

Word of the Day

May 30 – June 5

Highlighted word: New word. Unsure about its meaning or pronunciation.

gamut

noun | 'ga-mət | GAM-ut | May 30, 2020

Definition

1 : the whole series of recognized musical notes

2 : an entire range or series

Did You Know?

To get the **lowdown** on *gamut*, we have to dive to the bottom of a musical scale to which the 11th-century musician and monk Guido of Arezzo applied his particular system of **solmization**—that is, of using syllables to denote the tones of a musical scale. Guido called the first line of his **bass staff** *gamma* and the first note in his scale *ut*, which meant that *gamma ut* was the term for a note written on the first staff line. In time, *gamma ut* underwent a shortening to *gamut* but climbed the scale of meaning. It expanded to cover all the notes of Guido's scale, then to cover all the notes in the range of an instrument, and, eventually, to cover an entire range of any sort.

lowdown (n.): the inside facts

solmization: the act, practice, or system of using syllables to denote the tones of a musical scale.

bass (n.) the lower half of the whole vocal or instrumental tonal range

staff (n.): the horizontal lines with their spaces on which music is written.

Examples

"Possibly the most interesting man-made structural material is [reinforced concrete](#). . . . It is economical, available almost everywhere, fire-resistant, and can be designed to be light-weight to reduce the **dead load** or to have a whole *gamut* of strengths to satisfy structural needs." — [Mario Salvadori, *Why Buildings Stand Up*, 1990](#)

dead load (n.): a constant load in a structure (such as a bridge, building, or machine) that is due to the weight of the members, the supported structure, and permanent attachments or accessories.

"[Beverly] Long, whose previous novels run a limited *gamut* from romance to paranormal romance to romantic suspense, scores well in her transition to **hard-boiled thriller**." — [Jay Strafford, *The Free Lance-Star* \(Fredericksburg, Virginia\), 21 Mar. 2020](#)

hard-boiled (adj.): devoid of sentimentality. Of, relating to, or being a detective story featuring a tough unsentimental protagonist and a matter-of-fact attitude towards violence.

thriller (n.): a work of fiction or drama designed to hold the interest by the use of a high degree of intrigue, adventure, or suspense.

palmy

adjective | 'pā-mē | PAH-mee | May 31, 2020

Definition

1 : marked by prosperity : [flourishing](#)

2 : abounding in or bearing [palms](#)

Did You Know?

The palm branch has traditionally been used as a symbol of victory. It is no wonder then that the word [palm](#) came to mean "victory" or "triumph" in the late 14th century, thanks to the likes of Geoffrey Chaucer. Centuries later, William Shakespeare would employ *palmy* as a synonym for [triumphant](#) or [flourishing](#) in the tragedy *Hamlet* when the character Horatio speaks of the "palmy state of Rome / A little ere the mightiest Julius fell."

Examples

"The new breed of the Silicon Valley lived for work. They were disciplined to the point of back spasms. They worked long hours and kept working on weekends. They became absorbed in their companies the way men once had in the *palmy* days of the automobile industry." — [Tom Wolfe, *Hooking Up*, 2000](#)

"In Beaufort Road was a house, occupied in its *palmier* days, by Mr Shorthouse, a manufacturer of acids...." — [J.R.R. Tolkien, letter, July 1964](#)

stiction

noun | 'stik-shən | STIK-shun | June 1, 2020

Definition

: the force required to cause one body in contact with another to begin to move

Did You Know?

Stiction has been a part of the English language since at least 1946, when it appeared in a journal of aeronautics. While *stiction* refers to the force needed to get an object to move from a position at rest, it

is not related to the verb **stick**. The word is a blend word formed from the *st-* of **static** ("of or relating to bodies at rest") and the *-iction* of **friction** ("the force that resists relative motion between two bodies in contact"). So, basically, it means "**static friction**" (or to put it another way, "stationary friction").

Stick (v.): T hit or propel (something, such as a hockey puck) with a stick. To pierce with something pointed.

Examples

"*Stiction* is stationary friction. Starting the bolt turning takes more force than keeping it turning. The tighter the bolt, the more *stiction* can affect **torque** readings." — [Jim Kerr, SRTForums.com, 4 Mar. 2004](#)

torque (n.): a force that produces or tends to produce rotation or torsion. A turning or twisting force.

"The theme of blue continues on the fork **stanchions**. The upside-down fork itself is the same Showa unit seen on the standard bike, but in this case the inner tubes feature a special **nitride** coating to help reduce *stiction* and provide a smoother **stroke**." — [Zaran Mody, ZigWheels.com, 14 Apr. 2020](#)

stanchion (n.): an upright bar, post, or support (as for a roof of a ship's deck)

nitride (n.): a binary compound of nitrogen with a more electropositive element.

stroke (n.): a single unbroken movement?

eolian

adjective | ē- 'ō-lē-ən | ee-OH-lee-un | June 2, 2020

Definition

: borne, deposited, produced, or eroded by the wind

Did You Know?

When **Aeolus** blew into town, things really got moving. He was the Greek god of the winds and the king of the floating island of Aeolia. In *The Odyssey*, Homer claims Aeolus helped Odysseus by giving him a favorable wind. Aeolus also gave English speakers a few terms based on his name, including the adjective *eolian* (also spelled **aeolian**), which is often used for wind-sculpted geological features such as caves and dunes, and **aeolian harp**, the name for an instrument that makes music when the wind blows across its strings.

Aeolus (n.): the Greek god of the winds.

Examples

The park is known for its *eolian* caves—chambers formed in **sandstone** cliffs by powerful winds.

sandstone(n.): a sedimentary rock consisting of usually quartz sand united by some cement (such as silica or calcium carbonate).

"If an extremely tenuous atmosphere like that of Pluto can support the generation of **bedforms** from wind-driven sediment, what kind of *eolian* activity might we see on places like Io (a moon of Jupiter) ...?" — [Alexander Hayes, quoted in *The Los Angeles Times*, 31 May 2018](#)

bedform (n.): features developed by fluid flow over a deformable bed (such as sand or seabed).

compunction

noun | kəm-ˈpəŋ(k)-shən | kum-PUNK-shun | June 3, 2020

Definition

1 a : anxiety arising from awareness of guilt

b : distress of mind over an anticipated action or result

2 : a **twinge** of misgiving : [scruple](#)

twinge (n.): a moral or emotional pang.

Did You Know?

An old proverb says "a guilty conscience needs no accuser," and it's true that the sting of a guilty conscience—or a conscience that is provoked by the contemplation of doing something wrong—can prick very hard indeed. The sudden guilty "prickings" of compunction are reflected in the word's etymological history. *Compunction* comes (via Anglo-French *compunction* and Middle English *compunccioun*) from Latin *compungere*, which means "to prick hard" or "to sting." *Compungere*, in turn, derives from *pungere*, meaning "to prick," which is the ancestor of some other prickly words in English, such as [puncture](#) and even [point](#).

Examples

"A big reason why Illinois' population continues to plummet is that college-age youth feel no *compunction* at all about heading out of state for college." — [editorial board, *The Chicago Tribune*, 22 Feb. 2020](#)

"Roses can get old and sick, and there are better varieties to try. I have no *compunction* ripping out a rose that no longer works for me." — [Adrian Higgins, *The Washington Post*, 13 Feb. 2020](#)

posture

verb | ˈpäs-chər | PAHSS-cher | June 4, 2020

Definition

1 : to cause to assume a given posture : [pose](#)

2 : to assume a [posture](#); *especially* : to strike a pose for effect

3 : to assume an artificial or pretended attitude : [attitudinize](#)

Did You Know?

The Latin verb *ponere*, meaning "to put" or "to place," had a role in putting quite a few English terms into place, including *component*, *dispose*, *expose*, *impose*, *oppose*, *posit*, *position*, *positive*, *postpone*, and, yes, *posture*. The past participle of *ponere*—*positus*—gave Latin the noun *positura*, which has the same meaning as the English noun [posture](#). *Positura* passed through Italian and Middle French and was finally adopted by English speakers as *posture* in the late 16th century. The verb *posture* later developed from the noun, finding its place in English at around the midpoint of the 17th century.

Examples

"During the [rut](#), grabbing a bite to eat was an afterthought for [bucks](#), but right now and in the weeks to come, choosing a prime food source is key to their survival. Sure ... bucks are still banging [antlers](#) and *posturing* to prove who's boss. But this is all happening at, or around, the best food sources in the area."
— [Scott Bestul, *Field & Stream*, 6 Jan. 2020](#)

[rut](#)¹(n.): a periodic and often annually recurring state of certain male animals (such as deer or elk) during which behavior associated with the urge to breed is displayed.

[buck](#)¹ (n.): a male animal.

[antler](#) (n.): one of the paired deciduous solid bony processes that arise from the frontal bone on the head of an animal of the deer family.

"It's also been assumed that a [rift](#) exists between Elway and Harris, but according to the player, that couldn't be further from the truth, despite the two being *postured* as adversaries over contracts and money." — [Chad Jensen, *Sports Illustrated*, 11 Jan. 2020](#)

[rift](#) (n.): fissure, crevasse, fault.

rendition

noun | ren-'di-shən | ren-DISH-un | June 5, 2020

Definition

: the act or result of [rendering](#) something: such as

[render](#) (v.): 4: to cause to be or become: MAKE ?

a : a performance or interpretation of something

b : [depiction](#)

c : [translation](#)

d : [surrender](#); *specifically, US law* : the surrender by a state of a fugitive to another state charging the fugitive with a crime : [interstate extradition](#)

Did You Know?

Rendition entered English in the early 17th century and can be traced to the Middle French word *reddition* and ultimately to the Latin verb *reddere*, meaning "to return." The English verb [render](#) is another descendant of *reddere*, so perhaps it is no surprise that *rendition* fundamentally means "the act or result of rendering." English speakers also once adopted *reddition* itself (meaning either "restitution, surrender" or "elucidation"), but that word has mostly dropped out of use. Incidentally, if you've guessed that *surrender* is also from the same word family, you may be right; [surrender](#) derives in part from the Anglo-French *rendre*, which likely influenced the alteration of *reddition* to *rendition*.

Examples

"Still, Cosme is bound to offer the 'hood plenty of surprises, including a [mescal](#)-spiked, cactus-[studded](#) *rendition* of Manhattan [clam chowder](#)." — [Jeff Gordinier, *The New York Times*, 2 Sept. 2014](#)

[stud \(n.\): An upright post in the framework of a wall for supporting sheets of lath, drywall, or similar material.](#)

[stud \(v.\): to furnish \(a building, a wall, etc.\) with studs.](#)

[clam² \(n.\): any of the numerous edible marine bivalve mollusks living in sand or mud.](#)

[chowder \(n.\): a soup or stew of seafood \(such as clams or fish\) usually made with milk or tomatoes, salt pork, onions, and other vegetables \(such as potatoes\).](#)

"The best part is the vast majority of adults will love [*Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*]. Most know who Spider-Man is. We've seen many different *renditions* of this superhero." — [Andrew McManus, *The Portsmouth \(Ohio\) Daily Times*, 27 Apr. 2020](#)