occurring or appearing at intervals. > (of a magazine or newspaper) published at regular intervals. ■ *n.* a periodical magazine or newspaper.

– DERIVATIVES **periodically** *adv.*

periodic function ■ **n.** Mathematics a function returning to the same value at regular intervals.

periodic table ■ **n.** Chemistry a table of the chemical elements arranged in order of atomic number, usually in rows, so that elements with similar atomic structure (and hence similar chemical properties) appear in vertical columns.

periodontics /pɪərɪˈdɒntɪks/ ■ *pl. n.* [treated as *sing.*] the branch of dentistry concerned with the structures surrounding and supporting the teeth.

– DERIVATIVES **periodontal** *adj.* **periodontist** *n.*
– ORIGIN 1940s: from **PERI-** + Gk *odous, odont-* 'tooth' + *-ics*.

periodontitis /pɪərɪˈdɒntaɪtɪs/ ■ **n.** Medicine inflam-

mation of the tissue around the teeth.

periodontology /pɪərɪˈdɒntɒlədʒi/ ■ **n.** another term for **PERIODONTICS**.

period piece ■ **n.** an object or work that is set in or reminiscent of an earlier historical period.

perioperative ■ *adj.* Medicine (of a process or treatment) occurring or performed at or around the time of an operation.

periosteum /pɪərɪˈɒstɪəm/ ■ **n.** (pl. **periosteae** /-tɪə/) Anatomy a dense layer of vascular connective tissue enveloping the bones except at the surfaces of the joints.

– DERIVATIVES **periosteal** *adj.* **periostitis** *n.*
– ORIGIN C16: mod. L., from Gk *periosteon*, from *peri-* 'around' + *osteon* 'bone'.

peripatetic /pəˈrɪpəˈtɛtɪk/ ■ *adj.* 1 travelling from place to place. > working or based in a succession of places each for a short period. > (of a teacher) working in more than one school or college. 2 (**Peripatetic**) Aristotelian. [with ref. to Aristotle's practice of walking to and fro while teaching.] ■ **n.** 1 a peripatetic teacher. 2 (**Peripatetic**) an Aristotelian philosopher.

– DERIVATIVES **peripatetically** *adv.* **peripateticism** *n.*
– ORIGIN ME: from OFr. *peripatetique*, via L. from Gk *peripatētikos* 'walking up and down'.

peripeteia /pəˈrɪpɪˈtɛɪə/ ■ *n.* formal a sudden reversal of fortune or change in circumstances.

– ORIGIN C16: from Gk *peripeteia* 'sudden change', from *peri-* 'around' + the stem of *piptein* 'to fall'.

peripheral /pəˈrɪf(ə)r(ə)l/ ■ *adj.* 1 relating to or situated on the periphery. 2 marginal. 3 (of a device) able to be attached to and used with a computer, though not an integral part of it. 4 Anatomy near the surface of the body. ■ **n.** Computing a peripheral device.

– DERIVATIVES **peripherality** *n.* **peripheralization** or **peripheralisation** *n.* **peripheralize** or **peripheralise** *v.* **peripherally** *adv.*

peripheral nervous system ■ **n.** Anatomy the nervous system outside the brain and spinal cord.

periphery /pəˈrɪf(ə)rɪ/ ■ **n.** (pl. **peripheries**) 1 the outer limits or edge of an area or object. 2 a marginal or secondary position, part, or aspect.

– ORIGIN C16: via late L. from Gk *periphēreia* 'circumference'.

periphrasis /pəˈrɪfrəˈsɪs/ ■ **n.** (pl. **periphrases** /-sɪz/) 1 the use of indirect and circumlocutory speech or writing. 2 Grammar the use of separate words to express a grammatical relationship that is otherwise expressed by inflection, e.g. *did go* as opposed to *went*.

– DERIVATIVES **periphrastic** *adj.* **periphrastically** *adv.*
– ORIGIN C16: via L. from Gk, from *periphrazein*, from *peri-* 'around' + *phrazein* 'declare'.

periphyton /pəˈrɪfɪtən/ ■ **n.** Ecology freshwater organisms attached to or clinging to plants and other objects projecting above the bottom sediments.

– DERIVATIVES **periphytic** *adj.*

– ORIGIN 1960s: from Gk *peri-* 'around' + *phuton* 'plant'.

peripteral /pəˈrɪpt(ə)r(ə)l/ ■ *adj.* Architecture (of a building) having a single row of pillars on all sides in the style of the temples of ancient Greece.

– ORIGIN C19: from Gk *peripteron* (from *peri-* 'around' + *pteron* 'wing') + *-AL*.

periscope ■ **n.** an apparatus consisting of a tube attached to a set of mirrors or prisms, by which an observer (typically in a submerged submarine or behind a high obstacle) can see things that are otherwise out of sight.

– DERIVATIVES **periscopic** *adj.* **periscopically** *adv.*

perish ■ *v.* 1 literary die, especially in a violent or sudden way. > suffer complete ruin or destruction. 2 (of rubber, food, etc.) rot or decay. 3 (**be perished**) Brit. informal be suffering from extreme cold.

– PHRASES **perish the thought** informal may the thought or idea prove unfounded.

– ORIGIN ME: from OFr. *periss-*, lengthened stem of *perir*, from L. *perire* 'pass away'.

perishable ■ *adj.* 1 (of food) likely to rot quickly. 2 having a brief life or significance: *ballet is the most perishable of arts.* ■ **n.** (**perishables**) things, especially

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