# BLOOMSBURY DICTIONARY OF

## WORD ORIGINS



BLOOMSBURY FRELLES A988 JOHN AYTO

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DICTIONARY OF

## WORD ORIGINS



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Reprint Authorized by Bloomsbury Publishing Limited Reprinted by World Publishing Corporation, Beijing, 1993 Licensed for sale in The People's Republic of China only The average English speaker knows about 50,000 words—almost 25 times more words than there are stars visible in the night sky. This completely new **DICTIONARY OF WORD ORIGINS** uncovers the often surprising connections between words. In over 8,000 entries the dictionary reveals the origins of and links between, for example, beef and cow, secret and crime, flour and pollen, imbecile and bacteria, plankton and complain.

Written in a clear and informative style, the **DICTIONARY OF WORD ORIGINS** shows how English today has developed from its Indo-European origins and how the different main influences on the language have intermingled. Also the book deals with the many new words and coinages which enter the language every year.

Written with a rare combination of authority and accessibility, the 8,000 A to Z entries are amplified by detailed cross-references, laid out in Bloomsbury's typically clear style.

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JOHN AYTO is a writer and lexicographer. Having been involved in developing the Longman Dictionary of the English Language, he now writes on the English language, including for the influential 'WORDS' column in The Observer. He compiled the Longman Register of New Words (1989).

#### INTRODUCTION

The average English-speaker knows around 50,000 words. That represents an astonishing diversity – nearly 25 times more words than there are individual stars visible to the naked eye in the night sly. And even 50,000 seems insignificant beside the half a million recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary. But looked at from a historical perspective, that diversity becomes more apparent than real. Tracing a word's development back in time shows that in many cases what are now separate lexical items were formerly one and the same word. The deep prehistory of our language has nurtured little word-seeds that over the millennia have proliferated into widely differentiated families of vocabulary.

The purpose of this book is to uncover the often surprising connections between elements of the English lexicon that have become obscured by centuries of language change – the links in our word-web that join such unlikely partners as, for instance, beef and cow, bacteria and imbecile, and bishop and spy.

#### The origins of the English language

The life stories of individual words, often mazy and conjectural, need a fixed backdrop if they are to make sense. So first, a little history. English is a member of the Indo-European family of languages. The precise origins of this are still a matter of some controversy, but the consensus view is that it came on the scene around 8000 years ago in the general area to the north of the Black Sea. Since then it has split up into a large number of subgroups, which today provide nearly all the languages of Europe and have also spread over large areas of the Middle East and northern India. Among them are the Indo-Iranian languages, including Hindi and ancient Senskrit; the Slavic languages — Russian, Polish, Czech, Serbo-Croat, and so on; the Baltic languages, Latvian and Lithuanian (which of all these modern languages most closely resembles its Indo-European ancestor); the Celtic languages, such as Welsh, Gaelic, and Breton; and Greek.

But in the history of English, there are two particular groups that are of central importance. The first is the Romance languages: classical Latin, the literary language of ancient Rome; and French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Rumanian, which evolved from Vulgar Latin, the language of the common people that spread through the Western Roman empire. The role of Latin and French, in particular, in the growth of English vocabulary has been immense. We acquired a sizable proportion of our words from one or other of these sources.

The second important group, of course, is the Germanic languages: for that is the group to which English itself belongs. The existence of the Germanic peoples as a separate speech community dates back at least 3000 years. Their first northern European home has been traced to an area around the River Elbe. At this time they all spoke the same language, which is generally known as Common Germanic. Around the 2nd century BC this began to split up into three distinct dialects. One was East Germanic. The only East Germanic language of which any written evidence survives is Gothic. Now extinct, it was spoken by Germanic peoples who migrated back eastwards to the area of modern Bulgaria and the Crimea. It provides us with our closest glimpse of what prehistoric Common Germanic must have been like. The second was North Germanic, which has evolved into modern Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic. And lastly there was West Germanic, the ancestor of modern German, Dutch, Flemish, Frisian, and English.

The forerunners of English crossed the Channel in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. They were brought by peoples from the northeastern corner of the European mainland, around Jutland and southern Denmark — the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. They spoke a mutually intelligible set of Germanic dialects (whose closest modern continental relative is Frisian), which formed the basis of what is now known as Old English (the alternative term 'Anglo-Saxon' is no longer much used). This was a more or less homogeneous language, but with marked geographical differences reflecting the areas into which the various Germanic peoples had moved: the Angles into the Midlands (where Mercian was spoken) and the North (whose form of Old English is now called Northumbrian); the Jutes into Kent; and the Saxons into the rest of southern and western England (their speech is known as West Saxon).

#### Astonishing richness and diversity

The end of the Old English period is conventionally associated with the Norman Conquest of 1066, but in practice of course the transition into the next historical phase of the language, which we term Middle English, was a gradual process. Its crucial feature from the point of view of vocabulary was the beginning of the importation of non-native

#### DICTIONARY OF WORD ORIGINS

words which over the centuries have transformed English from a parochial northeast European dialect into a lexical tapestry of astonishing richness and diversity. A smattering of Latin words entered the language following the conversion of the English to Christianity in the 7th century, but it was the Vikings who first introduced new ingredients to the lexical blend in a big way. Their forays began in the mid-8th century and lasted for several hundred years. Their impact on English was greatest in northern areas, where they settled, but the language as a whole is indebted to Old Norse for such basic words as anger, egg, knife, law, and leg.

Undoubtedly the single most significant event in the history of the English language was the Norman invasion of 1066. For it provided the impetus for a huge influx of vocabulary from across the English Channel. These new words came both via Anglo-Norman, the dialect of Old French spoken in England by the new ruling classes, which was based on the northern variety of French; and direct from Old French itself (Old French, the ancestor of modern French, was spoken from the 9th century to roughly the middle of the 16th century). It was this lexical infusion, which lasted from the 11th to the 16th centuries, which truly laid the basis for the hybrid English language of today. It would be futile to try and give a representative sample of the words it introduced, for they are so all-pervasive. From supper to justice, from action to money, from village to receive, they came in their thousands. Some were Gaulish in ultimate origin. Gaulish was the Celtic language spoken in what is now France before French killed it off. But the great majority of these French imports were descended from earlier Latin ancestors.

It was Latin itself, together with Greek, that formed the next wave of lexical innovation in English. With the Renaissance came a revival in classical scholarship, and in the 16th and 17th centuries hundreds of Latin and Greek words were naturalized into English – among them apparatus, area, crisis, maximum, poem, and pollen, to name no more than a minute fraction.

#### **Expanding horizons**

It was around this time that English started to roam beyond its historical boundaries. As English merchant venturers sailed the world, not only did they take their language with them to distant continents, where it has since become in many cases the dominant form of speech, but they also brought back with them new and exotic terms that have found their way into the English lexicon. There is not a major language in the world that has not over the past 500 years made some contribution to English, from the bountiful donations of Italian (aria, arcade, bandit, bust, escort, frigate, granite, madrigal, pedal, solo, umbrella, etc) and Hindi (bungalow, chintz, cot, juggernaut, pundit, shampoo, etc) to the more modest gifts from the likes of Finnish (sauna) and Tibetan (lama).

English is still growing – faster probably in the late 20th century than at any previous time in its history (it has been calculated that around 800 neologisms are added to the working vocabulary of the language every year). Over half of the new items come from combinations of old ones, but there continues to be a lot of borrowing from other languages (glasnost and perestroika are notable examples from the 1980s). The formation of blends (conflations of existing words, such as motel formed from motor and hotel) and acronyms (words made up from initial letters, like yuppie – a young urban professional) is characteristic of late 20th-century English.

#### Unlikely relatives

All down these centuries of evolution and acquisition runs a complex tracery of descent — often muddled, interrupted, cancelling itself out or losing itself in dead ends, but often too presenting us with breathtaking lexical fragmentation patterns that link the unlikeliest of partners. It seems scarcely plausible, for instance, that acrobat and oxygen should be related, but they are. Both go back ultimately to an Indo-European base \*ak-, which conveyed the notion of being 'pointed' or 'sharp.' An acrobat is etymologically someone who walks on the 'points' of the feet, or on tiptoe (it is based on Greek åkros 'terminal, topmost'), while oxygen means literally 'acid-producer'. It comes from Greek oxús 'sharp, acid,' which in turn was descended from \*ak-. Nor is this by any means the end of the story. For the same base is responsible for a wide range of other English words, including acacia, acid, acme, acre, acrid, acute, eager, ear (of corn), edge, and vinegar. Despite their common source, they have reached English along very different routes. Ear and edge, for example, come in a line of direct descent from Indo-European through Germanic, while eager came via Old French from Latin, and acrobat and oxygen, as we have seen, go back to Greek.

This family of English words traces its history right back to the prehistoric roots of the language, but such extreme antiquity is not a precondition for great diversity. The Latin word gradus 'step,' for instance, lies behind an enormous range of English vocabulary, much of it formed by prefixation: aggression, for example, congress, degrade, degree, digress, egress, ingredient, ingress, progress, regress, retrograde, and transgress, not to mention grade, gradation, gradient, gradual, and graduate. An even more prolific source has been Latin cedere 'go, go away, give up,' which has given English accede, ancestor, cease, cede, concede, exceed, intercede, proceed, proceed, recede, and succeed, plus a range of related nouns such as concession and procession.

#### DICTIONARY OF WORD ORIGINS

How to use this book

The aim of this dictionary is to bring out and make explicit these sorts of historical connection between English words. It is arranged alphabetically, so that each article deals in the first instance with the origin and development of a particular word. But where appropriate the relationship of that word with other English words is described, and for quick reference a list is provided (preceded by  $\triangleright$ ) of the words which are etymologically linked with the entry word. All the words whose story is told in the dictionary are shown with a date after them in square brackets. This denotes the century in which they are first recorded in English. Thus cock-a-hoop [16] indicates that cock-a-hoop probably entered the language in the 16th century (words that date back to the Old English period are marked simply [OE]). If, in the article about a given word, a related word is mentioned but no date is shown for it, this means that the related word has its own article, so you should look there for further information.

In all about 8000 words have their stories told here. They represent the central core of English vocabulary, plus an extensive selection of words included either because their etymology is intrinsically interesting, or because they form part of a wider lexical family. It is far from being an exhaustive account of the entire English lexicon, of course, for it is not part of the book's purpose to give a complete list of the (all too many) English words whose origins are not known for certain.

In terms of sheer numbers of years, at least half of the period which the Dictionary of Word Origins covers predates the emergence of writing in the West, and so much of the material in it – Indo-European forms, for instance, and prehistoric Germanic words – is not recorded from contemporary sources. That we know so much about it is due to the work of historical linguists, who have reconstructed these ancient words and word-parts from the evidence of later written sources and of the modern descendants of these prehistoric languages. It is conventional to mark such reconstructions with an asterisk, and that is what is done here. So for example the prehistoric Germanic ancestor of English chicken is given as \*kiukīnam. This means that we have no direct evidence of a word kiukīnam, but that chicken itself and its relatives in other Germanic languages, together with our knowledge of how Germanic words evolved, have enabled us to postulate its existence.

John Ayto London, 1990

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a, an [OE] The indefinite article in English is ultimately identical with the word one (as is the case, even more obviously, in other European languages - French un, German ein, and so on). The ancestor of both a(n)and one was an, with a long vowel, but in the Old English period it was chiefly used for the numeral; where we would use a(n), the Anglo-Saxons tended not to use an article at all. An begins to emerge as the indefinite article in the middle of the 12th century, and it was not long before, in that relatively unemphatic linguistic environment, its vowel became weakened and shortened, giving an. And at about the same time the distinction between an and a began to develop, although this was a slow process; until 1300 an was still often used before consonants, and right up to 1600 and beyond it was common before all words beginning with h, such as house.

> one

#### aardvark see EARTH, FARROW

all the best of the second of the second

abacus [17] Abacus comes originally from a Hebrew word for 'dust,' 'ābāq. This was borrowed into Greek with the sense of 'drawing board covered with dust or sand,' on which one could draw for, among other purposes, making mathematical calculations. The Greek word, ābax, subsequently developed various other meanings, including 'table,' both in the literal sense and as a mathematical table. But it was as a 'dust-covered board' that its Latin descendant, abacus, was first used in English, in the 14th century. It was not until the 17th century that the more general sense of a counting board or frame carne into use, and the more specific 'counting frame with movable balls' is later still.

abandon [14] The Old French verb abandoner is the source of abandon. It was based on a bandon, meaning literally 'under control or jurisdiction,' which was used in the phrase mettre a bandon 'put someone under someone else's control' – hence 'abandon them.' The word bandon came, in altered form, from Latin bannum 'proclamation,' which is circuitously related to

English banns 'proclamation of marriage' and is an ancestor of contraband.

▶ banns, contraband

abash [14] Abash shares a common ancestry with abeyance [16], although the latter underwent an about-turn in meaning in the 17th century which disguises their relationship. They go back to a Latin verb batare, meaning 'yawn' or 'gape.' This was borrowed into French as baer, later bayer (it was the source of English bay 'recessed space'). The addition of the prefix es- (from Latin ex-) produced esbaer, later e(s)bahir 'gape with astonishment,' whence, via the present stem e(s)bass-, came English abash, which originally meant 'stand amazed' as well as 'embarass, discomfit.' (Bashful is a 16th-century derivative, with elision of the a-. which was first used by the dramatist Nicholas Udall.) Addition of the prefix a- to Old French baer, meanwhile, had given abaer 'aspire after,' and its noun abeance 'aspiration, desire.' In legal terminology, this word was used in French for the condition of a person in expectation or hope of receiving property, but in English the focus quickly became reversed to the property. and its condition of being temporarily without an owner.

» abeyance, bashful

abbot [OE] Abbot comes ultimately from abba, a Syriac word meaning 'father' (which itself achieved some currency in English, particularly in reminiscence of its biblical use: 'And he said, Abba, father, all things are possible unto thee,' Mark 14:36). This came into Greek as abbás, and thence, via the Latin accusative abbatem, into Old English as abbud or abbod. The French term abbé (which is much less specific in meaning than English abbot) comes from the same source. In much the same way as father is used in modern English for priests, abba was widely current in the East for referring to monks, and hence its eventual application to the head of a monastery. A derivative of Latin abbatem was abbatia, which has given English both abbacy [15] and

(via Old French abbeie) abbey [13]. Abbess is of similar antiquity (Latin had abbatissa).

▶ abbess, abbey

abbreviate see BRIEF

abet see BAIT

abhor [15] Abhor comes from Latin abhorrère, which literally meant 'shrink back in terror' (from the prefix ab- 'away' and horrère 'tremble! — which also gave English horror and horrid). The word used to have this intransitive meaning 'be repelled' in English too, but the transitive usage 'loathe' (which was probably introduced from Old French in the 15th century) has completely taken its place.

▶horrid, horror

abide see BIDE

able [14] Able and ability both come ultimately from the Latin verb habere 'have' or 'hold.' From this the Latin adjective habilis developed, meaning literally 'convenient or suitable for holding on to,' and hence in more general terms 'suitable' or 'apt,' and later, more positively, 'competent' or 'expert.' It came into English via Old French, bringing with it the noun ablete 'ability.' This was later reformed in English, on the model of its Latin source habilitas, to ability:

> habit

ablution see LAVATORY

abode see BIDE

abominable [14] The Latin original of this word meant 'shun as an evil omen.' The prefix ab'away' was added to ōmen (source of English omen) to produce the verb abōminārī. From this was created the adjective abōminābilis, which reached English via Old French. From the 14th to the 17th century there was a general misapprehension that abominable was derived from Latin ab hominem 'away from man," hence 'beastly, unnatural.' This piece of fanciful folk etymology not only perpetuated the erroneous spelling abhominable throughout this period, but also seems to have contributed significantly to making the adjective much more strongly condemnatory.

> omen

abort see ORIGIN

abound [14] Abound has no connection with bind or bound. Its Latin source means literally 'overflow,' and its nearest relative among English words is water. Latin undāre 'flow' derived from unda 'wave' (as in undulate), which has the same ultimate root as water. The addition of the prefix ab- 'away' created abundāre, literally 'flow away,' hence 'overflow,' and eventually 'be plentiful.' The present participial stem of the Latin verb gave English abundant and abundance. In the 14th and 15th centuries it was erroneously

thought that abound had some connection with have, and the spelling habound was consequently common.

inundate, surround, undulate, water

about [OE] About in Old English times meant 'around the outside of'; it did not develop its commonest present-day meaning, 'concerning,' until the 13th century. In its earliest incarnation it was onbitton, a compound made up of on and būtan 'outside' (this is the same word as modern English but, which was itself originally a compound, formed from the ancestors of by and out – so broken down into its ultimate constituents, about is on by out).

> but, by, out

above [OE] As in the case of about, the a- in above represents on and the -b- element represents by; above (Old English abufan) is a compound based on Old English ufan. This meant both 'on top' and 'down from above'; it is related to over, and is probably descended from a hypothetical West Germanic ancestor \*ufana, whose uf- element eventually became modern English up. So in a sense, above means 'on by up' or 'on by over.'

by, on, up

abracadabra [16] This magical charm reached English, probably via French, from Greek abrasadabra (the c in the English word arose from a misinterpretation of the c in the original Greek word, which in the Greek alphabet stands for s). It seems to have originated (perhaps in the 3rd century AD) as a cabalistic word of the Basilidians, a Gnostic sect of Alexandria, and was probably based on Abraxas, the name of their supreme deity.

abridge see BRIEF

abroad [13] It was only in the 15th century that abroad came to mean 'in foreign parts.' Earlier, it had been used for 'out of doors,' a sense still current today, if with a rather archaic air; but originally it meant 'widely' or 'about' (as in 'noise something abroad'). It was formed quite simply from a 'on' and the adjective broad, although it was probably modelled on the much earlier (Old English) phrase on brede, in which brede was a noun, meaning 'breadth.'

> broad

abscess [16] Abscess comes, via French abcès, from Latin abscessus, a noun derived from abscēdere 'go away.' The constituent parts of this compound verb are abs 'away' and cēdere 'go,' which has given English cede and a whole range of other words, such as accede and recede.

The notion linking 'abscesses' and 'going away' was that impure or harmful bodily humours were eliminated, or 'went away,' via the pus that gathered in abscesses. It originated amongst the Greeks, who indeed had a word for it: apostema. This meant literally 'separation' (apo 'away' and histánai 'stand'), and Latin ab-

scessus was an approximate translation of it, possibly by Aulus Cornelius Celsus, the Roman writer on medical and other matters.

▶ accede, cede, recede

absent [14] Absent is based ultimately on the Latin verb 'to be,' esse. To this was added the prefix ab-'away,' giving Latin abesse 'be away'; and the present participial stem of abesse was absent-. Hence, via Old French, the adjective absent and the noun absence. It has been conjectured, incidentally, that the 4nt- stem used for Latin esse was a descendant of Indo-European \*sontos 'truth,' from which English sooth comes.

absolute [14] Absolute, absolution, and absolve all come ultimately from the same source: Latin absolvere 'set free,' a compound verb made up from the prefix ab- 'away' and the verb solvere 'loose' (from which English gets solve and several other derivatives, including dissolve and resolve). From the 13th to the 16th century an alternative version of the verb, assoil, was in more common use than absolve; this came from the same Latin original, but via Old French rather than by a direct route. The t of absolute and absolution comes from the past participial stem of the Latin verb absolūt-. The noun, the adjective, and the verb have taken very different routes from their common semantic starting point, the notion of 'setting free': absolve now usually refers to freeing from responsibility and absolution to the remitting of sins, while absolute now means 'free from any qualification or restriction.'

▶ dissolve, resolve, solve

absorb [15] Absorb comes, via French absorber, from Latin absorbēre, a compound verb formed from the prefix ab-'away' and sorbēre 'suck up, swallow.' Words connected with drinking and swallowing quite often contain the sounds s or sh, r, and b or p — Arabic, for instance, has surāb, which gave us syrup—and this noisy gulping seems to have been reflected in an Indo-European base, \*srobh-, which lies behind both Latin sorbēre and Greek rophein 'suck up.'

abstain [14] The literal meaning of this word's ultimate source, Latin abstinere, was 'hold or keep away,' and hence 'withhold' (the root verb, tenere, produced many other derivatives in English, such as contain, maintain, obtain, and retain, as well as tenacious, tenant, tenement, tenet, tenor, and tenure). That is how it was used when it was first introduced into English (via Old French abstenir), and it was not until the 16th century that it began to be used more specifically for refraining from pleasurable activities, particularly the drinking of alcohol. The past participial stem of the Latin verb, abstent-, gave us abstention, while the present participial stem, abstinent-, produced abstinent and abstinence. There is no connection, incidentally, with the semantically similar abstemious, which comes from a Latin word for alcoholic drink, tēmōtum.

abstruse [16] It is not clear whether English borrowed abstruse from French abstrus(e) or directly from Latin abstrūsus, but the ultimate source is the Latin form. It is the past participle of the verb abstrūdere, literally 'thrust' (trūdere) 'away' (ab). (Trūdere contributed other derivatives to English, including extrude and intrude, and it is related to threat.) The original, literal meaning of abstruse was 'concealed,' but the metaphorical 'obscure' is just as old in English.

abuse see USE

abut see BUTT

abyss [16] English borrowed abyss from late Latin abvssus, which in turn derived from Greek ábussos. This was an adjective meaning 'bottomless,' from a- 'not' and bussós 'bottom,' a dialectal variant of buthós (which is related to bathys 'deep,' the source of English bathyscape). In Greek the adjective was used in the phrase ábussos limnē 'bottomless lake,' but only the adjective was borrowed into Latin, bringing with it the meaning of the noun as well. In medieval times, a variant form arose in Latin - abysmus. It incorporated the Greek suffix -ismós (English -ism). It is the source of French abîme, and was borrowed into English in the 13th century as abysm (whence the 19th-century derivative abysmal). It began to be ousted by abyss in the 16th century, however, and now has a distinctly archaic air.

acacia [16] Acacia comes via Latin from Greek akakiā, a word for the shittah. This is a tree mentioned several times in the Bible (the Ark of the Covenant was made from its wood). It is not clear precisely what it was, but it was probably a species of what we now know as the acacia. The ultimate derivation of Greek akakia is obscure too; some hold that it is based on Greek aké 'point' (a distant relation of English acid), from the thorniness of the tree, but others suggest that it may be a loanword from Egyptian.

academy [16] Borrowed either from French académie or from Latin acadēmia, academy goes back ultimately to Greek Akadēmiā, the name of the place in Athens where the philosopher Plato (c. 428-3.17 BC) taught. Traditionally thought of as a grove ('the groves of Academe'), this was in fact more of an enclosed piece of ground, a garden or park; it was named after the Attic mythological hero Akadēmos or Hekadēmus. In its application to the philosophical doctrines of Plato, English academy goes back directly to its Latin source, but the more general meanings 'college, place of training' derive from French.

accelerate [16] Accelerate comes from Latin accelerare, a compound verb formed from the intensive prefix ad- (ac- before /k/ sounds) and celerare 'hurry.' Celerare, in turn, derived from the adjective celer 'fast' (which gave English celerity [15] and is ultimately related to hold).

accent [14] Accent was originally a loan-translation from Greek into Latin (a loan-translation is when each constituent of a compound in one language is translated into its equivalent in another, and then reassembled into a new compound). Greek prosöidiā (whence English prosody) was formed from pros'to' and öidē 'song' (whence English ode); these elements were translated into Latin ad 'to' and cantus 'song' (whence English chant, cant, cantata, canticle), giving accentus. The notion underlying this combination of 'to' and 'song' was of a song added to speech – that is, the intonation of spoken language. The sense of a particular mode of pronunciation did not arise in English until the 16th century.

► cant, cantata, canticle, chant

accept [14] Accept comes ultimately from Latin capere, which meant 'take' (and was derived from the same root as English heave). The addition of the prefix ad- 'to' produced accipere, literally 'take to oneself,' hence 'receive.' The past participle of this, acceptus, formed the basis of a new verb, acceptare, denoting repeated action, which made its way via Old French into English.

▶ heave

accident [14] Etymologically, an accident is simply 'something which happens' - 'an event.' That was what the word originally meant in English, and it was only subsequently that the senses 'something which happens by chance' and 'mishap' developed. It comes from the Latin verb cadere 'fall' (also the source of such diverse English words as case, decadent, and deciduous). The addition of the prefix ad-'to' produced accidere, literally 'fall to,' hence 'happen to.' Its present participle was used as an adjective in the Latin phrase rēs accidēns 'thing happening,' and accidēns soon took on the role of a noun on its own, passing (in its stem form accident-) into Old French and thence into English.

▶ case, decadent, deciduous

accolade [17] Accolade goes back to an assumed Vulgar Latin verb \*accollāre, meaning 'put one's arms round someone's neck' (collum is Latin for 'neck,' and is the source of English collar). It put in its first recorded appearance in the Provençal noun acclada, which was borrowed into French as accolade and thence made its way into English. A memory of the original literal meaning is preserved in the use of accolade to refer to the ceremonial striking of a sword on a new knight's shoulders; the main current sense 'ccngratulatory' expression of approval' is a later development.

> collar

accomplice [15] This word was borrowed into English (from French) as complice (and complice stayed in common usage until late in the 19th century).

It comes from Latin complex, which is related to English complicated, and originally meant simply 'an associate.' without any pejorative associations. The form accomplice first appears on the scene in the late 15th century (the first record of it is in William Caxton's Charles the Great), and it probably arose through a misanalysis of complice preceded by the indefinite article (a complice) as acomplice. It may also have been influenced by accomplish or accompany.

**▶** complicated

accomplish see COMPLETE

accord [12] In its original source, Vulgar Latin \*accordāre, accord meant literally 'heart-to-heart' (from Latin ad 'to' and cord-, the stem of cor 'heart'). It passed into Old French as acorder, and was borrowed comparatively early into English, turning up in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 1123.

Its general sense of 'being in agreement' has been narrowed down in English and other languages to the notion of 'being in harmony musically,' and either Italian accordare or French accorder provided the basis for German akkordion (from which English got accordion), the musical instrument invented by Buschmann in Berlin in 1822.

▶ cordial

account [14] Account is of Old French origin. It was formed from compter, conter 'count' (which derived from Latin computare) and the prefix a-. Its original meaning in English, too, was 'count' or 'count up'; this had disappeared by the end of the 18th century, but its specialized reference to the keeping of financial records is of equal antiquity. Account for, meaning 'explain,' arose in the mid 18th century.

▶ count

accoutre [16] Accoutre is related to both couture and sew. English borrowed it from French accoutrer, which meant 'equip with something, especially clothes.' A stage earlier, Old French had acoustrer, formed from cousture (whence couture) and the prefix a- This came from Vulgar Latin \*consūtūra, literally 'sewn together,' from con-'together' and sūtūra' sewn' (whence English suture); sūtūra in turn came from the past participial stem of Latin suere, which derived from the same Indo-European root as English sew.

> couture, sew, suture

accumulate [16] Accumulate was borrowed from Latin accumulāre, a compound verb formed from the prefix ad-, here meaning 'in addition,' and cumulāre 'heap up' (the source of English cumulative). Cumulāre itself derived from cumulus 'heap'; English adopted this with its original Latin meaning in the 17th century, but it was not until the early 19th century that it was applied (by the meteorologist Luke Howard) to mountainous billowing cloud formations.

> cumulative, cumulus

accurate [16] 'Accuracy' is connected with 'curing,' in the sense not of 'making better' but of 'looking after' - as in 'the cure of souls.' The adjective comes from Latin accūrātus 'done carefully,' which in turn derived from a verb (cūrāre 'care for') formed from the noun cura 'care' (other English words from this source are curate, curious, procure, and secure). The notion of doing something carefully led on naturally to the notion of exactness

> curate, curious, procure, secure

accuse [13] Accuse comes via Old French acuser from the Latin verb accüsăre, which was based on the noun causa 'cause' - but cause in the sense not of 'something that produces a result,' but of 'legal action' (a meaning preserved in English cause list, for instance). Hence accūsāre was to 'call someone to account for their actions.

The grammatical term accusative [15] (denoting the case of the object of a verb in Latin and other languages) is derived ultimately from accūsāre, but it arose originally owing to a mistranslation. The Greek term for this case was ptosis aitiātike 'case denoting causation' - a reasonable description of the function of the accusative. Unfortunately the Greek verb aitiasthai also meant 'accuse,' and it was this sense that Latin grammarians chose to render when adopting the term.

b-cause, excuse

accustom see custom

ace [13] Ace comes from the name of a small ancient Roman coin, the as (which may have been of Etruscan origin). As well as denoting the coin. Latin as stood for 'one' or 'unity,' and it was as the 'score of one at dice' that it first entered English.

ache [OE] Of the noun ache and the verb ache, the verb came first. In Old English it was acan. From it was formed the noun, ace or ece. For many centuries, the distinction between the two was preserved in their pronunciation: in the verb, the ch was pronounced as it is now, with a /k/ sound, but the noun was pronounced similarly to the letter H, with a /ch/ sound. It was not until the early 19th century that the noun came regularly to be pronounced the same way as the verb. It is not clear what the ultimate origins of ache are, but related forms do exist in other Germanic languages (Low German äken, for instance, and Middle Dutch akel), and it has been conjectured that there may be some connection with the Old High German exclamation (of pain) ah.

achieve [14] Achieve is related to chief. It comes from Old French achever 'bring to an end,' or literally 'bring to a head,' which was based on the phrase a chief 'to a head' (chief derives ultimately from Latin caput 'head').

The heraldic meaning of achievement, 'coat of arms,' comes from the notion that the escutcheon was granted as a reward for a particular achievement. Over

the centuries it has evolved an alternative form, hatchment [16].

> chief, hatchment

acid [17] The original notion contained in the word acid is 'pointedness.' In common with a wide range of other English words (for example acute, acne, edge, oxygen) it can be traced back ultimately to the Indo-European base \*ak-, which meant 'be pointed or sharp. Among the Latin derivatives of this base was the adjective acer 'sharp.' From this was formed the verb acere 'be sharp or sour,' and from this verb in turn the adjective acidus 'sour.' The scientist Francis Bacon seems to have been the first to introduce it into English, in the early 17th century (though whether directly from Latin or from French acide is not clear). Its use as a noun, in the strict technical sense of a class of substances that react with alkalis or bases, developed during the 18th century.

▶ acacia, acne, acrid, acute, alacrity, ear, edge, oxygen acknowledge see KNOW

acne [19] It is ironic that acne, that represents a low point in many teenagers' lives, comes from acme, 'the highest point.' The Greeks used akme, which literally meant 'point,' for referring to spots on the face, but when it came to be rendered into Latin it was mistransliterated as acnē, and the error has stuck. (Acme comes. incidentally, from an Indo-European base \*ak-'be pointed,' and thus is related to acid, edge, and oxygen.)

▶ acid, acme, edge, oxygen

acolyte [14] Acolyte comes, via Old French and/or medieval Latin, from Greek akólouthos 'following.' This was formed from the prefix a- (which is related to homos 'same') and the noun keleuthos 'path,' and it appears again in English in anacolouthon [18] (literally 'not following'), a technical term for lack of grammatical sequence. The original use of acolyte in English was as a minor church functionary, and it did not acquire its more general meaning of 'follower' until the 19th century.

▶ anacolouthon

acorn [OE] Acorn has no etymological connection with oak; its nearest linguistic relative in English is probably acre. The Old English word was acern, which may well have derived from acer 'open land' (the related Middle High German ackeran referred to beech mast as well as acorns, and Gothic akran developed more widely still, to mean simply 'fruit'). There are cognate words in other, non-Germanic, Indo-European Ianguages, such as Russian yagoda 'berry' and Welsh aeron 'fruits.' Left to develop on its own, æcern would have become modern English achern, but the accidental similarity of oak and corn have combined to reroute its pronunciation.

acoustic [17] Appropriately enough, acoustic may be distantly related to hear. It first appeared in English in Francis Bacon's Advancement of Learning 1605, borrowed from Greek akoustikós. This in turn was derived from the Greek verb for 'hear,' akouein. which, it has been speculated, may have some connection with \*khauzjan, the original Germanic source of English hear, not to mention German hören and Dutch horen (as well as with Latin cavere 'be on one's guard,' and hence with English caution and caveat).

> caution, caveat, hear

acquaint [13] Acquaint is connected with quaint, distant though they may seem in meaning. It comes via Old French acointer from medieval Latin accognitare, which was based ultimately on cognitus, the past participle of cognoscere 'know.' Cognitus gave English cognition, of course, but also quaint (cognitus developed into cointe, queinte in Old French, and came to mean 'skilled, expert'; this led later to the notion of being skilfully made or elegant, which eventually degenerated into 'agreeably curious').

▶ cognition, quaint

acquire [15] The original source of acquire, Latin acquirere, meant literally 'get something extra.' It was formed from the verb quaerere 'try to get or obtain' (from which English gets query, the derivatives enquire and require, and, via the past participial stem. quest and question) plus the prefix ad-, conveying the idea of being additional. English borrowed the word via Old French acquerre, and it was originally spelled acquere, but around 1600 the spelling was changed to acquire, supposedly to bring it more into conformity with its Latin source.

> query, quest, question

acquit [13] Acquit is ultimately related to quiet. The Latin noun quies, from which we get quiet, was the basis of a probable verb \*quietare, later \*quitare, whose original meaning, 'put to rest,' developed to 'settle,' as in 'settle a debt.' With the addition of the prefix ad- this passed into Old French as a(c)quiter, and thence into English (still with the 'settling or discharging debts' meaning). The currently most common sense, 'declare not guilty,' did not appear until the 14th century, and the most recent meaning, 'conduct oneself in a particular way,' developed from the notion of discharging one's duties

**▶** quiet

acre [OE] Acre is a word of ancient ancestry, going back probably to the Indo-European base \*ag-, source of words such as agent and act. This base had a range of meanings covering 'do' and 'drive,' and it is possible that the notion of driving contributed to the concept of driving animals on to land for pasture. However that may be, it gave rise to a group of words in Indo-European languages, including Latin ager (whence

English agriculture), Greek agros, Sanskrit ájras, and a hypothetical Germanic \*akraz. By this time, people's agricultural activities had moved on from herding animals in open country to tilling the soil in enclosed areas, and all of this group of words meant specifically 'field.' From the Germanic form developed Old English æcer, which as early as 1000 AD had come to be used for referring to a particular measured area of agricultural land (as much as a pair of oxen could plough in one day).

act, agent, agriculture, eyrie, onager, peregrine,

pilgrim

acrid [18] Acrid is related to acid, and probably owes its second syllable entirely to that word. It is based essentially on Latin acer 'sharp, pungent,' which, like acid, acute, oxygen, and edge, derives ultimately from an Indo-European base \*ak- meaning 'be pointed or sharp.' When this was imported into English in the 18th century, the ending -id was artificially grafted on to it, most likely from the semantically similar acid.

▶ acid, acute, edge, eglantine, oxygen, paragon

acrobat [19] The Greek adjective ákros meant 'topmost, at the tip or extremity' (it derives ultimately from the Indo-European base \*ak- meaning 'be pointed or sharp,' which also gave rise to acid, acute, oxygen, and edge). It crops up in acrophobia 'fear of heights'; in acropolis 'citadel,' literally 'upper city'; in acromegaly 'unnaturally enlarged condition of the hands, feet, and face,' literally 'large extremities'; and in acronym, literally 'word formed from the tips of words.' Acrobat itself means literally 'walking on tiptoe.' The -bat morpheme comes from Greek bainein 'walk,' which is closely related to basis and base, and is also connected with come. Akrobátēs existed as a term in Greek, and reached English via French acrobate.

> acid, acute, edge, oxygen

[13] English originally borrowed across, across or the idea for it, from Old French. French had the phrase à croix or en croix, literally 'at or in cross,' that is, 'in the form of a cross' or 'transversely.' This was borrowed into Middle English as a creoix or o(n) croice, and it was not until the 15th century that versions based on the native English form of the word cross began to appear: in cross, on cross, and the eventual winner, across.

> cross

acrostic [16] An acrostic is a piece of verse in which the first letters of each line when put together spell out a word. The term is of Greek origin (akrostikhis), and was formed from ákros 'at the extremity' (see ACROBAT) and stikhos 'line of verse.' The second element crops up in several other prosodic terms, such as distich and hemistich, and comes from the Greek verb stelkhein 'go,' which is related ultimately to English stair, stile, and stirrup.

▶ acrobat, distich, hemistich, stair, stile, stirrup

Act [14] Act, action, active, actor all go back to Latin agere 'do, perform' (which is the source of a host of other English derivatives, from agent to prodigal). The past participle of this verb was āctus, from which we get act, partly through French acte, but in the main directly from Latin. The Latin agent noun, āctor, came into the language at about the same time, although at first it remained a rather uncommon word in English, with technical legal uses; it was not until the end of the 16th century that it came into its own in the theatre (player had hitherto been the usual term).

Other Latin derivatives of the past participial stem āct-were the noun āctiō, which entered English via Old French action, and the adjective āctīvus, which gave English active. See also ACTUAL.

> action, active, agent, cogent, examine, prodigal

actual [14] In common with act, action, etc, actual comes ultimately from Latin āctus, the past participle of the verb agere 'do, perform.' In late Latin an adjective āctuālis was formed from the noun āctus, and this passed into Old French as actuel. English borrowed it in this form, and it was not until the 15th century that the spelling actual, based on the original Latin model, became general. At first its meaning was simply, and literally, 'relating to acts, active'; the current sense, 'genuine,' developed in the mid 16th century.

▶ act, action

from Latin acumen, which meant both literally 'point' and figuratively 'sharpness.' It derived from the verb acuere 'sharpen,' which was also the source of English acute. The original pronunciation of acumen in English was /a'kjūmen/, with the stress on the second syllable, very much on the pattern of the Latin original; it is only relatively recently that a pronunciation with the stress on the first syllable has become general.

acute

'sharp' (which was also the source of English ague). This was the past participle of the verb acuere 'sharpen,' which in turn was probably formed from the noun acus 'needle.' Like the related acid, acetic, and acrid, it can be traced back to an Indo-European base \*ak-'be pointed,' which was also the ultimate source of oxygen and edge.

▶ acetic, acid, acrid, ague, cute, edge, oxygen

adage [16] Adage was borrowed, via French, from Latin adagium 'maxim, proverb.' This seems to have been formed from a variant of aio 'I say' plus the prefix ad- 'to.' In the 16th and 17th centuries an alternative version, adagy, existed.

adamant [14] In Greek, adamas meant 'unbreakable, invincible.' It was formed from the verb daman 'subdue, break down' (which came from the same source as English tame) plus the negative prefix a-. It developed a noun usage as a 'hard substance,' specifically 'diamond' or 'very hard metal,' and this passed into Latin as udamāns, or, in its stem form, adamant-. Hence Old French adamaunt, and eventually English adamant.

▶ diamond, tame

add [14] Etymologically, add means simply 'put to.' Its source is Latin addere, a compound verb formed from the prefix ad-'to' and the stem-dere 'put' (which is related to English do). Its original meaning in English was simply 'join one thing to another'; its specific mathematical use did not develop until the early 16th century.

▶ do

adder [OE] In Old English, the term for a snake (any snake, not just an adder) was næddre; there are or were related forms in many other European languages, such as Latin natrix, Welsh neidr, and German natter (but there does not seem to be any connection with the natterjack toad). Around the 14th century, however, the word began to lose its initial consonant. The noun phrase including the indefinite article, a nadder, became misanalysed as an adder, and by the 17th century nadder had disappeared from the mainstream language (though it survived much longer in northern dialects).

addict [16] Originally, addict was an adjective in English, meaning 'addicted.' It was borrowed from Latin addictus, the past participle of addicere, which meant 'give over or award to someone.' This in turn was formed from the prefix ad-'to' and the verb dicere. The standard meaning of dicere was 'say' (as in English diction, dictionary, and dictate), but it also had the sense 'adjudge' or 'allot,' and that was its force in addicere.

addled [13] Addled may be traceable back ultimately to a confusion between 'wind' and 'urine' in Latin. In Middle English the term was adel eye 'addled egg,' of which the first part derived from Old English adela 'foul-smelling urine or liquid manure.' It seems possible that this may be a loan-translation of the Latin term for 'addled egg,' ovum ūrīnae, literally 'urine egg.' This in turn was an alteration, by folk etymology, of ovum ūrīnum, a partial loan-translation of Greek oūrion ōōn, literally 'wind egg' (a wind egg is an imperfect or addled egg).

address [14] Address originally meant 'straighten.' William Caxton, for example, here uses it for
'stand up straight': 'The first day that he was washed
and bathed he addressed him[self] right up in the basin'
Golden Legend 1483. This gives a clue to its ultimate
source, Latin directum 'straight, direct.' The first two
syllables of this seem gradually to have merged together
to produce \*drictum, which with the addition of the prefix ad- was used to produce the verb \*addrictiāre. Of its
descendants in modern Romance languages, Italian ad-

dirizzare most clearly reveals its source. Old French changed it fairly radically, to adresser, and it was this form which English borrowed. The central current sense of 'where somebody lives' developed in the 17th and 18th centuries from the notion of directing something, such as a letter, to somebody.

▶ direct

adequate see EQUAL

adhere [16] Adhere was borrowed, either directly or via French adhérer, from Latin adhaerère. This in turn was formed from the prefix ad- 'to' and the verb haerere 'stick.' The past participial stem of haerere was haes- (the ultimate source of English hesitate), and from adhaes- were formed the Latin originals of adhesion and adhesive.

> hesitate

adjacent [15] Adjacent and adjective come from the same source, the Latin verb jacere 'throw.' The intransitive form of this, jacere, literally 'be thrown down,' was used for 'lie.' With the addition of the prefix ad-, here in the sense 'near to,' was created adjacëre, 'lie near.' Its present participial stem, adjacent-, passed, perhaps via French, into English.

The ordinary Latin transitive verb jacere, meanwhile, was transformed into adjicere by the addition of the prefix ad-; it meant literally 'throw to,' and hence 'add' or 'attribute,' and from its past participial stem, adject-, was formed the adjective adjectivus. This was used in the phrase nomen adjectīvus 'attributive noun.' which was a direct translation of Greek onoma épithetos. And when it first appeared in English (in the 14th century, via Old French adjectif) it was in noun adjective, which remained the technical term for 'adjective' into the 19th century. Adjective was not used as a noun in its own right until the early 16th century.

≥ adjective, easy, reject

adjourn [14] Adjourn originally meant 'appoint a day for,' but over the centuries, such is human nature, it has come to be used for postponing, deferring, or suspending. It originated in the Old French phrase à jour nomé 'to an appointed day,' from which the Old French verb ajourner derived. Jour 'day' came from late Latin diurnum, a noun formed from the adjective diurnus 'daily,' which in turn was based on the noun dies 'day.'

▶ diary, journal

adjust see JUST

adjutant [17] An adjutant was formerly simply an 'assistant,' but the more specific military sense of an officer who acts as an aide to a more senior officer has now virtually ousted this original meaning. The word comes from a Latin verb for 'help,' and is in fact related to English aid. Latin adjuvāre 'help' developed a new form, adjūtāre, denoting repeated action, and the present participial stem of this, adjutant- 'helping,' was borrowed into English.

maid. coadiutor

admiral [13] Admirals originally had nothing specifically to do with the sea. The word comes ultimately from Arabic 'amīr 'commander' (from which English later also acquired emir [17]). This entered into various titles followed by the particle -al- 'of' ('amīr-albahr 'commander of the sea,' 'amīr-al-mūminīn 'commander of the faithful'), and when it was borrowed into European languages, 'amīr-al-became misconstrued as an independent, free-standing word. Moreover, the Romans, when they adopted it, smuggled in their own Latin prefix ad-, producing admiral. When this reached English (via Old French) it still meant simply 'commander,' and it was not until the time of Edward III that a strong naval link began to emerge. The Arabic title 'amīr-al-bahr had had considerable linguistic influence in the wake of Arabic conquests around the Mediterranean seaboard (Spanish almirante de la mar, for instance), and specific application of the term to a naval commander spread via Spain, Italy, and France to England. Thus in the 15th century England had its Admiral of the Sea or Admiral of the Navy, who was in charge of the national fleet. By 1500 the maritime connection was firmly established, and admiral came to be used on its own for 'supreme naval commander.'

admire [16] Admire has rather run out of steam since it first entered the language. It comes originally from the same Latin source as marvel and miracle, and from the 16th to the 18th centuries it meant 'marvel at' or 'be astonished.' Its weaker modern connotations of 'esteem' or 'approval,' however, have been present since the beginning, and have gradually ousted the more exuberant expressions of wonderment. It is not clear whether English borrowed the word from French admirer or directly from its source, Latin admīrārī, literally 'wonder at,' a compound verb formed from ad- and mirari 'wonder.'

marvel, miracle

admit [15] This is one of a host of words, from mission to transmit, to come down to English from Latin mittere 'send.' Its source, admittere, meant literally 'send to,' hence 'allow to enter.' In the 15th and 16th centuries the form amit was quite common, borrowed from French amettre, but learned influence saw to it that the more 'correct' Latin form prevailed.

commit, mission, transmit

admonish [14] In Middle English times this verb was amoneste. It came, via Old French amonester, from an assumed Vulgar Latin verb \*admonestare, an alteration of Latin admonêre (monêre meant 'warn,' and came from the same source as English mind). The prefix ad- was reintroduced from Latin in the 15th cen-

tury, while the -ish ending arose from a mistaken analysis of -este as some sort of past tense inflection; the t was removed when producing infinitive or present tense forms, giving spellings such as amonace and admonyss, and by the 16th century this final -is had become identified with and transformed into the more common -ish ending.

≥ mind

ado [14] In origin, ado (like affair) means literally 'to do.' This use of the preposition at (ado = at do) is a direct borrowing from Old Norse, where it was used before the infinitive of verbs, where English would use to. Ado persisted in this literal sense in northern English dialects, where Old Norse influence was strong, well into the 19th century, but by the late 16th century it was already a noun with the connotations of 'activity' or 'fuss' which have preserved it (alongside the indigenous to-do) in modern English.

▶ do

adobe [18] Adobe is of Egyptian origin, from the time of the pharaohs. It comes from Coptic tobe 'brick' (the form t.b appears in hieroglyphs). This was borrowed into Arabic, where the addition of the definite article al produced attob 'the brick.' From Arabic it passed into Spanish (the corridor through which so many Arabic words reached other European languages), and its use by the Spanish-speaking population of North America (for a sun-dried brick) led to its adoption into English in the mid 18th century.

adolescent [15] The original notion lying behind both adolescent and adult is of 'nourishment.' The Latin verb alere meant 'nourish' (alimentary and alimony come from it, and it is related to old). A derivative of this, denoting the beginning of an action, was alescere 'be nourished,' hence 'grow.' The addition of the prefix ad- produced adolescere. Its present participial stem, adolēscent- 'growing,' passed into English as the noun adolescent 'a youth' (the adjective appears not to have occurred before the end of the 18th century). Its past participle, adultus 'grown,' was adopted into English as adult in the 16th century.

▶ adult, alimentary, alimony, coalesce, coalition, proletarian, prolific

adopt see OPINION adore see ORATOR adorn see ORNAMENT

adultery [14] Neither adultery nor the related adulterate have any connection with adult. Both come ultimately from the Latin verb adulterare 'debauch, corrupt' (which may have been based on Latin alter 'other,' with the notion of pollution from some extraneous source). By the regular processes of phonetic change, adulterare passed into Old French as avoutrer, and this was the form which first reached English, as

avouter (used both verbally, 'commit adultery,' and nominally, 'adulterer') and as the nouns avoutery 'adultery' and avouterer 'adulterer.' Almost from the first they coexisted in English beside adult- forms, deriving either from Law French or directly from Latin, and during the 15th to 17th centuries these gradually ousted the avout- forms. Adulter, the equivalent of avouter, clung on until the end of the 18th century, but the noun was superseded in the end by adulterer and the verb by a new form, adulterate, directly based on the past participle of Latin adulterare, which continued to mean 'commit adultery' until the mid 19th century.

#### adumbrate see UMBRAGE

advance [13] Advance originated in the Latin adverb abante 'before' (source of, among others, French avant and Italian avanti), which in turn was based on ab 'from' and ante 'before.' In post-classical times a verb, \*abantiare, seems to have been formed from the adverb. It developed into Old French avancer, and passed into English as avaunce, initially with the meaning 'promote.' A new form, advancer, started life in Old French, on the mistaken association of avancer with other av-words, such as aventure, which really did derive from Latin words with the ad-prefix; over the 15th and 16th centuries this gradually established itself in English. The noun advance did not appear until the 17th century.

advantage [14] Advantage comes from Old French avantage, which was based on avant 'before': the notion behind its formation was of being ahead of others, and hence in a superior position. As with advance, the intrusive -d- became established in the 16th century, on the analogy of words genuinely containing the Latin prefix ad-. The reduced form vantage actually predates advantage in English, having entered the language via Anglo-Norman in the 13th century.

adventure [13] Adventure derives ultimately from a Latin verb meaning 'arrive.' It originally meant 'what comes or happens by chance,' hence 'luck,' but it took a rather pessimistic downturn via 'risk, danger' to (in the 14th century) 'hazardous undertaking.' Its Latin source was advenire, formed from the prefix ad-and venire 'come.' Its past participial stem. advent-, produced English advent [12] and adventitious [17], but it was its future participle, adventura 'about to arrive,' which produced adventure. In the Romance languages in which it subsequently developed (Italian avventura, Spanish aventura, and French aventure, the source of Middle English aventure) the d disappeared, but it was revived in 15th-16th-century French in imitation of Latin. The reduced form venture first appears in the 15th century.

▶ adventitious, avent, venture