

HOW TO TALK ABOUT ACTIONS

(Sessions 19–23)

TEASER PREVIEW

What verb means to:

belittle?

be purposely confusing?

tickle someone's fancy?

flatter fulsomely?

prohibit some food or activity?

make unnecessary?

work against?

spread slander?

give implicit forgiveness for a misdeed?

change hostility to friendliness?

SESSION 19

Verbs are incalculably useful to you.

Every sentence you think, say, read, or write contains an implied or expressed verb, for it is the verb that carries the action, the movement, the force of your ideas.

As a young child, you used verbs fairly early.

Your first words, of course, were probably *nouns*, as you identified the things or people around you.

Mama, Dada, doll, baby, bottle, etc. perhaps were the first standard syllables you uttered, for naming concrete things or real persons is the initial step in the development of language.

Soon there came the ability to express *intangible* ideas, and then you began to use simple verbs—*go, stop, stay, want, eat, sleep*, etc.

As you gained maturity, your verbs expressed ideas of greater and greater complexity; as an adult you can describe the most involved actions in a few simple syllables—if you have a good store of useful verbs at your command.

The richer and more extensive your vocabulary of verbs, the more accurately and expressively you can communicate your understanding of actions, reactions, attitudes, and emotions.

Let's be specific.

IDEAS

1. playing it down

Ready to go back thirty or more years? Consider some post-World War II American political history:

Harry Truman couldn't win the 1948 election. The pollsters said

so, the Republicans heartily agreed, even the Democrats, some in high places, believed it. Mr. Truman himself was perhaps the only voter in the country who was not entirely convinced.

Came the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November—well, if you were one of those who stayed up most of the night listening to the returns, and then kept your ear to the radio most of the next day, you recall how you reacted to the unique Truman triumph.

It was no mean accomplishment, thought many people. Pure accident, said others. If one out of twelve voters in a few key states had changed his ballot, Harry could have gone back to selling ties, one Republican apologist pointed out. It wasn't anything Truman did, said another; it was what Dewey didn't do. No credit to Truman, said a third; it was the farmers—or labor—or the Republicans who hadn't bothered to vote—or the ingenious miscounting of ballots. No credit to Truman, insisted a fourth; it was Wallace's candidacy—it was the Democrats—it was Republican overconfidence—it was sunspots—it was the Communists—it was the civil service workers who didn't want to lose their cushy jobs—it was really Roosevelt who won the election.

Anyway Harry didn't accomplish a thing—he was just a victim of good fortune.

What were the apologists for Dewey's failure doing?

They were *disparaging* Truman's achievement.

2. playing it safe

Willing to look at some more history of the late 1940s?

Of course, Dewey did campaign, in his own way, for the presidency. As the Republican aspirant, he had to take a stand on the controversial Taft-Hartley Act.

Was he for it? He was for that part of it which was *good*. Naturally, he was against any of the provisions which were *bad*. Was he for it? The answer was *yes*—and also *no*. Take whichever answer you wanted most to hear.

What was Dewey doing?

He was *equivocating*.

3. enjoying the little things

Have you ever gone through a book that was so good you kept hugging yourself mentally as you read? Have you ever seen a play or motion picture that was so charming that you felt sheer delight as you watched? Or perhaps you have had a portion of pumpkin-chiffon pie, light and airy and mildly flavored, and with a flaky, delicious crust, that was the last word in gustatory enjoyment?

Now notice the examples I have used. I have not spoken of books that grip you emotionally, of plays and movies that keep you on the edge of your seat in suspense, or of food that satisfies a ravenous hunger. These would offer quite a different, perhaps more lasting and memorable, type of enjoyment. I have detailed, rather, mental or physical stimuli that excite enjoyably but not too sharply—a delightful novel, a charming play, a delicious dessert.

How do such things affect you?

They *titillate* you.

4. playing it way up

You know how the teen-agers of an earlier generation adored, idolized, and overwhelmed Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Beatles?

And of course you know how certain people fall all over visiting celebrities—best-selling authors, much publicized artists, or famous entertainers. They show them ingratiating, almost servile attention, worship and flatter them fulsomely.¹

How do we say it in a single word?

They *adulate* such celebrities.

5. accentuating the negative

What does the doctor say to you if you have low blood sugar? “No candy, no pastries, no chocolate marshmallow cookies, no ice cream!”, your morale dropping lower and lower as each favorite goody is placed on the forbidden list.

What, in one word, is the doctor doing?

The doctor is *proscribing* harmful items in your diet.

6. accentuating the affirmative

You are warm, friendly, enthusiastic, outgoing, easy to please; you are quick to show appreciation, yet accept, without judgment or criticism, the human weaknesses of others.

You are a fascinating talker, an even better listener.

You believe in, and practice, honest self-disclosure; you feel comfortable with yourself and therefore with everyone else; and you have a passionate interest in experiencing, in living, in relating to people.

Need you have any fears about making friends? Obviously not.

Your characteristics and temperament *obviate* such fears.

7. playing it wrong

Theodor Reik, in his penetrating book on psychoanalysis *Listening with the Third Ear*, talks about neurotic people who unconsciously wish to fail. In business interviews they say exactly the wrong words, they do exactly the wrong things, they seem intent (as, *unconsciously*, they actually are) on insuring failure in every possible way, though consciously they are doing their best to court success.

What effect does such a neurotic tendency have?

It *militates* against success.

8. playing it dirty

“Harry?” *He’s a closet alcoholic.* Maud? *She’s sleeping around*—and her stupid husband doesn’t suspect a thing. Bill? *He’s embezzling from his own company.* Paul? *He’s a child molester.* Sally? You don’t know that *she’s a notorious husband-beater?*”

What is this character doing?

He’s *maligning* everyone.

9. giving the benefit of any doubt

Do you think it’s all right to cheat on your income taxes? At least just a little? It’s wrong, of course, but doesn’t everybody do it?

How do you feel about marital infidelity? Are you inclined to overlook the occasional philandering of the male partner, since, after all, to invent a cliché, men are essentially polygamous by nature?

If your answers are in the affirmative, how are you reacting to such legal or ethical transgressions?

You *condone* them.

10. changing hostility

Unwittingly you have done something that has aroused anger and resentment in your best friend. You had no desire to hurt him, yet he makes it obvious that he feels pretty bitter about the whole situation. (Perhaps you failed to invite him to a gathering he wanted to come to; or you neglected to consult him before making a decision on a matter in which he felt he should have some say.) His friendship is valuable to you and you wish to restore yourself in his good graces. What do you do?

You try to *placate* him.

USING THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words?

1. <i>disparage</i>	dis-PAIR'-əj
2. <i>equivocate</i>	ee-KWIV'-ə-kayt'
3. <i>titillate</i>	TIT'-ə-layt'
4. <i>adulate</i>	AJ'-ə-layt'
5. <i>proscribe</i>	prō-SKRĪB'
6. <i>obviate</i>	OB'-vee-ayt'
7. <i>militate</i>	MIL'-ə-tayt
8. <i>malign</i>	mə-LĪN'
9. <i>condone</i>	kən-DŌN'
10. <i>placate</i>	PLAY'-kayt'

Can you work with the words?

1. disparage	a. flatter lavishly
2. equivocate	b. work against
3. titillate	c. prohibit
4. adulate	d. forgive
5. proscribe	e. change hostility to friendliness
6. obviate	f. purposely talk in such a way as to be vague and misleading
7. militate	g. slander

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 8. malign | h. play down |
| 9. condone | i. make unnecessary |
| 10. placate | j. tickle; stimulate pleasurably |

KEY: 1-h, 2-f, 3-j, 4-a, 5-c, 6-i, 7-b, 8-g, 9-d, 10-e

Do you understand the words?

Do you normally *disparage* something you admire?

YES NO

Do you *equivocate* if you think it unwise to take a definite stand?

YES NO

Do pleasant things *titillate* you?

YES NO

Do emotionally mature people need constant *adulation*?

YES NO

Is sugar *proscribed* for diabetics?

YES NO

Does a substantial fortune *obviate* financial fears?

YES NO

Does a worker's inefficiency often *militate* against his keeping his job?

YES NO

Do people enjoy being *maligned*?

YES NO

Do we generally *condone* the faults of those we love?

YES NO

Can you sometimes *placate* a person by apologizing?

YES NO

KEY: 1–no, 2–yes, 3–yes, 4–no, 5–yes, 6–yes, 7–yes, 8–no, 9–yes,
10–yes

Can you use the words?

In this exercise you gain the value of actually writing a new word as a meaningful solution to a problem. To think about a word, to say it, to write it, to use it—that is the road to word mastery. Write the verb that best fits each situation.

1. You've been asked to take a stand on a certain issue, but you don't have the courage to be either definitely for or against.

You _____.

2. You spread around an unpleasant story that you know will blacken someone's reputation.

You _____ that person.

3. Your friend is justifiably angry—you asked him to go to a party with you, ignored him all evening, and then finally left with someone else. What must you do if you wish to restore the relationship?

You must try to _____ him.

4. You virtually worship your therapist. You express your admiration in lavish flattery; you praise her in such excessive terms that she appears devoid of all human frailty.

You _____ her.

5. You are crowding 260 on the scales, so your doctor warns against high-calorie meals, rich desserts, second helpings, excessive carbohydrates, etc.

The doctor _____ these foods.

6. Your child Johnnie has smacked the neighbor's kid—entirely without provocation, you are forced to admit. But after all, you

think, tomorrow the other kid will, with equal lack of provocation, probably smack Johnnie.

You _____ Johnnie's behavior.

7. When your son, understandably expecting praise, mentions the three B's and two A's he earned in his courses, you respond, callously, "Is that the best you can do? What stopped you from getting *all* A's?"

You _____ his accomplishment.

8. You have run out of cash and plan to go to the bank to make a withdrawal; then unexpectedly you discover a twenty-dollar bill you secreted in your desk drawer months ago.

Your find _____ a trip to the bank.

9. You are the soul of honesty, but unfortunately, you have a sneaky, thievish, sinister look—and no one ever trusts you.

Your appearance _____ against you.

10. The centerfold of *Playboy* or *Playgirl* provides a mild and agreeable stimulation.

The centerfold _____ you.

KEY: 1–equivocate, 2–malign, 3–placate, 4–adulate, 5–proscribes,
6–condone, 7–disparage, 8–obviates, 9–militates, 10–titillates

Can you recall the words?

change hostility into friendliness

1. P _____

make unnecessary

2. O _____

belittle

3. D _____

overlook or forgive a transgression

4. C _____

tickle; delight; stimulate pleasurably

5. T _____

spread malicious rumors about

6. M _____

purposely use language susceptible of opposite interpretations

7. E _____

act to disadvantage of

8. M _____

forbid

9. P _____

worship; flatter fulsomely

10. A _____

KEY: 1–placate, 2–obviate, 3–disparage, 4–condone, 5–titillate, 6–malign, 7–equivocate, 8–militate (against), 9–proscribe, 10–adulate

(End of Session 19)

SESSION 20

ORIGINS AND RELATED WORDS

1. equality

If you play golf, you know that each course or hole has a certain *par*, the number of strokes allowed according to the results achieved by expert players. Your own accomplishment on the course will be at *par*, above *par*, or below *par*.

Similarly, some days you may feel up to *par*, other days below *par*.

Par is from a Latin word meaning *equal*. You may try, when you play golf, to *equal* the expert score; and some days you may, or may not, feel *equal* to your usual self.

When we speak of *parity* payments to farmers, we refer to payments that show an *equality* to earnings for some agreed-upon year.

So when you *disparage*, you lower someone's *par*, or feeling of *equality*, (*dis-* as you know, may be a negative prefix). The noun is *disparagement* (dis-PAIR'-əj-mənt), the adjective *disparaging* (dis-PAIR'-əj-ing), as in "Why do you always make *disparaging* remarks about me?"

Parity (PAIR'-ə-tee) as a noun means *equality*; *disparity* (dis-PAIR'-ə-tee) means a lack of *equality*, or a difference. We may speak, for example, of the *disparity* between someone's promise and performance; or of the *disparity* between the rate of vocabulary growth of a child and of an adult. The adjective *disparate* (DIS'-pə-rət) indicates *essential* or *complete* difference or inequality, as in "Our philosophies are so *disparate* that we can never come to any agreement on action."

The word *compare* and all its forms (*comparable*, *comparative*, etc.) derive from *par*, equal. Two things are *compared* when they have certain *equal* or similar qualities, (*con-*, *com-*, together, with).

Pair and *peer* are also from *par*. Things (shoes, socks, gloves, etc.) in *pairs* are *equal* or similar; your *peers* are those *equal* to you, as in age, position, rank, or ability. Hence the expression “to be judged by a jury of one’s peers.”

(British *peers*, however, such is the contradiction of language, were *nobles*.)

2. how to say yes and no

Equivocate is built on another Latin word meaning *equal*—*aequus* (the spelling in English is always *equ-*)—plus *vox*, *vocis*, voice.

When you *equivocate* (ə-KWIV’-ə-kayt’), you seem to be saying both *yes* and *no* with *equal voice*. An *equivocal* (ə-KWIV’-ə-kəl) answer, therefore, is by design vague, indefinite, and susceptible of contradictory interpretations, quite the opposite of an *unequivocal* (un’-ə-KWIV’-ə-kəl) response, which says *Yes!* or *No!*, and no kidding. Professional politicians are masters of *equivocation* (ə-kwiv’-ə-KAY’-shən)—they are, on most vital issues, mugwumps; they sit on a fence with their *mugs* on one side and their *wumps* on the other. You will often hear candidates for office say, publicly, that they *unequivocally* promise, if elected, to...; and then they start *equivocating* for all they are worth, like people who say, “Let me be perfectly *frank* with you”—and then promptly and glibly lie through their teeth.

3. statements of various kinds

Do not confuse *equivocal* with *ambiguous* (am’-BIG’-yoo-əs). An *equivocal* statement is purposely, deliberately (and with malice aforethought) couched in language that will be deceptive; an *ambiguous* statement is *accidentally* couched in such language.

Equivocal is, in short, purposely *ambiguous*.

You will recall that *ambi-*, which we last met in *ambivert* and *ambidextrous*, is a root meaning *both*; anything *ambiguous* may have *both* one meaning and another meaning. If you say, “That sentence is the height of *ambiguity*,” you mean that you find it vague because it admits of both affirmative and negative interpretations, or because it may mean two different things. *Ambiguity* is pronounced am’-bə-GYOO-ə-tee.

Another type of statement or word contains the possibility of two interpretations—one of them suggestive, risqué, or sexy. Such a statement or word is a *double entendre*. This is from the French and translates literally as *double meaning*. Give the word as close a french pronunciation as you can—DOOB’-ləhn-TAHN’-drə. (The *n*’s are nasalized, the *r* somewhat throaty, and the final syllable is barely audible.)

REVIEW OF ETYMOLOGY

PREFIX, ROOT, SUFFIX	MEANING
1. <i>par</i>	equal
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
2. <i>-ment</i>	noun suffix attached to verbs
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
3. <i>-ity</i>	noun suffix attached to adjectives
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
4. <i>dis-</i>	negative prefix
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
5. <i>con-, com-</i>	with, together
ENGLISH WORD: _____	

6. <i>aequus</i> (<i>equ-</i>)	equal
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
7. <i>vox, vocis</i>	voice
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
8. <i>-ate</i>	verb suffix
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
9. <i>-ion</i>	noun suffix attached to verbs ending in <i>-ate</i>
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
10. <i>-ous</i>	adjective suffix
ENGLISH WORD: _____	
11. <i>ambi-</i>	both
ENGLISH WORD: _____	

USING THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words?

1. <i>parity</i>	PAIR'-ə-tee
2. <i>disparity</i>	dis-PAIR'-ə-tee
3. <i>disparate</i>	DIS'-pə-rət
4. <i>disparagement</i>	dis-PAIR'-əj-mənt
5. <i>disparaging</i>	dis-PAIR'-əj-ing
6. <i>peer</i>	PEER

7. <i>equivocate</i>	ə-KWIV'-ə-kayt'
8. <i>equivocation</i>	ə-kwiv'-ə-KAY'-shən
9. <i>equivocal</i>	ə-KWIV'-ə-kəl
10. <i>unequivocal</i>	un'-ə-KWIV'-ə-kəl
11. <i>ambiguous</i>	am-BIG'-yoo-əs
12. <i>ambiguity</i>	am'-bə-GYOO'-ə-tee
13. <i>double entendre</i>	DOOB'-ləhn-TAHN'-drə

Can you work with the words?

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. parity | a. belittlement |
| | b. act of being deliberately vague or indirectly deceptive; |
| 2. disparity | statement that is deceptive or |
| | purposely open to contrary |
| | interpretations |
| 3. disparagement | c. quality of being open to |
| | misinterpretation; statement |
| | with this quality |
| 4. peer | d. statement or word with two |
| | meanings, one of them risqué, |
| | indelicate, or of possible sexual |
| | connotation |
| 5. equivocation | e. inequality |
| 6. ambiguity | f. equality |

7. double entendre

g. one's equal

KEY: 1–f, 2–e, 3–a, 4–g, 5–b, 6–c, 7–d

Do you understand the words?

Is there a *disparity* in age between a grandfather and his granddaughter?

YES NO

Is an *equivocal* statement clear and direct?

YES NO

Is an *unequivocal* answer vague and misleading?

YES NO

Are politicians often masters of *equivocation*?

YES NO

Are *ambiguous* sentences somewhat confusing?

YES NO

Are people with *disparate* perceptions of life likely to experience reality in the same way?

YES NO

Is a *disparaging* look one of admiration?

YES NO

When people *equivocate*, are they evading the issue?

YES NO

Is the deliberate use of *double entendres* likely to shock puritanical people?

YES NO

Are supervisors and their subordinates *peers*?

YES NO

KEY: 1–yes, 2–no, 3–no, 4–yes, 5–yes, 6–no, 7–no, 8–yes, 9–yes, 10–no

Can you recall the words?

accidentally vague

1. A_____

purposely vague

2. E_____

equality

3. P_____

word or statement one meaning of which may be interpreted as
risqué

4. D_____

lack of equality

5. D_____

belittlement

6. D_____

clear; direct; capable of only one interpretation

7. U_____

essentially or widely unequal or different

8. D_____

one's equal in age, rank, etc.

9. P_____

to use words in a calculated effort to mislead or to be ambiguous

10. E_____

KEY: 1–ambiguous, 2–equivocal, 3–parity, 4–double entendre, 5–disparity, 6–disparagement, 7–unequivocal, 8–disparate, 9–peer, 10–equivocate

(End of Session 20)

SESSION 21

ORIGINS AND RELATED WORDS

1. more on equality

The root *aequus*, spelled *equ-* in English words, is a building block of:

1. *equity* (EK'-wə-tee)—justice, fairness; i.e., equal treatment. (By extension, stocks in the financial markets are *equities*, and the value of your home or other property over and above the amount of the mortgage you owe is your *equity* in it.) The adjective is *equitable* (EK'-wə-tə-bəl).

2. *inequity* (in-EK'-wə-tee)—injustice, unfairness (*equity* plus the negative prefix *in-*). Adjective: *inequitable* (in-EK'-wə-tə-bəl).

3. *iniquity* (in-ik'-wə-tee)—by one of those delightful surprises and caprices characteristic of language, the change of a single letter (*e* to *i*), extends the meaning of a word far beyond its derivation and original denotation. Injustice and unfairness are sinful and wicked, especially if you naïvely believe that life is fair. So a “den of *iniquity*” is a place where vice flourishes; an *iniquity* is a sin or vice, or an egregiously immoral act; and *iniquity* is wickedness, sinfulness. Adjective: *iniquitous* (in-ik'-wə-təs).

4. *equinox* (EE'-kwə-noks')—etymologically, “equal night,” a combination of *aequus* and *nox*, *noctis*, night. The *equinox*, when day and night are of equal length, occurs twice a year: about March 21, and again about September 21 or 22. (The adjective is *equinoctial*—ee'-kwə-NOK'-shəl.) *Nocturnal* (nok-TURN'-əl), derived from *nox*, *noctis*, describes people, animals, or plants that are active or flourish at night rather than during daylight hours. Cats and owls are

nocturnal, as is the moonflower, whose blossoms open at night; not to mention “night people,” whose biorhythms are such that they function better after the sun goes down, and who like to stay up late and sleep well into midmorning. A *nocturne* (NOK'-turn) is a musical composition of dreamy character (i.e., night music), or a painting of a night scene.

5. *equanimity* (ee'-kwə-NIM'-ə-tee or ek'-wə-NIM'-ə-tee)—etymologically *aequus* plus *animus*, mind, hence “equal mind.” Maintain your *equanimity*, your evenness of temper, your composure, your coolness or calmness, when everyone around you is getting excited or hysterical, and you will probably be considered an admirable person, though one might wonder what price you pay for such emotional control. (Other words built on *animus*, mind, will be discussed in [Chapter 12](#).)

6. *Equability* (ee'-kwə-BIL'-ə-tee or ek'-wə-BIL'-ə-tee)—a close synonym of *equanimity*. A person of *equable* (EE'-kwə-bəl or EK'-wə-bəl) temperament is characteristically calm, serene, unflappable, even-tempered.

7. *equilibrium* (ee'-kwə-LIB'-ree-əm)—by derivation *aequus* plus *libra*, balance, weight, pound, hence “equal balance.” *Libra* (LĪ'-brə) is the seventh sign of the zodiac, represented by a pair of scales. Now you know, in case the question has been bothering you, why the abbreviation for the word *pound* is *lb.* and why the symbol for the British *pound*, the monetary unit, is £. *Equilibrium* is a state of *physical* balance, especially between opposing forces. When you are very drunk you may have difficulty keeping your *equilibrium*—the force of gravity is stronger than your ability to stay upright. An *equilibrist* (ə-KWIL'-ə-brist), as you might guess, is a professional tightrope walker—a performer successfully defying the law of gravity (when sober) by *balancing* on a thin overhead wire.

The *equator* divides the earth into *equal* halves, and words like *equation*, *equivalent*, *equidistant*, *equiangular*, and *equilateral* (from Latin *latus*, *lateris*, side) are self-explanatory.

2. not to be confused with horses

Equestrian (ə-KWES'-tree-ən) is someone on a horse (as *pedestrian* is someone on foot); an *equestrienne* (ə-kwes'-tree-EN') is a woman on a horse (if you *must* make the distinction); and *equine* (EE'-kwīn) is like a horse, as in appearance or characteristics, or descriptive of horses.

Equestrian is also an adjective referring to horseback riding, as an *equestrian* statue; and *equine* is also a noun, i.e., a horse.

So the *equ-* in these words, from Latin *equus*, horse, is not to be confused with the *equ-* in the words of the previous section—that *equ-* is from *aequus*, equal. (Remember, also, not to confuse the *ped-* in *pedestrian*, from Latin *pedis*, foot, with the *ped-* in *pediatrician*, from Greek *paidos*, child.)

3. hear voices?

Equivocal, you will recall, combines *aequus* with *vox*, *vocis*, voice; and *vox*, *vocis* combines with *fero*, to bear or carry, to form *vociferous* (vō-SIF'-ər-əs), etymologically “carrying (much) voice,” hence loud, noisy, clamorous, as *vociferous* demands (not at all quiet or subtle), or the *vociferous* play of young children (“Please! Try to be quiet so Dad can get his work done!”), though unfortunately TV addiction has abnormally eliminated child noises, at least during the program breaks between commercials. (*Vociferous* will be discussed at greater length in [Chapter 10](#).)

If you are *vocal* (VŌ'-kəl), you express yourself readily and freely by voice; *vocal* sounds are voiced; *vocal* music is sung; and you know what your *vocal* cords are for.

To *vocalize* (VŌ'-kə-līz') is to give voice to (“Vocalize your anger, don’t hold it in!”), or to sing the *vocals* (or voice parts) of music. (Can you write the noun form of the verb *vocalize*? _____.) A *vocalist* (VŌ'-kə-list) is a singer. And *Magnavox* (*vox* plus *magnus*, large) is the trade name for a brand of radios and TV sets.

REVIEW OF ETYMOLOGY

PREFIX, ROOT, SUFFIX	MEANING
1. <i>aequus (equ-)</i>	equal
ENGLISH WORD _____	
2. <i>in-</i>	negative prefix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
3. <i>nox, noctis</i>	night
ENGLISH WORD _____	
4. <i>animus</i>	mind
ENGLISH WORD _____	
5. <i>-ity</i>	noun suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
6. <i>libra</i>	balance, weight, pound
ENGLISH WORD _____	
7. <i>-ist</i>	person who
ENGLISH WORD _____	
8. <i>latus, lateris</i>	side
ENGLISH WORD _____	
9. <i>equus</i>	horse
ENGLISH WORD _____	
10. <i>-ine</i>	like, descriptive of
ENGLISH WORD _____	
11. <i>pedis</i>	foot

ENGLISH WORD _____

12. *paidos* (*ped-*) child

ENGLISH WORD _____

13. *vox, vocis* voice

ENGLISH WORD _____

14. *fero* to bear, carry

ENGLISH WORD _____

15. *magnus* large

ENGLISH WORD _____

USING THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words? (I)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. <i>equity</i> | EK'-wə-tee |
| 2. <i>equitable</i> | EK'-wə-tə-bəl |
| 3. <i>inequity</i> | in-EK'-wə-tee |
| 4. <i>inequitable</i> | in-EK'-wə-tə-bəl |
| 5. <i>iniquity</i> | in-ik'-wə-tee |
| 6. <i>iniquitous</i> | in-ik'-wə-təs |
| 7. <i>equinox</i> | EE'-kwə-noks' |
| 8. <i>equinoctial</i> | ee'-kwə-NOK'-shəl |
| 9. <i>nocturnal</i> | nok-TURN'-əl |
| 10. <i>nocturne</i> | NOK'-turn |

Can you pronounce the words? (II)

1. <i>equanimity</i>	ee'-kwə (or ek'-wə) -NIM'-ə-tee
2. <i>equability</i>	ee'-kwə (or ek'-wə) -BIL'-ə-tee
3. <i>equable</i>	EE'-kwə-bəl or EK'-wə-bəl
4. <i>equilibrium</i>	ee'-kwə-LIB'-ree-əm
5. <i>equilibrist</i>	ee-KWIL'-ə-brist
6. <i>equilateral</i>	ee-kwə-LAT'-ər-əl
7. <i>equestrian</i>	ə-KWES'-tree-ən
8. <i>equine</i>	EE'-kwīn
9. <i>vociferous</i>	vō-SIF'-ər-əs
10. <i>vocal</i>	VŌ'-kəl
11. <i>vocalize</i>	VŌ'-kə-līz'
12. <i>vocalization</i>	vō'-kə-lə-ZAY'-shən
13. <i>vocalist</i>	VŌ'-kə-list

Can you work with the words? (I)

1. equity	a. time when night and day are of equal length
2. inequity	b. balance of mind; composure; calmness under trying circumstances
3. iniquity	c. horseback rider
4. equinox	d. a horse

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 5. nocturne | e. sinfulness; wickedness;
immoral act; sin |
| 6. equanimity | f. unfairness, injustice |
| 7. equilibrium | g. tightrope walker |
| 8. equestrian | h. singer |
| 9. equilibrist | i. fairness, justice |
| 10. equine | j. balance, especially between
opposing forces |
| 11. vocalist | k. night music |

KEY: 1-i, 2-f, 3-e, 4-a, 5-k, 6-b, 7-j, 8-c, 9-g, 10-d, 11-h

Can you work with the words? (II)

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. equitable | a. descriptive of time when night and day are of equal length |
| 2. inequitable | b. give voice to; sing |
| 3. iniquitous | c. having equal sides |
| 4. equinoctial | d. using, or referring to, the voice; freely expressing by voice |
| 5. nocturnal | e. noisy, loud, clamorous |
| 6. equable | f. calm, unruffled, even-tempered |
| 7. equilateral | g. fair, just |
| 8. vociferous | h. referring or pertaining to, or active at, night |
| 9. vocal | i. sinful, wicked, immoral |
| 10. vocalize | j. unfair, unjust |

KEY: 1–g, 2–j, 3–i, 4–a, 5–h, 6–f, 7–c, 8–e, 9–d, 10–b

Do you understand the words?

Is life always *equitable*?

YES NO

Does the cynic expect more *inequity* than *equity* in life?

YES NO

Do ethical people practice *iniquity*?

YES NO

Does the *equinox* occur once a month?

YES NO

Are *nocturnal* animals active at night?

YES NO

If you generally preserve your *equanimity*, do you often get very excited?

YES NO

Is it easy to maintain your *equilibrium* on icy ground?

YES NO

Is *equability* the mark of a calm, even-tempered person?

YES NO

Does an *equilateral* triangle have equal sides?

YES NO

Is an *equine* a dog?

YES NO

If you demand something *vociferously*, do you make a lot of noise?

YES NO

If you are *vocal*, do you have difficulty expressing yourself?

YES NO

Is a *vocalist* the same as an instrumentalist?

YES NO

KEY: 1–no, 2–yes, 3–no, 4–no, 5–yes, 6–no, 7–no, 8–yes, 9–yes, 10–no, 11–yes, 12–no, 13–no

Can you recall the words? (I)

to give voice to; to express aloud; to sing

1. V_____

tightrope walker

2. E_____

active or flourishing at night

3. N_____

descriptive or characteristic of, or like, a horse

4. E_____

referring to the voice; skillful or fluent in expressing by voice

5. V_____

calm and unflappable in temperament

6. E_____

wicked, sinful

7. I_____

night music

8. N_____

fairness, justice

9. E_____

KEY: 1–vocalize, 2–equilibrant, 3–nocturnal, 4–equine, 5–vocal, 6–
equable, 7–iniquitous, 8–nocturne, 9–equity

Can you recall the words? (II)

loud, noisy, clamorous

1. V _____

person on horseback

2. E _____

or E _____

calmness or evenness of temper

3. E _____

or E _____

unfair, unjust

4. I _____

sin; wickedness; grossly immoral behavior

5. I _____

time when day and night are of equal length

6. E _____

fair, just, evenhanded

7. E _____

physical balance; balance between opposing forces

8. E _____

having equal sides

9. E _____

singer

10. V _____

KEY: 1–vociferous, 2–equestrian *or* equestrienne, 3–equanimity *or* equability, 4–inequitable, 5–iniquity, 6–equinox, 7–equitable, 8–equilibrium, 9–equilateral, 10–vocalist

(End of Session 21)

SESSION 22

ORIGINS AND RELATED WORDS

1. how to tickle

Titillate comes from a Latin verb meaning *to tickle*, and may be used both literally and figuratively. That is (literally), you can *titillate* by gentle touches in strategic places; you are then causing an actual (and always very pleasant) physical sensation. Or you can (figuratively) *titillate* people, or their minds, fancies, palates (and this is the more common use of the word), by charm, brilliance, wit, promises, or in any other way your imagination can conceive.

Titillation (tit'-ə-LAY'-shən) has the added meaning of light sexual stimulation. (Note that both noun and verb are spelled with a double *I*, not a double *t*.)

2. how to flatter

A *compliment* is a pleasant and courteous expression of praise; *flattery* is stronger than a compliment and often considered insincere. *Adulation* (aj'-ə-LAY'-shən) is flattery and worship carried to an excessive, ridiculous degree. There are often public figures (entertainers, musicians, government officials, etc.) who receive widespread *adulation*, but those not in the public eye can also be *adulated*, as a teacher by students, a wife by husband (and vice versa), a doctor by patients, and so on. (The derivation is from a Latin verb meaning *to fawn upon*.)

The adjective *adulatory* (aj'-ə-lə-TAWR'-ee) ends in *-ory*, a suffix we are meeting for the first time in these pages. (Other adjective

suffixes: -al, -ic, -ical, -ous.)

3. ways of writing

Proscribe, to forbid, is commonly used for medical, religious, or legal prohibitions.

A doctor *proscribes* a food, drug, or activity that might prove harmful to the patient. The church *proscribes*, or announces a *proscription* (prō-SKRIP'-shən) against, such activities as may harm its parishioners. The law *proscribes* behavior detrimental to the public welfare.

Generally, one might concede, *proscribed* activities are the most pleasant ones—as Alexander Woolcott once remarked, if something is pleasurable, it's sure to be either immoral, illegal, or fattening.

The derivation is the prefix *pro-*, before, plus *scribo*, *scriptus*, to write. In ancient Roman times, a man's name was written on a public bulletin board if he had committed some crime for which his property or life was to be forfeited; Roman citizens in good standing would thereby know to avoid him. In a similar sense, the doctor writes down those foods or activities that are likely to commit crimes against the patient's health—in that way the patient knows to avoid them.

Scribo, *scriptus* is the building block of scores of common English words: *scribe*, *scribble*, *prescribe*, *describe*, *subscribe*, *script*, *the Scriptures*, *manuscript*, *typescript*, etc. *Describe* uses the prefix *de-*, down—to *describe* is, etymologically, “to write down” about. *Manuscript*, combining *manus*, hand (as in *manual* labor), with *scriptus*, is something handwritten—the word was coined before the invention of the typewriter. *The Scriptures* are holy writings. To *subscribe* (as to a magazine) is to write one's name *under* an order or contract (*sub-*, under, as in *subway*, *subsurface*, etc.); to *subscribe* to a philosophy or a principle is figuratively to write one's name *under* the statement of such philosophy or principle.

To *inscribe* is to write *in* or *into* (a book, for example, or metal or stone). A *postscript* is something written after (Latin *post*, after) the

main part is finished.

Note how *-scribe* verbs change to nouns and adjectives:

VERB	NOUN	ADJECTIVE
<i>prescribe</i>	prescription	prescriptive
<i>subscribe</i>	subscription	subscriptive

Can you follow the pattern?

<i>describe</i>	_____	_____
<i>inscribe</i>	_____	_____
<i>proscribe</i>	_____	_____

4. it's obvious

You are familiar with the word *via*, by way of, which is from the Latin word for *road*. (The *Via Appia* was one of the famous highways of ancient Roman times.) When something is *obvious*, etymologically it is right there in the middle of the road where no one can fail to see it—hence, easily seen, not hidden, conspicuous. And if you meet an obstacle in the road and dispose of it forthwith, you are doing what *obviate* says. Thus, if you review your work daily in some college subject, frenzied “cramming” at the end of the semester will be *obviated*. A large and steady income *obviates* fears of financial insecurity; leaving for work early will *obviate* worry about being late. *To obviate*, then, is to make unnecessary, to do away with, to prevent by taking effective measures or steps against (an occurrence, a feeling, a requirement, etc.). The noun is *obviation* (ob'-vee-AY'-shən).

Surprisingly, *via*, road, is the root in the English word *trivial* (*tri*-, three). Where three roads intersect, you are likely to find busy traffic, lots of people, in short a fairly public place, so you are not going to talk of important or confidential matters, lest you be

overheard. You will, instead, talk of *trivial* (TRIV'-ee-əl) things—whatever is unimportant, without great significance; you will confine your conversation to *trivialities* (triv'-ee-AL'-ə-teez) or to *trivia* (also a plural noun, pronounced TRIV'-ee-ə), insignificant trifles.

5. war

Militate derives from *militis*, one of the forms of the Latin noun meaning *soldier* or *fighting man*. If something *militates* against you, it fights against you, i.e., works to your disadvantage. Thus, your timidity may *militate* against your keeping your friends. (*Militate* is always followed by the preposition *against* and, like *obviate*, never takes a personal subject—you don't *militate* against anyone, but some habit, action, tendency, etc. *militates* against someone or something.)

The adjective *militant* (MIL'-ə-tənt) comes from the same root. A *militant* reformer is one who fights for reforms; a *militant* campaign is one waged aggressively and with determination. The noun is *militancy* (MIL'-ə-tən-see), and *militant* is also a noun for the person—"Sally is a *militant* in the Women's Liberation movement."

Military and *militia* also have their origin in *militis*.

6. first the bad news

Built on Latin *malus*, bad, evil, to *malign* is to speak evil about, to defame, to slander. *Malign* is also an adjective meaning *bad*, *harmful*, *evil*, *hateful*, as in "the *malign* influence of his unconscious will to fail." Another adjective form is *malignant* (mə-LIG'-nənt), as in "a *malignant* glance," i.e., one showing deep hatred, or "a *malignant* growth," i.e., one that is cancerous (bad).

The noun of *malignant* is *malignancy* (mə-LIG'-nən-see), which, medically, is a cancerous growth, or, generally, the condition, state, or attitude of harmfulness, hatefulness, evil intent, etc. The noun form of the adjective *malign* is *malignity* (mə-LIG'-nə-tee).

Observe how we can construct English words by combining *malus* with other Latin roots.

Add the root *dico, dictus*, to say or tell, to form *malediction* (mal'-ə-DIK'-shən), a curse, i.e., an evil saying. Adjective: *maledictory* (mal'-ə-DIK'-tə-ree).

Add the root *volo*, to wish, to will, or to be willing, and we can construct the adjective *malevolent* (mə-LEV'-ə-lent), wishing evil or harm—a *malevolent* glance, attitude, feeling, etc. The noun is *malevolence* (mə-LEV'-ə-ləns).

Add the root *facio, factus*, to do or make (also spelled, in English words, *fec-*, *fic-*, *factus*, or, as a verb ending, *-fy*), to form the adjective *maleficent* (mə-LEF'-ə-sənt), doing harm or evil, or causing hurt—*maleficent* acts, deeds, behavior.

Can you figure out, and pronounce, the noun form of *maleficent*?

A *malefactor* (MAL'-ə-fak'-tər) is a wrongdoer, an evildoer, a criminal—a *malefactor* commits a *malefaction* (mal'-ə-FAK'-shən), a crime, an evil deed.

French is a “Romance” language, that is, a language based on Roman or Latin (as are, also, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Romanian), and so Latin *malus* became French *mal*, bad, the source of *maladroit* (mal'-ə-DROYT'), clumsy, bungling, awkward, unskillful, etymologically, having a “bad right hand.” (See *adroit*, [Chapter 3](#).) The noun is *maladroitness*. Also from French *mal*: *malaise* (mə-LAYZ'), an indefinite feeling of bodily discomfort, as in a mild illness, or as a symptom preceding an illness; etymologically, “bad ease,” just as *disease* (dis-ease) is “lack of ease.”

Other common words that you are familiar with also spring from Latin *malus*: *malicious*, *malice*, *malady*; and the same *malus* functions as a prefix in words like *maladjusted*, *malcontent*, *malpractice*, *malnutrition*, etc., all with the connotation of *badness*.

And what's the good news? See Session 23.

REVIEW OF ETYMOLOGY

PREFIX, ROOT, SUFFIX	MEANING
1. <i>-ory</i>	adjective suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
2. <i>scribo, scriptus</i>	to write
ENGLISH WORD _____	
3. <i>de-</i>	down
ENGLISH WORD _____	
4. <i>manus</i>	hand
ENGLISH WORD _____	
5. <i>sub-</i>	under
ENGLISH WORD _____	
6. <i>in-</i>	in, into
ENGLISH WORD _____	
7. <i>post</i>	after
ENGLISH WORD _____	
8. <i>via</i>	road
ENGLISH WORD _____	
9. <i>tri-</i>	three
ENGLISH WORD _____	
10. <i>militis</i>	soldier
ENGLISH WORD _____	
11. <i>malus</i>	bad, evil

ENGLISH WORD _____

12. *dico, dictus* to say, tell

ENGLISH WORD _____

13. *volo* to wish

ENGLISH WORD _____

14. *facio (fec-, fic-, fy)* to do, make

ENGLISH WORD _____

15. *-ence, -ancy* noun suffix

ENGLISH WORD _____

WORKING WITH THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words? (I)

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <i>titillation</i> | tit'-ə-LAY'-shən |
| 2. <i>adulation</i> | aj'-ə-LAY'-shən |
| 3. <i>adulatory</i> | AJ'-ə-lə-tawr'-ee |
| 4. <i>proscription</i> | prō-SKRIP'-shən |
| 5. <i>proscriptive</i> | prō-SKRIP'-tiv |
| 6. <i>obviation</i> | ob'-vee-AY'-shən |
| 7. <i>trivial</i> | TRIV'-ee-əl |
| 8. <i>trivialities</i> | triv'-ee-AL'-ə-teez |
| 9. <i>trivia</i> | TRIV'-ee-ə |
| 10. <i>militant</i> | MIL'-ə-tənt |

11. <i>militancy</i>	MIL'-ə-tən-see
12. <i>malign (adj.)</i>	mə-LĪN'
13. <i>malignty</i>	mə-LIG'-nə-tee
14. <i>malignant</i>	mə-LIG'-nənt
15. <i>malignancy</i>	mə-LIG'-nən-see

Can you pronounce the words? (II)

1. <i>malediction</i>	mal'-ə-DIK'-shən
2. <i>maledictory</i>	mal'-ə-DIK'-tə-ree
3. <i>malevolent</i>	mə-LEV'-ə-lənt
4. <i>malevolence</i>	mə-LEV'-ə-ləns
5. <i>maleficent</i>	mə-LEF'-ə-sənt
6. <i>maleficence</i>	mə-LEF'-ə-səns
7. <i>malefactor</i>	MAL'-ə-fak'-tər
8. <i>malefaction</i>	mal'-ə-FAK'-shən
9. <i>maladroit</i>	mal'-ə-DROYT'
10. <i>maladroitness</i>	mal'-ə-DROYT'-nəs
11. <i>malaise</i>	mə-LAYZ'

Can you work with the words? (I)

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. titillation | a. prohibition |
| 2. adulation | b. hatefulness; harmfulness |

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 3. proscription | c. clumsiness |
| 4. militancy | d. quality of wishing evil; ill-will |
| | e. prevention; fact or act of
making unnecessary or of
doing away with |
| 5. malignity | |
| 6. malediction | f. worship; excessive flattery |
| 7. maladroitness | g. vague feeling of bodily
discomfort |
| 8. obviation | h. pleasurable stimulation;
tickling |
| 9. malevolence | i. a curse |
| 10. malaise | j. aggressiveness |

KEY: 1–h, 2–f, 3–a, 4–j, 5–b, 6–i, 7–c, 8–e, 9–d, 10–g

Can you work with the words? (II)

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. adulatory | a. aggressive; “fighting” |
| 2. proscriptive | b. of no great consequence |
| 3. militant | c. bearing ill-will; wishing harm |
| 4. malign | d. of the nature of curses |
| 5. trivial | e. clumsy, awkward |
| 6. maledictory | f. worshipful, adoring |
| 7. malevolent | g. bad, harmful, hurtful |
| 8. maladroit | h. relating or pertaining to prohibitions |

KEY: 1–f, 2–h, 3–a, 4–g, 5–b, 6–d, 7–c, 8–e

Do you understand the words?

Does a *malignant* look indicate kindly feelings?

YES NO

Is a cancer sometimes called a *malignancy*?

YES NO

Are *trivialties* important?

YES NO

If your house is cluttered with *trivia*, are these objects of great value?

YES NO

Do people enjoy having *maledictions* hurled at them?

YES NO

Is a *maleficent* act likely to cause harm or hurt?

YES NO

Does *maladroitness* show skill?

YES NO

Is a *malefactor* a wrongdoer?

YES NO

Does an *adulatory* attitude show exaggerated admiration?

YES NO

Is *militancy* the same as passiveness?

YES NO

KEY: 1–no, 2–yes, 3–no, 4–no, 5–no, 6–yes, 7–no, 8–yes, 9–yes, 10–no

Can you recall the words? (I)

clumsy, awkward

1. M_____

bearing ill-will; wishing harm

2. M_____

pleasurable stimulation

3. T_____

a person aggressively fighting for a cause

4. M_____

prohibition against something injurious

5. P_____

excessive flattery; exaggerated admiration

6. A_____

vague feeling of general physical discomfort

7. M_____

a criminal; a wrongdoer

8. M_____

a curse

9. M_____

a crime; bad or evil act or behavior

10. M_____

KEY: 1–maladroit, 2–malevolent, 3–titillation, 4–militant, 5–proscription, 6–adulation, 7–malaise, 8–malefactor, 9–malediction, 10–malefaction

Can you recall the words? (II)

fact or act of making unnecessary or of taking effective steps toward prevention

1. O_____

aggressive attitude

2. M_____

harmful, hurtful, bad

3. M_____

or M_____

or M_____

unimportant, insignificant

4. T_____

unimportant, insignificant things; trifles

5. T_____

or T_____

cursing; of the nature of, or relating to, curses (*adj.*)

6. M_____

worshipful

7. A_____

KEY: 1–obviation, 2–militancy, 3–malign, malignant, *or* maleficent,
4–trivial, 5–trivialities *or* trivia, 6–maledictory, 7–adulatory

(End of Session 22)

SESSION 23

ORIGINS AND RELATED WORDS

1. so now what's the good news?

Malus is bad; *bonus* is good. The adverb from the Latin adjective *bonus* is *bene*, and *bene* is the root found in words that contrast with the *mal-* terms we studied in the previous session.

So *benign* (bə-NĪN') and *benignant* (bə-NIG'-nənt) are kindly, good-natured, not harmful, as in *benign* neglect, a *benign* judge, a *benign* tumor (not cancerous), a *benignant* attitude to malefactors and scoundrels. The corresponding nouns are *benignity* (bə-NIG'-nə-tee) and *benignancy* (bə-NIG'-nən-see).

A *malediction* is a curse; a *benediction* (ben'-ə-DIK'-shən) is a blessing, a “saying good.” The adjective is *benedictory* (ben'-ə-DIK'-tə-ree).

In contrast to *maleficent* is *beneficent* (bə-NEF'-ə-sənt), doing good. The noun? _____.

In contrast to *malefactor* is *benefactor* (BEN'-ə-fak'-tər), one who does good things for another, as by giving help, providing financial gifts or aid, or coming to the rescue when someone is in need. If you insist on making sexual distinctions, a woman who so operates is a *benefactress* (BEN'-ə-fak'-trəs). And, of course, the person receiving the *benefaction* (ben-ə-FAK'-shən), the recipient of money, help, etc., is a *beneficiary* (ben'-ə-FISH'-ər-ee or ben-ə-FISH'-ee-air-ee). *Benefit* and *beneficial* are other common words built on the combination of *bene* and a form of *facio*, to do or make.

So let others be *malevolent* toward you—confuse them by being *benevolent* (bə-NEV'-ə-lənt)—wish them well. (Turn the other cheek?

Why not?) The noun? _____

The adjective *bonus*, good, is found in English *bonus*, extra payment, theoretically—but not necessarily—for some good act; in *bonbon*, a candy (a “good-good,” using the French version of the Latin adjective); and in *bona fide* (BŌ'-nə-FĪD' or BŌ'-nə-FĪ'-dee), etymologically, “in good faith,” hence valid, without pretense, deception, or fraudulent intent—as a *bona fide* offer, a *bona fide* effort to negotiate differences, etc. *Fides* is Latin for *faith* or *trust*, as in *fidelity* (fə-DEL'-ə-tee), faithfulness; *Fido*, a stereotypical name for a dog, one's faithful friend; *infidel* (IN'-fə-dəl), one who does *not* have the right faith or religion (depending on who is using the term), or one who has *no* religion (Latin *in-*, not); and *infidelity* (in'-fə-DEL'-ə-tee), unfaithfulness, especially to the marriage vows.

2. say, do, and wish

Benediction and *malediction* derive from *dico*, *dictus*, to say, tell. *Dictate*, *dictator*, *dictation*, *dictatorial* (dik'-tə-TAWR'-ee-əl)—words that signify telling others what to do (“Do as I say!”)—are built on *dico*, as is *predict*, to tell beforehand, i.e., to say that something will occur before it actually does (*pre-*, before, as in *prescient*).

The brand name *Dictaphone* combines *dico* with *phone*, sound; *contradict*, to say against, or to make an opposite statement (“Don't *contradict* me!”; “That *contradicts* what I know”) combines *dico* with *contra-*, against, opposite; and *addiction*, etymologically “a saying to or toward,” or the compulsion to say “yes” to a habit, combines *dico* with *ad-*, to, toward.

Facio, *factus*, to do or make (as in *malefactor*, *benefactor*), has, as noted, variant spellings in English words: *fec-*, *fic-*, or, as a verb ending, *-fy*.

Thus *factory* is a place where things are *made* (-ory, place where); a *fact* is something *done* (i.e., something that occurs, or exists, or is, therefore, true); *fiction*, something *made* up or invented; *manufacture*, to *make* by hand (*manus*, hand, as in *manuscript*, *manual*), a word

coined before the invention of machinery; *artificial*, *made* by human art rather than occurring in nature, as *artificial* flowers, etc.; and *clarify*, *simplify*, *liquefy*, *magnify* (to *make* clear, simple, liquid, larger) among hundreds of other -fy verbs.

Volo, to wish, to will, to be willing (as in *malevolent*, *benevolent*), occurs in *voluntary*, *involuntary*, *volunteer*, words too familiar to need definition, and each quite obviously expressing *wish* or *willingness*. Less common, and from the same root, is *volition* (vō-LISH'-ən), the act or power of willing or wishing, as in “of her own *volition*,” i.e., *voluntarily*, or “against her *volition*.”

3. if you please!

Placate is built on the root *plac-* which derives from two related Latin verbs meaning, 1) *to please*, and 2) *to appease*, *soothe*, or *pacify*.

If you succeed in *placating* an angry colleague, you turn that person's hostile attitude into one that is friendly or favorable. The noun is *placation* (play-KAY'-shən), the adjective either *placative* (PLAK'-ə-tiv or PLAY'-kə-tiv) or *placatory* (PLAK'-ə-taw-ree or PLAY'-kə-taw-ree). A more *placatory* attitude to those you have offended may help you regain their friendship; when husband and wife, or lovers, quarrel, one of them finally makes a *placative* gesture if the war no longer fulfills his or her neurotic needs—one of them eventually will wake up some bright morning in a *placatory* mood.

But then, such is life, the other one may at that point be *implacable* (im-PLAK'-ə-bəl or im-PLAY'-kə-bəl)—*im-* is a respelling of *in-*, not, before the letter *p*. One who *can* be soothed, whose hostility *can* be changed to friendliness, is *placable* (PLAK'-ə-bəl or PLAY'-kə-bəl).

Implacable has taken on the added meaning of *unyielding to entreaty or pity*; hence, *harsh*, *relentless*, as “The governor was *implacable* in his refusal to grant clemency.”

The noun form of *implacable* is *implacability* (im-plak'-ə-BIL'-ə-tee or im-play'-kə-BIL'-ə-tee). Can you write (and pronounce) the noun derived from *placable*? _____.

If you are *placid* (PLAS'-id), you are calm, easygoing, serene, undisturbed—etymologically, you are pleased with things as they are. Waters of a lake or sea, or the emotional atmosphere of a place, can also be *placid*. The noun is *placidity* (plə-SID'-ə-tee).

If you are *complacent* (kəm-PLAY-sənt), you are pleased with yourself (*com-*, from *con-*, with, together); you may, in fact, such is one common connotation of the word, be smug, *too* pleased with your position or narrow accomplishments, too easily self-satisfied, and the hour of reckoning may be closer than you realize. (Humans, as you know, are delighted to be critical of the contentment of others.)

The noun is *complacence* (kəm-PLAY'-səns) or *complacency* (kəm-PLAY'-sən-see).

4. how to give—and forgive

To *condone* is to forgive, overlook, pardon, or be uncritical of (an offense, or of an antisocial or illegal act). You yourself might or might not indulge in such behavior or commit such an offense, but you feel no urge to protest, or to demand censure or punishment for someone else who does. You may *condone* cheating on one's income tax, shoplifting from a big, impersonal supermarket, or exceeding the speed limit, though you personally observe the law with scrupulousness. (Not everyone, however, is so charitable or forgiving.) The noun is *condonation* (kon'-dō-NAY'-shən).

Condone is built on Latin *dono*, to give, the root found in *donor*, one who gives; *donate*, to give; and *donation*, a gift.

REVIEW OF ETYMOLOGY

PREFIX, ROOT, SUFFIX	MEANING
1. <i>bonus, bene</i>	good, well

ENGLISH WORD _____

2. *fides*

faith

ENGLISH WORD _____

3. *dico, dictus*

to say, tell

ENGLISH WORD _____

4. *pre-*

before, beforehand

ENGLISH WORD _____

5. *phone*

sound

ENGLISH WORD _____

6. *contra-*

against, opposite

ENGLISH WORD _____

7. *ad-*

to, toward

ENGLISH WORD _____

8. *facio, factus, fec-, fic-, -fy*

to make or do

ENGLISH WORD _____

9. *-ory*

place where

ENGLISH WORD _____

10. *manus*

hand

ENGLISH WORD _____

11. *volo*

to wish, to will, to be willing

ENGLISH WORD _____

12. *plac-*

to please, appease, soothe, pacify

ENGLISH WORD _____

13. <i>-ive</i>	adjective suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
14. <i>-ory</i>	adjective suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
15. <i>im- (in-)</i>	not; negative prefix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
16. <i>com- (con-)</i>	with, together
ENGLISH WORD _____	
17. <i>do-</i>	to give
ENGLISH WORD _____	

USING THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words? (I)

1. <i>benign</i>	bə-NĪN'
2. <i>benignity</i>	bə-NIG'-nə-tee
3. <i>benignant</i>	bə-NIG'-nənt
4. <i>benignancy</i>	bə-NIG'-nən-see
5. <i>benediction</i>	ben'-ə-DIK'-shən
6. <i>benedictory</i>	ben'-ə-DIK'-tə-ree
7. <i>beneficent</i>	bə-NEF'-ə-sənt
8. <i>beneficence</i>	bə-NEF'-ə-səns
9. <i>benefactor</i>	BEN'-ə-fak'-tər

10. <i>benefaction</i>	ben'-ə-FAK'-shən
11. <i>beneficiary</i>	ben'-ə-FISH'-ər-ee <i>or</i> ben'-ə-FISH'- ee-air-ee
12. <i>benevolent</i>	bə-NEV'-ə-lənt
13. <i>benevolence</i>	bə-NEV'-ə-ləns
14. <i>bona fide</i>	BŌ'-nə FĪD' <i>or</i> BŌ'-nə FĪ'-dee
15. <i>fidelity</i>	fə-DEL'-ə-tee
16. <i>infidelity</i>	in'-fə-DEL'-ə-tee
17. <i>infidel</i>	IN'-fə-dəl

Can you pronounce the words? (II)

1. <i>dictatorial</i>	dik'-tə-TAWR'-ee-əl
2. <i>volition</i>	vō-LISH'-ən
3. <i>placation</i>	play-KAY'-shən
4. <i>placative</i>	PLAK'-ə-tiv <i>or</i> PLAY'-kə-tiv
5. <i>placatory</i>	PLAK'-ə-tawr-ee <i>or</i> PLAY'-kə- tawr-ee
6. <i>placable</i>	PLAK'-ə-bəl <i>or</i> PLAY'-kə-bəl
7. <i>implacable</i>	im-PLAK'-ə-bəl <i>or</i> im-PLAY'-kə-bəl
8. <i>placability</i>	plak'-ə-BIL'-ə-tee <i>or</i> play'-kə-BIL'- ə-tee
9. <i>implacability</i>	im-plak'-ə-BIL'-ə-tee <i>or</i> im-play'- kə-BIL'-ə-tee

10. <i>placid</i>	PLAS'-id
11. <i>placidity</i>	plə-SID'-ə-tee
12. <i>complacent</i>	kəm-PLAY'-sənt
13. <i>complacence</i>	kəm-PLAY'-səns
14. <i>complacency</i>	kəm-PLAY'-sən-see
15. <i>condonation</i>	kon'-dō-NAY'-shən

Can you work with the words? (I)

1. benign	a. wishing good things (for another) ; well disposed
2. benedictory	b. domineering; giving orders in a manner permitting no refusal
3. benevolent	c. not to be soothed or pacified; unyielding to pity or entreaty
4. bona fide	d. tending, or intended, to pacify, to soothe, or to change hostility to friendliness
5. dictatorial	e. kindly, good-natured; not cancerous
6. placatory	f. calm, unruffled, undisturbed
7. implacable	g. self-satisfied; smug
8. placid	h. of the nature of, or relating to, blessings

9. complacent

i. in good faith; sincere; valid

KEY: 1–e, 2–h, 3–a, 4–i, 5–b, 6–d, 7–c, 8–f, 9–g

Can you work with the words? (II)

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. benevolence | a. recipient of money, kindness, etc. |
| 2. benefaction | b. free will |
| 3. beneficiary | c. act of overlooking, or of forgiving, an offense or transgression |
| 4. infidelity | d. faithfulness |
| 5. volition | e. self-satisfaction; smugness |
| 6. placation | f. calmness |
| 7. fidelity | g. act of pacifying, or of turning hostility or anger into friendly feelings |
| 8. condonation | h. attitude of wishing good things for another |
| 9. placidity | i. faithlessness |
| 10. complacency | j. good deed; act of charity or kindness |

KEY: 1–h, 2–j, 3–a, 4–i, 5–b, 6–g, 7–d, 8–c, 9–f, 10–e

Do you understand the words? (I)

Are *benedictions* given in houses of worship?

YES NO

Is it pleasant to be the recipient of a *beneficent* act?

YES NO

Are kind people *benevolent*?

YES NO

Do *placatory* gestures often heal wounds and soothe disgruntled friends?

YES NO

Are some unambitious people *complacent*?

YES NO

Does *benignity* show malice?

YES NO

Is a *benefaction* an act of philanthropy?

YES NO

Is an *implacable* foe of corruption likely to *condone* corrupt acts?

YES NO

Is a *bona fide* offer made insincerely?

YES NO

Does a *benignant* attitude indicate hostility?

YES NO

KEY: 1–yes, 2–yes, 3–yes, 4–yes, 5–yes, 6–no, 7–yes, 8–no, 9–no,
10–no

Do you understand the words? (II)

benign—hateful

SAME OPPOSITE

benignant—kindly

SAME OPPOSITE

benediction—malediction

SAME OPPOSITE

benefactor—evildoer

SAME OPPOSITE

beneficiary—giver

SAME OPPOSITE

benevolent—well disposed

SAME OPPOSITE

bona fide—valid

SAME OPPOSITE

fidelity—unfaithfulness

SAME OPPOSITE

infidel—true believer

SAME OPPOSITE

dictatorial—submissive

SAME OPPOSITE

placative—pacifying

SAME OPPOSITE

implacable—unyielding

SAME OPPOSITE

placid—calm

SAME OPPOSITE

complacent—discontented

SAME OPPOSITE

condonation—forgiveness

SAME OPPOSITE

KEY: 1–O, 2–S, 3–O, 4–O, 5–O, 6–S, 7–S, 8–O, 9–O, 10–O, 11–S, 12–S, 13–S, 14–O, 15–S

Can you recall the words?

tending to give orders

1. D _____

act of overlooking (an offense, etc.)

2. C _____

unyieldingly hostile; beyond soothing; relentless; pitiless

3. I _____

intended to soothe or pacify (*adj.*)

4. P _____

or P _____

one's desire, wishes, or unforced will

5. V _____

calmness

6. P _____

self-satisfaction; smugness

7. C _____

or C _____

non-believer in the “true” religion

8. I _____

kindly; well disposed

9. B _____

or B _____

or B _____

unfaithfulness

10. I _____

involving a blessing (*adj.*)

11. B _____

doing something good or kind (*adj.*)

12. B _____

faithfulness

13. F _____

sincere; valid; in good faith

14. B _____

one who does something good, kind, or charitable (for another)

15. B _____

a kind or charitable deed

16. B _____

recipient of kindness, gift, etc.

17. B _____

able to be soothed or pacified

18. P _____

KEY: 1–dictatorial, 2–condonation, 3–implacable, 4–placatory *or* placative, 5–volition, 6–placidity, 7–complacence *or* complacency, 8–infidel, 9–benign, benignant, *or* benevolent, 10–infidelity, 11–benedictory, 12–beneficent, 13–fidelity, 14–bona fide, 15–benefactor, 16–benefaction, 17–beneficiary, 18–placable

CHAPTER REVIEW

A. Do you recognize the words?

To belittle:

(a) titillate, (b) disparage, (c) adulate

To be purposely confusing:

(a) equivocate, (b) obviate, (c) proscribe

To work to the disadvantage of:

(a) malign, (b) militate, (c) placate

To slander:

(a) malign, (b) condone, (c) placate

Lack of equality:

(a) parity, (b) disparity, (c) ambiguity

Phrase that may have two interpretations, one of them indelicate or off-color:

(a) equivocation, (b) ambiguity, (c) double entendre

Hateful:

(a) malignant, (b) benignant, (c) malaise

Ill will:

(a) malaise, (b) malevolence, (c) maleficence

Kindly:

(a) benevolent, (b) placid, (c) complacent

Inflexibly hostile:

(a) implacable, (b) placatory, (c) militant

Giving orders imperiously:

(a) benedictory, (b) dictatorial, (c) adulatory

Self-satisfaction:

(a) complacency, (b) placation, (c) placidity

KEY: 1-b, 2-a, 3-b, 4-a, 5-b, 6-c, 7-a, 8-b, 9-a, 10-a, 11-b, 12-a

B. Can you recognize roots?

MEANING	ROOT
1. <i>par</i>	_____
EXAMPLE parity	
2. <i>aequus</i> (<i>equ-</i>)	_____
EXAMPLE equivocal	
3. <i>vox, vocis</i>	_____
EXAMPLE vocal	
4. <i>nox, noctis</i>	_____
EXAMPLE nocturnal	
5. <i>libra</i>	_____
EXAMPLE equilibrist	
6. <i>latus, lateris</i>	_____
EXAMPLE equilateral	
7. <i>equus</i>	_____
EXAMPLE equine	
8. <i>pedis</i>	_____
EXAMPLE pedestrian	
9. <i>paidos</i> (<i>ped-</i>)	_____

EXAMPLE pedagogue

10. *fero*

EXAMPLE vociferous

11. *magnus*

EXAMPLE magnify

12. *scribo, scriptus*

EXAMPLE proscribe

13. *manus*

EXAMPLE manuscript

14. *post*

EXAMPLE postscript

15. *via*

EXAMPLE trivial

16. *militis*

EXAMPLE militate

17. *malus*

EXAMPLE malefactor

18. *dico, dictus*

EXAMPLE dictatorial

19. *volo*

EXAMPLE volition

20. *facio (fec-, fic-, -fy)*

EXAMPLE benefactor

fiction

simplify

21. *bonus*

EXAMPLE bona fide

22. *fides*

EXAMPLE fidelity

23. *phone*

EXAMPLE Dictaphone

24. *plac-*

EXAMPLE placate

25. *dono*

EXAMPLE donation

KEY: 1–equal, 2–equal, 3–voice, 4–night, 5–balance, 6–side, 7–horse, 8–foot, 9–child, 10–carry, bear, 11–large, 12–write, 13–hand, 14–after, 15–road, 16–soldier, 17–bad, 18–say, tell, 19–wish, 20–do, make, 21–good, 22–faith, 23–sound, 24–please, soothe, pacify, 25–give

TEASER QUESTIONS FOR THE AMATEUR ETYMOLOGIST

1. Keeping in mind the roots *animus* in *equanimity* and *magnus* in *Magnavox* or *magnify*, can you combine these two roots to form a noun meaning, etymologically, *largeness of mind*? _____. Can you figure out the adjective form, ending in *-ous*, of the noun you have constructed? _____.
2. If *equilateral* means *equal-sided*, can you construct an adjective meaning *two-sided*? _____.
3. *Trans-* is a prefix meaning *across*. Build a verb meaning *to write across* (from one form or language to another): _____. What is the noun derived from this verb? _____.
4. What disease was so named on the erroneous assumption that it was caused by “bad air?” _____.
5. *Facio* may appear in English words as *fec-*. Using the prefix *con-*, together, can you form a noun sometimes used as a synonym for candy, cake, or ice cream (etymologically, “something made together”)? _____.

(Answers in [Chapter 18](#))

THE THRILL OF RECOGNITION

You have been adding, over the past twenty-three sessions, hundreds of words to your vocabulary; you have been learning hundreds of prefixes, roots, and suffixes that make it possible for you to figure out the meaning of many unfamiliar words you may come across in your reading.

As time goes on and you notice more and more of the words you have studied whenever you read, or whenever you listen to lectures, the radio, or TV, the thrill of recognition plus the immediate comprehension of complex ideas will provide a dividend of incalculable value.

You will hear these words in conversation, and you will begin to use them yourself, unself-consciously, whenever something you want to say is best expressed by one of the words that exactly verbalizes your thinking. Another priceless dividend!

So keep on! You are involved in a dividend-paying activity that will eventually make you intellectually rich.

(End of Session 23)

¹ *Fulsome* (FŪL'-səm) does not mean, despite its appearance, *fully* or *completely*, but rather, *offensive because of excessiveness or insincerity*, often in reference to compliments, praise, admiration, or flattery.

——— *Brief Intermission Five* ———

HOW TO SPEAK NATURALLY

Consider this statement by Louis Bromfield, a noted author: “If I, as a novelist, wrote dialogue for my characters which was meticulously grammatical, the result would be the creation of a speech which rendered the characters pompous and unreal.”

And this one by Jacques Barzun, former literary critic for *Harper's*: “Speech, after all, is in some measure an expression of character, and flexibility in its use is a good way to tell your friends from the robots.”

Consider also this puckish remark by the late Clarence Darrow: “Even if you do learn to speak correct English, who are you going to speak it to?”

These are typical reactions of professional people to the old restrictions of formal English grammar. Do the actual teachers of English feel the same way? Again, some typical statements:

“Experts and authorities do not make decisions and rules, by logic or otherwise, about correctness,” said E. A. Cross, then Professor of English at the Greeley, Colorado, College of Education. “All they can do is observe the customs of cultivated and educated people and report their findings.”

“Grammar is only an analysis after the facts, a post-mortem on usage,” said Stephen Leacock in *How To Write*. “Usage comes first and usage must rule.”

One way to discover current trends in usage is to poll a cross

section of people who use the language professionally, inquiring as to their opinion of the acceptability, in everyday speech, of certain specific and controversial expressions. A questionnaire I prepared recently was answered by eighty-two such people—thirty-one authors, seven book reviewers, thirty-three editors, and eleven professors of English. The results, some of which will be detailed below, may possibly prove startling to you if you have been conditioned to believe, as most of us have, that correct English is rigid, unchangeable, and exclusively dependent on grammatical rules.

TEST YOURSELF

Californians boast of the *healthy* climate of their state.

RIGHT WRONG

Her new novel is not *as* good as her first one.

RIGHT WRONG

We *can't* hardly believe it.

RIGHT WRONG

This is *her*.

RIGHT WRONG

Who are you waiting for?

RIGHT WRONG

Please take care of *whomever* is waiting.

RIGHT WRONG

Whom would you like to be if you weren't yourself?

RIGHT WRONG

My wife has been *robbed*.

RIGHT WRONG

Is this *desert* fattening?

RIGHT WRONG

1. Californians boast of the *healthy* climate of their state.

RIGHT. There is a distinction, says formal grammar, between *healthy* and *healthful*. A person can be *healthy*—I am still quoting the rule—if he possesses good health. But climate must be *healthful*, since it is *conducive* to health. This distinction is sometimes observed in writing but rarely in everyday speech, as you have probably noticed. Even the dictionaries have stopped splitting hairs—they permit you to say *healthy* no matter which of the two meanings you intend.

“*Healthy* climate” was accepted as current educated usage by twenty-six of the thirty-three editors who answered the questionnaire, six of the seven book reviewers, nine of the eleven professors of English, and twenty of the thirty-one authors. The earlier distinction, in short, is rapidly becoming obsolete.

2. Her new novel is not *as* good as her first one.

RIGHT. If you have studied formal grammar, you will recall that after a negative verb the “proper” word is *so*, not *as*. Is this rule observed by educated speakers? Hardly ever.

In reference to the sentence under discussion, author Thomas W. Duncan remarked: “I always say—and write—*as*, much to the distress of my publisher’s copyreader. But the fellow is a wretched purist.”

The tally on this use of *as* showed seventy-four for, only eight against.

3. We *can’t* hardly believe it.

WRONG. Of the eighty-two professional people who answered my questionnaire, seventy-six rejected this sentence; it is evident that *can’t hardly* is far from acceptable in educated speech. Preferred usage: We *can* hardly believe it.

4. This is *her*.

WRONG. This substitution of *her* where the rule requires *she* was rejected by fifty-seven of my eighty-two respondents. Paradoxically enough, although “It’s *me*” and “This is *me*” are fully established in educated speech, “This is *her*” still seems to be condemned by the majority of cultivated speakers. Nevertheless, the average person, I imagine, may feel a bit uncomfortable saying “This is *she*”—it

sounds almost too sophisticated.

This is more than an academic problem. If the voice at the other end of a telephone conversation makes the opening move with “I’d like to speak to Jane Doe [your name, for argument’s sake],” you are, unfortunately, on the horns of a very real dilemma. “This is *she*” may sound prissy—“This is *her*” may give the impression that you’re uneducated. Other choices are equally doubtful. “Talking!” is suspiciously businesslike if the call comes to your home, and “I am Jane Doe!” may make you feel like the opening line of a high school tableau. The need for a decision arises several times in a busy day—and, I am sorry to report, the English language is just deficient enough not to be of much help. I wonder how it would be if you just grunted affably?

5. *Who* are you waiting for?

RIGHT. *Formal grammar* not only requires *whom* but demands that the word order be changed to: “For whom are you waiting?” (Just try talking with such formality on everyday occasions and see how long you’ll keep your friends.)

Who is the normal, popular form as the first word of a sentence, no matter what the grammatical construction; and an opinion by Kyle Crichton, a well-known magazine editor, is typical of the way many educated people feel. Mr. Crichton says: “The most loathsome word (to me at least) in the English language is *whom*. You can always tell a half-educated buffoon by the care he takes in working the word in. When he starts it, I know I am faced with a pompous illiterate who is not going to have me long as company.”

The score for acceptance of the sentence as it stands (with *who*) was sixty-six out of eighty-two. If, like most unpedantic speakers, you prefer *who* to *whom* for informal occasions, or if you feel as strongly about *whom* as Mr. Crichton does, you will be happy to hear that modern trends in English are all on your side.

6. Please take care of *whomever* is waiting.

WRONG. *Whomever* is awkward and a little silly in this sentence and brings to mind Franklin P. Adams’ famous remark on grammar: “‘Whom are you?’ asked Cyril, for he had been to night school.” It is

also contrary to grammatical rule. People who are willing to be sufficiently insufferable to use *whomever* in this construction have been tempted into error by the adjacent word *of*. They believe that since they are following a preposition with an objective pronoun they are speaking impeccable grammar. In actuality, however, *whomever* is not the object of the preposition *of* but the subject of the verb *is waiting*. Preferable form: Please take care of *whoever* is waiting.

7. *Whom* would you like to be if you weren't yourself?

WRONG. Here is another and typical example of the damage which an excessive reverence for *whom* can do to an innocent person's speech. Judged by grammatical rule, *whom* is incorrect in this sentence (the verb *to be* requires *who*); judged by normal speech patterns, it is absurd. This use of *whom* probably comes from an abortive attempt to sound elegant.

8. My wife has been *robbed*.

RIGHT—if something your wife owns was taken by means of thievery. However, if your wife herself was kidnapped, or in some way talked into leaving you, she was *stolen*, not *robbed*. To *rob* is to abscond with the contents of something—to *steal* is to walk off with the thing itself. Needless to say, both forms of activity are highly antisocial and equally illegal.

9. Is this *desert* fattening?

WRONG. The *dessert* that is fattening is spelled with two *s*'s. With one *s*, it's a desert, like the Sahara. Remember the two *s*'s in dessert by thinking how much you'd like *two* portions, if only your waistline permitted.