

a *adjective* (called the *indefinite article* and changing to **an** before most vowel sounds) **1** one (but not any special one), *Can you lend me a book?* **2** each; per, *We can see it once a day or once an hour.*

a⁻¹ *prefix* **1** on; to; towards (as in *afoot, ashore, aside*). **2** in the process of (as in *a-hunting*).

a⁻² *prefix* (**an-** is used before a vowel sound) not; without (as in *asymmetrical, anarchy*). [from Greek *a-* = not]

aardvark (*say ahd-vahk*) *noun* an African animal with a pig-like body and a tubular snout, feeding on termites. [from Afrikaans *aarde* = earth, + *vark* = pig]

ab- *prefix* (changing to **abs-** before *c* and *t*) away; from (as in *abduct, abnormal, abstract*). [from Latin *ab* = away]

aback *adverb* taken aback surprised.

abacus (*say ab-uh-kuhs*) *noun* (*plural abacuses*) a frame used for counting with beads sliding on wires. [Latin from Greek from Hebrew]

abalone (*say ab-uh-loh-nee*) *noun* an edible mollusc with a shell lined with mother-of-pearl.

abandon¹ *verb* **1** give up. **2** leave a person, thing, or place without intending to return, *Abandon ship!* **abandonment** *noun*

abandon² *noun* a casual and careless manner, *dancing with great abandon.*

abase *verb* (**abased, abasing**) humiliate.

abashed *adjective* embarrassed.

abate *verb* (**abated, abating**) make or become less; die down, *The storm had abated.*

abatement *noun*

abattoir (*say ab-uh-twah*) *noun* a place where animals are killed for food. [French]

abbess *noun* the head of an abbey of nuns.

abbey *noun* (*plural abbeys*) **1** a monastery or convent. **2** a church that was once part of a monastery, *Westminster Abbey.*

abbot *noun* the head of an abbey of monks.

abbreviate *verb* (**abbreviated, abbreviating**) shorten something.

abbreviation *noun* **1** a shortened form of a word or words, such as *maths, TV, USA*. **2** abbreviating something.

ABC *noun* **1** a name for the alphabet, *We know our ABC.* **2** Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

abdicate *verb* (**abdicated, abdicating**) resign from a throne; give up an important responsibility. **abdication** *noun*

abdomen (*say ab-duh-muhn*) *noun* **1** the lower front part of a person's or animal's body, containing the stomach, intestines, and other digestive organs. **2** the rear section of an insect's body. **abdominal** (*say ab-dom-uh-nuhl*) *adjective*

abduct *verb* take a person away illegally; kidnap. **abduction** *noun*, **abductor** *noun* [from *ab-*, + Latin *ductum* = led]

aberration (*say ab-uh-ray-*

shuhn) *noun* a deviation from what is normal.

abet *verb* (**abetted, abetting**) help or encourage someone to commit a crime. **abetter** or **abettor** *noun*

abeyance (*say uh-bay-uhns*) *noun* in **abeyance** suspended or postponed.

abhor *verb* (**abhorred, abhorring**) detest. **abhorrence** *noun*, **abhorrent** *adjective* [from Latin *abhorere* = shrink in fear]

abide *verb* (**abided** (in sense **1** **abode**), **abiding**) **1** (*old use*) remain; dwell. **2** bear; tolerate, *I can't abide flies.*

abide by keep a promise; act in accordance with a rule or decision.

abiding *adjective* lasting; permanent.

ability *noun* (*plural abilities*) **1** being able to do something. **2** cleverness; talent.

abiotic *adjective* not having life.

abject (*say ab-jekt*) *adjective* **1** wretched; miserable, *living in abject poverty*. **2** humble, *an abject apology*. [from *ab-*, + Latin *-jectum* = thrown]

ablaze *adjective* blazing; on fire.

able *adjective* **1** having the power or skill or opportunity to do something. **2** skilful; clever.

ably *adverb*

ablution *noun* ceremonial washing of the hands or sacred vessels.

ablutions *plural noun* (*informal*) washing yourself, *perform your ablutions.*

abnormal *adjective* not normal;

unusual. **abnormality** *noun*, **abnormally** *adverb*

aboard *adverb & preposition* on or into a ship or aircraft or train.

abode¹ *noun* (*old use*) the place where someone lives.

abode² *past tense & past participle* of **abide**.

abolish *verb* put an end to. **abolition** (*say ab-uh-lish-uhn*) *noun*

abominable *adjective* very bad; detestable. **abominably** *adverb*

abominate *verb* (**abominated, abominating**) detest. **abomination** *noun*

aboriginal¹ *adjective* **1** inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times. **2** (**Aboriginal**) of Australian Aboriginal people.

aboriginal² *noun* **1** an aboriginal inhabitant of a place. **2** (**Aboriginal**) a person belonging to one of the indigenous peoples of Australia. **3** (*informal*) (**Aboriginal**) any of the numerous Australian Aboriginal languages.

Aboriginality *noun* **1** the quality of being Aboriginal. **2** Aboriginal culture.

aborigine (*say ab-uh-rij-uh-nee*) *noun* (*plural aborigines*) **1** an original inhabitant of a place. **2** (**Aborigine**) an aboriginal inhabitant of Australia. [from Latin *ab origo* = from the beginning]

abort *verb* put an end to something before it has been completed, *They aborted the space flight because of problems.*

THESAURUS

abandon¹ *verb* **1** abdicate, cancel, chuck in (*informal*), discontinue, drop, forgo, give up, quit, resign, scrap, surrender, throw in (*informal*), waive, yield. **2** (*abandon a person*) desert, ditch (*informal*), forsake, jilt, leave, leave in the lurch, run out on (*informal*), walk out on (*informal*); (*abandon a place*) evacuate, leave, quit, vacate.

abate *verb* decrease, die down, ease, moderate, subside, weaken.

abbey *noun* **1** convent, friary, monastery, nunnery, priory, religious house.

abbreviate *verb* abridge, contract, cut, reduce, shorten, truncate.

abbreviation *noun* **1** acronym, contraction, shortening.

abdicate *verb* quit, resign, stand down, step down; see also RENOUNCE.

abdomen *noun* **1** belly, gut

(*informal*), insides (*informal*), intestines, paunch, stomach, tummy (*informal*).

abduct *verb* carry off, kidnap, seize, snatch (*informal*).

aberration *noun* abnormality, anomaly, deviation, peculiarity, variation.

abet *verb* aid, assist, encourage, help, incite, support.

abhor *verb* abominate, detest, hate, loathe, recoil from, shrink from.

abhorrent *adjective* abominable, detestable, disgusting, hateful, horrid, loathsome, odious, repugnant, repulsive, revolting.

abide *verb* **1** dwell, live, remain, reside, stay. **2** bear, endure, put up with, stand, stomach, suffer, take, tolerate.

abide by accept, adhere to, agree to, comply with, conform to, follow, keep to, obey, observe, stick to.

abiding *adjective* endless, enduring, eternal, everlasting,

lasting, permanent, steadfast, unending.

ability *noun* **1** capability, capacity, potential, power, strength. **2** aptitude, capability, capacity, cleverness, competence, expertise, facility, flair, genius, gift, knack, know-how, potential, proficiency, prowess, skill, talent.

able *adjective* **1** allowed, authorised, available, eligible, fit, free, permitted. **2** accomplished, adept, adroit, capable, clever, competent, gifted, intelligent, proficient, qualified, skilful, talented.

abnormal *adjective* anomalous, atypical, bizarre, curious, deviant, eccentric, exceptional, extraordinary, freakish, irregular, odd, peculiar, rare, singular, strange, uncommon, unconventional, unnatural, unusual, weird.

abnormality *noun* anomaly, deformity, irregularity,

malformation, peculiarity.

abolish *verb* cancel, do away with, eliminate, end, eradicate, extinguish, get rid of, put an end to, remove, stamp out, wipe out. **abolition** *noun* cancellation, elimination, ending, eradication, removal.

abominable *adjective* abhorrent, appalling, atrocious, base, contemptible, despicable, detestable, disgusting, execrable, foul, hateful, heinous, horrible, loathsome, obnoxious, odious, repugnant, repulsive, terrible, vile.

abominate *verb* abhor, detest, hate, loathe.

aboriginal¹ *adjective* **1** earliest, first, indigenous, native, original.

aboriginal² *noun* **1** aborigine, indigene, local, original inhabitant.

aborigine *noun* **1** see ABORIGINAL².

a

DICTIONARY

b

abortion *noun* removal of a foetus from the womb before it has developed enough to survive.

c

abortive *adjective* unsuccessful, an abortive attempt.

d

abound *verb* 1 be plentiful or abundant, *Fish abound in the river.* 2 have something in great quantities, *The river abounds in fish.*

e

about¹ *preposition* 1 near in amount or size or time; approximately, *It costs about \$5; Come about two o'clock.* 2 on the subject of; in connection with, *Tell me about your holiday.* 3 all round; in various parts of, *They ran about the yard.*

f

about² *adverb* 1 approximately. 2 in various directions, *They were running about.* 3 not far away, *He is somewhere about.*
be about to be going to do something.

g

about-face *noun* (also **about-turn**) a reversal of previous actions or opinions.

h

above¹ *preposition* 1 higher than. 2 more than.

i

above² *adverb* 1 at or to a higher place. 2 earlier in a book or article, *mentioned above.*

j

above board¹ *adjective* legitimate, honest, and open.

k

above board² *adverb* in a legitimate, honest, and open way.

l

abrade *verb* (abraded, abrading) scrape or wear something away by rubbing it. **abrasion** *noun*

m

n

o

p

abortion *noun* (when spontaneous) miscarriage, (when induced) termination.

q

abortive *adjective* failed, fruitless, futile, ineffective, unsuccessful, vain.

r

abound *verb* 1 be abundant, be plentiful, flourish, proliferate, thrive. 2 be full, overflow, swarm, teem.

s

about¹ *preposition* 1 around, close to, near. 2 concerning, connected with, dealing with, involving, on, regarding, relating to.

t

about² *adverb* 1 almost, approximately, around, more or less, nearly, roughly. 3 around, hereabouts, near, nearby.

u

be about to be going to, be on the brink of, be on the point of, be on the verge of, be ready to.

v

above¹ *preposition* 1 higher than, on top of, over, superior to. 2 beyond, exceeding, greater than, higher than, more than, over.

w

above² *adverb* 1 on high, overhead, upstairs. 2 before, earlier, previously.

x

above board¹ *adjective* clean, fair, honest, honourable, legal, legitimate, open, straight.

y

z

abrasive¹ *adjective* 1 that abrades things. 2 harsh, an abrasive manner.

abrasive² *noun* a rough substance used for rubbing or polishing things.

abreast *adverb* 1 side by side. 2 keeping up with something.

abridge *verb* (abridged, abridging) shorten, especially by using fewer words, an abridged edition. **abridgement** *noun* [from Old French *abregier* = shorten]

abroad *adverb* in or to another country.

abrupt *adjective* 1 sudden; hasty. 2 brief and rude. **abruptly** *adverb*, **abruptness** *noun* [from *ab-*, + Latin *ruptum* = broken]

ABS *abbreviation* 1 anti-lock braking system. 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics.

abs- *prefix* see *ab-*.

abscess (say *ab-suhs*) *noun* (plural *abscesses*) an inflamed place where pus has formed in the body.

abscond *verb* go away secretly, *The cashier had absconded with the money.*

abseil (say *ab-sayl*) *verb* descend a rock face using a doubled rope that is fixed at a higher point.

absence *noun* 1 being away; the period of this. 2 a lack of something.

absent¹ (say *ab-shunt*) *adjective*

not here; not present, *absent from school.*

absent² (say *ab-sent*) *verb* **absent yourself** stay away.

absentee *noun* a person who is absent. **absenteeism** *noun*

absent-minded *adjective* having your mind on other things; forgetful.

absolute *adjective* 1 complete. 2 not restricted. [same origin as *absolve*]

absolutely *adverb* 1 completely. 2 (informal) yes, I agree.

absolute majority *noun* a majority over all rivals combined; more than half.

absolution *noun* a priest's formal declaration that people's sins are forgiven.

absolve *verb* (absolved, absolving) 1 clear a person of blame or guilt. 2 release from a promise or obligation. [from *ab-*, + Latin *solvere* = set free]

absorb *verb* 1 soak up; take in. 2 receive something and reduce its effects, *The buffers absorbed most of the shock.* 3 take up a person's attention or time.

absorbent *adjective*, **absorption** *noun*

absorbing *adjective* intensely interesting; engrossing, an absorbing book.

abstain *verb* keep yourself from doing something (e.g. from voting); refrain. **abstainer** *noun*, **abstention** *noun*

THESAURUS

abortion *noun* (when spontaneous) miscarriage, (when induced) termination.

abortive *adjective* failed, fruitless, futile, ineffective, unsuccessful, vain.

abound *verb* 1 be abundant, be plentiful, flourish, proliferate, thrive. 2 be full, overflow, swarm, teem.

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be about to be going to, be on the brink of, be on the point of, be on the verge of, be ready to.

above¹ *preposition* 1 higher than, on top of, over, superior to. 2 beyond, exceeding, greater than, higher than, more than, over.

above² *adverb* 1 on high, overhead, upstairs. 2 before, earlier, previously.

above board¹ *adjective* clean, fair, honest, honourable, legal, legitimate, open, straight.

above board² *adverb* cleanly, fairly, honestly, honourably, legally, legitimately, openly.

abrade *verb* corrode, erode, scrape, wear, wear away, wear down.

abrasion *noun* graze, lesion, scrape, scratch.

abridge *verb* abbreviate, condense, cut, edit, reduce, shorten, trim.

abroad *adverb* overseas.

abrupt *adjective* 1 hasty, precipitate, quick, rapid, sharp, sudden, swift, unexpected. 2 blunt, brisk, brusque, curt, gruff, impolite, rude, short.

abscond *verb* bolt, disappear, escape, flee, make off, nick off (Australian informal), run off, shoot through (Australian informal).

absence *noun* 1 absenteeism, non-attendance, truancy. 2 dearth, deficiency, lack, want.

absent¹ *adjective* away, elsewhere, missing, off.

absent-minded *adjective* abstracted, daydreaming, distracted, dreamy, forgetful, inattentive, oblivious, preoccupied, scatterbrained,

scatty (informal), vague.

absolute *adjective* 1 complete, downright, out-and-out, outright, perfect, positive, pure, sheer, thorough, total, unmitigated, unqualified, utter. 2 autocratic, complete, omnipotent, sovereign, supreme, total, unconditional, unlimited, unqualified, unrestricted.

absolution *noun* forgiveness, pardon, remission.

absolve *verb* 1 acquit, clear, exonerate, forgive, pardon, vindicate. 2 discharge, excuse, exempt, free, release, set free.

absorb *verb* 1 (absorb liquid) draw up, mop up, soak up, suck up, take up; (absorb information) assimilate, digest, take in. 3 captivate, capture, engage, engross, interest, monopolise, occupy, preoccupy.

absorbing *adjective* captivating, engrossing, fascinating, gripping, interesting, riveting.

abstain *verb* (abstain from) avoid, decline, desist from, do without, forgo, go without, refrain from.

abstinence *noun* non-indulgence, self-denial,

abstemious (say *uhb-stee-mee-uhs*) *adjective* eating or drinking only small amounts; not greedy. **abstemiously** *adverb*, **abstemiousness** *noun*

abstinence *noun* abstaining, especially from alcohol. **abstinent** *adjective*

abstract¹ (say *ab-strakt*) *adjective* 1 concerned with ideas, not with objects, *Truth is abstract.* 2 (of a painting or sculpture) showing the artist's ideas or feelings, not showing a recognisable person or thing.

abstract² *noun* a summary. [from *abs-*, + Latin *tractum* = pulled]

abstracted *adjective* with your mind on other things; not paying attention.

abstract noun *noun* a noun denoting an idea, quality, state, or action.

abstruse (say *uhb-stroos*) *adjective* hard to understand; obscure.

absurd *adjective* ridiculous; foolish. **absurdity** *noun*, **absurdly** *adverb* [from Latin *absurdus* = out of tune]

abundance *noun* plenty.

abundant *adjective* plentiful. **abundantly** *adverb*

abuse¹ (say *uh-byooz*) *verb* (abused, abusing) 1 use badly or wrongly; misuse. 2 ill-treat. 3 say unpleasant things to a person or thing.

sobriety, teetotalism, temperance.

abstract¹ *adjective* 1 academic, conceptual, intangible, intellectual, theoretical.

abstract² *noun* outline, precis, resumé, summary, synopsis.

absurd *adjective* comic, crazy, farcical, foolish, funny, illogical, inane, laughable, ludicrous, mad, nonsensical, outrageous, preposterous, ridiculous, senseless, silly, strange, stupid, unreasonable, zany.

abundance *noun* heaps (informal), lashings (informal), loads (informal), lots (informal), oodles (informal), plenty, stacks (informal), tons (informal), wealth.

abundant *adjective* ample, bountiful, copious, generous, lavish, liberal, overflowing, plentiful, profuse, teeming.

abuse¹ *verb* 1 exploit, misuse. 2 assault, damage, harm, hurt, ill-treat, maltreat, mistreat, molest. 3 attack, be rude to, curse, denigrate, disparage, insult, revile, slander, swear at.

Grammar

Grammar refers to the ways we combine words in phrases, clauses and sentences and organise them in texts. We do this according to conventions that have developed over time and are generally accepted and used. Grammar also refers to the ways we describe how language works as a system. The language we use to discuss language, its conventions and their use is called metalanguage.

Parts of speech

Each word in a sentence has a job to do and its function is called its part of speech. There are eight parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Each one is used to *do* different things in a sentence.

We need to see a word in a phrase or clause before we can identify what part of speech it is. The same word can be a different part of speech depending on its relationship to the other words.

water

We need to save **water**. (noun)

We **water** the garden twice a week in summer. (verb)

Nouns

Nouns are words that represent people, creatures, places, things, qualities, feelings and ideas.

scientist, elephant, lake, monitor, courage, pride, equality

To check if a word in a sentence is a noun, see if it answers the question Who? or What?

Fran plays the **flute**. (Who plays? 'Fran') (Fran plays what? 'the flute')

There are different types of nouns:

Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter as they specifically name a particular person, place or thing.

Tom, Mount Everest, Golden Retriever

Common nouns do not begin with a capital letter (unless they begin a sentence). They refer to people or things that can be counted

boy, mountain, dog

and things that cannot be counted.

air, rice, traffic

Most common nouns are concrete as they name something that we can see, hear, smell, taste or touch.

river, whistle, rose, pineapple, fur

Some common nouns are abstract as they name something we cannot understand with our senses.

love, respect, democracy, talent

Abstract modal nouns can also express judgments about the likelihood of events.

possibility, probability, certainty

Collective nouns name groups of people, animals, or things.

team, flock, bunch

Compound nouns are formed by combining two nouns into one word.

rain/coat, hair/style, foot/ball, house/boat

Noun groups

Noun groups are groups of words that build on a noun and usually consist of an article, one or more adjectives, and a noun.

a very simple solution

the economic and social conditions

Nominalisation

To nominalise an adjective or verb is to change it into a noun. A noun can be formed from a verb by adding a suffix such as '-ing', '-ation', '-ance', 'ment' or 'ness'.

argue (verb) argument (noun)

ignore (verb) ignorance (noun)

emit (verb) emission (noun)

A noun can similarly be formed from an adjective.

stagnant (adj) stagnation (noun)

polite (adj) politeness (noun)

Nominalisation can allow complex ideas to be conveyed compactly.

Australia agrees to carbon emission targets.

is more concise than

Australia agrees to set targets for how much carbon can be emitted.

Articles

Nouns are often preceded by 'the', 'a' or 'an', known as articles.

'The' is the definite article as it introduces a particular noun.

The car collided with **the** pole.

'A' (or 'an' if the noun begins with a vowel) is an indefinite article as it introduces a general noun.

A car is **an** expensive purchase.

Pronouns

Pronouns help avoid repetition by replacing nouns that have already been mentioned.

The tourists hired a guide. The guide showed the tourists around the town.

The tourists hired a guide. **She** showed **them** around the town.

The tourists hired a guide **who** showed **them** around the town.

Because they replace nouns, pronouns also answer Who?, Whom? or What?.

Aunt Mary gave **me** a present. **She** said **I** would treasure **it**.

(To whom did Aunt Mary give a present? 'me')

(Who said? 'She')

(She said who would treasure it? 'I')

(What would I treasure? 'it')

The noun that the pronoun stands in for is called the antecedent (meaning the word that comes before). It is important that it is clear which noun the pronoun is replacing.

Fran told Gemma **she** had won the competition. (Who has won it?)

Fran boasted to Gemma that **she** had won the competition. (Now it is clear.)

There are several types of pronouns.

Personal pronouns stand in for nouns that name people or things.

I, we, me, us, you, he, she, her, him, it, they

He asked **her** if **she** would help **him** move the couch.

She said **she** would be happy to help **him** move **it**.

Possessive pronouns show that someone owns something.

mine, ours, yours, his, hers, its, theirs

The couch was **his**. It was heavier than **hers**.

Reflexive pronouns refer to a noun or pronoun earlier in the sentence.

myself, ourselves, yourself, yourselves, itself, herself, himself, themselves

Sam taught **himself** to play chess.

I see **myself** as a comedian.

With personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns, we can use the first, second or third person.

First: **I, me, us, mine, ours, myself, ourselves** (the person or persons speaking)

Second: **you, yours, yourself, yourselves** (the person or persons spoken to)

Third person: **he, she, it, they, his, hers, theirs, himself, herself, itself, themselves** (the person or persons spoken about)

I told **you** about **him**.

The cake is **mine**. That biscuit is **yours** and someone has eaten **hers**.

We must save **ourselves** from starvation.

You can help **yourself** to another biscuit.

The kitten gave **itself** a fright.

Relative pronouns relate one part of a sentence to another (a dependent clause to an independent clause).

who, whom, whose, which, what

She was the woman **who** spoke to me.

I addressed the letter to **whom** it may concern.

Whose is this jumper?

He repeated the joke, **which** I didn't think was funny.

The team **that** wins today goes into the final.

Demonstrative pronouns point to someone or something.

this, that, these, those

'This' and 'these' refer to things close in time and/or place. 'That' and 'those' refer to things further away in time and place.

This is my first job.

These are my favourite shoes.

Who gave you **that**?

Those were the days.