

Word of the Day

April 24

April 18, 2020

regurgitate

(,)rē-'gər-jə-,tāt | ree-GUR-juh-tayt

Definition

1 : to become thrown or poured back

2 : to throw or pour back or out from or as if from a cavity

Did You Know?

Something regurgitated has typically been taken in, at least partially digested, and then spit back out—either literally or figuratively. The word often appears in biological contexts (e.g., in describing how some birds feed their chicks by regurgitating incompletely digested food) or in references to ideas or information that has been acquired and restated. A student, for example, might be expected to learn information from a textbook or a teacher and then regurgitate it for a test. *Regurgitate*, which entered the English vocabulary in the latter half of the 16th century, is of Latin origin and traces back to the Latin word for "whirlpool," which is *gurgēs*.

Examples

"When [Kawhi] Leonard says, 'The youth is the future, and good education, they need it,' like he did Wednesday night in Phoenix, he's not just *regurgitating* a cliché. It's a sincere belief. After signing with the Clippers, the team's community relations team brought a number of service ideas to Leonard, with the team's superstar immediately zeroing in on efforts in public schools, in Moreno Valley, where he grew up, and in Los Angeles." — [Dan Woike, *The Los Angeles Times*, 27 Feb. 2020](#)

"Not only do wolves eat berries—something researchers were already aware of—but adult wolves also *regurgitate* them to feed their pups." — [Pam Louwagie, *The Star Tribune \(Minneapolis, Minnesota\)*, 22 Feb. 2020](#)

April 19, 2020

alienist

'ā-lē-ə-nist | AY-lee-uh-nist

Definition

: [psychiatrist](#)

Did You Know?

Alienist looks and sounds like it should mean "someone who studies aliens," and in fact *alienist* and [alien](#) are related—both are ultimately derived from the Latin word *alius*, meaning "other." In the case of *alienist*, the etymological trail leads from Latin to the French noun *aliéniste*, which refers to a doctor who treats the mentally ill. *Alienist* first appeared in print in English about mid-19th century. It was preceded by the other *alius* descendants, *alien* (14th century) and [alienate](#) (used as a verb since the 15th century). *Alienist* is much rarer than [psychiatrist](#) these days, but at one time it was a common term.

Examples

"Enter two protagonists, also historical figures. One is the novelist [Benito Pérez Galdós](#), 'the most famous Spanish writer whom many English-speaking readers may not know by name or reputation.' The other is the eminent *alienist* (as psychiatrists were then called) Luis Simarro." — [The Kirkus Reviews](#), 6 Mar. 2020

"Medical professionals (the kind known as '*alienists*' in the 1930s) have tried to improve the level of sunshine in M. Kinsler's life with one miracle cure or another. There are anti-depressants, and mood elevators, and serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, and all have side-effects." — [Mark Kinsler](#), [The Lancaster \(Ohio\) Eagle Gazette](#), 6 Oct. 2019

April 20, 2020

peccant

'pe-kənt | PEK-unt

Definition

1 : guilty of a moral offense : [sinning](#)

2 : violating a principle or rule : [faulty](#)

Did You Know?

Peccant comes from the Latin verb *peccare*, which means "to sin," "to commit a fault," or "to stumble," and is related to the better-known English word [peccadillo](#) ("a slight offense"). Etymologists have suggested that *peccare* might be related to Latin *ped-* or *pes*, meaning "foot," by way of an unattested adjective, *peccus*, which may have been used to mean "having an injured foot" or "stumbling." Whether or not a connection truly exists between *peccant* and *peccus*, *peccant* itself involves stumbling of a figurative kind—making errors, for example, or falling into immoral, corrupt, or sinful behavior.

Examples

"Cavil at [Dylan Thomas's](#) overdoings; praise this bit and dispraise that bit; but there he was, there he is, an emblem of poetry, which is Being itself.... And the world honored him for it, while chopping him to pieces.... It's the loony, *peccant* villagers of *Under Milk Wood*.... It's Auntie Hannah in 'A Child's Christmas in Wales,' who liked port, and who stood in the middle of the snowbound back yard, singing like a big-bosomed thrush." — [James Parker, *The Atlantic*, December 2014](#)

"The book stands for all the right things, and is *peccant* only in two minor but irritating ways. That there are occasional errors—'deprecatingly' for 'depreciatingly,' 'a bookstore which' for 'a bookstore that,' a couple of faulty agreements and a captious attack on the useful word 'demythify'—is not so much Newman as human." — John Simon, *Paradigms Lost*, 1980

April 21, 2020

colloquy

'kă-lə-kwē | KAH-luh-kwee

Definition

1 : [conversation](#), [dialogue](#)

2 : a high-level serious discussion : [conference](#)

Did You Know?

Colloquy may make you think of [colloquial](#), and there is indeed a connection between the two words. As a matter of fact, *colloquy* is the parent word from which *colloquial* was coined in the mid-18th century. *Colloquy* itself, though now the less common of the two words, has been a part of the English language since the 15th century. It is a descendant of Latin *loquī*, meaning "to speak." Other descendants of *loquī* in English include [eloquent](#), [loquacious](#), [ventriloquism](#), and [soliloquy](#), as well as [elocution](#) and [interlocutor](#).

Examples

The company's employees worried and speculated as the executive team remained closeted in an intense *colloquy* for the entire morning.

"He has a pitch-perfect ear for the cutesy euphemisms parents devise for their little kids ('Don't be a pane of glass') and for their **snarky** *colloquies* with precocious teenagers ('That's not the tone you take with your grandmother.' 'I'm not taking a tone, I'm making an argument.' 'Your argument has a tone')." — [Rand Richards Cooper, *The New York Times*, 14 Nov. 2019](#)

snarky: sarcastic, impertinent, or irreverent in tone or manner

April 22, 2020

obstinate

'äb-stə-nət | AHB-stuh-nut

Definition

1 : perversely adhering to an opinion, purpose, or course in spite of reason, arguments, or persuasion

2 : not easily subdued, remedied, or removed

Did You Know?

If you're obstinate, you're just plain stubborn. *Obstinate*, *dogged*, *stubborn*, and *mulish* all mean that someone is unwilling to change course or give up a belief or plan. *Obstinate* suggests an unreasonable persistence; it's often a negative word. *Dogged* implies that someone goes after something without ever tiring or quitting; it can be more positive. *Stubborn* indicates a resistance to change, which may or may not be admirable. Someone who displays a really unreasonable degree of stubbornness could accurately be described as *mulish*.

Examples

The project that had been the group's main focus for weeks was temporarily stymied by one member's *obstinate* refusal to compromise.

"With a permanent frown, Mr. Gnome has an *obstinate* attachment to the word *no*. 'Say hello to the readers, Mr. Gnome,' the narrator requests. 'No,' says Mr. Gnome, arms crossed in front of his belly." — [Publisher's Weekly Review](#), 2 Mar. 2020

April 23, 2020

facilitate

fə-'si-lə-, tāt | fuh-SIL-uh-tayt

Definition

: to make easier : help bring about

Did You Know?

As with so many English words, it's easy to find a Latin origin for *facilitate*. It traces back to the Latin adjective *facilis*, meaning "easy." Other descendants of *facilis* in English include *facile* ("easy to do"), *facility* ("the quality of being easily performed"), *faculty* ("ability"), and *difficult* (from *dis-* plus *facilis*,

which equals "not easy"). *Facilis* in turn comes from *facere*, a Latin verb meaning "to make or do." *Facere* has played a role in the development of dozens of English words, ranging from [affect](#) to [surfeit](#).

Examples

"The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 freed most of America's important waterways from private ownership and **thereby** *facilitated* the uninterrupted movement of American commerce." — [Mark R. Brown, *Cleveland.com*, 11 Mar. 2020](#)

thereby: by that : by that means

"She imagined he was thinking a similar set of thoughts beside her, even if they too went unexpressed. Silence *facilitated* blame, she would decide later. In the absence of another person's account, the story you invented for yourself went unchallenged." — [Laura van den Berg, *The Third Hotel*, 2018](#)

April 24, 2020

arboreal

är- 'bôr-ē-əl | ahr-BOR-ee-ul

Definition

1 : of or relating to a tree : resembling a tree

2 : inhabiting or frequenting trees

Did You Know?

Arbor, the Latin word for "tree," has been a rich source of tree-related words in English, though a few are fairly rare. Some *arbor* descendants are generally synonymous with *arboreal*: [arboraceous](#), [arborary](#), [arboreous](#), and [arborous](#). Others are primarily synonymous with *arboreal* in the sense of "relating to or resembling a tree": [arborescent](#), [arboresque](#), [arborical](#), and [arboriform](#). And one, [arboricole](#), is a synonym of *arboreal* in its sense of "inhabiting trees." The verb [arborize](#) means "to branch freely," and [arborvitae](#) is the name of a shrub that means literally "tree of life." There's also [arboretum](#), a place where trees are cultivated, and [arboriculture](#), the cultivation of trees. And we can't forget [Arbor Day](#), which since 1872 has named a day set aside by various states (and the national government) for planting trees. Despite its spelling, however, the English word [arbor](#), in the sense of a "[bower](#)," does not have its roots in the Latin *arbor*. Instead, it arises by way of the Anglo-French *herbe* from the Latin *herba*, meaning "herb" or "grass."

Examples

"[The hammocks] are relatively indestructible, mimic the *arboreal* nests used by orangutans, and provide a resting area for the **gibbons** as they swing among the treetops." — [Jim Redden, *The Portland \(Oregon\) Tribune*, 25 Aug. 2014](#)

gibbon: any of a genus (*Hylobates* of the family Hylobatidae) of agile brachiating tailless apes of southeastern Asia that are the smallest and most arboreal anthropoid apes

"In the wild, they're *arboreal* and live in tropical rainforests. And as their name implies, sloths move slowly. So slowly, in fact, that they have a [metabolic rate](#) of about 40 percent to 45 percent of 'what would be expected for their body weight,' according to zoo experts." — [Dana Hedgpeth, *The Washington Post*, 30 Dec. 2019](#)

sloth: any of various slow-moving arboreal edentate mammals (genera *Bradypus* and *Choloepus*) that inhabit tropical forests of South and Central America, hang from the branches back downward, and feed on leaves, shoots, and fruits