

# Merriam- Webster's Collegiate<sup>®</sup> Thesaurus

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EDITION



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# A

**aback** *adv* without warning <completely taken *aback* by the neighbors' announcement that they were moving>  
— see UNAWARES

**abaft** *adv* near, toward, or in the stern of a ship or the tail of an aircraft <the lookout in the crow's nest warned that there was an enemy frigate *abaft* and bearing down hard on their ship> — see AFT

**abaft** *prep* at, to, or toward the rear of <a school of porpoises swam *abaft* the fishing boat> — see BEHIND 1

**abandon** *n* carefree freedom from constraint <added spices to the stew with complete *abandon*>

**synonyms** abandonment, ease, lightheartedness, naturalness, spontaneity, spontaneousness, unconstraint, uninhibitedness, unrestraint

**related words** ardor, enthusiasm, exuberance, fervor, spirit, warmth, zeal, zealotry, zealousness; carelessness, heedlessness, impulsiveness, impulsivity, indiscretion, insouciance, recklessness, thoughtlessness; self-consciousness; casualness, offhandedness; excess, excessiveness, immoderacy, incontinence, indulgence, intemperance, licentiousness, permissiveness, wantonness, wildness; blank check, carte blanche, free hand  
**near antonyms** embarrassment, reserve, reticence, self-consciousness, uneasiness; inhibition, repression, self-restraint, suppression; carefulness, discreetness, discretion, heedfulness; discipline, self-command, self-control, self-denial, self-discipline, self-mastery, will-power

**antonyms** constraint, restraint

**abandon** *vb* 1 to give (oneself) over to something especially unrestrainedly <more than ready to *abandon* himself to a life of complete idleness for the duration of his vacation>

**synonyms** deliver, give up, indulge, surrender, yield  
**related words** overdo, overindulge; bask, luxuriate, revel, roll, wallow

**near antonyms** abstain (from), eschew, forbear, forgo (*also* forego), refrain (from); check, inhibit, restrain  
**antonyms** deny

2 to cause to remain behind <*abandoned* the group that he had been hiking with and struck out on his own> — see LEAVE 1

3 to put an end to (something planned or previously agreed to) <the bad weather forced NASA to *abandon* the launch> — see CANCEL 1

4 to stop doing (something) permanently <marriage customs that were *abandoned* decades ago> — see QUIT 2

**abandoned** *adj* 1 left unoccupied or unused <she consciously avoided walking past the *abandoned* house, with its broken windows and sagging porch>

**synonyms** derelict, deserted, desolate, disused, forgotten, forsaken, rejected, vacant, vacated, void

**related words** ignored, neglected, unattended, untended; castaway, cast-off, discarded, jettisoned, junked, refuse, waste; godforsaken, miserable, shabby, wretched; empty, idle

**near antonyms** reclaimed, recovered, redeemed, rescued, retrieved, salvaged, saved; reconditioned, rehabbed, rehabilitated, restored; reseeded

2 showing no signs of being under control <wild, *abandoned* dancing that shocked the staid chaperones at the debutante ball> — see RAMPANT 1

**abandonment** *n* 1 carefree freedom from constraint <sang at the top of her lungs with complete *abandonment* in the shower> — see ABANDON

2 the act of abandoning <the law says *abandonment* by the owner of any building for more than a year entitles the city to sell it> — see DERELICTION 1

3 the act of putting an end to something planned or previously agreed to <the park commissioner cited cost considerations as the main reason for the project's *abandonment*> — see CANCELLATION 1

**abase** *vb* 1 to lower in character, dignity, or quality <was unwilling to *abase* himself by pleading guilty to a crime that he did not commit> — see DEBASE 1

2 to reduce to a lower standing in one's own eyes or in others' eyes <I certainly don't *abase* myself when I do good, honest manual labor> — see HUMBLE

**abash** *vb* to throw into a state of self-conscious distress <felt terribly *abashed* when she walked into the wrong hotel room> — see EMBARRASS 1

**abashment** *n* the emotional state of being made self-consciously uncomfortable <his friends shared his *abashment* when his wife scolded him right in front of them> — see EMBARRASSMENT 1

**abate** *vb* 1 to grow less in scope or intensity especially gradually <interest in the author's home *abated* as her novels waned in popularity> — see DECREASE 2

2 to make smaller in amount, volume, or extent <a couple of aspirin should *abate* the pain> — see DECREASE 1

3 to put an end to by formal action <asked the appellate court to *abate* the lower court's ruling allowing the patient to be removed from life support> — see ABOLISH 1

4 to take away (an amount or number) from a total <I managed to get the used car dealer to *abate* \$200 from the sticker price> — see SUBTRACT

5 to take something away from <recurring problems could not *abate* her of her enthusiasm for the project> — see DEPRIVE 1

**abatement** *n* 1 something that is or may be subtracted <entitled to a tax *abatement* for child care expenses> — see DEDUCTION 1

2 the amount by which something is lessened <there's been a significant *abatement* in noise from the floor above since the upstairs neighbors installed carpets> — see DECREASE

3 the doing away with something by formal action <sought an *abatement* of the court proceeding on the grounds that the plaintiff had no legal standing in the case> — see ABOLITION

**abbey** *n* a residence for men under religious vows <the monks in the *abbey* grow all their own vegetables> — see MONASTERY

**abbreviate** *vb* to make less in extent or duration <had to *abbreviate* his vacation in France in order to travel to Oslo to receive the Nobel Prize> — see **SHORTEN**

**abbreviation** *n* a shortened version of a written work <a recording of musical *abbreviations* that introduces the listener to the great composers> — see **ABRIDGMENT**

**ABC** *n*, usually **ABC's** or **ABCs** *pl* general or basic truths on which other truths or theories can be based (a book on the *ABCs* of computer usage) — see **PRINCIPLES 1**

**abdicate** *vb* to give up (as a position of authority) formally <the revolutionary government forced Nicholas II to *abdicate* the Russian throne>

**synonyms** abnegate, cede, relinquish, renounce, resign, step aside (from), step down (from), surrender  
**related words** abjure, demit, deny, disavow, disclaim, disown, waive; forsake, give up, hand over, yield; abandon, desert, quit, vacate

**near antonyms** appropriate, arrogate, assume, claim, confiscate; seize, take over, usurp, wrest; defend, guard, protect, safeguard, secure

**abdomen** *n* the part of the body between the chest and the pelvis (showed us a tiny tattoo on her *abdomen*, right next to her belly button) — see **STOMACH 1**

**abduct** *vb* to carry away (as a person) forcibly or unlawfully <the gangsters planned to *abduct* the industrialist's young daughter and demand a huge ransom from her family> — see **KIDNAP**

**abduction** *n* the unlawful or forcible carrying away of a person or animal <discredited reports of *abductions* by aliens>

**synonyms** hijacking (also highjacking), kidnapping (also kidnaping), rape, snatch [*slang*]

**related words** imprisonment, seizure, shanghaiing

**abecedarian** *adj* of or relating to the simplest facts or theories of a subject <an *abecedarian* approach to historical study> — see **ELEMENTARY**

**abecedarian** *n* a person who is just starting out in a field of activity <*abecedarians* soon learn that martial arts have a spiritual as well as physical side> — see **BEGINNER**

**aberrant** *adj* 1 being out of the ordinary <a year of *aberrant* weather—record rainfall in the summer, record heat in the autumn> — see **EXCEPTIONAL 1**

2 departing from some accepted standard of what is normal <*aberrant* behavior can be a sign of rabies in a wild animal> — see **DEVIANT**

**aberrated** *adj* being out of the ordinary <you may have taken an *aberrated* path to the correct answer, but you got there> — see **EXCEPTIONAL 1**

**aberration** *n* 1 a serious mental disorder that prevents one from living a safe and normal life <Joan of Arc was certain the voices she had been hearing were not a manifestation of some sort of *aberration*> — see **INSANITY 1**

2 something that is different from what is ordinary or expected <there are some slight *aberrations* in the type due to the nature of old printing presses> — see **ANOMALY 1**

**aberrational** *adj* departing from some accepted standard of what is normal <in wartime what was once regarded as clearly *aberrational* becomes the new norm> — see **DEVIANT**

**abet** *vb* 1 to bring (something volatile or intense) into being <the belief that violent entertainment *abets* violent behavior in the people who partake of it> — see **INCITE 1**

2 to provide (someone) with what is useful or necessary to achieve an end <car thieves are often unwittingly *abetted* by owners foolishly leaving the keys in the ignition> — see **HELP 1**

**abetment** *n* an act or instance of helping

government bailout of the company is being decried as an ill-advised *abetment* of managerial ineptitude> — see **HELP 1**

**abettor** also **abetter** *n* 1 one associated with another in wrongdoing <the man who drove the getaway car in the bank robbery was arrested as an aider and *abettor*> — see **ACCOMPLICE**

2 someone associated with another to give assistance or moral support <without all the neighborhood kids as *abettors*, I would never have gotten all my chickens back in their coop> — see **ALLY**

**abeyance** *n* a state of temporary inactivity <our week-end plans were held in *abeyance* until we could get a weather forecast>

**synonyms** cold storage, deep freeze, doldrums, dormancy, holding pattern, latency, moratorium, quiescence, suspended animation, suspense, suspension

**related words** inaction, inertia, inertness, motionlessness; impasse, standstill; coma, hibernation, hypnosis, repose, rest, sleep, slumber, torpor; recess, recession, remission; downtime, idleness, layoff

**near antonyms** recommencement, renewal, resumption, resuscitation

**antonyms** continuance, continuation

**abhor** *vb* to dislike strongly <*abhors* the way people leave their trash at the picnic sites in the park> — see **HATE**

**abhorrence** *n* 1 something or someone that is hated <one of the changes in American society that remains a particular *abhorrence* of social conservatives> — see **HATE 2**

2 a very strong dislike <my firm *abhorrence* of all forms of hypocrisy> — see **HATE 1**

**abhorrent** *adj* 1 causing intense displeasure, disgust, or resentment <he considers it *abhorrent* the way she keeps her dogs penned up all the time> — see **OFFENSIVE 1**

2 feeling or showing open dislike for someone or something regarded as undeserving of respect or concern <she's *abhorrent* of the nonsense that the tabloid media pass off as news> — see **CONTEMPTUOUS 1**

**abidance** *n* 1 the following of a custom, rule, or law <the FDA requires strict *abidance* by food manufacturers of its definitions for certain terms used on product labels> — see **OBSERVANCE 1**

2 uninterrupted or lasting existence <the reassuring *abidance* of their friendship through times both good and bad> — see **CONTINUATION**

**abide** *vb* 1 to continue to be in a place for a significant amount of time <refused to *abide* where it was clear that he wasn't wanted> — see **STAY 1**

2 to have a home <the charming fantasy that fairies *abide* in the cup-shaped flowers dotting the woodland floor> — see **LIVE 1**

3 to put up with (something painful or difficult) <cannot *abide* being in huge crowds> — see **BEAR 2**

4 to remain indefinitely in existence or in the same state <the village's once-honored ways no longer *abide* and now exist only in the memories of a few elders> — see **CONTINUE 1**

**abiding** *adj* having an existence or validity that does not change or diminish <I have an *abiding* interest in animal welfare—it's not just a phase I'm going through>

**synonyms** ageless, continuing, dateless, enduring, eternal, everlasting, immortal, imperishable, lasting, ongoing, perennial, perpetual, timeless, undying

**related words** ceaseless, endless, permanent; changeless, constant, stable, stationary, steady, unchanging, unvarying

**near antonyms** antiquated, archaic, dated, obsolete, outdated, outmoded, out-of-date, outworn, passé

**ability** *n* the physical or mental power to do something

⟨as a result of the accident the once-vigorous athlete lost the *ability* to walk⟩

**synonyms** capability, capableness, capacity, competence, competency, faculty

**related words** aptitude, aptness, endowment, equipment, facility, gift, knack, talent; address, adroitness, deftness, dexterity, hand, prowess, skill; gray matter, instinct, intelligence, ken, reason, understanding; might, potency, puissance, staying power, stuff; adequacy, effectiveness, effectualness, fitness, form, influence, resourcefulness, usefulness; means, resources, wherewithal

**near antonyms** helplessness, impotence, paralysis, powerlessness, weakness; defectiveness, deficiency, inadequacy, inadequateness, ineffectiveness, ineffectuality, ineffectualness, inefficaciousness, inefficacy, uselessness; debilitation, disablement, impairment, incapacitation

**antonyms** disability, inability, incapability, incapable-ness, incapacity, incompetence, incompetency, ineptitude, ineptness

**abject** *adj* showing, expressing, or offered in a spirit of humility or unseemly submissiveness ⟨demanded nothing less than an *abject* apology from them⟩

**synonyms** base, humble, menial, servile, slavish  
**related words** hangdog, lamblike, sheepish; demure, lowly, meek, modest, retiring, unassuming, unpretentious; fawning, sycophant, sycophantic, toadyish

**near antonyms** arrogant, haughty, high-handed, imperious, lordly, supercilious, superior, uppity

**abjection** *n* a sinking to a state of low moral standards and behavior ⟨sees the corporate scandal as yet another sign of the general *abjection* of our society⟩ — see CORRUPTION 2

**abjectly** *adv* in a manner showing no signs of pride or self-assertion ⟨she was so sincerely and *abjectly* apologetic that he was won over⟩ — see LOWLY

**abjure** *vb* 1 to solemnly or formally reject or go back on (as something formerly adhered to) ⟨*abjured* some long-held beliefs when she converted to another religion⟩

**synonyms** abnegate, forswear (also foreswear), recant, renege, renounce, repeal, repudiate, retract, take back, unsay, withdraw

**related words** contradict, deny, disavow, disclaim, disown, gainsay, negate, negative; abandon, bolt, forsake, give up, relinquish, spurn, surrender; controvert, disagree (with), disprove, dispute, rebut, refute; back down, back off, backtrack; disallow, recall, revoke

**near antonyms** acknowledge, admit, affirm, assert, avow, claim, contend, declare, maintain, proclaim, profess, state, vouch, vow; back, confirm, defend, endorse (also indorse), espouse, maintain, support, uphold; accept, adopt, embrace

**antonyms** adhere (to)  
2 to resist the temptation of ⟨a strict religious sect that *abjures* the luxuries, comforts, and conveniences of the modern world⟩ — see FORBEAR

**ablaze** *adj* 1 being on fire ⟨the entire block was *ablaze* by the time firefighters arrived⟩

**synonyms** afire, aflame, alight [chiefly British], blazing, burning, combusting, conflagrant, fiery, flaming, ignited, inflamed (also enflamed), kindled, lit (or lighted)

**related words** aglow, flaring, flickering, glowing, live, smoldering (or smouldering); broiling, hot, piping hot, red-hot, roasting, scalding, scorching, searing, sizzling; burned (or burnt), charred, incinerated, scorched, seared, singed

**near antonyms** choked, damped, dead, doused (also dowsed), extinguished, quenched, smothered, snuffed (out), stamped (out), suffocated

2 filled with much light ⟨that night the hall was *ablaze*

with light, looked very different from the curtained room it usually was by day⟩ — see BRIGHT 2

**able** *adj* having the required skills for an acceptable level of performance ⟨looking for an *able* and reliable assistant⟩ — see COMPETENT 1

**able-bodied** *adj* enjoying health and vigor ⟨every *able-bodied* young man in the village had been sent off to fight in the war⟩ — see HEALTHY 1

**ably** *adv* in a skillful or expert manner ⟨*ably* maneuvered the boat up to the dock⟩ — see WELL 3

**abnegate** *vb* 1 to give up (as a position of authority) formally ⟨*abnegated* all claims to the deceased lord's domain⟩ — see ABDICATE

2 to solemnly or formally reject or go back on (as something formerly adhered to) ⟨felt that if the Congress adopted these security measures, it would be *abnegating* the nation's fundamental commitment to individual rights⟩ — see ABJURE 1

**abnegation** *n* the act or practice of giving up or rejecting something once enjoyed or desired ⟨the couple's sudden *abnegation* of life in the fast lane for work as missionaries stunned everyone⟩ — see RENUNCIATION

**abnormal** *adj* 1 being out of the ordinary ⟨a completely *abnormal* school day, because half of the kids were out sick⟩ — see EXCEPTIONAL 1

2 departing from some accepted standard of what is normal ⟨noticed his *abnormal* breathing and took him to the emergency room⟩ — see DEVIANT

**abnormality** *n* 1 a person, thing, or event that is far from normal ⟨the *abnormalities* in the tree's leaves are caused by disease⟩ — see FREAK 1

2 something that is different from what is ordinary or expected ⟨let the vet know if you notice any *abnormalities* in your pet's behavior⟩ — see ANOMALY 1

**abode** *n* the place where one lives ⟨welcome to my humble *abode*⟩ — see HOME 1

**aboil** *adj* marked by much life, movement, or activity ⟨even in the wee hours of the morning, his mind is *aboil* with new ideas⟩ — see ALIVE 2

**abolish** *vb* 1 to put an end to by formal action ⟨the U.S. *abolished* slavery by constitutional amendment on December 6, 1865⟩

**synonyms** abate, abrogate, annul, avoid, cancel, disannul, dissolve, invalidate, negate, null, nullify, quash, repeal, rescind, roll back, strike down, vacate, void

**related words** countermand, override, overrule, overturn, veto; abort, call, call off, drop, recall, retract, reverse, revoke, suspend, withdraw; ban, enjoin, forbid, outlaw, prohibit; disallow, dismiss, reject; annihilate, break down, eliminate, eradicate, erase, liquidate, remove, throw out, write off

**phrases** do away with, set aside  
**near antonyms** enact, lay down, legislate; establish, found, institute; formalize, legalize, legitimate, legitimize, validate; pass, ratify; allow, approve, authorize, clear, endorse (also indorse), permit, sanction, warrant; command, decree, mandate, order, prescribe

2 to destroy all traces of ⟨if only there were a way that we could *abolish* hatred and intolerance⟩ — see ANNIHILATE 1

**abolishment** *n* the doing away with something by formal action ⟨recurrent calls for the *abolishment* of the electoral college⟩ — see ABOLITION

**abolition** *n* the doing away with something by formal action ⟨calls for the *abolition* of the death penalty⟩

**synonyms** abatement, abolishment, abrogation, annulment, avoidance, cancellation (also cancelation), defeasance, dissolution, invalidation, negation, nullification, quashing, repeal, rescindment, voiding

**related words** abortion, calling off, recall; countermand, override, overruling, overturn, veto; retraction, revocation, suspension, withdrawal; banning,