

Word of the Day

June 20 – June 26

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

envisage

Verb | in-'vi-zij | in-VIZ-ij | June 20, 2020

Definition

1 : to view or regard in a certain way

2 : to have a mental picture of especially in advance of realization

Did You Know?

Envisage has been part of the English language since the 17th century. It was sometimes used with the sense of "to meet squarely" or "to confront" (*visage* means "face" so the word suggests face-to-face encounters); however, that sense is now archaic and the word is primarily used in senses that involve having a particular conception or mental picture of something (*visage* also means "appearance" or "aspect"). In the early 20th century, some usage commentators began deriding *envisage* for reasons not entirely clear, declaring it "undesirable." Today, time and usage have won out, and *envisage* is widely used and accepted, though it is slightly formal in tone. Its near twin *envision* ("to picture to oneself"), which has been with us since the 19th century, is interchangeable with *envisage* in many contexts and is slightly less formal.

Examples

In planning out their new patio, Betty and Sherman *envisaged* a place where they could grill food on the **barbecue** and invite friends over to relax.

"The internet was *envisaged* as a decentralized global network, but in the past 25 years it has come to be controlled by a few, very powerful, centralized companies." — [Mark van Rijmenam and Philippa Ryan, *Blockchain, 2018*](#)

barbecue (n.): an often portable fireplace over which meat and fish are roasted

masterful

Adjective | 'ma-stər-fəl | MASS-ter-ful | June 21, 2020

Definition

1 a : inclined and usually competent to act as [master](#)

b : suggestive of a domineering nature

2 : having or reflecting the power and skill of a master

Did You Know?

Some commentators insist that *masterful* must only mean "domineering," reserving the "expert, skillful" sense for [masterly](#). The distinction is a modern one. In earlier times, the terms were used interchangeably, with each having both the "domineering" and "expert" senses. The "domineering" sense of *masterly* fell into disuse around the 18th century, however, and in the 20th century the famous grammarian H. W. Fowler decided that *masterful* should be similarly limited to a single meaning. He [summarily](#) ruled that the "expert" definition of *masterful* was incorrect. Other usage writers followed his lead. But the "expert" meaning of *masterful* has continued to flourish in standard prose in spite of the disapproval, and, considering the sense's long history, it cannot really be called an error.

[summary \(adj.\): covering the main points succinctly](#)

Examples

"But he hasn't stopped challenging himself or his players or opponents on the baseball field.... Maddon has earned a reputation as a bright and innovative tactician, but more as a *masterful* leader and developer of young players in particular." — [Kirk Wessler, *The Journal Star* \(Peoria, Illinois\), 9 Oct. 2015](#)

"'The Last Dance' surpassed Netflix's hit 'Tiger King' in global popularity after last week's two episodes (3 and 4)... [E]ven two decades after their *masterful* run, Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls are still so interesting." — [Joe D'Amodio, *SILive.com* \(Staten Island, New York\), 3 May 2020](#)

crux

Noun | 'kræks | KRUKS | June 22, 2020

Definition

1 : a puzzling or difficult problem : an unsolved question

2 : an essential point requiring resolution or resolving an outcome

3 : a main or central feature (as of an argument)

Did You Know?

In Latin, *crux* referred literally to an instrument of torture, often a cross or stake, and figuratively to the torture and misery inflicted by means of such an instrument. *Crux* eventually developed the sense of "a

puzzling or difficult problem"; that was the first meaning that was used when the word entered English in the early 18th century. Later, in the late 19th century, *crux* began to be used more specifically to refer to an essential point of a legal case that required resolution before the case as a whole could be resolved. Today, the **verdict** on *crux* is that it can be used to refer to any important part of a problem or argument, inside or outside of the courtroom.

verdict (n.) 2: OPINION, JUDGMENT

Examples

"Manipulation is a key trait of individuals with controlling personalities. Call it **gaslighting**, **whitewashing**, or rewriting the script: The *crux* of the matter is the manipulator's desire to control the narrative and either be the hero or the victim." — [Kristy Lee Hochenberger, *Psychology Today*, 22 Feb. 2020](#)

gaslight (v.): to attempt to make (someone) believe that he or she is going insane (as by subjecting that person to a series of experiences that have no rational explanation)

whitewash (v.): to gloss over or cover up (something, such as a record of criminal behavior)?

"[David] Leib [chair of microbiology and immunology at Dartmouth College] said one of the challenges of combating **COVID-19** in humans is the fact that viruses **hijack** our cells. 'This is really the *crux* of the reason why it has been so hard to develop antiviral drugs, because almost any drug that will stop viruses dead in [their] tracks will also stop our cells dead in their tracks,' he said." — [Gabrielle Emanuel, *WGBH.org*, 27 Apr. 2020](#)

hijack (v.): 1d: kidnap

fraternize

Verb | 'fra-tər-, nīz | FRAT-er-nyze | June 23, 2020

Definition

1 : to associate or mingle as [brothers](#) or on [fraternal](#) terms

2 a : to associate on close terms with members of a hostile group especially when contrary to military orders

b : to be friendly or [amiable](#)

Did You Know?

Both *fraternize* and [fraternal](#) (meaning "of, relating to, or involving brothers") come to us, by way of Medieval Latin, from Latin *frater*, meaning "brother." Other *frater* descendants in English include [friar](#), [fraternity](#), and [confraternity](#) ("a society devoted especially to a religious or charitable cause"). Even [brother](#) itself shares a relationship with *frater*. These days, although *fraternize* can still refer to a

brotherly association or simple friendliness, it often occurs in contexts, such as "fraternizing with the enemy," implying friendliness toward someone who would be better avoided.

Examples

The boss warned that *fraternizing* with the junior employees could be a risky career move for a manager.

"Today's [social distancing](#) orders make the [commonplace](#) themes of pre-[COVID](#) ads—singles *fraternizing* in crowded bars, teen potato chip parties, folks all feasting from a [communal](#) bucket of fried chicken—look like cautionary tales, the [unwitting](#) equivalent of a 'This is your brain on drugs' [PSA](#)." — [Lorraine Ali, *The Los Angeles Times*, 23 Apr. 2020](#)

[commonplace](#) (adj.): commonly found or seen : ordinary, unremarkable

[communal](#) (adj.): characterized by collective ownership and use of property

[unwitting](#) (adj.): not knowing : unaware

[PSA](#): public service announcement

gourmand

Noun | 'gu̠r-,määnd | GOOR-mahnd | June 24, 2020

Definition

1 : one who is excessively fond of eating and drinking

2 : one who is [heartily](#) interested in good food and drink

[heartily](#) (adj.) with all sincerity : wholeheartedly?

Did You Know?

"What God has plagu'd us with this gourmaund guest?" As this exasperated question from Alexander Pope's 18th-century translation of Homer's *Odyssey* suggests, being a gourmand is not always a good thing. When *gourmand* began appearing in English texts in the 15th century, it was a decidedly bad thing, a synonym of [glutton](#) that was reserved for a greedy eater who consumed well past [satiation](#). That negative connotation mostly remained until English speakers borrowed the similar-sounding (and much more positive) [gourmet](#) from French in the 19th century. Since then, the meaning of *gourmand* has softened so that although it still isn't wholly flattering, it now suggests someone who likes good food in large quantities rather than a [slobbering](#) glutton.

[satiety](#) (n.): the quality or state of being fed or gratified to or beyond capacity : surfeit, fullness

[gourmet](#) (n.): a [connoisseur](#) of food and drink

[slobber](#) (v.): to let saliva dribble from the mouth : drool

Examples

"Their love was a tale of two *gourmands*. 'Marty and I fell in love and we loved to eat. Marty knew every restaurant in New York that did second **helpings**, and we knew every restaurant in Queens that didn't charge for dessert.'" — [Marisa Meltzer, *This Is Big*, 2020](#)

helping (n.): a portion of food : [serving](#)

"Chefs and restaurants in South Florida are gearing up to offer *gourmands* a **foodie** fix with live streaming and video channels with cooking tutorials, designed specifically for their culinary fans who can't leave home because of [COVID-19](#)." — [Rod Stafford Hagwood, *The South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 29 Apr. 2020](#)

foodie (n.): a person having an avid interest in the latest food fads

omnipotent

Adjective | äm-'ni-pə-tənt | ahm-NIP-uh-tunt | June 25, 2020

Definition

1 *often capitalized* **Omnipotent** : having absolute power over all : [almighty](#)

2 : having virtually unlimited [authority](#) or influence

3 *obsolete* : being notoriously without moderation : [arrant](#)

arrant (adj.) : being notoriously without moderation : [extreme](#)

Did You Know?

The word *omnipotent* made its way into English through Anglo-French, but it ultimately derives from the Latin prefix *omni-*, meaning "all," and the word *potens*, meaning "potent." The *omni-* prefix has also given us similar words such as [omniscient](#) (meaning "all-knowing") and [omnivorous](#) (describing one that eats both plants and animals). Although *omnipotent* is most often used in general contexts to mean "having virtually unlimited authority or influence" (as in "an omnipotent warlord"), its original applications in English referred specifically to the power held by an almighty God. The word has been used as an English adjective since the 14th century, and since the 16th century it has also been used as a [noun](#) referring to one who is omnipotent.

Examples

"To the *omnipotent* leader, rules and norms are meant for everyone but them." — [Merete Wedell-Wedellsborg, *The Harvard Business Review*, 12 Apr. 2019](#)

"This isn't the Jean-Luc [Picard] who went toe-to-toe with *omnipotent* beings, Klingons, Romulans, and the Borg. This is a man with no ship, no crew..., no purpose." — [Alan Sepinwall, *Rolling Stone*, 23 Jan. 2020](#)

yokel

Noun | 'yō-kəl | YOH-kul | June 26, 2020

Definition

: a naive or gullible inhabitant of a rural area or small town

Did You Know?

The origins of *yokel* are uncertain, but it might have come from the dialectal English word *yokel* used as the name for the [green woodpecker](#) (the nickname is of imitative origin). Other words for supposedly naive country folk are [chawbacon](#) (from *chaw*, meaning "chew," and *bacon*), [hayseed](#) (which has obvious connections to country life), and [clodhopper](#) (indicating a clumsy, heavy-footed rustic). But city [slickers](#) don't always have the last word: rural folk have had their share of labels for city-dwellers too. One simple example is the often disparaging use of the adjective [citified](#). A more colorful (albeit historical) example is [cockney](#), which literally means "cocks' egg," or more broadly "misshapen egg." In the past, this word often designated a spoiled or [foppish townsman](#)—as opposed to the [sturdy](#) countryman, that is.

[slicker](#) (n.): a city dweller especially of stylish and well-groomed appearance or sophisticated mannerisms

[foppish](#) (adj.): behaving or dressing in the manner of a fop

[fop](#) (n.): a man who is devoted to or vain about his appearance or dress : [coxcomb](#), [dandy](#)

[townsman](#) (n.): a native or resident of a town or city

[sturdy](#) (adj.): marked by or reflecting physical strength or vigor

Examples

Many of the town's residents felt that the documentary unfairly portrayed them as [bumbling yokels](#).

[bumbling](#) (adj.): awkwardly blundering or faltering :prone to or marked by foolish mistakes

"Few would have predicted that the guys behind the [frat](#)-house anthem 'Fight for Your Right' would grow into [alt-rock](#) heroes, acclaimed for their innovative sampling and attention to musical craft. By the 2000s, the Beastie Boys were festival headliners, beloved by music fans of all [stripes](#)—from rock [snobs](#) to hip-hop heads to shirtless *yokels*." — [Rafer Guzmán, *Newsday* \(Long Island, New York\), 24 Apr. 2020](#)

[frat](#) (n.): US, informal : [fraternity](#) —often used before another nounfrat houses/brothers

[alt-rock](#) (n.): alternative rock

stripe² (n.): a distinct variety or sort : type

snob (n.): one who tends to rebuff, avoid, or ignore those regarded as inferior