

ascribe

meaning

preventing infection; having a cleansing effect

example

Hospitals succeeded in lowering the mortality rate as soon as they introduced aseptic conditions.

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atrophy

meaning

wasting away

example

Polio victims need physiotherapy to prevent the atrophy of affected limbs.

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awe

meaning

solemn wonder

example

The tourists gazed with awe at the tremendous expanse of the Grand Canyon.

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bard

meaning

poet

example

The ancient bard Homer sang of the fall of Troy.

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blunder

meaning

error

example

The criminal's fatal blunder led to his capture.

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bouillon

meaning

clear beef soup

example

The cup of bouillon served by the stewards was welcomed by those who had been chilled by the cold ocean breezes.

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buffoonery

meaning

clowning

example

John Candy's buffoonery in Uncle Buck was hilarious.

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chameleon

meaning

lizard that changes color in different situations

example

Like the chameleon, he assumed the political coloration of every group he met.

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clapper

meaning

striker (tongue) of a bell

example

Wishing to be undisturbed by the bell, Dale wound his scarf around the clapper to muffle its striking.

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convoke

meaning

call together

example

Congress was convoked at the outbreak of the emergency.

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crescendo

meaning

increase in the volume or intensity, as in a musical passage; climax

example

The overture suddenly changed from a quiet pastoral theme to a crescendo featuring blaring trumpets and clashing cymbals.

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cull

meaning

pick out; reject

example

Every month the farmer culls the nonplaying hens from his flock and sells them to the local butcher.

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enmity

meaning

ill will; hatred

example

At Camp David President Carter labored to bring an end to the enmity that prevented Egypt and Israel from living in peace.

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feasible

meaning

practical

example

This is an entirely feasible proposal. I suggest we adopt it.

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febrile

meaning

feverish

example

In his febrile condition, he was subject to nightmares and hallucinations.

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fleece

meaning

wool coat of a sheep

example

They shear sheep of their fleece, which they then comb into separate strands of wool.

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forestall

meaning

prevent by taking action in advance

example

By setting up a prenuptial agreement, the prospective bride and groom hoped to forestall any potential arguments about money in the event of a divorce.

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incarnation

meaning

act of assuming a human body and human nature

example

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is a basic tenet of Christian theology.

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malingerer

meaning

one who feigns illness to escape duty

example

The captain ordered the sergeant to punish all malingererers and force them to work.

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malodorous

meaning

foul-smelling

example

The component heap was most malodorous in summer.

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marital

meaning

pertaining to marriage

example

After the publication of his book on marital affairs, he was often consulted by married people on the verge of divorce.

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mealymouthed

meaning

indirect speech; hypocritical; evasive

example

Rather than tell Jill directly what he disliked, Jack made a few mealymouthed comments and tried to change the subject.

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onerous

meaning

burdensome

example

He asked for an assistant because his work load was too onerous.

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opportune

meaning

timely; well chosen

example

You have come at an opportune moment for I need a new secretary.

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pan

meaning

criticize harshly

example

Hoping for a rave review of his new show, the playwright was miserable when the critics panned it unanimously.

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parity

meaning

equality; close resemblance

example

I find your analogy inaccurate because I do not see the parity between the two illustrations.

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poseur

meaning

person who pretends to be sophisticated, elegant, etc., to impress others

example

Some thought Dali was a brilliant painter; others dismissed him as a poseur.

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posterity

meaning

descendants; future generations

example

We hope to leave a better world to posterity.

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prim

meaning

very precise and formal;
exceedingly proper

example

Many people commented on the contrast between the prim attire of the young lady and the inappropriate clothing worn by her escort.

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rejoinder

meaning

retort; comeback; reply

example

When someone has been rude to me, find it particularly satisfying to come up with a quick rejoinder.

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saturate

meaning

soak

example

Their clothes were saturated by the rain.

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sluggish

meaning

slow; lazy; lethargic

example

After two nights without sleep, she felt sluggish and incapable of exertion.

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sordid

meaning

filthy; base; vile

example

The social worker was angered by the sordid housing provided for the homeless.

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splice

meaning

fasten together; unite

example

Before you splice two strips of tape together, be sure to line them up evenly.

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stereotyped

meaning

oversimplified; lacking
individuality; seen as a type

example

My chief objection to the book is that the characters are stereotyped; they come across as ethnic caricatures, not as real people with individual quirks, fears, and dreams.

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subside

meaning

settle down; descend; grow quiet

example

The doctor assured us that the fever would eventually subside.

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tout

meaning

publicize; praise excessively

example

I lost confidence in my broker after he touted some junk bonds that turned out to be a bad investment.

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unprepossessing

meaning

unattractive

example

During adolescence many attractive young people somehow acquire the false notion that their appearance is unprepossessing.

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vent

meaning

small opening; outlet

example

The wine did not flow because the air vent in the barrel was clogged.

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visceral

meaning

felt in one's inner organs

example

She disliked the visceral sensations she had whenever she rode the roller coaster.

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wan

meaning

having a pale or sickly color; pallid

example

Suckling asked, "Why so pale and wan, fond lover?"

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winnow

meaning

sift; separate good parts from bad

example

This test will winnow out the students who study from those who don't bother.

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adverse

meaning

unfavorable; hostile

example

adverse circumstances compelled him to close his business.

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anemia

meaning

condition in which blood lacks red corpuscles

example

The doctor ascribes her tiredness to anemia.

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arrears

meaning

being in debt

example

He was in arrears with his payments on the car.

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