

capillary

meaning

having a very fine bore

example

The changes in surface tension of liquids in capillary vessels is of special interest to physiologists.

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conjure

meaning

summon a devil; proactive magic; imagine; invent

example

He conjured up an image of a reformed city and had the voters completely under his spell.

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diorama

meaning

like-size, three-dimensional scene from nature or history

example

Because they dramatically pose actual stuffed animals against realistic painted landscapes, the dioramas at the Museum of Natural History particularly impress high school biology students.

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disgorge

meaning

surrender something; eject; vomit

example

Unwilling to disgorge the cash he had stolen from the pension fund, the embezzler tried to run away.

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disinterested

meaning

unprejudiced

example

The only disinterested person in the room was the judge.

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eclipse

meaning

darken; extinguish; surpass

example

The new stock market high eclipsed the previous record set in 1985.

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exorcise

meaning

drive out evil spirits

example

By incantation and prayer, the medicine man sought to exorcise the evil spirits that had taken possession of the young warrior.

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figurative

meaning

not literal, but metaphorical; using a figure of speech

example

To lose one's marbles is a figurative expression; if you're told Jack has lost his marbles, no one expects you to rush out to buy him a replacement set.

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flaccid

meaning

flabby

example

His sedentary life had left him with flaccid muscles.

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forbearance

meaning

patience

example

We must use forbearance in dealing with him because he is still weak from his illness.

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fructify

meaning

bear fruit

example

This peach tree should fructify in three years.

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frugality

meaning

thrift; economy

example

In these economically difficult days businesses must practice frugality or risk bankruptcy.

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hazardous

meaning

dangerous

example

Your occupation is too hazardous for insurance companies to consider your application.

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humility

meaning

humbleness of spirit

example

He spoke with a humility and lack of pride that impressed his listeners.

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inception

meaning

start; beginning

example

She was involved with the project from its inception.

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inductive

meaning

pertaining to induction or proceeding from the specific to the general

example

The discovery of the planet Pluto is an excellent example of the results that can be obtained from inductive reasoning.

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ineluctable

meaning

irresistible; not to be escaped

example

He felt that his fate was ineluctable and refused to make any attempt to improve his lot.

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levity

meaning

lack of seriousness or steadiness; frivolity

example

Stop giggling and wriggling around in the pew; such levity is improper in church.

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oratorio

meaning

dramatic poem set to music

example

The Glee Club decided to present an oratorio during their recital.

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orientation

meaning

act of finding oneself in society

example

Freshman orientation provides the incoming students with an opportunity to learn about their new environment and their place in it.

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pastiche

meaning

imitation of another's style in musical composition or in writing

example

We cannot even say that her music is a pastiche of this or that composer; it is rather, reminiscent of many musicians.

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perforate

meaning

treacherous; disloyal

example

When Caesar realized that Brutus had betrayed him, he reproached his perfidious friend.

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plebeian

meaning

common; pertaining to the common people

example

His speeches were aimed at the plebeian minds and emotions; they disgusted the more refined.

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pore

meaning

study industriously; ponder; scrutinize

example

Determined to become a physician, Beth spends hours poring over her anatomy text.

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prevalent

meaning

widespread; generally accepted

example

A radical committed to social change, Reed had no patience with the conservative views prevalent in the America of his day.

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prod

meaning

poke; stir up; urge

example

If you prod him hard enough, he'll eventually clean his room.

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prosody

meaning

the art of versification

example

This book on prosody contains a rhyming dictionary as well as samples of the various verse forms.

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remorse

meaning

guilt; self-reproach

retrospective

meaning

looking back on the past

sacrosanct

meaning

most sacred; inviolable

salacious

meaning

lascivious; lustful

salvage

meaning

rescue from loss

simplistic

meaning

oversimplified

example

Chaucer's monk is not pious but salacious, a teller of lewd tales and ribald jests.

example

All attempts to salvage the wrecked ship failed.

example

Though Jack's solution dealt adequately with one aspect of the problem, it was simplistic in failing to consider various complicating factors that might arise.

slag

meaning

residue from smelting metal; dross; waste matter

smirk

meaning

conceited smile

unimpeachable

meaning

blameless and exemplary

example

The blast furnace had a special opening at the bottom to allow the workers to remove the worthless slag.

example

Wipe that smirk off your face!

example

Her conduct in office was unimpeachable and her record is spotless.

unwitting

meaning

unintentional; not knowing

example

She was the unwitting tool of the swindlers

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urbane

meaning

suave; refined; elegant

example

The courtier was urbane and sophisticated

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ursine

meaning

bearlike; pertaining to a bear

example

Because of its ursine appearance, the great panda has been identified with the bears; actually, it is closely related to the raccoon.

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viscous

meaning

sticky, gluey

example

Melted tar is a viscous substance.

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wallow

meaning

roll in; indulge in; become helpless

example

The hippopotamus loves to wallow in the mud.

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apathetic

meaning

indifferent

example

He felt apathetic about the conditions he had observed and did not care to fight against them.

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appropriate

meaning

acquire; take possession of for one's own use

example

The ranch owners appropriated the lands that had originally been set aside for the Indians' use.

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autopsy

meaning

examination of a dead body; postmortem

example

The medical examiner ordered an autopsy to determine the cause of death.

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bicameral

meaning

two-chambered, as a legislative body

example

The United States Congress is a bicameral body.

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