

aardwolf

n
/ 'ärd.wulf /
Afrikaans

a striped hyenalike mammal of southern and eastern Africa that feeds chiefly on carrion and insects.
Termites are the favorite food of the aardwolf.

abacus

n
/ 'abəkəs /
Gk > L

a calculating instrument for performing arithmetical processes by sliding counters by hand on rods or in grooves.
The grocer used an abacus instead of a modern cash register.

abalone

n
/ .abə'lɒnē /
Sp

a gastropod mollusk that clings to rocks tenaciously with a broad muscular foot.
At the beach, Marta made a necklace from the shell of an abalone.

abattoir

n
/ 'abət.wär /
F

slaughterhouse.
At the end of the day the battlefield at Hastings looked like an abattoir.

abdicate

v
/ 'abdəkāt /
L

relinquish formally, renounce.
The crown prince will abdicate his throne so that his brother may rule.

abdomen

n
/ 'abdəmən /
L > F

region of an insect's body.
The three main body parts of an insect are the head, the thorax, and the abdomen.

abecedarius

n
/ .äbē(.)sē'da(a)rēəs /
L

a poem in which the lines or stanzas begin with the letters of the alphabet in regular order.
Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a famous abecedarius.

aberration

n
/ .abə'rāshən /
L

deviation from the natural state or from a normal type.
Jane's outburst at the meeting was a shocking behavior aberration, for her manner is usually so reserved.

abeyance

n
/ ə'bāən(t)s /
L > F + Ecf

[has homonym: obedience]
cessation or suspension (as of a customary practice).
Use of the swimming pool was put in abeyance until a new lifeguard could be hired.

abidance

n
/ ə'bīd^ən(t)s /
E

compliance.
Abidance with the golden rule helps one have a happy life.

ablution

n
/ ə'blüshən /
L

the washing of one's body or part of it as a religious rite.
A common example of ablution in Judaism is washing the hands before a meal that includes bread.

abominable

adj
/ ə'bäm(ə)nəbəl /
L > F > E

worthy of or causing loathing or hatred.
Charlie's abominable pretense of being attracted to Jane was the result of a dare by his friends.

aborigine

n
/ .abə'rɪjə(.)nē /
L

[Note: Could be confused with aborigen.] one of the native people especially as contrasted with an invading or colonizing people.
Cathy Freeman, an Australian aborigine, carried the flame into the Olympic stadium.

abracadabra

n
/ .abrəkə'dabrə /
L

confused or unintelligible language
: nonsense.
Despite the abracadabra in the poem "Jabberwocky," its message is rather clear.

abrasion

n
/ ə'brāzhən /
L

wearing, grinding, or rubbing away by friction.
Moving glaciers caused abrasion on Earth's surface.

abruptly

adv

/ ə'brʌp(t)l̩ /

L

in a manner that produces the effect of a sudden ending.

George's mom stopped abruptly at the door of his room when she saw his pet python on the floor.

abscissa

n

/ ab'sisə /

L

the horizontal coordinate of a point in a plane Cartesian coordinate system obtained by measuring parallel to the x-axis.

Bill was asked to mark the point on the graph at which the abscissa is 4 and the ordinate is 7.

abseil

n

/ 'æp.zɪl /

G

descent in mountaineering by means of a rope looped over a projection above.

In her wilderness survival class, Elisa learned how to perform an abseil without losing control.

abstemious

adj

/ abz'tēmēəs /

L

sparing in eating and drinking.

Evelyn is abstemious by nature and never orders dessert.

abstention

n

/ əbz'tenchən /

L

withholding of a vote.

Helga resented her senator's abstention on the crime bill.

abstruse

adj

/ əbz'trʊs /

L

[has obsolete variant with similar pronunciation: obstruse] difficult to comprehend or understand.

Mr. Thompson's abstruse calculations covered the blackboard.

abysmal

adj

/ ə'bɪzməl /

Gk > L > E

having the characteristics of an abyss : bottomless.

Ahmet jumped his motorcycle over the abysmal gorge.

acacia

n

/ ə'kɑːʃə /

Gk > L

any plant of the genus of woody plants of warm regions having pinnate leaves and white or yellow flower clusters.

Giraffes have specialized teeth that help them comb leaves from the spiny branches of the acacia.

academia

n

/ ,akə'dēmyə /

Gk > L

life and interests associated with a school especially of higher learning.

Robert prefers academia to the business world.

academic

adj

/ ,akə'demɪk /

Gk > L > F

relating to a school, especially an institution of higher education.

Claudia postponed her academic pursuits after learning of her father's serious illness.

accelerate

v

/ ɪk'selə.ræt /

L

add to the speed of or quicken the motion of.

To qualify for the finals, the jogger had to accelerate his pace.

accessible

adj

/ ɪk'sesəbəl /

L

capable of being reached or easily approached.

Wilbur made sure his restaurant was accessible to those in wheelchairs.

accession

n

/ ɪk'seshən /

L > F

the act of attaining or coming to high office or a position of honor or power.

The best seller chronicled the accession of the new prince.

accipiter

n
/ ak'sipədə(r) /

L
any hawk of the genus *Accipiter* (as the Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, goshawk).
Calvin spotted an accipiter darting among the trees.

acclimatization

n
/ ə.klīmədə'zāshən /
L > F + Ecff

the process of adapting to a new temperature, altitude, environment, or situation.
The wild fern's acclimatization to Mrs. Bennett's rock garden amazed her.

acclivity

n
/ ə'klivədə /

L
an ascending slope (as of a hill).
The biker hoped that a downhill stretch would soon follow what seemed to be an endless acclivity.

accolade

n
/ 'akə.lād /
L > F

a bestowal of praise.
Martin received one accolade after another at the awards banquet.

accommodate

v
/ ə'kāmədət /
L

provide with lodgings.
Leah begged the hotel clerk to accommodate her for just one more night.

accomplice

n
/ ə'kæmpləs /
L > F > E

one that participates with another in a crime either as principal or accessory.
The juvenile was convicted as an accomplice in the robbery.

acrescent

adj
/ ə'kresənt /
L

growing continuously; specifically : growing larger after flowering.
After its flower had fallen away, the plant's acrescent calyx became noticeably larger.

accrued

v
/ ə'krüd /
L > F > E

came by way of increase or addition.
Helen argued that many advantages have accrued to society from the freedom of the press.

accumulate

v
/ ə'kyümyə.lāt /
L

heap up in a mass : pile up.
The weather forecaster said that as much as two feet of snow might accumulate overnight.

accurate

adj
/ 'akyərət /
L

correct, exact, precise.
The detective prided himself on making accurate reports of crime scenes.

acerbity

n
/ ə'sərbədə /
L

acidity of temper or tone : astringency or sharpness of manner.
Rosemary remarked with acerbity that her son's chores hadn't been done in days.

acescent

adj
/ ə'sesənt /
L

turning sour or tending to turn sour.
Natalie spit out the acescent milk.

acetylene

n
/ ə'sedʰlən /
L + Gk + Gk

a colorless gaseous hydrocarbon that is explosive when compressed but safe if diluted with nitrogen or acetone.
The welder ran out of acetylene while cutting through the ship's hull.

achondrite

n
/ ā'kän.drīt /
Gk

a stony meteorite devoid of the granular structures known as chondrules.
The claim that the achondrite originated from the moon was based on compositional matches of lunar rocks obtained by the Apollo missions.

acicular

adj
/ ə'sikyələr /
L + Ecf

like a needle in shape : slender and pointed.
Under the microscope, the crystals appear as single acicular structures.

acme

n
/ 'akmē /
Gk

the highest point or stage (as of growth or development).
Many of her fans think Barbra Streisand is at the acme of the music profession.

acolyte

n
/ 'akə.līt /

Gk > L > F > E

one who attends or assists :
follower.

*Not one acolyte remained after the
cult leader's fall from grace.*

acoustics

n pl
/ ə'küstiks /

Gk

the aggregate of qualities (as
absence of echo or reverberation)
of an enclosure (as an auditorium)
or other area that affects
production, control, transmission,
reception, and perception of sound.

*As a result of the renovation, the
acoustics of the concert hall have
improved dramatically.*

acquaintance

n
/ ə'kwāntʰn(t)s /

F > E

familiarity, experience.

*Ruth developed an acquaintance
with Tibetan musical tradition.*

acquittal

n
/ ə'kwidʰl /

L + L > F

[Note: The definition provided is
not the one most commonly
associated with this word.] release
or discharge from debt or other
liability.

*Mr. Churchill was deeply involved
in the game and was too much
indebted to it for his acquittal.*

acre

n
/ 'ākə(r) /

E

any of various units of land area.
*Miriam had to cross a 10-acre field
to get to her favorite swimming
hole.*

acrid

adj
/ 'akrəd /

L

unpleasantly sharp or strong to the
taste or to the smell.

*The acrid sulfur fumes made
Gustavo's eyes water.*

acrimonious

adj
/ ,akrə'mōnēəs /

L > F

caustic, biting, or rancorous,
especially in feeling, language, or
manner : bitter.

*It was obvious that Marjorie's
comments were acrimonious and
complaining.*

acrobat

n
/ 'akrəbat /

Gk > F

one who performs gymnastic feats
or exercises.

*Paul is developing the skills of a
first-rate acrobat.*

acronym

n
/ 'akrənim /

Gk + Gk

a word formed from the initial
letter or letters of each of the
successive parts or major parts of a
compound term.

*The word radar is an acronym of
radio detection and ranging.*

acrostic

n
/ ə'kröstik /

Gk

a composition usually in verse in
which one or more sets of letters
when taken in order form a word, a
connected group of words, or the
regular sequence of the letters of
the alphabet.

*Mrs. Taylor was not at all pleased
with the acrostic her students made
using her name.*

actinic

adj
/ ak'tinik /

Gk > L + Ecf

having photochemical properties or
effects.

*The stars emit actinic rays as well
as light and heat.*

actuary

n
/ 'akchə.werē /

L

one trained in mathematics and
statistics whose business it is to
calculate insurance and annuity
premiums, reserves, and dividends.
*An actuary uses such factors as age
and health status to determine a
person's life insurance premiums.*

acuate

adj
/ 'akyə.wāt /

L

having a sharp point : shaped like a
needle : sharpened.

*Cobb's beagle was distinctive
because of its acuate tail.*

aculeate

adj
/ ə'kyülēāt /

L

marked by incisiveness : stinging,
pointed.

*No actor was spared in the
reviewer's aculeate criticisms.*

acumen

n
/ ə'kyümən /
L

acuteness of mind : keenness of perception, discernment, or discrimination : shrewdness especially in practical matters.
Della's business acumen helped her amass a fortune of over \$50 million.

acuminate

adj
/ ə'kyümənət /
L

tapering to a slender point : pointed.
Steve found one of his parakeet's acuminate tail feathers on the floor.

adagio

n
/ ə'dä(,)jō /
(L + L > OProv) > It

[Note: The definition provided is not the one most commonly associated with this word.] a series of sustained and perfectly controlled dance movements displaying balance and grace.
The wicked fairy performed a perfect adagio just before Sleeping Beauty appeared.

adamantine

adj
/ .adə'man.tīn /
Gk > L > E

rigidly firm : unyielding.
Debra's adamantine chain of logic bedazzled her philosophy professor.

adenoidal

adj
/ .adən'oidl /
Gk

typical or suggestive of one affected with abnormally enlarged glands in the back of the throat.
The critics panned the tenor, whose voice was terribly adenoidal and breathy.

adherent

n
/ .ad'hirənt /
L

a believer in or advocate of a particular thing, idea, or religion.
Julia has been an adherent of Buddhism since 1985.

adjacent

adj
/ ə'jāsənt /
L

living nearby or sitting or standing relatively near or close together.
Citizens of Centerville and its adjacent communities banded together to form a volunteer fire department.

adjunct

n
/ 'a.jəŋ(k)t /
L

something joined or added to another thing but not essentially a part of it.
Exercise is an adjunct to a long and healthy life.

adminicle

n
/ ad'minəkəl /
L

support, auxiliary.
Shelly enjoyed serving as an adminicle of the local Girl Scout troop.

admiral

n
/ 'adm(ə)rəl /
Ar > L

a naval officer of high rank.
Petty Officer Pritchard saluted the admiral and continued to her post.

Adonis

n
/ ə'dänəs /
Gk name

an exceptionally handsome young man.
Nearly all the eighth-grade girls think that Leonardo is an Adonis.

adumbrate

v
/ 'adəm.brāt /
L

give a sketchy representation of : outline broadly, omitting details.
There was time to only adumbrate the escape plan.

advisory

n
/ əd'vīz(ə)rē /
L > F

a report giving information (as one issued by a weather bureau on the progress of a hurricane).

The weather advisory warned small craft that winds would be in excess of 34 knots today.

advocate

n
/ 'advəkət /
L

one that argues for, defends, maintains, or recommends a cause or proposal.

Isabella was sure nobody ought to be, or could be, a greater advocate for matrimony than she.

aerodynamic

adj
/ ,a(ə)rō(,)dī'namik /
Gk

of or relating to the science that treats of the motion of air and other gaseous fluids.

The aerodynamic design of race cars helps them achieve great speeds.

aerosol

n
/ 'a(ə)rəsəl /
Gk + L

a suspension of ultramicroscopic solid or liquid particles in air or gas.

Volcanic eruptions propel hydrogen sulfide into the stratosphere, where it reacts with oxygen to form an aerosol that can persist for more than a year.

Aeschylean

adj
/ eskə'lēən /

Gk name
of, relating to, or suggestive of the Greek tragic poet Aeschylus.

The Aeschylean chorus plays an important role in the plot of the tragedy.

affability

n
/ ,afə'bilədē /
L

sociability.

Miss Smith was delighted with the affability with which Miss Woodhouse had treated her all the evening.

affectionate

adj
/ ə'feksh(ə)nət /
L

having warm regard : loving, fond.
Tipper is the most affectionate collie Susan had ever owned.

affianced

v
/ ə'fiən(t)st /
L > F > E

solemnly promised (oneself or another) in marriage : betrothed.

The ruler of Austria affianced his daughter to the king of France.

affidavit

n
/ ,afə'dāvət /
L

a sworn statement in writing made especially under oath or before an authorized officer.

The police asked Heather to prepare an affidavit regarding what she saw when she surprised a burglar in her house.

affiliate

v
/ ə'filē.āt /
L

attach as a member or branch : bring or receive into close connection.

The university assists in trying to affiliate local high schools.

affiliation

n
/ ə'filē'āshən /
L

the state or relation of being attached as a member or branch.

Professor Bruner retired after a 30-year affiliation with Harvard University.

affinity

n
/ ə'finədē /
L

sympathy especially as marked by community of interest.

Marie felt an affinity with the new chess prodigy, remembering how she had followed Bobby Fischer's early career many years before.

afflatus

n
/ ə'flādəs /
L

a divine imparting of knowledge or power : inspiration.

Most art students are familiar with Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel depicting the afflatus from God to Adam.

agape

n
/ ä'gä.pä /
Gk

spontaneous self-giving love expressed freely without calculation of cost or gain to the giver or merit on the part of the receiver.

The question "What's in it for me?" is unheard of in agape.

agate

adj
/ 'agät /
Gk > L > F

of or resembling a fine-grained chalcedony frequently mixed with opal and having various colors arranged in stripes or bands; especially : of the color of agate.
Rachel's brown agate eyes are extremely unusual and beautiful.

agglomerate

n
/ ə'glämərət /
L

[Note: Could be confused with agglomerant.] a confused or jumbled mass, heap, or collection.
Helen's favorite jeans are somewhere in the agglomerate of clothing on her bedroom floor.

aggrandizement

n
/ ə'grandəzmənt /
L > F

the act, action, or result of making great or greater (as in power, honor, or wealth).
Because she was a commoner, Ruth was accused of marrying the prince for her own personal aggrandizement.

aggravate

v
/ 'agrə.vāt /
L

make worse, more serious, or more severe.

Shane worried that a game of one-on-one would aggravate his ankle injury.

aggregate

n
/ 'agrəgət /
L

a body of units or parts somewhat loosely associated with one another.

The protesters straggled toward the muddy park in a dispirited aggregate as the organizers set up tents and microphones.

agitated

adj
/ 'ajə.tədəd /
L

troubled in mind : disturbed, excited.

The crowd became agitated when the candidate failed to appear.

agnostic

n
/ əg'nästik /
Gk

one who maintains a continuing doubt about the existence or knowability of a god or any ultimates.

Raymond and Olive have been happily married for ten years, even though she is an agnostic and he never misses Sunday morning mass.

agreeable

adj
/ ə'grēəbəl /
L > F

pleasing to the mind or senses : to one's liking : pleasant.

The famous ballplayer proved to be the most likable and agreeable man that Billy had ever met.

agronomy

n
/ ə'gränəmē /
L + Gk

the branch of agriculture that deals with field crop production and soil management.

Vince earned a degree in agronomy at the state university's school of agriculture.

ailanthus

n
/ ā'lan(t)thəs /
Amboinese

a tree of a small genus of East Indian and Chinese trees with greenish flowers.

The ailanthus is fast growing and its shallow, wide-spreading root system effectively anchors the soil.

aileron

n
/ 'ālərən /
L > F

a movable portion of an airplane wing or a movable airfoil external to the wing for imparting a rolling motion and thus providing lateral control.

An aileron is usually situated at the trailing edge of an airplane's wing near the wing tip.

airedale

n
/ 'a(a)(ə)r.dāl /
E geog name

a large terrier with a wiry black and tan coat.

Shantha's airedale is registered with the American Kennel Club.

akimbo

adj
/ ə'kim(,)bō /
E

having the hands on the hips with the elbows projecting outward.

With her arms akimbo, Marion waited for Tim to explain himself.

akropodion

n
/ ,akrə'pōdēən /
Gk

the most prominent point on the back of the heel.

After the hike, Eli had a nasty blister on his left akropodion.

alabaster

adj
/ 'alə,bastə(r) /
Gk > L > F > E

of or resembling alabaster; specifically : having a nearly white color and a light-diffusing surface.

Patsy's alabaster skin gives her a spectral appearance.

alacrity

n
/ ə'lakrədē /
L

cheerful readiness : eagerness.

Dr. Cameron's students always enter his class with alacrity and depart with reluctance.

alary

adj
/ 'alərē /
L

wing-shaped or fan-shaped.

There was an alary membrane on each side of the seed.

albatross

n
/ 'albə.tròs /
Ar? > Pg or Sp

any of a number of large web-footed seabirds that are capable of long-continued flight.

The wingspan of an albatross can exceed ten feet.

albedo

n
/ al'bē(,)dō /
L

reflective power.

Arno researched the effects of soil albedo on vegetation.

albedometer

n
/ ,albəd'āmədə(r) /
L + Gk

a device for measuring the reflection of light (as by snow).

David used an albedometer to measure the reflection of light by the clouds.

albeit

conj
/ ol'bēət /
E

although.

Sonia had a simple, albeit expensive, wedding.

alchemy

n
/ 'alkəmē /
Gk > Ar > L > F

the medieval chemical science and speculative philosophy whose aims were the transmutation of base metals into gold.

The wizard's apprentice was determined to learn enough alchemy to turn lead into gold.

alcove

n
/ 'alkōv /
Ar > Sp > F

a recessed part (as a breakfast nook) of a room.

Silvio found an alcove in the library that was a perfect place for taking a nap.

aleatoric

adj
/ ,ālēə'tōrik /
L

characterized by chance or random elements.

By digitizing thunder and traffic noises, Georgia was able to compose aleatoric music.

alegar

n
/ 'aligə(r) /
E + L > F

sour ale or vinegar made of ale.

While studying in England as an exchange student, Judith developed a taste for fried potatoes with salt and alegar.

alfalfa

n
/ al'falfə /
Ar > Sp

an important European leguminous forage plant.

The farmer alternated his crops, growing alfalfa one season and corn the next.

alfresco

adj
/ al'fre(,)skō /
It

open-air.

Everyone looks forward to the alfresco party that the Smiths hold every Derby Day.

alibi

n
/ 'aləbī /

L
the plea of having been elsewhere at the time an act was committed.
To support his alibi, Jake showed his lawyer a video made during his Hawaii trip.

alien

adj
/ 'ālēən /

L
different in nature or character : far removed.
Nguyen's response to his mother's question had results entirely alien from what he intended.

alimentary

adj
/ ,alə'mentərə /

L
[Note: Could be confused with elementary.] of, concerned with, or relating to nourishment or to the function of nutrition.
Pasta is sometimes called an "alimentary paste."

allargando

adv
/ ,älär'gän(,)dō /

L
in a manner becoming gradually broader with the same or greater volume.
David's piano teacher indicated that the piece was to be played allargando.

allege

v
/ ə'lej /

L
assert, affirm, state without proof or before proving.
Residents of the area allege that the lake water has curative properties.

allegiance

n
/ ə'lējən(t)s /
F > E

the duty of fidelity owed by a subject or citizen to his sovereign or government.
The new citizens pledged allegiance to their adopted country.

allegory

n
/ 'alə,gōrē /

Gk
a story in which people, things, and happenings have a hidden or symbolic meaning.
Gail disliked the moralistic tone of the allegory.

allegro

n
/ ə'le(,)grō /

It > L
ballet steps performed in a lively, fast tempo.
After the allegro, Madame Delacroix instructed the dancers to cool down slowly.

allemande

v
/ 'alə,mənd /
Gmc > L > F

perform a step with arms interlaced.
The caller told the square dancers to allemande left and swing their partners.

allergy

n
/ 'alə(r)jē /

Gk > G
exaggerated or pathological reaction (as by sneezing, itching, or skin rashes) to substances, situations, or physical states that are without comparable effect on the average individual.
Because of her allergy, Mrs. Griffin discouraged her students from bringing in any furry pets for show-and-tell.

alliance

n
/ ə'liən(t)s /
L > F > E

union or connection especially between families, states, parties, or individuals.
The alliance between the two nations has been strong for nearly 50 years.

alligator

n
/ 'alə,gādə(r) /

L > Sp
a reptile having a head not tapering to the snout and being in general much more sluggish than the typical crocodiles.
Jason's favorite sight at the fair was a woman wrestling an alligator.

alliteration

n
/ ə,lid-ə'rāshən /

L + Ecf
the repetition usually initially of a sound that is usually a consonant in two or more neighboring words or syllables (as in "daring deed").
Poor writers rely on alliteration when lacking ideas.

allocate

v
/ 'alə,kāt /

L
set apart and earmark or designate.
Leon hoped the committee would allocate funds for the new playground.

allocation

n
/ ə'ləkāshən /

L
the act of apportioning.
The allocation of powers in the United States Constitution is clearly defined.

alluviation

n
/ əˌlʊvɪ'eɪʃən /
L

the process that results in deposits of clay, silt, sand, or gravel at places in rivers or estuaries where stream velocity is decreased.

The effects of alluviation can be seen along the banks of a large river.

almond

n
/ 'ä(1)mənd /
Gk > L > F > E

the fruit of a small tree; especially : the nutlike stone or kernel of this tree.

The almond is a nut that is easy to crack.

almoner

n
/ 'älmənə(r) /
L > F > E

one who distributes charitable gifts, often for another.

In his role as the king's almoner, Jared tossed a few pennies to the audience.

alnico

n
/ 'älnəˌkō /
L + G > Sw + G

a powerful permanent-magnet alloy containing iron, nickel, aluminum, and one or more of the elements cobalt, copper, and titanium.

Mr. Arkin's factory makes industrial magnets from alnico.

aloof

adj
/ ə'lüf /
E + D? > F > E

removed or distant either physically or spiritually and usually by choice and with indifference to the feelings, opinions, or interests of others.

Greg's aloof personality discouraged his gregarious colleagues.

alopecia

n
/ .älə'pēsh(ē)ə /
Gk

loss of hair, wool, or feathers : baldness.

Prescription drugs such as minoxidil have had limited success in treating alopecia.

alpaca

n
/ al'pakə /
Aymara > Sp

an animal like a llama with fine long woolly hair and domesticated in Peru and adjacent countries.

The petting zoo featured four goats, an alpaca, a pony, and three lambs.

alpenglow

n
/ 'älpənglō /
G + E

a reddish glow or sometimes the entire series of light phenomena seen near sunset or sunrise on the summits of mountains.

Jocelyn and Ruth enjoyed the rich alpenglow from the balcony of their cabin.

altazimuth

n
/ al'tazəməθ /
L + Ar > L

an instrument consisting of a telescope mounted so that it can swing horizontally and vertically.

Josh saw an antique altazimuth in the maritime museum.

altercation

n
/ .öltə(r)'kāshən /
L

dispute carried on with feeling (as anger).

Police broke up a minor altercation between two street vendors.

altiplano

n
/ .ältə'plä(ˌ)nō /
L > Sp

a high plateau or plain : tableland.
A cold northerly wind over the altiplano heralded the arrival of winter.

altitude

n
/ 'ältəˌtüd /
L > E

position at a height.

When the plane suddenly lost altitude, the pilot told the passengers to fasten their seat belts.

altogether

adv
/ .öltə'gethə(r) /
E

wholly, completely, thoroughly.

The suffragettes argued that it was altogether fit and proper that women have the right to vote.

alveolate

adj
/ al'vēələt /
L + Ecf

pitted like a honeycomb.

The porous sandstone had an alveolate surface.

amalgam

n
/ ə'malgəm /
Ar? > L > F

an alloy of mercury with another metal.

Because mercury will form an amalgam with most other metals, it can be used to extract them from ore.

amanuensis

n
/ əˌmʌniəˈwen(t)səs /

L
one who is employed to write from dictation or to copy what another has written.

During the six weeks that Chrissie's arm was in a cast, she completed her homework with her mother as her amanuensis.

amaryllis

n
/ ˌɑməˈrɪləs /

L name
any of several African bulbous herbs grown for their large showy flowers.

Deborah's amaryllis bloomed just in time for the December holidays.

amber

n
/ ˈæmbə(r) /
Ar > L > F

a very hard yellowish to brownish translucent fossil resin that takes a fine polish.

Sarah was delighted when her mother gave her some earrings made of amber.

ambiguity

n
/ ˌæmbəˈɡjuədē /

L
the condition of admitting of two or more meanings, of being understood in more than one way, or of referring to two or more things at the same time.

The ambiguity of Mr. Mitchell's essay questions encouraged creative interpretations.

ambivalent

adj
/ ˌæmˈbɪvələnt /

L
characterized by, suggestive of, motivated by, or exhibiting contradictory emotional or psychological attitude.
Because Tad has a grueling job lined up, he is ambivalent about the upcoming summer vacation.

amblyopia

n
/ ˌæmblēˈɒpiə /
Gk

dimness of sight without apparent change in the eye structures associated especially with the toxic effects of certain drugs or chemicals or with dietary deficiencies.

The doctor told Henry to quit smoking if he wanted his amblyopia to improve.

ambrosia

n
/ ˌæmˈbrɔʒh(ē)ə /
Gk > F

a dessert of a fruit or of mixed fruits topped with shredded coconut.

Cyrus's favorite dessert is his grandmother's ambrosia.

ameliorate

v
/ əˈmɛliəˌrāt /

L
make better : improve.
Activists lobbied to ameliorate prison conditions.

amelioration

n
/ əˌmɛliəˈrāʃən /

L
the act of making better or the state of being made better : improvement.

The committee submitted its recommendations for the amelioration of the undesirable conditions at the overcrowded school.

amenable

adj
/ əˈmɛnəbəl /
L > F

readily brought to yield or submit : responsive, tractable.

Horst is amenable to any ideas for the prom's theme.

amendment

n
/ əˈmɛn(d)mənt /
L + Ecf

the process of changing or modifying in any way for the better (as a motion, bill, act, or constitution).

A well-drafted constitution will provide for its own amendment.

amertoy

n
/ ˈæmə(r)tɔi /

E geog name + E
a small terrierlike dog having a short sleek satiny coat and weighing between six and ten pounds.

Ricky was forever chasing Trixie, the family amertoy, out of the flower beds.

amicable

adj
/ 'aməkəbəl /
L

characterized by or as if by friendship and goodwill.

Carla and Jeanine have had an amicable relationship since they settled their initial dispute.

amice

n
/ 'aməs /
L

[has near homonyms: amas, amiss] a liturgical vestment consisting of an oblong piece of cloth usually of white linen, worn about the neck and shoulders and partly under the alb.

Father Patrick put on a fresh white amice before serving mass.

amity

n
/ 'amədē /
L

friendship and goodwill, especially as characterized by mutual acceptance and tolerance of potentially antagonistic standpoints or aims.

The natural amity between Avital and her sister has helped them maintain strong ties through many family disagreements.

ammeter

n
/ 'a(m).medə(r) /
F + Gk

[has near homonym: amateur] an instrument for measuring electric current.

Perry and Ayrton's ammeter helped measure the efficiency of the battery.

amnesia

n
/ am'nēzhə /
Gk

loss of memory : forgetfulness.

Alice suffered from amnesia as the result of a head injury.

amole

n
/ ə'mōlē /
Nahuatl > Sp

any of a number of plants utilized as a source of soap.

The discovery of an amole created much excitement among the castaways.

amphibian

n
/ am'fībēən /
Gk

[has homonym: amphibion] an animal or plant accustomed or adapted to life both on land and in the water.

The frog is perhaps the best-known amphibian.

amphora

n
/ 'amfərə /
Gk > L

a Greek unit of capacity equal to 10.3 gallons or 39 liters.

The group ordered 1 amphora of punch for the Antiquity Party.

ampicillin

n
/ ,ampə'silən /
ISV

a penicillin that is effective against gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria and is used to treat various infections of the urinary, respiratory, and intestinal tracts.

Pneumonia has been successfully treated with ampicillin.

amulet

n
/ 'amyələt /
L

an inscribed charm believed to protect or aid the wearer.

The archaeologist discovered an amulet in the tomb of an ancient Egyptian ruler.

amuse

v
/ ə'myüz /
L > F

entertain or occupy in a pleasant manner.

The children seemed to tumble about and amuse themselves like good-natured collie puppies.

amygdaline

adj
/ ə'migdəlīn /
Gk

of or relating to a tonsil.

Because of a persistent amygdaline infection, Lana checked into the hospital to have her tonsils removed.

anabasis

n
/ ə'nabəsəs /
Gk

a going or marching up; especially : a military advance.

Hannibal is famous for his remarkable anabasis across the Alps into Italy.

anabibazon

n
/ ,anə'bibəzən /
Gk

the ascending node of the Moon's orbit with the ecliptic.

Lars waited for the Moon to reach its anabibazon so he could confirm his findings.

anabolic

adj

/ .anə'bälík /

Gk + Gk

relating to, characterized by, or promoting constructive metabolism.

The weightlifter was disqualified after it was discovered he had used anabolic steroids.

anaconda

n

/ .anə'kändə /

Singhalese

a large arboreal snake of the boa family of tropical South America.

The anaconda has been known to forage in trees for birds.

anaglyph

n

/ 'anəglif /

Gk

a stereoscopic still or moving picture producing a three-dimensional effect when viewed through colored filters.

Troy begged his parents to take him to the newest anaglyph at the IMAX theater.

anagnorisis

n

/ .anəg'nōrəsəs /

Gk

an incident or solution of plot in tragedy in which the main character recognizes his or her own or some other character's true identity or discovers the true nature of his or her own situation.

The moment of anagnorisis occurs when the boy finds out he is actually the king's son.

anagogic

adj

/ .anə'gäjik /

Gk > L

having a spiritual meaning or a sense referring to the heavenly life.

Terrance recited anagogic poems by a Greek mystic.

analemma

n

/ .anə'lemə /

Gk

a graduated scale shaped like a figure 8 and showing the Sun's declination for each day of the year usually constituting part of a sundial and often shown on globes.

Katrina consulted the sundial's analemma to calculate the correct time.

analogy

n

/ ə'naləjē /

Gk

a figure of speech involving an extended or elaborate comparison between two things or situations.

Hugo used an analogy to illustrate his point, but no one understood the analogy either.

analysand

n

/ ə'naləsənd /

Gk + L > Ecf

one that is analyzed; specifically : one who is undergoing psychoanalysis.

The psychotherapist encouraged the analysand to unburden herself of her anxieties.

anonym

n

/ 'anənim /

Gk

[has homonym: *anonym*] a fictitious name consisting of the real name written backwards.

Pat often uses the anonym Tap when writing secret messages to her friends.

anaphora

n

/ ə'naf(ə)rə /

Gk

repetition of a word or words at the beginning of two or more successive clauses or verses.

"The voice of the Lord" occurred three times in anaphora in the psalm Julie read.

anarchy

n

/ 'anə(r)kē /

Gk > L

a state of lawlessness or political disorder due to the absence of governmental authority.

After the revelation of election fraud, some observers feared that the tiny republic would succumb to anarchy.

anastomosis

n

/ ə'nastə'mōsəs /

Gk

a joining of the parts of a branched system.

Hal pointed out the anastomosis in the veined mulberry leaf.

anastrophe

n

/ ə'nastrə(,)fē /

Gk

inversion of the usual syntactical order of words for rhetorical effect.

In the poem "Jabberwocky," the line "So rested he by the TumTum tree" is an example of anastrophe.

anathema

n

/ ə'nathəmə /

Gk

one that is cursed by ecclesiastical authority.

The Sixth Ecumenical Council pronounced Pope Honorius anathema in A.D. 681.

anaudia

n

/ ə'nōdēə /

Gk

loss of voice : inability to articulate.

anchovy

n
/ 'an.chōvē /

Gk > L? > It > Sp

any of a number of small herringlike fishes; especially : a common Mediterranean form esteemed for its rich and peculiar flavor.

Joshua informed his mother that one anchovy had rendered the entire pizza inedible.

ancillary

adj
/ 'ansə.lerē /

L
serving to aid or assist : auxiliary : supplementary.

Electronic media usually include radio, film, and television, as well as the ancillary industries of audio and video recording.

anecdote

n
/ 'anik.dōt /

F&Gk
a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or curious incident.

The speaker's presentation ended with a touching anecdote.

anemochore

n
/ ə'neməkō(ə)r /

Gk > F + Gk
a plant that has seeds or spores adapted to distribution by wind.
The dandelion is a familiar anemochore.

anemometer

n
/ ,anə'mämədə(ə)r /

Gk > F + Gk > Ecf
an instrument for measuring and indicating the force or speed of the wind.

The anemometer spun furiously as the hurricane approached.

anemone

n
/ ə'nemənē /

Heb name > Gk

a plant or flower of a widely distributed genus of plants with showy flowers that lack petals but have showy sepals.

Xantha picked an anemone from the flower bed.

aneroid

adj
/ 'anə.rōid /

Gk > F

containing no liquid or functioning without the use of liquid.

Tasha carefully monitored the aneroid manometer throughout the course of the experiment.

anglaise

adj
/ äŋ'glāz /

Gmc > F

boiled and served without sauce.

Carrots anglaise are not very tasty.

anise

n
/ 'anəs /

Gk

an herb cultivated for its aromatic seeds.

The flavor of anise is similar to that of licorice.

ankh

n
/ 'aŋk /

Egypt

a cross having a loop instead of an upper vertical arm used especially in ancient Egypt.

Roger's first discovery as an Egyptian archeologist was a gold ankh.

annihilate

v
/ ə'nīəlāt /

L

destroy a considerable part of.

Armyworms can annihilate a beautiful lawn in just a few days.

anniversary

n
/ ,anə'vərs(ə)rē /

L

the annual recurrence of a date marking an event or occurrence of notable importance.

Next Thursday will be the 23rd anniversary of our family grocery store's first day of operation.

annoyance

n
/ ə'nōiən(t)s /

F > E

a source of vexation or irritation : bothersome disturbance.

Vera enjoyed raking leaves on the warm autumn day, but the loud music from the neighbor's yard was an annoyance.

annuity

n
/ ə'n(y)üədē /

L

an amount payable yearly or at other regular intervals (as quarterly) for a certain or uncertain period.

Carl's grandparents set up a trust fund that will provide him with an annuity for the next 20 years.

annul

v
/ ə'nəl /

L > F > E

cause to cease to exist : reduce to nothing.

The legislator's motion to annul the out-of-date law met with the approval of his colleagues.

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Gk + Gk

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n

/ ə'nōdēə /

Gk

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antimacassar

n

/ antēmə'kasə(r) /

Gk + Celebes island geog name
a cover to protect the back or arms
of furniture from Macassar oil or
other hair preparations.

*Fran found the missing
antimacassar under one of the sofa
cushions.*

antimony

n

/ 'antə.mōnē /

Ar? > L > E

a metalloid element that is
commonly metallic silvery white,
crystalline, and brittle and is used
especially as a constituent of alloys.
*Pewter is an alloy of antimony and
tin.*

antipasto

n

/ ,antē'pastō /

L > It

any of various savory foods usually
served as appetizers : hors
d'oeuvre.

*Herbert ordered antipasto for the
table.*

antipodal

adj

/ an'tipəd' /

Gk

situated at the opposite sides of the
earth.

*Regina imagined that she could
reach an antipodal town
somewhere in China if she
continued digging in her garden.*

antiquarian

adj

/ ,antə'kwērēən /

L

dealing in old and rare books or in
secondhand books.

*Pamela went to an antiquarian
bookseller to have her first edition
of Oliver Twist appraised.*

antithesis

n

/ an'tithəsəs /

Gk

the rhetorical opposing or
contrasting of ideas by means of
grammatically parallel
arrangements of words, clauses, or
sentences.

*A Tale of Two Cities opens with the
famous antithesis: "It was the best
of times, it was the worst of times."*

antonomasia

n

/ (,)an.tänə'māzh(ē)ə /

Gk

the making of a common noun or
verb from a proper name.

*The formation of the verb
pasteurize from the name Pasteur
is an example of antonomasia.*

apartheid

n

/ ə'pär.tāt /

D > Afrikaans

a policy of segregation and political
and economic discrimination
against certain population groups.

*The end of apartheid in South
Africa was one of the great world
events of the decade.*

apastron

n

/ a'pastrən /

Gk

the point in the orbit of one star of
a binary where it is farthest from
the other.

*In binary star systems the motion in
the orbits is not uniform but is least
rapid near apastron.*

apathy

n

/ 'apəthē /

Gk

absence or lack of interest or
concern : listlessness, indifference.

*The active interest women are
taking in today's issues strongly
contrasts with the apathy many
women had a century ago.*

aperture

n

/ 'apə(r).chù(ə)r /

L

an opening that restricts a beam of
radiation or a stream of particles;
specifically : the opening in a
photographic lens that admits the
light passing through.

*A photographer typically has to
adjust the shutter speed and set the
aperture.*

apex

n

/ 'āpeks /

L

[Note: The definition provided is
not the one most commonly
associated with this word.] the
point of the heavens toward which
a celestial body is moving at a
given time.

*Helga tracked the planet's
movement towards the apex.*

aphasia

n

/ ə'fāzh(ē)ə /

Gk

[has near homonym: aphagia] the
loss or impairment of the power to
use words as symbols of ideas that
results from a brain lesion.

*As a speech therapist, Tonya takes
a particular interest in patients
struggling with aphasia.*

aphelion

n

/ a'fēlyən /

Gk

the point of a planet's or comet's
orbit most distant from the Sun.

*Earth generally reaches aphelion
around July 4.*

aphid

n
/ 'áfəð /
Gk > L

any of numerous small sluggish insects that suck the juices from plants, causing damage to the plants.

An aphid can cause wilting, distorted growth, or gall formation in plants.

aphorism

n
/ 'afə.rizəm /
Gk > L > F

a terse and often ingenious formulation of a truth or sentiment usually in a single sentence.

Clark lives his life by the aphorism "Clothes make the man."

aplomb

n
/ ə'pləm /
L > F

complete confidence or assurance in oneself : poise.

A seasoned public relations officer, Karen handles difficult situations with aplomb.

apocope

n
/ ə'pəkə.pē /
Gk

the loss of one or more sounds or letters from the end of a word.

The song title "Singin' in the Rain" exemplifies apocope.

apocryphal

adj
/ ə'pəkrəfəl /
Gk

of doubtful authenticity : fictitious, spurious, untrustworthy.

The historian thought the story about the cemetery apocryphal.

apogee

n
/ 'apə(,)jē /
Gk

the point in the orbit of a satellite of Earth (as the Moon or an artificial body) at the greatest distance from the center of Earth.

The transmission delay was longest when the spacecraft reached apogee.

apolaustic

adj
/ ,apə'ləstik /
Gk

devoted to enjoyment.

The students spent the vacation in apolaustic pursuits.

apologue

n
/ 'apə.lɔg /
Gk

an allegorical narrative (as a beast fable) usually intended to convey a moral.

Most schoolchildren are familiar with the apologue of the tortoise and the hare.

apology

n
/ ə'pələjē /
Gk > L > F

an admission to another of a wrong or discourtesy done him or her accompanied by an expression of regret.

The teacher received an apology from the tardy student.

apoplexy

n
/ 'apə.pleksē /
Gk

a sudden loss of consciousness followed by paralysis caused by hemorrhage within the brain—called also "stroke."

When Ray regained consciousness, his doctor told him he was recovering from severe apoplexy.

aporia

n
/ ə'pɔrēə /
Gk

a passage in speech or writing incorporating or presenting a difficulty or doubt.

The Bible verse "Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do?'" is an aporia.

aposiopesis

n
/ ,apə.sɪə'pēsəs /
Gk

the leaving of a thought explicitly incomplete in writing or speaking often by a sudden breaking off and shifting of grammatical construction.

Gail answered with an aposiopesis when she replied, "His problem is—how shall I say?"

apostle

n
/ ə'päsəl /
Gk > L > E

one who is sent forth : messenger.

Many voters regard Ralph Nader as the apostle of protected environments.

apothecary

n
/ ə'pəthəkərē /
Gk > L > E

one who prepares and sells drugs or compounds for medicinal purposes : pharmacist.

The visits of Mr. Perry, the apothecary, were one of the few comforts of Mr. Woodhouse's life.

appalling

adj
/ ə'pɔlɪŋ /
L > F > E

inspiring dismay : shocking.

There was something about the night that was mysterious and appalling.

Appaloosa

n
/ ˌapəˈlʊsə /

American Indian

one of a breed of rugged saddle horses distinguished by a mottled skin and a patch of white hair over the rump and loins that is blotched or dotted with darker color.

Sherry begged her father to buy her an Appaloosa for her birthday, but to no avail.

apparatchik

n
/ ˌäpəˈrächik /

Russ

a Communist secret agent.

Oren and Elaine went to see an old movie in which an apparatchik tries to blow up the Empire State Building.

apparatus

n
/ ˌapəˈradəs /

L

any compound instrument or appliance designed for a specific mechanical or chemical action or operation.

The trainer went into much detail about which apparatus is better for a cardiovascular workout.

apparition

n
/ ˌapəˈrɪʃən /

L > E

ghost, phantom, specter.

The apparition of a figure on horseback, without a head, haunts this enchanted region.

appendages

n pl
/ əˈpendɪjəz /

L

things accompanying or appended to another thing and usually subordinate or not essential to it.

The Abbey-Mill Farm, with all its appendages of prosperity and beauty, was a favorable spot for a walk.

appendicitis

n
/ əˈpendɪˈsɪdɪs /

L + Ecf

an inflammation of the appendix characterized usually by abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting.

The doctor diagnosed Sharon's illness as appendicitis.

appetite

n
/ ˈapəˌtɪt /

L > F > E

the immediate desire to eat when food is present.

George went back to his meal with a good appetite.

apprentice

n
/ əˈprentɪs /

L > F > E

one who learns a trade, art, or craft by practical experience under skilled workers.

Jake hopes to become an apprentice in the stained-glass studio.

approbation

n
/ ˌäprəˈbāʃən /

L

an act of approving formally or authoritatively : sanction.

The mayor's actions have the approbation of none of the other members of the city council.

appropriate

adj
/ əˈprəʊpreɪt /

L

specially suitable : fit, proper.

Calvin had orange hair and the appropriate freckles to go with it.

appurtenant

adj
/ əˈpɜrt(ə)nənt /

F

annexed or belonging legally to some more important thing.

The property insurance covers any additions to the building and to private structures appurtenant to the building.

apropos

adj
/ ˌäprəˈpō /

F

pertinent, relevant.

Rachel wondered if Herman had understood her question, for his answer was not very apropos.

apsidal

adj
/ ˈäpsədɪl /

Gk > L

of or relating to the point of a celestial body's orbit at which it is farthest from the center of attraction.

Laura researched apsidal ocean tidal levels.

aquatic

adj
/ əˈkwädɪk /

L

living wholly or chiefly in or on water.

Porpoises and seals are aquatic mammals.

aqueduct

n
/ 'akwədəkt /
L

an artificial channel for conveying water.

The ancient Romans used the aqueduct to provide water to the city's residents.

aquiline

adj
/ 'akwə.lɪn /
L

curving or hooked like an eagle's beak.

The senator was easily recognizable by his aquiline nose.

arabesque

n
/ ,arə'besk /
Ar > It > F

a posture (as in ballet dancing) in ballet in which the body is bent forward from the hip on one leg with one arm extended forward and the other arm and leg backward in a line parallel to the floor.

The painting depicts a ballerina in a flawless arabesque.

arability

n
/ ,arə'bilədē /
L + Ecf

the state of being fit for tillage and crop production.

Before Caleb bought Jed's property, he had the land checked for arability.

arboreal

adj
/ ər'borēəl /
L

inhabiting or frequenting trees.

The arboreal fauna of Madagascar are endangered by logging.

arboret

n
/ ər'bə'ret /
L + Ecf

a small tree or shrub.

Gwen trekked purposefully through the forest, dodging an occasional arboret but generally heading in a straight line.

arbuscle

n
/ ər'bəsəl /
L

a dwarf tree or treelike shrub.

The gardener recommended that Micah purchase an arbuscle to plant next to the house.

arcanum

n
/ ər'kɑ:nəm /
L

a secret or mysterious knowledge or information known only to the initiate.

Ralph developed a secret handshake as an arcanum for his club.

archangel

n
/ ər'kɑ:njəl /
Gk + Gk

a being in the heavenly hierarchy ranking above an angel.

Joan of Arc had visions of the archangel Michael and saints Catherine and Margaret telling her to raise an army.

archery

n
/ ər'ch(ə)rē /
F > E

the art, practice, or skill of shooting with bow and arrow.

Joe chose archery as one of his physical education electives.

archipelago

n
/ ər'kə'peləgō /
Gk > It

a group or cluster of islands.

The country of Indonesia is an enormous archipelago.

architecture

n
/ ər'kə'tekchər /
Gk > L

the art or science of building; specifically : the art or practice of designing and building structures in accordance with principles determined by aesthetic and practical or material considerations.

The building that housed the department of architecture was, to many students, the most hideous-looking edifice on campus.

archivalia

n pl
/ ər'kə'vālēə /
Gk > L

material preserved in or suitable for preservation in rooms for the exhibition of a collection.

Included in the library's archivalia is a copy of the first edition of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

arcing

v
/ ər'kiŋ /
L

following or describing a curving course.

Waterfalls arcing outward into white plumes plummet down and flow into Cayuga Lake.

ardent

adj
/ ər'dənt /
L

extremely loyal : devoted, faithful.

Bickford was an ardent supporter of environmental causes.

arduous

adj
/ 'ɑːrjəwəs /
L

hard to accomplish or achieve :
difficult.

*Alan was not prepared for the
arduous demands of his
construction job.*

arenaceous

adj
/ ,ɑːrə'nāshəs /
L

growing in sandy places.

*Arenaceous plants develop
blossoms after the first spring rain.*

arenicolous

adj
/ ,ɑːrə'nikələs /
L + L

inhabiting or burrowing in sand :
growing in sand soil.

*Numerous arenicolous organisms
can be found at the beach.*

areology

n
/ ,ɑːrē'äləjē /
Gk

the scientific study of the planet
Mars.

*Todd's interest in areology was
spurred by the discovery of
possible life forms on Mars.*

aretalogy

n
/ ,ɑːrə'taləjē /
Gk

a narrative of the miraculous deeds
of a god or hero.

*Owen was fascinated by the
aretalogy of Hercules' labors.*

argillaceous

adj
/ ,ɑːrjə'lāshəs /
L

of, relating to, or containing clay or
clay minerals.

*The geologist determined that a
large part of the mountain
consisted of argillaceous limestone.*

argosy

n
/ 'ɑːrgəsē /
It

a fleet of ships or of anything
likened to ships.

*The lone schooner had gotten
separated from the argosy in the
inclement weather.*

argot

n
/ 'ɑːrgət /
F

the special vocabulary and idiom
(as slang) of a particular social
group or class.

*Nowadays the argot of many
teenagers includes the word cool.*

argumentative

adj
/ ,ɑːrgyə'mentədɪv /
L

given to or fond of disagreement :
contentious.

*Jill is so argumentative that no one
likes to sit beside her on the bus.*

aristoi

n pl
/ ,ɑːrə'stɔɪ /
Gk

citizens of high rank making up a
governing body.

*When the aristoi ignore the needs
of the common people, they are
sowing the seeds of rebellion.*

arithmocracy

n
/ ,ɑː(ɹ)ɪθ'mākɹəsē /
Gk + Gk

rule of the majority.

*The United States is an
arithmocracy as well as a republic.*

armadillo

n
/ ,ɑːrmə'di(ɹ)lɔ /
L > Sp

any of several burrowing chiefly
nocturnal mammals having body
and head encased in an armor of
small bony plates.

*Using its long, sticky tongue to
extract ants from their nests, the
armadillo may eat up to 40,000
ants at a sitting.*

Armageddon

n
/ ,ɑːrmə'gedʒən /
Gk > L

final and conclusive conflict
between the forces of good and
evil.

*In the Bible, the book of Revelation
mentions Armageddon.*

armature

n
/ 'ɑːrmə'chü(ə)r /
L

[has near homonym: armiger]
armor.

*As part of the preparation for the
contest at the medieval fair, the
jousts were given their choice of
armature.*

armistice

n
/ 'ɑːrmɪstɪs /
L > F

temporary suspension of hostilities
as agreed upon by those engaged in
the hostilities.

*Fortunately, the armistice that
ended World War I turned out to be
permanent.*

arpeggio

n
/ ər'pejē.ō /
Gmc > It

production of the tones of a chord
in succession and not
simultaneously.

*The opening measure of Ryan's
piano recital piece featured a
difficult arpeggio.*

arraignment

n
/ ə'rānmənt /
F > E

an act of finding fault with :
denunciation.

*It seems that every few years there
is a wholesale arraignment of
existing educational standards.*

arrogance

n
/ 'arəgən(t)s /

L
a genuine or assumed feeling of superiority that shows itself in an overbearing manner.

After Sam won the contest, he displayed an annoying arrogance.

arrogant

adj
/ 'arəgənt /

L
exhibiting a level of superiority that is inconsistent with one's position.

Jack's arrogant attitude annoyed his more qualified colleagues.

arsenal

n
/ 'ɑːrs(ə)nəl /

Ar > It
a storehouse or source of supply for arms, ammunition, or other military equipment.

In early 1941 Franklin Roosevelt believed that America's most immediate role was to act as an arsenal for democratic nations.

arsenic

n
/ 'ɑːrs(ə)nik /

Gk > L & F > E
a metalloid element that is used in small amounts in alloys and in the form of its compounds chiefly as poisons (as insecticides), in pharmaceutical preparations, and in glass.

Ingestion of arsenic was listed as the official cause of Tim's mysterious death.

artesian

adj
/ ɑːr'teɪzhən /

F
involving, relating to, or supplied by the upward movement of water under hydrostatic pressure in rocks or unconsolidated material beneath Earth's surface.

The water bubbling up in the pasture was coming from an artesian spring.

arthritis

n
/ ɑːr'thriːdɪs /

Gk
inflammation of one or more joints due to infectious, metabolic, or constitutional causes.

Theo's arthritis kept him from playing tennis.

artichoke

n
/ 'ɑːdʌtʃəʊk /

Ar > It
the flower head of a tall herb that resembles a thistle and is cooked as a vegetable.

Norm demonstrated the proper way to eat an artichoke.

artifice

n
/ ɑːr'dɪfɪs /

L
a wily or artful stratagem.
Emma saw the artifice of Jane's reserved response, and she returned to her first surmises.

artillery

n
/ ɑːr'tɪl(ə)rē /

F > E
the missiles discharged by the weapons of war.
The May Day parade in Red Square was widely known for its display of artillery.

ascension

n
/ ə'senʃən /

L
the act or process of going upward from a lower level or degree.

The article describes Tiger Woods's rapid ascension to the top rank of golfers.

ascertained

v
/ ,asə(r)'tānd /

L > F > E
made sure of : discovered.

In the moonlight, the form of the heretofore unknown might now be ascertained.

ascribable

adj
/ ə'skrɪbəbəl /

L
capable of being attributed to a supposed cause, source, or author.
Dad explained that the two books were ascribable to the same author under different pen names.

askew

adv
/ ə'skyü /

E + F > E
out of line : to one side.
Jared's house was leaning because one of the joists had gone askew.

asparagus

n
/ ə'sparəgəs /

Gk > L
a plant widely cultivated for its tender edible young shoots.
Jack didn't touch the asparagus his mother served him.

aspartame

n
/ 'aspə(r).tām /
L > ISV

a noncarbohydrate crystalline compound that is formed from the amino acids phenylalanine and aspartic acid and is used as a low-calorie sweetener.

Since Bertha began her diet, she prefers foods that are sweetened with aspartame.

aspersion

n
/ ə'spərzhən /
L

a calumnious or defamatory expression or reflection.

Questions about Tom's handling of the club's petty cash cast an aspersion on his honesty.

asphodel

n
/ 'asfədəl /
Gk

any of various Old World usually perennial herbs that bear their flowers in long erect racemes.

Bernice thought that an asphodel would complete the bouquet nicely.

asphyxiated

v
/ ə'sfiksē.ādəd /
Gk

killed or made unconscious by obstruction of normal breathing.

When the volcano erupted, many of the town's inhabitants were asphyxiated by the dust and ashes.

aspirin

n
/ 'asp(ə)rən /
ISV

a white crystalline compound of salicylic acid used especially in tablet form as a pain-killer.

Tests have shown that small, daily doses of aspirin can reduce the risk of stroke.

assassinate

v
/ ə'sasən.āt /
L > F

murder (usually a prominent person).

The newspapers carried gripping accounts of an attempt to assassinate the prime minister.

assess

v
/ ə'ses /
L

determine the rate or amount of.

Joyce's job with the insurance company was to assess damages.

asseveration

n
/ ə.sevə'rāshən /
L

positive or emphatic affirmation or assertion : solemn declaration.

The jury did not believe the defendant's asseveration of innocence.

assiduously

adv
/ ə'sijəwəslē /
L + Ecf

in a diligent, attentive, or solicitous manner.

Lucinda questioned her brother assiduously before his interview.

assimilate

v
/ ə'simə.lāt /
L

receive into the mind and consider and thoroughly comprehend.

Sandy needs time to sort things out and assimilate them properly.

assonance

n
/ 'asənən(t)s /
L + Fcf

relatively close juxtaposition of similar sounds especially of vowels.

"Zip your lips" was the teacher's favorite example of assonance.

assuage

v
/ ə'swāj /
L > F > E

reduce to a state of peace, calm, or quiet : mollify, pacify.

No one could assuage Bertina after she dropped her ice-cream cone.

Assyrian

adj
/ ə'sirēən /

geog name

of, relating to, or characteristic of Assyria, an ancient empire of western Asia.

The doorways of the Assyrian palace of Nineveh were flanked by large winged bulls.

asthmatic

adj
/ əz'madik /
Gk > L

caused by or affected with labored breathing.

Because of Pam's asthmatic condition, her mother had to dust and vacuum the house every day.

astigmatism

n
/ ə'stigmətizəm /
Gk + Ecf

a defect of an optical system (as of the eye) that prevents light from focusing accurately and results in a blurred image.

Amy's new eyeglasses correct her astigmatism.

astringe

v
/ ə'strinj /
L

cause (tissue) to draw together :
constrict.

*Larry uses witch hazel to astringe
his facial pores.*

astronomy

n
/ ə'strænəmē /
Gk

the science that treats of the
celestial bodies.

*Astronomy is a popular topic for
science writers.*

astuteness

n
/ ə'st(y)üt'nəs /
L + Ecf

the quality or state of having or
displaying shrewd discernment and
sagacity.

*The candidate showed political
astuteness in attacking his
opponent's weak arguments.*

atelier

n
/ .ad'lyā /
L > F

an artist's studio or workroom.

*Ken hoped to find some affordable
loft space downtown for his atelier.*

atmosphere

n
/ 'atməsfi(ə)r /
Gk

the air of a given place especially
as affected by a particular
characteristic (as heat, moisture,
wholesomeness, or
unwholesomeness).

*Christy could barely tolerate the
close atmosphere of her one-room
schoolhouse.*

atmospheric

adj
/ .atmə'sfirik /
Gk + Gk > L > F

of or relating to the whole mass of
air surrounding Earth.

*Only two elements are known to be
liquid under atmospheric
conditions: mercury and bromine.*

atrichia

n
/ ā'trikēə /
Gk

congenital or acquired baldness.

*Some dogs are afflicted with
atrichia from birth.*

atrocious

adj
/ ə'trōshəs /
L

markedly inferior in quality.

*Mrs. Diamond vowed to do
something about her grandson's
atrocious table manners.*

atrophy

v
/ 'atrəfē /
Gk > L

undergo a wasting away or
progressive decline.

*Jay knows that his muscles will
atrophy while he recuperates from
surgery.*

attenuate

adj
/ ə'tenyə.wət /
L

tapering gradually often into a long
slender point.

*The locust tree has narrow
attenuate leaves.*

attitude

n
/ 'adətüt /
L > It

[Note: The definition provided is
not the one most commonly
associated with this word.] any
posture held momentarily in
dancing.

*The premier danseur held his final
attitude briefly, then leapt offstage
to thunderous applause.*

attrition

n
/ ə'trishən /
L

a usually gradual loss of personnel
from causes normal or peculiar to a
given situation (as death,
retirement, and resignation in a
labor force) often without filling
the vacancies.

*The CEO promised that all of the
cuts would come from attrition; no
employees would be laid off.*

auctioneer

n
/ .ökshə'ni(ə)r /
L + Ecf

one who conducts the sale of goods
at public auction usually as an
agent on commission.

*The auctioneer at the antique sale
had a booming voice.*

audacious

adj
/ ò'dāshəs /
L

recklessly venturesome :
presumptuously bold.

*Tom's audacious disregard for
physical limitations will catch up
with him sooner or later.*

audience

n
/ 'ɒdɪəns(t)s /
L

[has homonym: audients] those attending a stage or film production or viewing a televised program.
The audience erupted with thunderous applause at the act's conclusion.

audition

n
/ ɔ'dɪʃən /
L or F

a trial performance to appraise an entertainer's merits.
After hearing Alice's stunning audition, the director offered her the role without hesitation.

augur

v
/ 'ɒgə(r) /
L

[has homonym and near homonym: auger and agar] give indirect evidence of : portend.
The club members' enthusiasm and dedication augur success for the club's projects.

auk

n
/ 'ɒk /

ON > Norw or Icelandic any of several black and white short-necked diving seabirds that nest in colder parts of the Northern Hemisphere.
In one of her books, Laura Ingalls Wilder writes of a strange midwinter encounter with a stray bird resembling an auk.

aureate

adj
/ 'ɔːrɪət /
L

marked by a rhetorical style that is affected, grandiloquent, and heavily ornamental.
Many students today have little appreciation of the aureate language of English Renaissance poetry.

aureity

n
/ ɔːrɪədeɪ /
L + Ecf

the distinctive properties of gold.
Pyrite's apparent aureity has fooled many a prospector.

aurelian

n
/ ɔːrɪljən /
L + Ecf

a collector and breeder of moths and butterflies.
Sarah admired the beautiful butterflies pictured in the book by Mr. Jacobson, a well-known aurelian.

auricle

n
/ 'ɔːrɪkəl /
L

[has homonym: oracle] a chamber of the heart that receives blood from the veins and forces it into the ventricle or ventricles.
The heart of a fish has one auricle and one ventricle.

auricular

adj
/ ɔːrɪkjələ(r) /
L

of, relating to, or using the ear or the sense of hearing.
George's understanding of unfamiliar words is auricular; that is, he must hear out loud the words he reads before he can comprehend them.

auriferous

adj
/ ɔːrɪfərəs /
L + Ecf

gold-bearing—used of gravels and rocks.
The auriferous quartz veins sparkled in the sunlight.

aurora

n
/ əˈrɔːrə /
L

the redness of the sky just before the Sun rises.
As the aurora began to brighten the sky, the airline passengers eagerly looked out their windows to see the rising Sun.

auscultation

n
/ ɔːskəl'tæʃən /
L

the act of listening to sounds arising within organs (as the lungs or heart) as an aid to diagnosis and treatment.
Warming her stethoscope with her hands before performing auscultation has become second nature to Dr. Harris.

auspices

n pl
/ 'ɒspəʃɪz /
L

patronage and kindly guidance : protection.
The medical team entered the country under the auspices of the International Red Cross.

austere

adj
/ ɔːsti(ə)r /
GK > L > F > E

stern and unyielding in appearance and manner.
The substitute teacher was austere and humorless.

