
The Word Within the Word • List #17

lingu	<i>(tongue)</i>	bilingual, linguist, lingua franca, linguini, language	<i>Latin</i>
mot	<i>(move)</i>	motor, motivation, demote, emotion, motion, promote, motile, commotion	<i>Latin</i>
nav	<i>(ship)</i>	navy, naval, navigate, circumnavigate, unnavigable	<i>Latin</i>
und	<i>(wave)</i>	inundate, undulate, undulatory, undulation	<i>Latin</i>
flect	<i>(bend)</i>	reflect, inflection, genuflect, deflect, reflection	<i>Latin</i>
coron	<i>(crown)</i>	corona, coronation, coronary, coroner	<i>Latin</i>
aur	<i>(gold)</i>	aura, auriferous, Aurora, auric	<i>Latin</i>
liter	<i>(letter)</i>	literature, illiterate, preliterate, literati	<i>Latin</i>
rat	<i>(think)</i>	rational, ratio, irrational, ratiocinate, rationalize, irate	<i>Latin</i>
sis	<i>(condition)</i>	arteriosclerosis, osmosis, mitosis, meiosis, catharsis, symbiosis	<i>Greek</i>
par	<i>(equal)</i>	parity, disparity, par, compare, incomparable, disparate	<i>Latin</i>
mens	<i>(measure)</i>	commensurate, immense, incommensurable, measurable, dimension	<i>Latin</i>
mony	<i>(condition)</i>	acrimony, harmony, matrimony, ceremony, simony, parsimony	<i>Latin</i>
quin	<i>(five)</i>	quintet, quintillion, quintuplet, quintuple, quintessence, quindecagon	<i>Latin</i>
socio	<i>(society)</i>	sociology, sociable, socialism, sociopath, dissociate	<i>Latin</i>
ovi	<i>(egg)</i>	oviducts, oviparous, ovipositors, ovoviviparous, ovisac, oviform, ovary, oval	<i>Latin</i>
phasia	<i>(speech)</i>	aphasia, dysphasia, apophasia	<i>Greek</i>
pter	<i>(wing)</i>	pterodactyl, helicopter, pterosaur, archaeopteryx, chiropteran	<i>Greek</i>
phen	<i>(appearance)</i>	phenomenon, phenotype, phosphenes, fancy, fantasy	<i>Greek</i>
hist	<i>(tissue)</i>	histopathology, histolysis, histology, histogenesis	<i>Greek</i>
glott	<i>(tongue)</i>	epiglottis, polyglot, glossolalia, glottal, monoglot, glossectomy	<i>Greek</i>
phan	<i>(appearance)</i>	phantom, epiphany, diaphanous, sycophant, cellophane, theophany	<i>Greek</i>
peri	<i>(near or around)</i>	perimeter, perihelion, perigee, periphery, periodical	<i>Greek</i>
pot	<i>(drink)</i>	potable, potion, potation, potatory, compote, symposium	<i>Latin</i>
via	<i>(road)</i>	via, viaduct, trivium, via avion, obviate, obvious, via media	<i>Latin</i>

syn

with • together

The Greek stem *syn*, which we usually define as meaning *together*, is sometimes altered to *sym*, *syl*, *syz*, or *sys* in order to blend with the stem that follows it. Though *syn* often means *together*, it can mean *with*, *at the same time*, or even *by means of*. Here are some of the interesting words that contain *syn* in its various shades of meaning:

- syncline:** a rock downfold. The bones were discovered in the limestone syncline.
- syncope:** dropping sounds. Through syncope, *Gloucester* becomes *Gloster*.
- symposium:** conference. The symposium on the rain forest had little effect on the fires.
- synonym:** a word of similar meaning. He argued that there were no true synonyms.
- synapse:** nerve connection. The neural impulse shot through the synapses.
- symphysis:** bone junction. The two halves of the jaw had grown together at the symphysis.
- symptom:** an indication. The doctor felt a chill when she learned of his symptoms.
- syncretism:** reconciliation of religions. The theological purists rejected all syncretism.
- systaltic:** dilating and contracting. The normal systaltic heartbeat pattern was disrupted.
- syzygy:** pair of opposites. At lunar syzygy, the moon was exactly opposite the sun.
- syllogism:** conclusion from premises. There was an error in his specious syllogism.
- syllabus:** course outline. Dr. Adamson reviewed her syllabus with the students.
- symbiont:** an organism in symbiosis. The rhinoceros liked his blue-feathered symbiont.
- synchronous:** simultaneous. At 4:30 a.m., synchronous explosions rocked the sleeping city.
- syncopate:** shift rhythm. They played the "Closer Walk" theme in syncopated time.
- synecdoche:** part for whole. By the synecdoche of "daily bread," He meant *food*.
- systemic:** affecting the whole organism. It was a virulent systemic infection.
- symmetry:** correspondence of opposites. In psychological symmetry, he loved her, too.
- sympathy:** agreement of feeling. The old enemies met in a historic, new sympathy.
- synthesis:** combination. The synthesis of tensor calculus and physics was space-time.
- syndetic:** connective. The surrounding tissue had a syndetic effect on its contents.

1. The **linguini-loving linguist** knew the **lingua franca**.
2. **Motile** microorganisms have powers of spontaneous **motion**.
3. The navy **circumnavigated** the globe by precise **navigation**.
4. The **undulant** waves soon **inundated** the low regions.
5. As she **genuflected**, she saw her **reflection** in the glass.
6. A hazy **corona** circled the moon the night before the **coronation**.
7. The goddess of the golden dawn, **Aurora**, held the **auriferous** rocks.
8. At the party the **literati** discussed the glories of **literature**.
9. The **rational** person will not **rationalize** his wrongs away.
10. Singing was an emotional **catharsis** for the vocalist.
11. There was a **disparity** between his story and the facts.
12. Are the rewards of the job **commensurate** with the duties?
13. We must decide whether we wish to live in **harmony** or **acrimony**.
14. The **quintet** played Mozart to a group of **quinquagenarians**.
15. The **sociopath** used his knowledge of **sociology** to evil purposes.
16. **Ovoviviparous** fishes produce eggs that hatch inside the mother's body.
17. The **dysphasia** resulted from injury to the speech center of his brain.
18. The stunned shepherd watched the **pterodactyl** fly off with his ram.
19. Are you studying these **phenomena** or this **phenomenon**?
20. **Histology** is the study of the structure of plant and animal tissues.
21. The famous **polyglot** spoke seventeen languages.
22. Soft light came through the **diaphanous** curtains.
23. The moon's **perigee** and the earth's **perihelion** are both tomorrow.
24. The magic **potion** was too vile to be **potable**.
25. His resignation **obviated** the need for impeachment proceedings.

1. A Micropoem: Pasta lovers beware. There is good news and bad news. The bad news is that **linguini** means little tongues, and **vermicelli** means little worms. The good news is that both terms refer to the shape of the pasta, not to the ingredients.
2. A Micropoem: A person who speaks many languages is a **polyglot**. But the literal meaning of the word is many (poly) tongued (glot). It is fortunate that the term is metaphorical, rather than anatomical! One is tempted to suggest that a true polyglot would make short work of an ice cream cone. And what if your blind date turned out to be a polyglot!
3. Why is a helicopter called a **helicopter**? Because as a helicopter goes up or down, its rotating wings (pter) describe a helix (helico) in the air.
4. To ask if the rewards of a job are **commensurate** with the responsibilities is to ask if what you get is on the same scale with what you give. It is to ask if the benefits and the requirements can be measured (mens) together (co).
5. A **phenomenon** is something that one observes and (usually) regards as remarkable. A green cloud would be an interesting meteorological phenomenon. The word phenomenon derives from the notion of something that appears, or something that shines. The two stems **phen** and **phan** are actually variations of each other.

There is a common mistake in usage that occurs with the word **phenomenon** and its plural, **phenomena**. People use the plural when they should use the singular, and vice-versa. To say, "I saw an interesting phenomena" is like saying "I saw an interesting ducks." Just as we don't say *a ducks* or *those duck*, we shouldn't say *a phenomena* or *those phenomenon*.

6. To **obviate** the necessity of a trip is to make it unnecessary, to avoid the problem through anticipation. Literally the word **obviate** means to look ahead for problems, spot them, and take the road (via) away (ob) before you reach them. You take the road away from them.
7. **Trivial** conversation is conversation of no importance. It is jabber, chatter. It is the sort of conversation that, in ancient times when people didn't travel in enclosed vehicles, used to arise when people met at intersections and stopped to talk. Trivial conversation is the sort to be found where three (tri) roads (via) cross. Trivial talk is crossroads talk.
8. **Spanish Cognates**: One of the most important observations to gain from the study of the etymology of English vocabulary is that English and Spanish share thousands of words that are cognates, related words, that have common origins. Often, the English and the Spanish word share not only a stem, but even more than one stem, and often in the same order. As examples, here are some English words from this lesson, and their Spanish cognates:

bilingual : bilingüe
promote : promover
reflection : reflexión
irrational : irracional
compare : comparar
immense : inmenso
helicopter : helicóptero
symbiosis : simbiosis