

Confusing words

Some words sound the same or "seem" to mean the same but are in effect very different. Here is a list of such confusing words. Know them well so that you can be on guard against misusing them.

- **ABLUTION** (washing the body as a religious rite) – *We usually pray after our morning ablutions.*
WASHING (cleaning, bathing) – *She was washing her clothes.*
- **ABLE** (power or strength in general) – *He is able to run.*
CAPABLE (power or strength in particular) – *He is capable of running for two hours continuously.*
- **ACCEPT** (receive, admit, approve) – *I accept your offer.*
EXCEPT (prevent from being included, considered or accepted) – *Except you all members were present.*
- **ACCESS** (approach, reach, enter) – *I have no access to the minister.*
EXCESS (too much) – *Excess of anything is bad.*
- **ACCESSARY** (a helper or associate, usually in a crime; this word may be spelt as "accessory" also) – *He was an accessary to the murder.*
ACCESSORY (spare part, extra) – *Please also purchase the car's accessories from the same shop.*
- **ADMIT** (accept, allow entry or participation) – *1. I admit my mistake. 2. He was admitted to the college.*
CONFESS (accept that one has done something wrong or bad) – *He refused to confess in spite of the overwhelming evidence of his crime.*
- **ADVICE** (noun) – *1. It is a good advice. 2. Avoid showering unwanted advice.*
ADVISE (verb) – *1. It is good of you to advise me. 2. Do not advise someone unless he or she asks for it.*
INFORM (verb -- to tell, communicate) – *I shall inform his parents if he goes to the cinema daily.*
- **AFFECT** (verb -- to influence, to induce) – *Your absence will affect your score.*
EFFECT (noun -- consequence; verb -- to produce) *1. Your absence will have a bad effect on your score. 2. The citizens must act together to effect a change in the community's living conditions.*
- **AFFECTATION** (pretence, artificiality of manner, insincere behaviour) – *His words and deeds are so full of affectation that one is wary of trusting him at all.*
AFFECTION (love, affinity, attachment) – *Every mother has great affection for her children.*
- **AFFLICT** (hurt, injure, pain, cause suffering) – *This infection afflicts men and women alike.*
INFLICT (force someone to experience something unpleasant; impose) – *The suffering the epidemic inflicted on children was unimaginable.*
- **ALE** (beer) – *He needed some ale every day to stay in good spirits.*
AIL (be ill, cause suffering) – *In spite of the tests, the doctors still cannot tell what ails him.*
- **ALTER** (change, transform) – *There will be a lot of confusion if you keep altering the schedule.*
ALTAR (a place of offering) – *He sacrificed his personal interests at the altar of national progress.*
- **ALLUDE** (to hint at) – *In his speech he was alluding to the previous regime.*
ELUDE (escape physically; escape understanding by; avoid fulfilling, answering or performing) – *1. The chase went on for long but in the end the thief managed to elude the police. 2. The professor provided many examples but the crux of the theory eluded us. 3. Her telephone number eluded me when I needed it the most and I managed to remember it just when I was dropping off to sleep.*
- **ALL TOGETHER** (all in one place) – *We are all together to celebrate this special occasion.*
ALTOGETHER (wholly, entirely) – *He is altogether mistaken in his view.*
- **ALLUSION** (indirect reference) – *You can check up this allusion from the Indian mythology.*
ILLUSION (a deceptive appearance) *The glamour of the skyscrapers is an illusion as it hides the poverty below.*
DELUSION (a mistaken or unfounded opinion or idea; mistaken psychological belief in the face of evidence to the contrary) *1. His clothes create a delusion of grandeur. 2. I was labouring under the delusion that the company would honour the contract.*
- **ALUMNA/ALUMNAE** (female graduate/graduates)
- **ALUMNUS/ALUMNI** (male graduate/graduates)
- **ALREADY** (beforehand) – *1. I already know the result. 2. He is already in service.*
ALL READY (completely prepared) – *I have the information all ready for you.*
- **ALL WAYS** (every direction, every road) – *All ways have been cleared for the minister's caravan.*
ALWAYS (adverb) (at all times) *One must always keep a cool head.*
- **ALTERNATIVE** (choice, substitute, unusual) *1. There is no alternative to hard work. 2. He was quite famous for his work in alternative cinema but failed in commercial films.*
CHOICE (act of choosing or selecting; something selected; of superior grade) – *1. She finally made the choice. 2. This is a choice collection of stamps.*
ALTERNATE (every other) – *Business was brisk on alternate days.*

- **AMATEUR** (nonprofessional, dabbler) – *The company chairman is an amateur hockey player.*
PROFESSIONAL (expert, veteran) – *India can't win the match unless the players show a professional attitude.*
- **AMIALE** (lovable, kind, benign) – *The workers liked the new supervisor because he was very amiable.*
AMICABLE (friendly, harmonious) – *After a long discussion, they came to an amicable settlement.*
AMENABLE (manageable, obedient, willing to comply) – *The trade union was fortunately amenable to the offer.*
- **AMEND** – *To improve*
EMEND – (of a text) *remove errors, edit*
- **AMBIGUOUS** (vague, puzzling, cryptic, having more than one meaning) – *His rather ambiguous statements made it clear that he did not have a good grasp of the subject.*
EQUIVOCAL (intentionally ambiguous or misleading) – *Politicians are notorious for their splendid equivocal statements!*
- **ANXIOUS** (sense of worry and suspense) – *I was anxious about my brother's welfare in the remote location.*
EAGER (sense of joyful expectation) – *The participants were eager to know the names of the winners.*
- **APPRAISE** – *Estimate the value of*
APPRISE – *To inform*
- **ARTIST** (someone who makes images or things that are beautiful or express feelings) – *Picasso was a famous artist.*
ARTISTE (professional entertainer esp. singer, dancer or actor) – *The artistes presented a folk dance.*
- **ASCENT** (upward climb) – *The ascent in this company's hierarchy is a tiring job indeed.*
ASSENT (to agree) – *He has finally given his assent to the imposition of President's rule in the state.*
- **AUTARCHY** – *Despotism*
AUTARKY – *Economic Self-Sufficiency*
- **AVOCATION** (hobby) – *His avocation is playing chess.*
VOCATION (occupation, employment) – *Trading in fine textiles is his vocation.*
- **BACKWARD** (not progressing; in reverse order, in the reverse direction) – 1. *The child is rather backward for her age.* 2. *The train moved backward, startling the passenger who was trying to get in.*
BACKWARDS (in reverse order, opposite to facing or usual direction) – *He walked backwards from Mumbai to Pune.*
- **BAIL** (security) – *There is no fear of law simply due to the ease with which a bail can be obtained.*
BALE (bundle) – *This is the only bale of cotton which was not destroyed by the fire.*
- **BALL** (solid or hollow sphere used in games) – *This is the best cricket ball ever made.*
BALL (formal social gathering where people dance) – *Many people were invited to the ball aboard the luxury liner.*
BAWL (cry loudly) – *The minister bawled at the officer when he repeatedly failed to do the job.*
- **BALMY** – *Fragrant, Aromatic, Sweet Smelling*
BARMY – *Crazy, Insane, Lunatic*
- **BATTLE** (open clash between two opposing groups or two units of opposing armies; fight against a situation that needs to change) – *The battle against AIDS is no longer limited to one or two nations.*
WAR (armed fighting between two or more groups or nations) – *Today the world cannot afford World War III.*
- **BENEFICIAL** (useful, rewarding) – *The expert guidance of the coach will undoubtedly prove beneficial.*
BENEFICENT (kind, benign; doing or producing good) – *His was a beneficent regime when even the poorest felt the country cared for them.*
- **BESIDE** (adjacent, nearby) – *The secretary was sitting beside the chairman.*
BESIDES (also, further, as well as) – *The library stocked microfilms and cassettes besides books.*
- **BIANNUAL** (happening twice a year; not necessarily once every six months) – *The magazine is published biannually.*
BIENNIAL (happening once in two years) – *The biennial marathon was so popular that there was a demand to hold it every quarter.*
SEMIANNUAL (occurring every six months) – *The school board has decided to conduct semiannual examinations from the next academic year.*
- **BLUNDER** (a serious, embarrassing mistake) – *He committed a blunder by mistaking the chief guest's wife to be an old classmate.*
ERROR (defect, lapse, mistake) – *The accountant located an error in the journal.*
- **BREACH** (a break, violation) – *Your act constitutes a breach of faith.*
BREECH (back part of a rifle or gun barrel where bullets can be loaded) – *Breech-loading guns were preferred to muzzle-loading guns.*
- **BRIDAL** (connected with marriage; designed for a bride) – *The bridal ceremonies in India are very elaborate.*
BRIDLE (limit, curb; headgear of horse designed to give rider control) – *Your unbridled passions and indulgences will ruin you.*
- **BRIEF** (short, concise; usually used with reference to time and not distance) – *He gave a very brief lecture.*
SHORT (applies to duration and distance both) – 1. *It's a short distance.* 2. *He was on a short tour to London.*

- **BRING** (get while moving towards the speaker) – *Please bring me that book when you come here.*
FETCH (to go and get a thing or a person) – *My mother asked me to fetch my sister from her dancing class.*
TAKE (to carry away from speaker) – *I will take the book to him when I go to his office.*

- **BROACH** (to open; to bring up) – *Rather than risk an argument, he preferred not to broach the subject.*
BROOCH (small decorative pin worn by women; also spelt as broach) – *Avoid wearing the brooch when you travel.*

- **BRUSQUE** (blunt, abrupt, impudent) – *Your brusque manner is not likely to win you many friends.*
BURLESQUE (satire, mockery) – *The burlesque won some applause but did not go down well with the government.*

- **CADDIE** – *a person who carries your golf clubs*
CADDY – *a container for Tea*

- **CAN** (to be able to) – *I can drive your car.*
MAY (suggesting possibility; seeking or giving permission; expressing a wish or hope) – *1. I may drive your car. 2. May I drive your car? 3. May you have a nice drive.*

- **CANAL** (man-made waterway mainly for inland navigation or irrigation) – *The Suez Canal provides the fastest crossing from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean.*
CHANNEL (stretch of water joining two seas) – *The English Channel links the North Sea with the Atlantic Ocean, connecting Britain and France.*

- **CANNON** (a big gun) – *This place is famous for the cannons discovered in the archaeological survey.*
CANON (rule or body of rules) – *This is the fundamental canon of morality and we must observe it.*

- **CANVASS** (to solicit, propagate, seek support for) – *Political canvassing is getting louder these days.*
CANVAS (heavy closely woven fabric) – *Once he started working on the canvas, he was lost to the world.*

- **CALENDAR** (almanac, itinerary) – *According to the calendar, your birthday falls on a Sunday.*
CALENDER (a pressing machine) – *We manufacture calenders for the textile industry.*

- **CARELESS** (negligent, indifferent, opposite of careful) – *He is very careless in his studies.*
CAREFREE (without worry, gay) – *He led a carefree life till his first heart attack.*

- **CARGO** (goods carried as freight by sea, road or air) – *Cargo piled up at the ports as the workers went on strike.*
SHIPMENT (goods shipped together as part of the same cargo) – *The terrorists had sent the deadly shipment concealed in a cargo of plastic goods.*

- **CAST** (actors in a play; throw) – *This film has a very interesting cast.*
CASTE (a social class separated by distinctions of rank, profession or wealth) – *The caste system in India is indeed irrational.*

- **CATHOLIC** (means Roman Catholic, when used with a capital C) – *Peter is a devout Catholic who never misses church.*
CATHOLIC (means liberal or comprehensive, used with a small c) – *He has a catholic taste.*

- **CEASE** (stop, terminate, perish) – *The office ceased to function after his demise.*
SEIZE (to take possession of) – *A huge cache of arms was seized from the dacoit.*
SIEGE (blockade of any place by the armed forces) – *The army organised a siege to flush out every terrorist from the area.*

- **CENSER** – *container for incense (agarbatti)*
CENSOR – *to examine books, films etc before public release*
CENSURE – *to disapprove*

- **CESSATION** (break, standstill, end) – *There appears to be no chance of any cessation in the civil war in Somalia.*
CESSION (giving up or yielding) – *The cession of part of the land was expected to end the family dispute.*

- **CHILDISH** (immature, foolish, infantile) – *She thought others found her childish behaviour charming.*
CHILDLIKE (innocent, cute) – *Her childlike joy at seeing every gift of nature was very charming.*

- **CHORD** (a combination of notes that blend together harmoniously when sounded together; a straight line connecting two points on a curve) – *He waited for her to come, idly striking mournful chords on his guitar.*
CORD (a thin rope, a thick strong string) – *The cords of the Venetian blinds were in a tangle, making it impossible to open the blinds.*

- **COARSE** (rough, crude) – *The coarse manner in which they greeted us left a bad feeling in our hearts.*
COURSE (line of action) – *The government must immediately decide on the course of action of reforms.*

- **COMPLACENT** (contented, self-satisfied, smug) – *Complacency is the first indication of imminent downfall.*
COMPLAISANT (amiable, cheerfully obliging, eager to please) – *An excessively complaisant attitude reeks of sycophancy.*

- **COMPLIMENT** (praise; commendation) – *The Principal complimented her for her achievement in the national sports meet.*
COMPLEMENT (match; completing part; a quantity of people or things that is considered complete) – *1. One's actions should complement one's words. 2. The enemy had no option but to surrender when faced with the full complement of our mighty warships and lethal submarines.*
COMPLIMENTARY (commending, flattering) – *His complimentary remarks fell on deaf ears as she missed the presence of her father at the function.*
COMPLEMENTARY (something that completes; making a pair or whole; dependant, ancillary; either of two angles that together make a right angle) – *His wife sarcastically complimented him for finally managing to find two complementary socks.*

- **CONFIDANT** (a trusted person who you share secrets with) – *All of us feel the need for a confidant at times.*
CONFIDENT (assured, positive) – *Regular practice will give you the much required confidence to face the final examination.*
- **CONSCIOUS** (aware, cognizant) – *Be conscious of your duties if you wish to succeed.*
CONSCIENTIOUS (ethical, moral, virtuous) – *A conscientious attitude may not always be very practical.*
AWARE (alert, attentive, knowledgeable) – *He was aware of the dangerously rising rate of inflation.*
- **CONSEQUENT** (happening as a result of something) – *We are careless about disposing our waste and the consequent damage is killing our rivers.*
SUBSEQUENT (happening after something) – *Fortunately, the bridge collapsed subsequent to our departure.*
- **CONTINUAL** (frequent, recurring) – *The continual occurrence of riots has made the administration jittery.*
CONTINUOUS (endless, perpetual) – *His continuous aerobics performance for 50 hours made him famous.*
- **CORPORAL** (pertaining to the body) *Corporal punishment is not a healthy way to discipline children.*
CORPOREAL (physical and not spiritual; of the body) – *We cannot expect ghosts to have a corporeal existence.*
- **CORPS** – a body of people
CORPSE – a dead body
COPSE – a group of trees
- **COUNCIL** (assembly) – *An emergency meeting of the council was called.*
COUNSEL (advice) – *He gave me good counsel though it did not appeal to me at first.*
CONSUL (government official looking after country's interests and people in a foreign land) – *Mr. Peter was the British consul in Sri Lanka.*
- **CYGNET** – a young swan
SIGNET – a seal; often set in a ring
- **DEDUCE** (infer, derive, conclude) – *I was able to deduce from her actions that she was a spy.*
DEDUCT (diminish, reduce) – *We plan to deduct 10 percent of your salary as your contribution to the earthquake relief fund.*
- **DEFERENCE** (respect, reverence) – *No matter how good you are, you must always show deference to your seniors.*
DIFFERENCE (distinction, contrast) – *The difference between these two brands is very minor.*
- **DEFY** (challenge, disregard, challenge) – *He was punished for defying the traffic rules.*
DEIFY (to worship as a deity) – *Today's youth have a tendency to deify the wrong kind of heroes.*
- **DENOMINATE** (to give a name) – *Mahatma Gandhi was denominated the "Father of the nation."*
NOMINATE (to put forward for election to a position or appoint) – *He was nominated by the President.*
- **DENT** (depression, groove, indentation) – *Her haste in opening the door before the car could stop caused a dent in the door of the car.*
DINT (by means of) – *He succeeded by dint of sheer hard work.*
- **DEVICE** (machine, gadget; a clever or deceptive manoeuvre) – *Curbing the money supply to the economy is a device to tame inflation.*
DEVISE (formulate, engineer) – *The party has devised a wonderful plan to grab more votes.*
- **DELUSION** (false belief, hallucination) – *He lives under the delusion that someone is out to murder him.*
DELUSIVE (deceptive, raising false hopes) – *For once, the minister's delusive assurances failed to pacify the people.*
- **DEPRECATE** (condemn, disparage) – *There is no need to deprecate the much-needed exit policy.*
DEPRECIATE (devalue, belittle, abase) – *A depreciated rupee helps to boost Indian exports.*
- **DIALECT** (a local variation of a language) – *His dialect gives away his origin.*
DIALOGUE (words spoken by characters in a book, movie or play; formal conversation between two or more people; formal discussion) – *1. The movie had very sharp dialogues. 2. The dialogue was deadlocked as both parties refused to budge.*
- **DISCOMFIT** (to make somebody unsettled or confused; frustrate someone's plans) – *The teacher was discomfited by the student's bold response.*
DISCOMFORT (physical uneasiness; embarrassment) – *The breakdown of the airconditioner resulted in great discomfort.*
- **DISEASE** (illness) – *Casteism is indeed the biggest disease afflicting India.*
DECEASE (death; die) – *The sudden decease of the leader created a vacuum in the country's leadership.*
- **DISINTERESTED** (impartial; free from bias or self-interest) – *The teacher should assess the students in a disinterested manner.*
UNINTERESTED (indifferent; not showing interest) – *He seems uninterested in his work.*
- **DISSENT** (differ, disagree) – *The voice of dissent often has a significant message to convey.*
DESCENT (decline; ancestry; downward movement) – *1. The descent in the morals of the leadership spells doom for us. 2. He is of royal descent.*
- **DINGHY** – a small boat
DINGY – dirty, grimy, in a poor condition

- **DISCLOSE** (reveal, uncover) – *Under sustained interrogation, the prisoner broke down and disclosed the names of his masters.*
EXPOSE (unmask, uncover, unshroud) – *The prisoner's statement helped to expose the dark deeds of the high and mighty.*
- **DISCREET** (tactful, careful, secretive) – *We must be very discreet while talking to him.*
DISCRETE (distinct, separate) – *The company was divided into three discrete divisions.*
- **DUAL** (with or combining two parts) – *Under the new scheme of things, he now plays the dual role of chairman and chief executive.*
DUEL (in olden times, a formal fight between two persons using guns or swords; difficult competition between two sides) – *The two leaders are locked in a duel for the prime city seat in the assembly election.*
- **ECONOMIC** – (related to economics) *The economic condition of India is very bad.*
ECONOMICAL – (using minimum of time or resources for effective results) *With the price of cooking gas rising every month, it is important to work out the most economical way to cook food.*
- **EFFLUENT** (flowing outward; water mixed with waste matter) – *Without proper effluent management, the environment will soon be unable to support life.*
AFFLUENT (rich, wealthy) – *Ancient India was an affluent nation.*
- **ELAPSE** (pass by) – *Many months elapsed before the government responded to the petition.*
LAPSE (break or interval; momentary fault or failure in morality or behaviour; drop to a lower level; failure to exercise right in time) – *1. His momentary lapse of concentration resulted in a terrible accident. 2. He forgot to pay the premia and as a result, the life insurance policy lapsed.*
- **ELEMENTAL** (being or resembling a force of nature; ultimate; relating to severe atmospheric conditions; fundamental; simplified) – *The artist's classic elemental sculptures were on display at the exhibition.*
ELEMENTARY (simple, rudimentary, basic) – *The manager took them to the village market to learn the elementary principles of marketing.*
- **ELICIT** (draw, activate, induce) – *He was able to elicit a reaction from the normally quiet official.*
ILLICIT (illegal, felonious) – *The illicit trade in ivory has caused the death of thousands of elephants.*
- **ELIGIBLE** (qualified, acceptable) – *MBAs from reputed institutes are eligible to apply for the post.*
ILLEGIBLE (incomprehensible) – *Illegible handwriting is a major source of irritation for typists.*
- **ELUSIVE** (difficult to describe, find, achieve or remember; skilful at avoiding capture; slippery, intangible) – *Though two elite police groups were after him, the notorious sandalwood smuggler remained elusive.*
ILLUSIVE (imaginary, misleading, deceptive) – *The forecasts were rosy but any improvement in job opportunities remained illusive.*
- **EMIGRANT** (one who leaves one's country to settle in a foreign country) – *Unfortunately, that country treats emigrants as second class citizens.*
IMMIGRANT (one who comes from a foreign country to settle in) – *He blended in so well that none could tell he was an immigrant from Canada.*
- **EMPTY** (something from which everything has been removed; containing nothing) – *The box was empty.*
VACANT (means an unoccupied room, seat etc.) – *The building has four vacant flats.*
- **ENORMITY** (extreme wickedness) – *He has not realised the enormity of his crime.*
ENORMOUSNESS (largeness of size or amount) – *The villager stood gaping at the enormousness of the shopping mall.*
- **EQUABLE** (consistent, reliable, steady) – *His equable temper helped him to lead the tense negotiations efficiently.*
EQUITABLE (just, fair, honest) – *Indian socialism aims at an equitable distribution of wealth.*
- **ESPECIALLY** (particularly, specifically) – *She enjoys watching movies, especially with her friends.*
SPECIALLY (preferentially) – *The PM specially requested him to attend the meeting.*
- **EXIGENT** (demanding immediate attention) – *This money will help you meet your exigent needs.*
EXIGUOUS (scanty; small) – *The exiguous rainfall this year may create problems for the nation.*
- **EXPECT** (to hope for; anticipate) – *The teacher expects sincerity of his students.*
EXCEPT (excluding) – *The students possess everything except sincerity.*
- **EXTENT** (size, degree) – *The extent of damage due to the earthquake is not yet known.*
EXTEND (open out into space; increase size; continue for specific duration) – *1. The metropolis now extends several kilometers in all directions, except the west. 2. The talks extended over the weekend.*
EXTANT (still existing) – *The file of the 1960 murder case is extant.*
EXTINCT (no longer existing) – *Dinosaurs are hopefully extinct by now, though the movie tries to convince us otherwise.*
- **EXTRACT** (take out) – *The government is determined to extract money from those who evade tax.*
EXTRICATE (free with difficulty; pull out) – *The poor villager was unable to extricate himself from the moneylender's contract.*
- **EXTRADITION** (delivering of criminals by one country to another) – *Malaysia refused to extradite the war criminal unless the trial was held in a neutral country.*
EXPATRIATE (someone who has moved abroad; someone without a citizenship) – *The US has expatriated several terrorists after the bombing.*

- **FAILING** (weakness, fault) – *Great men tend to forgive the human failings in others.*
FAILURE (lack of success) – *He has been a failure all through his career.*
- **FAIN** (gladly, eagerly) – *Fain would I visit him if he invites me.*
FEIGN (to pretend) – *Some animals often feign death to confuse or distract a predator.*
- **FAINT** (suddenly lose consciousness; barely perceptible; lacking clarity or strength) – *1. The student fainted on receiving the examination booklet. 2. Her voice was very faint in the storm. 3. I have only a faint recollection of being here before.*
FEINT (a distracting or deceptive manoeuvre) – *The attacker feinted and managed to fool the goalkeeper into moving the wrong way.*
FEIGN (to pretend) – *The student feigned confidence on receiving the examination booklet.*
- **FAMOUS** (well-known positively) – *Inspector Zende became famous after he caught the criminal Charles Shobhraj.*
NOTORIOUS (well-known negatively, infamous) – *Inspector Zende caught the notorious criminal Charles Shobhraj at a restaurant in Goa.*
- **FARTHER** (to a greater distance) – *The hotel was farther from the station than she expected.*
FURTHER (to a greater degree or more advanced stage) – *I will discuss this no further.*
- **FAUN** – *a rural god or deity*
FAWN – *a young deer OR to flatter*
- **FINAL** (last, conclusive) – *Is this your final decision ?*
FINALE (conclusion, end) – *The car rally is the grand finale of the carnival.*
- **FORBEAR** (refrain from) – *The relatives were warned to forbear from divulging the terrible news to the seriously injured co-passenger.*
FOREBEAR (ancestor, forerunner) – *You live easy because your forebears worked very hard.*
- **FORCEFUL** (full of force) – *He has a forceful personality.*
FORCIBLE (by force) – *The police had to make a forcible entry into the shrine.*
- **FORMALLY** (seriously, officially) – *You must behave formally before the chief guest.*
FORMERLY (in the past) – *Myanmar was formerly known as Burma.*
- **FORTUITOUS** (accidental, by chance) – *He met the President fortuitously.*
FORTUNATE (lucky, auspicious) – *You are fortunate to have such caring parents.*
- **FOUL** (dirty, putrid) – *Any team can win if it resorts to foul play.*
FOWL (a bird used to produce meat or eggs) – *This is a fast-breeding variety of fowls.*
- **FUNERAL** (macabre, depressing, ghastly; suitable for a funeral) – *The entire atmosphere at the gathering was funereal.*
FUNERAL (burial, cremation) – *The funeral ceremony of the man was conducted in the public garden amidst his beloved flowers.*
- **GENIAL** (friendly and pleasant) – *His secretary is always genial.*
CONGENIAL (compatible) – *He found that the new office offered a very congenial atmosphere to work in.*
- **GEEZER** – *Old man (slang)*
GEYSER – *a hot spring or a bathroom water heater*
- **GHOSTLY** (related to ghosts) – *I was frightened by the ghostly atmosphere of the palace.*
GHASTLY (shocking, horrible; indicative of death) – *The badly maintained heritage hotel looked ghastly.*
- **GLANCE** (a brief quick look at something) – *I glanced at the officer checking the luggage.*
GLIMPSE (a brief, short sight of something) – *I could just catch a glimpse of the person before the car moved away.*
- **GODLY** (pious; holy) – *Great saints lead a godly life.*
GODLIKE (befitting a God; having the nature of God) – *His disciples believed that he had godlike powers.*
- **GOURMET** – *a connoisseur of food*
GOURMAND – *Greedy*
- **GRACEFUL** (showing elegance, beauty and smoothness of form or movement) – *He is a graceful person.*
ELEGANT (showing sophistication and good taste in appearance and behaviour; pleasingly neat, simple or concise) – *The hotel room was very elegant and designed right for the busy executive.*
- **GRISLY** – *horrible*
GRIZZLY – *a type of bear*
- **GUARANTEE** – (used as a verb and a noun -- written assurance or pledge; give surety or make certain of) *1. There is no guarantee that they are speaking the truth. 2. The government cannot guarantee safe passage to the hijackers.*
GUARANTY – (correct only as a noun -- security for a formal promise; someone who promises responsibility for someone else's debts or obligations) – *He offered guaranty for the borrower.*
- **HARE** (an animal like a large rabbit) – *The hare was hunted down by the pack of dogs.*
HEIR (successor) – *The king, unfortunately, had no worthy heir.*
- **HAIL** (small hard balls of ice falling from the sky like rain; call someone) – *1. The fierce hailstorm destroyed the whole crop. 2. It is best to hail a taxi.*
HALE (in good health) – *The soldiers who made it to the Antarctic are quite hale and hearty.*

- **HEAR** (perceive sound without any special effort) – *I can hear the noise coming from the opposite room.*
LISTEN (to make a special effort to hear something) – *The students listened attentively.*
- **HONORARY** (serving without pay) – *He is an honorary surgeon at the hospital.*
HONOURABLE (worthy of honour) – *He is an honourable member of the community.*
- **HOARD** – *to store, accumulate*
HORDE – *a tribe or a group*
- **HOME** (a place where one lives and is happy) – *He has a cosy little home.*
HOUSE (a structure to live in with no emotional involvement as such) – *He has a big house full of beautiful furniture.*
- **HUMAN** (pertaining to man) – *It is but human to err.*
HUMANE (kind, benevolent) – *Our society needs to adopt a more humane approach to those living with AIDS.*
- **HUNG** (suspended or supported from above) – *I hung the towel on the clothesline.*
HANGED (to put to death by suspending by the neck) – *The convict was hanged at dawn.*
- **IDEAL** (perfect) – *The ideal solution to the Kashmir problem is yet to be found.*
IDOL (object of worship) – *Their religion does not encourage idol worship.*
- **IMAGINARY** (fictitious, opposed to real) – *Don't let the imaginary ghosts under your bed steal your sleep.*
IMAGINATIVE (full of imagination, skilled at thinking originally) – *Isaac Asimov was an imaginative writer.*
- **IMMANENT** – Inherent, by birth
IMMINENT – impending, in the near future
EMINENT – Important, respected
- **IMMORAL** (corrupt, evil, having no morality) – *Going by the current trend, an immoral politician is no longer a surprise.*
AMORAL (without moral standards) – *It would appear that politics have sunk to new amoral levels.*
- **IMPUDENT** (rude, disrespectful) – *The impudent student asked the teacher his age during a lecture.*
IMPRUDENT (unwise) – *The imprudent utilisation of the nation's resources has left us underdeveloped.*
- **INDIGENOUS** (native; originating in a particular region) – *The Agni missile is indigenously developed.*
INGENUOUS (gullible; innocent) – *An ingenuous customer is likely to be defrauded.*
INGENIOUS (clever, inventive) – *It was an ingenious solution to the vexing problem.*
INDIGENT (poor) – *In India many people are so indigent that they cannot manage a square meal.*
- **INTELLIGENT** (talented, clever) – *The intelligent student always wins.*
INTELLIGIBLE (understandable) – *His message was not intelligible because there was too much noise in the background.*
- **JOURNEY** (travel by any mode) – *We had an exciting bus journey.*
VOYAGE (used for journey by sea) – *The voyage of Columbus was a turning point in history.*
- **JUDICIAL** (related to a judge or to the law) – *This is a judicial matter and should be left to experts.*
JUDICIOUS (wise, prudent, right judgment) – *Think hard and then take a judicious decision about your investment.*
- **LAMA** – a Buddhist Monk
LLAMA – a South American Animal
- **LESS** (refers to uncountable quantity) – *Her new apartment has less floor space and fewer windows.*
FEWER (refers to countable number) – *Fewer industrial accidents occurred this year than the last.*
- **LIGHTENING** (reducing, alleviating) – *He is lightening the burden by providing some monthly allowance.*
LIGHTNING (flash of light in the sky) – *The lightning lit up the night sky like it was noon.*
LIGHTING (illumination) – *The lighting at the marriage party was impressive.*
- **LOVABLE** (worthy of love) – *Some may not find a pug very lovely but she is definitely a lovable dog.*
LOVELY (beautiful) – *Her behaviour was as lovely as her looks.*
- **LICENCE** (noun -- freedom, liberty, legal document granting permission) – *Never drive without your licence.*
LICENSE (verb -- permit) – *Your post does not license you to behave in this high-handed manner.*
- **LOATHE** (verb -- hate) – *He loathes studying.*
LOATH (adj. -- unwilling) – *She was loath to donate the money.*
- **LOOSE** (not fixed; not tight; relaxed; turn free) – *He let the horse free in the field.*
LOSE (to stop possessing) – *You'll lose a golden career opportunity if you don't apply now.*
- **LUMBAR** – *the lower back of the human body*
LUMBER (N) – wood, timber
LUMBER (V) – to walk slowly and heavily
- **LUXURIANT** (abundant) – *The luxuriant growth of plants has given a fine look to the garden.*
LUXURIOUS (giving great pleasure; very comfortable and expensive) – *His luxurious life has made him a little complacent.*

- **MANNEQUIN** – *A dressmaker's model / to display garments*
MANIKIN – a dwarf
- **MATERIAL** (noun -- commercial term for goods of any kind; fabric; information; something used to make things; someone suitable) – *1. He does not appear to be executive material. 2. Her dress was made of some new synthetic material. 3. The material must be delivered before 12 noon on Friday.*
MATERIEL – (supplies, weapons and equipment of a military force) – *The men were ready to defend the city but were handicapped by a severe shortage of materiel.*
- **MEAN** (adj -- very bad, stingy) – *The mean neighbour posed problems for all.*
MEAN (noun -- the average) – *The BSE Sensex is a weighted mean of 30 alpha scrips.*
- **MEMORABLE** (worth remembering) – *Unfortunately, there is no video record of Kapil Dev's memorable innings of 175.*
MEMORIAL (statue, monument) – *The memorial in Hiroshima for those killed by the atomic bomb is a grim reminder of the perils of war and the need for global peace.*
- **MENDACITY** (lying) – *Politicians are often accused of mendacity.*
MENDICITY (begging) – *We may be a developing nation but we refuse to lead a life of mendicity.*
- **MIGHT** (strength) – *The might of the G7 nations has often gone unchallenged.*
MITE (fragment, bit) – *All citizens gave their mite to the earthquake relief fund.*
- **MOAT** – Ditch
MOTE – a spot of dust
- **MOB** (disorderly group) – *The police had to teargas the unruly mob at Delhi.*
CROWD (a big group) – *A big crowd had gathered to watch the match.*
- **MOMENTARY** (for a moment) – *Material pleasures are but momentary.*
MOMENTOUS (important) – *A momentous decision was taken by the Congress Working Committee.*
- **MORAL** (adj -- ethical; noun -- significance of a story or event) – *The moral (noun) of the story is that a king must always be moral (adj) in his actions.*
MORALE (feeling of confidence; spirit) – *The chief tried to boost their morale through aggressive gestures.*
- **OBDURATE** (stubborn) – *The obdurate state machinery does not make it very easy for investors to venture into new areas.*
OBJURGATE (to scold) – *The judge objurgated the police officer for his failure to conduct the investigation in a proper manner.*
- **OFFICIAL** (related to an office) – *The minister pointed out that the pleasure trip was not made in his official capacity.*
OFFICIOUS (meddlesome) – *The minister's officious attitude irked the members of his team.*
- **ORDINANCE** (rule of order) – *Presidential ordinances can be issued when parliament is not in session.*
ORDNANCE (arms, cannon) – *The explosion at the ordnance factory was a matter of grave concern for the army.*
ORDONNANCE – a systematic arrangement of objects
- **OSTENSIBLE** (claiming to be different from the real) – *The ostensible motivation was the urge to serve the poor but in reality he was only doing some arm-twisting to gain more favours from the high command.*
OSTENTATIOUS (fond of display, exhibition, showy) – *He prefers to live in an ostentatious manner.*
- **PAEAN** – a song of praise
PAEON – a metrical foot
PEON – various sorts of worker
- **PAIN** (physical or mental suffering) – *The pain of a bodily injury may seem more bearable than the pain of separation.*
PANE (a flat piece of glass) – *The window panes of the office were cleaned yesterday.*
- **PALATE** – roof of one's mouth
PALETTE – a flat plate for mixing paints, used by artists
PALLET – a platform or a mattress
PELLET – a small capsule
- **PATROL** (guard, protect) – *The night patrol on the highway yielded good results and eliminated dacoity.*
PETROL (refined crude oil) – *Petrol is no longer the preferred fuel, now that the new cars have superior diesel engines.*
- **PENURY** (abject poverty) – *Millions of Indians live and die in penury.*
PENURIOUS (miserly, stingy) – *The rich man was very penurious.*
- **PEOPLE** (a general word referring to a collection of persons) – *Several people attended the function.*
A PEOPLE (a nation or a race) – *The Germans are a self-respecting people.*
PEOPLES (nations, races, tribes etc.) – *Peoples of the world must unite to fight terrorism.*
- **PERSECUTE** (harass, oppress) – *The opposition alleged that the government was trying to persecute the media for exposing its dark deeds.*
PROSECUTE (bring a criminal action against) – *The government has warned that those who produce or market gutkha will be prosecuted.*
- **PERSONAL** (related to one person, individual) – *You should avoid interfering in somebody's personal matters.*
PERSONNEL (persons employed in any service) – *The company personnel will definitely get a bonus.*
- **PERSPICACIOUS** (acutely insightful and wise) – *Today's urban consumer is much too perspicacious to fall for mere advertising gimmicks.*
PERSPICUOUS (clearly understandable) – *Her perspicuous argument left no room for any doubt.*

- **PLAINTIFF** – *brings a case in court of law*
PLAINTIVE – sad, mournful

- **POLITIC** (prudent, shrewd; smoothly agreeable and courteous) – *He was too politic to pick up a quarrel with the principal of the school.*
POLITICAL (pertaining to government, of public affairs) – *He was yet another actor who hoped to shine in the political arena but failed miserably.*

- **POTABLE** (fit to drink) – *There is a shortage of potable water in our locality.*
PORTABLE (not fixed; easily transported) – *Portable TV sets are a great hit with the urban crowd.*

- **PRACTICAL** (justifiable, pragmatic, realistic) – *Practical experience is a must for this post.*
PRACTICABLE (implementable; usable for a specific purpose) – *Your suggestion is not very practicable.*

- **PRECEDE** (to go before) – *Minor quarrels always precede a war.*
PROCEED (to advance) – *The army has proceeded deep into the enemy territory.*

- **PREMIER** (chief, head of state, first) – *The Premier of Pakistan has been invited to India to discuss matters.*
PREMIERE (opening show) – *The world premiere of this movie is on Zee TV.*

- **PRESCRIBE** (to lay down authoritatively) – *The election commission has prescribed the code of conduct applicable to all government officials and candidates.*
PROSCRIBE (to prohibit; forbid) – *The athlete was disqualified for using proscribed drugs.*

- **PRINCIPAL** (chief) – *The principal of the college has resigned following a prolonged strike by the students.*
PRINCIPLE (codes) – *The principal was a man of principle and chose to resign rather than compromise.*

- **PROCEED** (go, continue) – *The vehicles were allowed to proceed after the boulders were cleared.*
PROCEEDS (collections) – *The proceeds of the film show would go to the earthquake relief fund.*

- **PRESUMPTIVE** (having a reasonable basis for belief or acceptance) – *Presumptive evidence points to his involvement in the crime.*
PRESUMPTUOUS (lacking respect for others; doing something without the right) – *It was rather presumptuous of the local film star to expect autograph seekers in a foreign country.*

- **PROPHECY** (noun -- prediction) – *The prophecies of Nostradamus are world famous.*
PROPHECY (verb -- to predict) – *He prophesied that the government would fall within six months.*

- **QUITE** (perfectly, significantly) – *This was quite a balanced match.*
QUIET (silent, inert, inactive) – *The government has been quiet over the GATT issue.*

- **RARE** (not common and very valuable; unusual) – *This is a rare stamp indeed.*
SCARCE (in short supply; not easy to find) – *Clean water is becoming scarce.*

- **RATIONAL** (sane, logical) – *We need a rational approach to population control.*
RATIONALE (logical basis) – *What is the rationale behind this plan?*

- **RECOLLECT** (recall knowledge from memory) – *I am unable to recollect his name.*
REMEMBER (keep in mind for attention or consideration) – *I shall remember this evening for the rest of my life.*

- **RECOMMEND** (suggest some person or action for a job or purpose) – *He recommended Dr. Joshi for the surgery.*
REFER (redirect to a person or place) – *The family doctor referred the patient to a specialist so that she could get some expert advice on her diet.*

- **RETRENCHMENT** (reduction in expenditure or number of employees) – *Workers are strongly opposing retrenchment in the public sector.*
RETRIBUTION (punishment, reprisal) – *The retribution for his action was immediate.*

- **REVIEW** – *a survey or a report*
REVUE – a musical show

- **RHYME** – *matching of sounds in verse*
RIME – frost

- **RICH** (wealthy) – *He is a rich man.*
RICHES (belongings, resources) – *India has limitless natural riches.*

- **RIGHT** (correct) – *There may be doubts and protests but economic liberalisation was the right path to take.*
RITE (ceremony) – *Some religious rites in India are elaborate and time-consuming.*

- **RIGOROUS** (thorough, severe, unsparing) – *Commandoes have to undergo rigorous training.*
VIGOROUS (energetic, strong, active) – *The students were put through some vigorous exercise routine by the new instructor.*

- **RING** (circular band, a circle) – *This is my marriage ring.*
WRING (twist, squeeze) – *Wring the towel properly so that it does not drip.*

- **ROUTE** (path, itinerary) – *The minister's motorcade changed its route at the last moment.*
ROUT (defeat, debacle) – *The opposition party had to face a total rout in the elections.*

- **SALON** (reception room; a shop where hairdressers and beauticians work) – *She made it a point to dash down to the salon before every meeting.*
SALOON (bar, den, hangout) – *A meeting was convened in the hotel saloon.*

- **SANATORY** (curative) – *The vacation had a sanatory effect on her.*
SANITARY (clean, hygienic; free from dirt and germs) – *Diseases thrive in poor sanitary conditions.*
- **SATIRE** – *make fun of, sarcasm*
SATYR – *a woodland deity / god*
- **SCHOLAR** (intellectual, academician, guru) – *He is a distinguished scholar of ancient Indian history.*
PUPIL (student, disciple, beginner) – *The pupils of the college were inspired by the scholarly director.*
- **SCULL** – *oar to row a boat*
SKULL – *the bone of the head*
- **SENSUAL** (related to bodily desires; sexually exciting) – *He takes a sensual delight in eating.*
SENSUOUS (appealing to senses) – *On the whole it was a very sensuous experience.*
- **SEPTIC** (infected by bacteria which produce pus) – *One of the wounds became septic, necessitating a course of strong antibacterials.*
SCEPTIC (a person who always doubts) – *A sceptic may be prudent but not often popular.*
- **SHEAR** (trim, clip, shave, whittle) – *The shepherd is shearing a sheep.*
SHEER (complete, absolute) – *He passed the examination by sheer determination and hard work.*
- **SIMULATE** (duplicate, imitate) – *Pilots are trained on machines that simulate flying conditions.*
STIMULATE (rouse, excite) – *Hitler's speeches could stimulate the whole of Germany.*
- **SOCIAL** (living together in a group; liking companionship; fond of society) – *Man is by nature a social animal.*
SOCIABLE (friendly and pleasant) – *Samir is a very sociable person.*
- **SPECIOUS** (plausible but false; illusive; untrue) – *Her arguments were quite specious but her fighting spirit was making an impression.*
SPACIOUS (roomy, big, jumbo) – *The debate was held in a spacious hall.*
- **SPIRITUAL** (not material) – *Spiritual awakening must accompany intellectual development.*
SPIRITUOUS (containing or of the nature of alcohol) – *The illegal spirituous preparation made hundreds of people blind.*
- **STALACTITE** (column of rock hanging from the roof of a cave)
STALAGMITE – (column of rock rising from the floor of a cave) *Stalactites and stalagmites are found in limestone cave systems.*
- **STATIONARY** (motionless) – *The speeding goods train rammed into the stationary passenger train.*
STATIONERY (writing material) – *We will not save much by cutting down on stationery.*
- **STATUE** (image, icon, idol) – *The arm of the statue was broken by the enraged mob.*
STATUTE (law, canon, command) – *The statutes of civilisation demand decency and honesty.*
- **STORY** (narrative) – *Jeffrey Archer is one of the best storytellers of our times.*
STOREY (a single floor or level of a multilevel building) – *The 25-storey building was the tallest in the suburb.*
- **STILE** – *steps, especially wooden*
STYLE – *shape or manner*
- **STRAIT** (difficult situation; narrow channel of sea) – *He is in dire straits.*
STRAIGHT (direct, traditional) – *The straight road to Mumbai will save you an hour but will cost you more in terms of toll charges.*
- **SUIT** (to fit) – *This proposal will suit the leaders, I am sure.*
SUITE (a set of connected rooms) – *A suite was reserved for the Prime Minister in the best hotel in town.*
- **TEAM** (group) – *The Indian cricket team has been selected by the BCCI.*
TEEM (abound, swarm) – *The valley teems with tourists during the summers.*
- **THRASH** (beat, batter, assail, attack) – *The boy was thrashed by his teacher for indiscipline.*
THRESH (beat the grain out of ears or cobs) – *It is the time for farmers to carry out their threshing.*
- **TROOP** (a company of persons or animals moving together) – *The American troops suffered heavy losses in Vietnam.*
TROUPE (a group of entertainers like circus, dances etc.) – *The world-famous circus troupe is in town.*
- **TORTUOUS** (spiral, twisting, winding) – *The accused gave some tortuous answers about the reason for his presence at the scene of the crime.*
TORTUROUS (painful, distorting) – *The preparations required for passing MBA may appear torturous but the rewards make it all worthwhile.*
- **TURBID** (muddy, soiled, clouded) – *The water from the municipal taps is often turbid.*
TURGID (inflated, pompous) – *The author's style is quite turgid and not particularly suited for humour.*
- **TYPEWRITER** (machine for printing, one character at a time) – *PCs have replaced typewriters in most offices.*
TYPIST (a person who uses the typewriter) – *The skill of an experienced typist is still valuable when it comes to using a computer keyboard.*
- **UNHUMAN** (lacking in human characteristics) – *The creature from outer space had an unhuman form in the movie.*
INHUMAN (cruel or without human feelings) – *The Nazis were very inhuman in their approach.*

- **ULTERIOR** (hidden, covert, secret) – *The inspector was sure that the thief had some ulterior motive when the latter announced his desire to mend his ways.*
ULTIMATE (final, maximum, limiting, highest) – *Conquering the Everest remains the ultimate challenge for a mountaineer.*
- **UNQUESTIONED** (that which has not been questioned) – *The statement was accepted by both parties, unquestioned.*
UNQUESTIONABLE (impossible or not open to question) – *His loyalty is unquestionable.*
- **URBAN** (belonging to the city or town) – *The migration of villagers to urban areas is alarming.*
URBANE (refined, polished, cultured) – *Vinod is a very urbane person.*
- **UXORIOUS** (submissively fond of a wife) – *The villagers teased their newly married neighbour as being too uxorious.*
UXORICIDE (wife killing) – *It was a shock when the person they took to be uxorious was taken away by the police for uxoricide.*
- **VACATION** (holidays) – *Never take a vacation long enough for your boss make other arrangements.*
VOCATION (profession, occupation) – *One should choose one's vocation according to one's liking.*
- **VAIN** (useless, futile) – *He made a vain attempt to win the favour of others.*
VEIN (blood vessel) – *The blood vessels carrying blood to the heart are called veins.*
- **VASSAL** (slave, pauper) – *The vassal was brought back to his native land after a long time.*
VESSEL (utensil, bucket, boat or ship) – *Years ago he was taken away forcibly as a vassal; now he returned as the master of both his will and the vessel that brought him there.*
- **VENAL** (evil, corrupt, immoral) – *The venal acts of the officials caused great distress and led to the uprising.*
VENIAL (excusable, pardonable) – *The punishment was too harsh for the child's venial mischief.*
- **VERACITY** (truthfulness) – *After his involvement in the scam, one tended to doubt the veracity of every statement he made.*
VORACITY (extreme desire to eat) – *His voracity is beyond his own control now.*
- **VERBAL** (relating to words; expressed in spoken words) – *Verbal promises hold no value in law.*
VERBOSE (wordy, talkative) – *His style is so verbose that he is unable to hold his reader's attention for long.*
- **VIRTUAL** (in effect though not in fact) – *The workers' union has virtually taken over the management.*
VIRTUOUS (chaste, ethical) – *His virtuous nature will never allow him to indulge in such a crime.*
- **VISCOUS** (sticky, semi-fluid) – *Rubber is collected as a viscous fluid from the bark of a tree.*
VICIOUS (cruel, evil-minded) – *The vicious motives of the dacoits were no secret.*
- **WAIL** (to cry bitterly) – *The widow's wails left all eyes moist.*
WAIN (a large open wagon for hay) – *Bring in the wain from the other gate.*
- **WASTE** (useless) – *All your efforts are a waste if you do not appear for the examination.*
WAIST (part of the human body between ribs and hips) – *A luxuriant waist is a sign of obesity.*
- **WAVE** (to signal to move) – *The policeman waved the vehicles on, hoping to clear the jam before it got worse.*
WAIVE (to forego) – *The consulate agreed to waive visa formalities but the scientist refused to relent and cancelled his trip.*
- **WET** (containing water) – *It is not very healthy to stay in your wet clothes for too long.*
WHET (to sharpen; make more acute) – *1. The smell of lunch getting ready was enough to whet my appetite. 2. You need to whet this blunt knife.*
- **WHITHER** (to what place) – *The elderly professor frequently exclaims, "Whither youth?"*
WITHER (fade, shrivel) – *Age had withered his body but his mind was as sharp as ever.*
- **WILLING** (agreeable, compliant, amenable) – *He was willing to surrender his arms.*
WILFUL (stubborn, perverse, dogmatic) – *The wilful acts of the company against a section of the employees are unpardonable.*
- **WOMANLY** (like a mature woman) – *She was quite womanly in handling the dispute and settled everyone down in no time.*
WOMANISH (having a woman's characteristics, not considered desirable in a man, like weakness or fussiness) – *He was so womanish that men were uncomfortable to have him around.*
- **WREAK** (inflict, bring about) – *The new battle tank wreaked havoc on the enemy.*
REEK (strong bad odour, show strong evidence of something unpleasant) – *Your plan reeks of treachery.*
WRECK (destruction, fragments) – *The sudden storm made a wreck of our picnic plans and we ended up spending the day at home.*
- **WRITE-OFF** – *damage something irreparably*
RIGHT-OFF – *immediately, without delay*
- **YOKE** (piece of wood placed on the neck of oxen) – *The yoke of bonded labour must be eliminated.*
YOLK (yellow of an egg) – *The yolk of egg is very nutritious.*