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A Resource for the Writer
and the Computer
Researcher

William Statsky

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**A Resource for the Writer
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**A Resource for the Writer
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For Jessica:
Thirteen years and counting

Also by William P. Statsky

Case Analysis and Fundamentals of Legal Writing, 2d ed. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1984 (with J. Wernet).

Legal Research and Writing: Some Starting Points, 3d ed. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1986.

Legislative Analysis and Drafting, 2d ed. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1984.

Torts: Personal Injury Litigation. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1982.

Rights of the Imprisoned: Cases, Materials, and Directions. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1974 (with R. Singer).

Family Law, 2d ed. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1984.

Introduction to Paralegalism: Perspectives, Problems, and Skills, 3d ed. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1986.

Preface

There are a number of instances in which you may find yourself struggling for the “right” word. For example:

- while writing a legal memorandum, appellate brief, or other document;
- while searching a data base with a computer;
- while using the thousands of indexes in the tens of thousands of law books in a comprehensive law library.

If all you need is a synonym, this book should provide one for you. Yet the book is not simply a collection of synonyms. While a vast number are included, the scope of the entries is much broader. A substantial menu of related words and phrases is also provided. Since you sometimes will not know what you are looking for until you find it, you need a broad arena of connected words and phrases as candidates for the “correct” terminology.

The relatively recent emergence of computer-assisted research systems has lead to a new need to generate word options. In WESTLAW, for example, the publisher (West) has prepared a “Query Planner” on which you write down possible words and phrases before tackling the keyboard. You are encouraged to think of “all synonyms or alternatives” for the important words involved in the client’s case. Similarly, the publisher of LEXIS (Mead Data) tells you to think of “alternative expressions” in its preliminary work sheet called, “Developing a Search Request”. Users of research data bases are sometimes urged to identify “searchonyms” and to try them on the computer. A searchonym can include a synonym, an antonym, or some other related term.

The *Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary* can help you use such computer data bases by giving you ready access to a myriad of word alternatives.

In addition, the book provides definitions of the major words and phrases involved in the practice and study of law.

Appreciation is gratefully acknowledged to West Publishing Company for its permission to use and adapt definitions from *Black’s Law Dictionary*. Similarly, Daniel Oran, a colleague on other writing ventures, was kind enough to allow me to draw material from his *Oran’s Dictionary of the Law*. Special thanks are also due to the following individuals who assisted me in the massive task of compiling this book: Richard Nakamura, Joan Torkildson, Bill Gabler, Angela Grote, Commie Farrell, and John Lassiter.

A

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Aback, *adv.* 1. Shocked (the client was taken aback by the decision). Surprised, unawares, thrown off guard, startled, amazed, astonished, bewildered, stunned, perplexed, flabbergasted, "floored." 2. Backward (to move aback). Rearward, to the rear, back, behind, toward the back, regressively. *Ant.* Prepared; forward.

Abaction, *n.* 1. Carrying away by violence. See larceny. 2. Stealing animals.

Abandon 1. *v.* To surrender totally and intentionally (it is unethical to abandon a client). Desert, forsake, forswear, renounce, relinquish, refuse to perform, yield, totally withdraw, give up absolutely, repudiate, quit, resign, waive one's interest, turn one's back on, totally ignore, abjure, walk out on, abnegate, abdicate, cast aside, cast off, discard, turn away from, depart from, strand, maroon, leave in the lurch, vacate, retract, discontinue, leave aside, disown, reject. 2. *n.* Wantonness (drove with abandon). Lack of restraint, absence of self-control, lawlessness, intemperance. *Ant.* Retain; moderation.

Abandoned, *adj.* 1. Surrendered (abandoned property). Deserted, forsaken, forsworn, renounced, relinquished, repudiated, vacated, discarded, dropped, cast away, cast off, cast aside, discontinued, left, left behind, shunned, rejected, demitted, marooned, given up, neglected, outcast, desolate, destitute, forlorn, vacant, unoccupied. 2. Dissolute (an abandoned life). Depraved, licentious, irreclaimable, profligate, shameless, incorrigible, reprobate, unprincipled, unrestrained, lost, loose, dissipated, wild, wicked, wanton, debased, corrupt, hardened, sinful, unconstrained, immoral, disreputable, unrepentant, demoralized, unfortunate, uninhibited, debauched, shameful, degraded, desperate, lewd, unchaste, amoral, vicious, hopeless, helpless, solitary, adrift, scorned. *Ant.* Claimed; virtuous.

Abandonee, *n.* A person to whom something is abandoned. See abandon (1).

Abandonment, *n.* The total and intentional surrender of property, persons, or rights (abandonment of spouse, child, copyright). Relinquishment, renunciation, abnegation, demission, resignation, desertion, denial, disavowal, departure, withdrawal, repudiation, rejection, abjuration, abdication, abrogation, forsaking, evacuation, apostasy, dereliction, defection, rescission, disownment, cession, decampment, flight, ceding, yielding, disaffection, cancellation, vacating, neglect. *Ant.* Acceptance.

Abase, *v.* To lower or humble (she refused to abase herself). Humiliate, bring down, debase, depress, reduce, degrade, disgrace, dishonor, demean, downgrade, cast down, discredit, denigrate, disparage, depreciate, devalue, belittle, shame, malign, slander, smear, demote. *Ant.* Praise.

Abash, *v.* See embarrass, disparage, discredit, decry, slander.

Abatable nuisance A nuisance that can be diminished or eliminated. A nonpermanent interference with the use of land or with a right that is common to the public. See nuisance, abate, abatement.

Abate, *v.* 1. To eliminate (abate a nuisance). Destroy, terminate, demolish, beat down, put down, bring to an end, put an end to, raze, lay low, remove, suppress,

Abate

abolish, annihilate, annul, invalidate, negate, nullify, quash, undo, vitiate, abrogate, cancel, repeal, rescind, abandon, revoke, vacate, defeat, discontinue, dissolve, exterminate, obliterate, quell, void. 2. To diminish (the wind abated). Reduce, lessen, alleviate, decrease, moderate, mitigate, attenuate, allay, temper, lighten, limit, relieve, soften, subside, weaken, curtail, decline, diminish, modify, palliate, rebate, deduct, remit, lower, relax. *Ant.* Create; increase.

Abatement, *n.* 1. Termination (abatement of a lawsuit; abatement of a nuisance).

Destruction, obliteration, extermination, extinguishment, stoppage, abolition, quashing, defeat, eradication, annulment, quelling, revocation, end, ending, elimination, cancellation, crushing, abrogation, discontinuance, cessation, repression, suppression, nullification, invalidation, avoidance, fade-out, check. 2. Reduction (abatement of taxes; abatement of a legacy because of inadequate funds available). Decrease, cutback, lowering, lessening, discount, curtailment, limitation, remission, markdown, diminution, write-off, allowance, mitigation, subsidence, tempering, assuagement, decline, mollification, alleviation, slackening, modification, extenuation, softening, relief, weakening, falling-off, sinking, ebb, decay, shrinking, settling, palliation, fading, lightening, attenuation, waning. *Ant.* Enlargement; intensification.

Abator, *n.* 1. Someone who illegally takes possession of land upon the death of the owner before the heir or devisee can take legal possession. 2. Someone who abates a nuisance.

Abbreviate, *v.* To shorten (the editor abbreviated the names of the judges).

Abridge, contract, condense, abstract, digest, brief, truncate, cut, cut down, prune, reduce, summarize, boil down, synopsis, compress, pare down, curtail, trim, lessen, epitomize, retrench, diminish, shrink, dock, narrow, clip, constrict. *Ant.* Enlarge.

Abbreviation, *n.* See abbreviate, digest (1), brief (2).

Abbroachment, *n.* Obtaining control of goods on the market by buying at wholesale and selling at retail. Forestalling a market.

Abdicate, *v.* To voluntarily renounce (abdicate the throne). Give up, leave, quit, vacate, resign, cede, forgo, relinquish, retire, withdraw, disown, demit, depart, part with, lay down, renounce all claim to, disclaim, yield, surrender, abandon, repudiate. *Ant.* Claim, assert.

Abdication, *n.* The voluntary renunciation of a privilege or an office (the attorney general later regretted her abdication). Surrender, abandonment, resignation, repudiation, retirement, waiver, demission, quitting, relinquishment, cession, disowning, desertion, withdrawal, abnegation, abjuration, yielding, ceding, vacating, rejection, disclaimer, disavowal, transfer.

Abdomen, *n.* A body cavity in a mammal containing the stomach, the kidneys, etc. Belly, gut, intestinal organ, ventricle, viscera. See also venter.

Abdominal, *adj.* Relating to the abdomen (abdominal pain). Visceral, intestinal, ventral, gastric, stomachic, digestive.

Abduct, *v.* To take away a child, wife, ward, or servant unlawfully (the patient was abducted). Kidnap, steal, steal away, shanghai, "snatch," pirate, commandeer, take away by force, take away surreptitiously, impress, conscript, bear off, carry away, carry off, expropriate, hijack, ravish, rape, seize, make off with, grab, run off with, run away with, capture, ensnare, appropriate, purloin, spirit away, transport, wrest from, deprive, lay hold of, arrogate. *Ant.* Return, restore.

Abduction, *n.* The unlawful taking away of a child, wife, ward, or servant (abduction of the heir by force). Kidnapping, child snatching, child stealing, withdrawing, subjugation, impressment, spiriting away surreptitiously, carrying away, ravishment, theft, confiscation, seizure, commandeering, hijacking, capture, expropriation, rape, arrogation. *Ant.* Restoration.

- Abductor**, *n.* Someone who abducts. Kidnapper, thief, robber, pirate. See also thief.
- Aberrant**, *adj.* See aberration, abnormal, deviant (1), anomalous.
- Aberration**, *n.* Deviation from the norm (noticeable aberrations in behavior). Abnormality, irregularity, nonconformity, anomaly, divergence, peculiarity, abortion, corruption, perversion, derangement, delusion, eccentricity, strangeness, insanity, lunacy, freak, monster, degradation, degeneration, distortion, freakishness. See also exception (3). *Ant.* Normality, standard.
- Abet**, *v.* To encourage someone to commit a crime (abet the conspirators). Aid, assist, help, promote, incite, back, instigate, prompt, procure, advocate, foment, support, request, goad, conspire, counsel, connive, cooperate with, arouse, command, facilitate, spur, stimulate, induce, urge, exhort, facilitate, prod, succor, sustain, give moral support to, "egg on," sanction, endorse, embolden, inspire, arouse, countenance, underwrite. *Ant.* Discourage, frustrate.
- Abetment**, *n.* The incitement of someone to commit a crime. See abet.
- Abettor**, *n.* A person who encourages or incites another to commit a crime (he was charged as an abettor). Collaborator, backer, helper, co-conspirator, conspirator, accomplice, accessory, instigator, promoter, advocate, assistant, prompter, associate, inducer, protagonist, partner, aider, confederate, coadjutor, right hand, underwriter. *Ant.* Antagonist, competitor.
- Abeysance**, *n.* Not finally settled; not being in force or use for a time (the decision was held in abeyance). In expectancy, not vested, in expectation, in the clouds, in pendentia (in suspension), in waiting, dormancy, interim, interval, intermission, in a state of temporary inactivity, latency, pause, quiescence, arrest, deadlock, inactivity, interregnum, recess, repose, respite, postponement, lull, stay, deferral, hiatus, remission, anticipation, contemplation, delay, reprieve, deferment, interruption, breathing spell, lapse, discontinuance. *Ant.* Action, continuity.
- Abhor**, *v.* To react with disgust (abhor the violence). Hate, despise, loathe, be revolted by, detest, abominate, execrate, scorn, reject, be nauseated by, recoil from, dislike, shun, view with horror. *Ant.* Admire.
- Abhorrence**, *n.* See abhor, contempt (2), odium, hostility.
- Abhorrent**, *adj.* See repugnant (1), contemptible; abhor.
- Abide**, *v.* 1. To obey (they agreed to abide by the decision). Comply with, observe, accept the consequences of, conform to, carry out, carry into execution, live up to, yield to, heed, perform, observe, execute, acquiesce in, adhere to, follow, submit to, respect, agree to, acknowledge, discharge, fulfill, consent to, stand by. 2. To tolerate (she could not abide the delay). Put up with, bear patiently, endure, suffer, brook, stand, "stomach," submit to. See also continue. 3. To remain (abide with me). Stay, reside, "stick with," linger, live, dwell, sojourn. See also continue. 4. To endure (time will abide). Last, be permanent, survive, persevere, persist. *Ant.* Disregard; resist; depart; die.
- Abiding**, *adj.* See permanent, perpetual.
- Ability**, *n.* 1. The power to do something (the court's ability to enforce the order). Capacity, potential, strength, facility, faculty. 2. The competence to do something (the ability to make decisions). Talent, capability, aptitude, fitness, proficiency, expertise, know-how, effectiveness, qualification, gift, adeptness, acumen, flair, genius, command, mastery, efficiency, ableness, expertness, adaptability, prowess, intelligence, knowledge, ingenuity, skill, endowment, mastery. *Ant.* Impotence; incompetence.
- Ab initio**, *adv.* From the beginning (the marriage was void ab initio). From the first act, in the first place, from its infancy, from the inception. *Ant.* Starting now, in the future.
- Abject**, *adj.* 1. Deplorable (abject poverty). Complete, wretched, degrading,

Abject

pathetic, miserable, hopeless, terrible, inescapable, thorough, helpless, humiliating.
2. Contemptible (abject coward). Immoral, mean, sordid, debased, despicable, low, vile, corrupt, dishonorable, fraudulent, disgraceful, hateful, groveling, ignoble, foul, odious, evil, depraved. See also contemptible. *Ant.* Honorable; admirable.

Abjudicate, *v.* To deprive one of something as a result of a judgment.

Abjuration, *n.* Formally giving up rights; a renunciation given under oath (abjuration of citizenship). Sworn denial, abandonment, relinquishment, rejection, abnegation, disowning, repudiation, discarding, recantation, disavowal, forswearing, rejection, revocation, defection, disaffirmation, renouncement, recall. *Ant.* Affirmation, confirmation.

Abjure, *v.* To give something up formally; to renounce under oath (he abjured all allegiance to the state). Repudiate, forswear, reject, retract, disown, disclaim, discard, disavow, revoke, renege, relinquish, recant, recall, abrogate, dismiss, deny, take back, withdraw, surrender, abandon, cede, abnegate, cast off, disdain, withdraw, desert, renunciate, apostatize, eschew, forgo. *Ant.* Certify, maintain.

Ablation, *n.* An excision. See amputate.

Ablaze, *adj.* See burn, fire (1).

Able, *adj.* Competent (able attorney). Qualified, knowledgeable, capable, skilled, gifted, experienced, intelligent, talented, expert, clever, accomplished, adroit, proficient, powerful, masterful, creative, superior, outstanding, versed, efficient, adequate, fit, endowed, brilliant, robust, vigorous, enterprising, first-rate, inventive. See also learned. *Ant.* Inept, useless.

Able-bodied, *adj.* Capable of performing the regular and ordinary duties of a job (able-bodied worker). Robust, healthy, in good health, strong, sturdy, fit, sound, well, well-conditioned, physically fit, in shape, in good condition, able, solid, muscular, well-built, fast, sturdy, brawny, powerful, sinewy, wiry, manly, hardy, lusty. *Ant.* Decrepit.

Ablution, *n.* Purification. See sanitation.

ABM Antiballistic missile.

Abnegate, *v.* To renounce (she abnegated her rights). Give up, relinquish, abjure, abandon, deny, surrender, forbear, reject, refuse, resign, decline, yield, abdicate, repudiate. *Ant.* Accept.

Abnormal, *adj.* Considerably irregular (abnormal reaction). Unusual, not average, not typical, atypical, aberrant, nonconforming, eccentric, anomalous, deviant, deviating, unnatural, singular, peculiar, strange, erratic, uncommon, queer, bizarre, odd, freakish, unexpected, extraordinary, unique, perverse, unconventional. *Ant.* Ordinary, normal.

Abnormally dangerous Extrahazardous (abnormally dangerous inmate). Extraordinarily dangerous, exceptionally hazardous, unusually dangerous, fraught with peril, inherently dangerous.

ABO The system of human blood typing that produces the blood types A, B, AB, and O.

Aboard, *adv.* On board a vessel or other mode of transportation. Inside, within, on deck.

Abode, *n.* Home, residence (the normal place of abode). Dwelling place, address, fixed place of residence, habitation, habitat, house, lodging, domicile, quarters, living quarters, headquarters, homestead, accommodations, apartment, tenement, "pad."

Abogado, *n.* (Span.) An advocate.

Abolish, *v.* To eliminate completely (the legislature abolished the court). Repeal, revoke, do away with completely, annul, abrogate, rescind, destroy, put an end to, declare null and void, render null and void, eradicate, erase, end, crush, extirpate,

formally end, terminate, annihilate, dispense with, invalidate, void, set aside, extinguish, squelch, quash, repudiate, disestablish, demolish, subvert, negate, undo, abate, delete, discontinue, dissolve, overturn, overrule, override, vacate, retract, countermand, cancel, vitiate, supersede, expunge. *Ant.* Establish, create.

Abolishment, *n.* See reversal, rescission, abjuration, defeat (2), neutralization, elimination, abolition.

Abominable, *adj.* See repugnant, odious, gross (1), offensive, contemptible.

Abomination, *n.* See infamy, corruption, odium, debauchery.

Abolition, *n.* A complete elimination (abolition of slavery). Annihilation, termination, nullification, cancellation, rescission, rescinding, revocation, repeal, destruction, eradication, ending, abolishment, annulment, suppression, obliteration, vitiation, defeasance, disestablishment, extirpation, voidance, vacation, withdrawal, repudiation, countermand, reversal, retraction, dissolution, overthrow, subversion, invalidation, demolition, extermination, extinction. *Ant.* Establishment, restoration.

Aboriginal, *adj.* Relating to natives (aboriginal title). First, from the beginning, indigenous, native, primal, primitive, original, autochthonous, primordial, primeval. *Ant.* Recent, imported.

Abort, *v.* 1. To terminate a pregnancy. Miscarry, give birth before viability. 2. To fail to complete (abort the mission). Terminate, end, fail, fail to develop fully, halt, stop, call off, quell, fall short, come to naught, thwart, frustrate, arrest, prevent, fizzle, nullify, obstruct, cease, not reach, intercept. *Ant.* Deliver; finish.

Abortee, *n.* A woman who has had or is having an abortion.

Abortifacient 1. *n.* Something that is used to produce or cause an abortion, e.g., drugs. 2. *adj.* Inducing or causing an abortion.

Abortion, *n.* 1. The premature expulsion of the embryo or nonviable fetus from the uterus (abortion on demand). Miscarriage, aborticide. 2. Failure (the hearing was an abortion). Fiasco, defeat, frustration, disaster, termination, aberration, disappointment, fruitless attempt, blunder. *Ant.* Full-term delivery; success.

Abortive, *adj.* 1. Fruitless (an abortive venture). Unprofitable, profitless, unsuccessful, worthless, ineffective, failed, failing, unavailing, unfruitful, unproductive, unrewarding, ineffectual, miscarried, miscarrying, nugatory, idle, sterile, inoperative, barren, impotent. 2. Incompletely or imperfectly developed (an abortive plan). Underdeveloped, underdeveloped, rudimentary, untimely, immature, premature, stunted. *Ant.* Effective; consummated.

Abound, *v.* To overflow. Teem, exuberate, bristle, crowd, flourish, fill, thrive, overgrow, swell. *Ant.* Diminish.

About, 1. *adv.* Near in quantity or amount (about 680 pages of testimony). Approximately, approximating, nearly, close to, almost, more or less, around, well-nigh, circa, roughly, approaching, generally, virtually. See also "more or less." 2. *prep.* Concerning (an affidavit about damages). Regarding, respecting, with reference to, with regard to, touching, having to do with, re. See also "in re."

About-face, *n.* Change of position or backtracking. See reverse, reversal.

Above 1. *adj.* Mentioned earlier (the above discussion). Aforementioned, above-mentioned, former, previous, preceding, described earlier, said, supra. 2. *adv.* Superior status (the court above). In a higher place, over, more powerful, higher in authority. 3. *prep.* In excess of (above forty pages). Over, more than, exceeding, larger than, greater than.

Aboveboard, *adj.* See open (5, 7), honest, direct (6), explicit, outright, moral, bona fide.

Aboveground, *adj.* See surface (1).

ABP

ABP Arterial blood pressure.

Abrasion, *n.* See contusion, lesion, injury, wound.

Abrasive, *adj.* Causing irritation (counsel's abrasive behavior). Provoking, causing annoyance, rough, nasty, coarse, harsh, gnawing, cutting, biting. See also caustic.
Ant. Soothing.

Abreast, *adj.* See informed, cognizant.

Abridge 1. *v.* To diminish (the order abridged the mayor's power). Lessen, curtail, minimize, narrow, cut, decrease, limit, truncate, subtract, trim, strip, deprive, divest. 2. *adj.* Condensed (an abridged edition). Abbreviated, digested, shortened, summarized, synopsisized, capsulized, scaled down, compressed, boiled down, abstracted, concentrated. *Ant.* Increase; expanded.

Abridgment, *n.* 1. Reduction (abridgment of damages). Cutting down, lessening, decrease, curtailing, subtraction, limitation, restriction, diminution, restraint, contraction, retrenchment, narrowing. 2. Summary (she prepared an abridgment of the testimony). Condensation, digest, shortened version, recapitulation, précis, epitome, synopsis, outline, brief, syllabus, abstract, compendium, conspectus, abbreviation, survey. *Ant.* Expansion; unabridged text.

Abroad, *adv.* Overseas. In a foreign land, out of the country, wandering, traveling, vacationing, away, at large.

Abrogate, *v.* To cancel (to abrogate the clerk's authority). Repeal, put an end to, end, terminate, annul, destroy, abandon, discard, reject, declare null and void, nullify, negate, quash, void, invalidate, abate, extinguish, obliterate, abolish, do away with, eliminate, rescind, set aside, reverse, undo, override, renounce, repudiate, abjure, withdraw, contradict, vacate, vitiate, disestablish, discontinue, veto, abnegate. *Ant.* Enact, establish.

Abrupt, *adj.* See caustic, impetuous, precipitate, sudden, rude.

Abscond, *v.* To flee in order to avoid legal process; to run away and hide in order to escape the consequences of something (the clerk absconded with the company files). Leave suddenly, leave clandestinely, escape, vanish, secretly flee, disappear, sneak away, slip away, bolt, take flight, depart hastily, secretly depart, travel covertly, withdraw, decamp, retreat, go, quit, desert, elude, make off, steal away, "split," lie concealed. *Ant.* Remain.

Absence, *n.* 1. Failure to be present (absence of counsel). Nonpresence, nonappearance, nonattendance, truancy. 2. Deficiency (absence of proof). Lack, want, unavailability, inadequacy, defect, scarcity, need, dearth, privation, vacuum, paucity, missing, omission, shortage, insufficiency, incompleteness. *Ant.* Presence; adequacy.

Absent, *adj.* 1. Missing (absent without leave). Not present, away, abroad, gone, truant, off the premises, elsewhere, unavailable, out, nonattendant, being away from, at a distance from, not in company with, off somewhere. 2. Inattentive (an absent expression). Absorbed in thought, preoccupied, blank, dreaming, lost, absorbed, distracted, removed, oblivious. *Ant.* Present; receptive.

Absent-minded, *adj.* See oblivious, careless, remiss, absent (2), negligent, reckless.

Absent without leave (AWOL) Not present at one's military position or assignment when there is no permission to be away, but without the intent to stay away permanently or to desert.

Absentee, *n., adj.* A person who is not present; pertaining to one who is not present (recorded as an absentee; absentee ballot, absentee landlord).

Absolute, *adj.* 1. Unconditional (absolute authority). Free from all qualifications or restrictions, unrestricted, unqualified, total, unlimited, entire, utter, unbounded, unbound, unhampered, unimpeded, unrestrained, supreme, full, without exception, unreserved, arbitrary, autocratic, despotic, tyrannical, dictatorial. 2. Complete (absolute nullity). Perfect, clear, whole, sheer, undiminished, comprehen-

sive, undivided, genuine, untainted, utter, free from imperfection, unadulterated, ideal. **3.** Positive (absolute proof). Certain, affirmative, infallible, conclusive, decisive, exhaustive, final, whole, solid, comprehensive, explicit, unequivocal, unambiguous, demonstrative, accurate, confirmed, factual, reliable, sure, genuine, indubitable, unquestionable, commanding, independent, not dependent, autonomous, self-evident, self-determined, endless, infinite, consummate, best. *Ant.* Qualified; incomplete; vague.

Absolute liability Responsibility for an injury or damage regardless of whether it was caused innocently or through negligence or fault.

Absolutely, *adv.* **1.** To the fullest extent (absolutely sure). Completely, entirely, unconditionally, wholly, thoroughly, totally, categorically, without limit, fully, unqualifiedly, utterly. **2.** Positively (absolutely essential). Definitely, unquestionably, without doubt, beyond doubt, certainly, truly, in truth, affirmatively, actually, indeed, unequivocally, really, in reality, demonstrably, in fact, manifestly, indubitably, infallibly, explicitly, expressly, strictly, plainly, specifically, precisely, unambiguously, decidedly. *Ant.* Approximately; maybe.

Absolute nuisance A nuisance (i.e., an interference with the use of land or with a right that is common to the public) that will lead to liability regardless of how reasonable the defendant was in trying to avoid the interference.

Absolute privilege A defense that avoids liability for defamation irrespective of the motives of the defendant.

Absolution, *n.* An official declaration that the accused is innocent (absolution of the suspect). Exoneration, exculpation, acquittal, discharge, remission, clearance, cleansing, forgiveness, pardon, dispensation, indulgence, amnesty, release, dismissal of charge, liberation, freedom, vindication. *Ant.* Condemnation.

Absolve, *v.* **1.** To release from an obligation (she was absolved from her promise). Release, exempt, loosen, deliver, liberate, discharge, set free, excuse from, let out of. **2.** To free from guilt or blame (he is absolved of the minor charges). Acquit, exonerate, find innocent, clear, exculpate, vindicate, forgive, pardon, remit, excuse. *Ant.* Obligate; accuse.

Absorb, *v.* **1.** To drink in or assimilate (absorb the moisture). Sponge up, suck in, draw in, blot up, gather in, swallow up, digest, take in, incorporate, imbibe. See also inundate. **2.** To preoccupy or immerse (absorbed themselves in the trial). Enwrap, fascinate, rivet, mesmerize, seize. See also engage (2), enamor, consume. **3.** See centralize.

Absorbed, *adj.* See preoccupied, engaged.

Absorbing, *adj.* See intriguing, compelling, attractive, enjoyable.

Absorption, *n.* **1.** Assimilation (the absorption of the company). Appropriation, incorporation, devouring, destroying, consumption, engulfing. **2.** A collective bargaining term for the preservation of seniority rights when companies are merged.

Abstain, *v.* To hold back (abstain from any accusations). Refrain, resist, eschew, forbear, forgo, withhold, refuse, desist, decline, reject, turn down, discontinue, renounce, suppress, shun, spurn, abnegate. *Ant.* Indulge.

Abstemious, *adj.* See moderate (1), economical.

Abstention, *n.* The act of refraining (abstention from the work of the committee). Abstaining, nonparticipation, avoidance, nonindulgence, refusal, denying oneself, holding off, abstinence, eschewing, forbearance, inaction, self-deprivation, self-denial, restraint, withholding, self-mortification, puritanism, curbing, repression, suppression, shunning, spurning, curtailment. *Ant.* Indulgence.

Abstention doctrine A federal court can decline to exercise or postpone the exercise of its power or jurisdiction to hear a case in deference to the state court system. The federal court refrains from deciding the federal issues until the state

Abstention doctrine

court has resolved the state issues in the case.

Abstinence, *n.* See abstention, celibacy.

Abstract 1. *v.* To take away or remove (to abstract the funds). Steal, separate, disengage, detach, disunite, isolate, divide, part, appropriate, purloin, take dishonestly, seize, divert, disjoin, take out of context, eliminate, disassociate. 2. *v.* To summarize (to abstract the documents). Abridge, condense, epitomize, synopsise, abbreviate, excerpt from, make an abstract of, make an outline of, compress, compact, shorten, reduce, digest, edit, cut down, curtail, prune. 3. *n.* A summary (prepare an abstract of the file). Abridgment, outline, synopsis, digest, condensation, abbreviation, compendium, précis, epitome, extract, résumé, conspectus, syllabus, brief, sum and substance, capsule, draft, review, recapitulation, summary of salient points, compilation, analysis, consolidation, reduction, extract, prospectus, essence. 4. *adj.* Theoretical (an abstract argument). Conceptual, remote, not concrete, unrelated, philosophical, metaphysical, intellectual, hypothetical, visionary, general, indefinite, ideal, impractical, pure. See also moot. 5. *adj.* Obscure (an abstract approach). Complicated, difficult, hidden, vague, enigmatic, mysterious, impractical, abstruse, incomprehensible, attenuated. *Ant.* Unite; expand; complete text; concrete; clear.

Abstraction, *n.* 1. The wrongful taking of something. See abstract (1), larceny.

2. A generalization. Conceptualization, idea, theory, concept, generality, hypothesis, "pipe dream," impracticality, symbol, formula, notion, vague statement.

Abstract of title A summary of the documents and facts appearing in public records that affect title to land (e.g., prior deeds or conveyances of the land, liens, mortgages, covenants, wills, court orders).

Abstruse, *adj.* See obscure (1), complex (1).

Absurd, *adj.* Illogical (an absurd result). Irrational, could not have been intended, foolish, senseless, ridiculous, preposterous, unnatural, logically inconsistent, contradictory, idiotic, crazy, meaningless, unreasonable, ludicrous, unbelievable, nonsensical, incongruous, patently fallacious, stupid, drivel, infatuated, asinine, fatuous, inane, silly, moronic, anomalous, farcical, implausible, inconsistent, inconceivable. *Ant.* Rational.

Abundance, *n.* See sufficiency, excess, wealth, luxury, remainder (2), most, majority, mass (2), abundant.

Abundant, *adj.* Plentiful (abundant evidence). Ample, well-supplied, bountiful, bounteous, profuse, lavish, more than enough, sufficient, copious, replete, rich, teeming, overflowing, flowing, opulent, liberal, thick, much, lush, luxuriant, generous, extravagant, bristling, fruitful, productive. See also great (1), big, full, many, majority, mass (2), liberal (3). *Ant.* Scarce.

Abuse 1. *v.* To mistreat (abuse a child). Injure, degrade, oppress, harm, molest, debauch, wrong, damage, defile, malign, scold, disparage, berate, vilify, assail, flay, assault, batter, misemploy, misapply, misdirect, misappropriate, mismanage, mishandle, pervert, spoil, corrupt, debase, maltreat, revile, rail against, defame, libel, slander, rape, reproach, disgrace, dishonor, condemn, denounce, reprove, distort, exploit, pollute, victimize, ill use, ill treat, violate, prostitute, profane, desecrate, deceive, seduce, betray, disrespect, strike, wound, attack, torment, torture, persecute, belittle, ridicule. 2. *n.* Misuse (abuse of discretion; abuse of confidence). Desecration, improper use, insult, condemnation, vituperation, invective, defamation, obloquy, billingsgate, insult, contumely, scurrility, opprobrium, denouncement, reproof, distortion, malfeasance, misfeasance, exploitation, maltreatment, misdirection, misappropriation, assault, battery, reproach, scorn, ridicule, aspersion, malversation, censure, denunciation, disparagement, belittlement, injury, damage. *Ant.* Assist; respect.

Abuse of discretion A decision that is manifestly unreasonable, arbitrary, biased,

illogical, inconsistent, not supported by the evidence, or beyond the power of the decision maker. A decision that is clearly erroneous or unjust.

Abuse of process A tort that exists when there has been (a) a use of civil or criminal proceedings, (b) for an improper or ulterior purpose, (c) resulting in actual damage. Example: You have someone arrested in order to pressure him or her to repay a loan or to marry your child. The purpose of the criminal law is not to collect debts or to encourage marriage.

Abusive, *adj.* See offensive, caustic, malicious, hostile, derogatory, abuse.

Abut, *v.* To touch at one end (the two lots abut). Border on, adjoin, be contiguous, be adjacent to, be next to, reach, connect with, join, meet at one end, meet end to end, meet, touch, verge on, flank, attach, end at, lean against, conjoin, impinge, juxtapose.

Abutment, *n.* 1. That which abuts or borders on something. Abutting, adjacency, contiguity, juxtaposition, adjoining, union, connection, attachment, joint, junction, contact, being contiguous, being adjacent. 2. Support. Prop, bulwark, brace, buttress, rampart, pier, stay, terminal support.

Abutments, *n.* End lines of land. See boundary.

Abutter, *n.* One whose property abuts, is contiguous, or joins at a border or boundary where no other land, road, or street intervenes.

Abysmal, *adj.* Deep or bottomless (abysmal shame). Boundless, immeasurable, vast, huge, enormous. See also big, extreme (1).

Abyss, *n.* A chasm or bottomless pit (fall into the abyss). Cavity, void, gorge, infinitude, limbo, depth, gully, crevasse, crack, chaos, inferno, hell.

Academic 1. *adj.* Speculative or theoretical. See hypothetical, abstract (4), moot. 2. *adj.* Scholastic. Educational, scholarly, erudite, pedagogical, pedantic, formal, collegiate, studious, bookish, cultured. See also learned, literary (2), cultivated, demonstrative (1). 3. *n.* See teacher, scholar, student.

Academician, *n.* See teacher.

Academy, *n.* See school.

Accede, *v.* 1. To give one's agreement (accede to the request). Consent, agree, assent, acquiesce, yield, comply, concur, approve, cooperate, allow, permit, let, concede, grant, subscribe, admit, endorse, defer to, go along with, surrender to, abide by, acknowledge, respond affirmatively, capitulate, back down, obey, conform, grant, vouchsafe. 2. To attain an office or position; to take control of (accede to the throne). Inherit, assume, succeed to, reach. *Ant.* Decline.

Accelerate, *v.* To cause something to happen sooner (when the future interest was accelerated, it vested earlier than originally contemplated). Hasten, quicken, step up, speed up, rush, spur, advance, dispatch, facilitate, augment, promote, stimulate, impel, intensify. See also precipitate (1), expedite. *Ant.* Delay, decelerate.

Accelerated depreciation Depreciating property in such a way that the deductions are greater during the early years of the life of the asset. Methods of this kind of depreciation include double declining balance and sum of the years' digits.

Acceleration, *n.* Speeding up, hastening, facilitation, shortening the time for the vesting in possession of an expectant interest. See advancement, advance (3).

Acceleration clause A clause in a contract (e.g., mortgage, promissory note) stating that if a certain event happens, the payment schedule under the contract is advanced. For example, a mortgage might provide that the entire loan must be repaid immediately if a single payment is missed or if the mortgaged property is transferred.

Accelerator, *n.* See catalyst.

Accent 1. *n.* Stress or intonation. Emphasis, pronunciation, accentuation, tone, articulation, speech pattern, modulation, enunciation. 2. *v.* To stress or accentuate. Underline, italicize, mark, punctuate, highlight, underscore, intensify. See

Accent

also emphasize.

Accentuate, *v.* See accent (2).

Accept, *v.* 1. To receive with approval or with the intent to retain (she accepted the goods). Take without protest, receive willingly, take possession of, secure, gain. 2. To assent to (he accepts the offer). Acquiesce in, approve, adopt, embrace, accede to, concur, admit as satisfactory, authorize, endorse, ratify, sanction, honor, acknowledge, concede, believe, yield, accommodate oneself to, resign oneself to, go along with, suffer, tolerate, endure, reconcile oneself to, submit to, bear, undertake, assume responsibility for, assume, admit, avow. *Ant.* Reject.

Acceptable, *adj.* See admissible, proper, adequate, worthy, competent.

Acceptably, *adv.* See well (2).

Acceptance, *n.* Acquiescence (acceptance of guilt). Consent, approbation, approval, acknowledgment, favorable reception, endorsement, ratification, acceding, adoption, accession, agreement, reception, acquisition, affirmation, confirmation, recognition, resignation, toleration, sanction, satisfaction, submission. *Ant.* Rejection, opposition.

Acceptance of check The signed engagement of the drawee (usually a bank) to honor a draft (a document for the transfer of money) as presented.

Acceptance of deed Acts, conduct, or words that manifest an intent to take title to the property described in the deed.

Acceptance of goods There are three ways a buyer can accept goods: (a) by signifying to the seller that the goods are conforming or that the buyer will accept them in spite of their nonconformity, (b) by failing to make an effective rejection, and (c) by doing an act inconsistent with the seller's ownership.

Acceptance of offer The assent by the person to whom an offer has been made (offeree) to enter into a binding agreement with the person making the offer (offeror) according to the terms of the offer.

Accepted, *adj.* See common (1).

Acceptor, *n.* Someone who becomes liable on a draft by an acceptance of it. See acceptance of check.

Access, *n.* 1. Opportunity to reach (access to the commissioner). Opportunity to communicate with, admittance, entrée, entrance, approachability, accessibility, availability. 2. The availability of contact for a designated purpose (access in order to inspect the land and the records). Entry, approach, avenue, liberty to approach, passage, passageway, route, gateway, means of access, means of approach, right of entry, opening, inlet, path, ingress. *Ant.* Inaccessibility.

Accessible, *adj.* Easy to reach (an accessible court). Reachable, nearby, at hand, on hand, within reach, available, obtainable, achievable, attainable, vulnerable, persuasible, persuadable, easily influenced, susceptible, approachable, easily approached, public, unrestricted, securable, obliging, weak, unguarded, compliant, informal. *Ant.* Remote.

Accession, *n.* 1. Increase, addition (the accession of two offices). Augmentation, accretion, increment, supplement, extension, appurtenance, accrual, accumulation, continuation, adjunction, adjunct, appendage, fixture, adhesion, annexation, attachment, combination, fastening, fusion, incorporation, amplification, broadening, developing, joining, merger, uniting, supplementation, expansion, growth, swelling, aggrandizement, widening. 2. A country's acceptance of a treaty (Britain's accession). Assent, agreement, acceding, consent, concordance, concord, acquiescence, concurrence, acceptance. 3. Taking control or possession of something (accession to office). Succession, elevation, inauguration, elevation, inheritance, investiture. *Ant.* Decrease; rejection.

Accessory, *n.* 1. Someone who, without being present, helps another to commit a