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Alps in the north and the Apennines running the length of the peninsula. Official language: Italian. Religion: Roman Catholic majority. Currency: lira. Capital: Rome. Pop.: 57 500 000 (1996). Area: 301 247 sq. km (116 312 sq. miles). Italian name: **Italia**.

Ikar Tass (i'ka: tæs) *n* a news agency serving Russia, eastern Europe, and central Asia, created in 1992 to replace the former Soviet news agency Tass. [Information Telegraph Agency of Russia, Telegraph Agency of Sovereign States]

ITC (in Britain) *abbrev. for* Independent Television Commission.

itch (itʃ) *n* 1 an irritation or tickling sensation of the skin causing a desire to scratch. 2 a restless desire. 3 any skin disorder, such as scabies, characterized by intense itching. ♦ *vb* 4 (*intr*) to feel or produce an irritating or tickling sensation. 5 (*intr*) to have a restless desire (to do something). 6 *Not standard.* to scratch (the skin). 7 **itching palm**, a grasping nature; avarice. 8 **have itchy feet**, to be restless; have a desire to travel. [Old English *gīccēan* to itch, of Germanic origin] ▶ **itchy adj** ▶ **itchiness *n***

itch mite *n* any mite of the family *Sarcoptidae*, all of which are skin parasites, esp. *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which causes scabies.

-ite *suffix forming nouns*. 1 a native or inhabitant of: *Israelite*. 2 a follower or advocate of; a member or supporter of a group: *Luddite*; *laborite*. 3 (in biology) indicating a division of a body or organ: *somite*. 4 indicating a mineral or rock: *nephrite*; *peridotite*. 5 indicating a commercial product: *vulcanite*. [via Latin *-ita* from Greek *-itēs* or directly from Greek]

-ite² *suffix forming nouns*, indicating a salt or ester of an acid having a name ending in *-ous*; a *nitrite* is a salt of *nitrous acid*. [from French, arbitrary alteration of *-ATE*]

item (i'taɪm) 1 a thing or unit, esp. included in a list or collection. 2 *Book-keeping*, an entry in an account. 3 a piece of information, detail, or note: *a news item*. 4 *Informal*, two people having a romantic or sexual relationship. ♦ *vb* (i'taɪm). 5 (*tr*) an archaic word for **itemize**. ♦ *adv* (i'taɪm). 6 likewise; also. [C14 (adv) from Latin: in like manner]

itemize or **itemise** (i'taɪ,maɪz) *vb* (*tr*) to put on a list or make a list of. ▶ **itemization** or **itemisation *n***

item veto *n* (in the U.S.) the power of a state governor to veto items in bills without vetoing the entire measure.

Iténez (i'teneθ) *n* the Spanish name for the **Guaporé**.

iterate (i'taɪ,reit) *vb* (*tr*) to say or do again; repeat. [C16: from Latin *iterāre*, from *iterum* again] ▶ **iterant adj** ▶ **iteration** or **iterance *n***

iterative (i'taɪrətɪv) *adj* 1 repetitious or frequent. 2 *Maths, logic*, for **recursive**. 3 *Grammar*, another word for **frequentative**. ▶ **iteratively adv** ▶ **iterativeness *n***

Ithaca (i'thəka) *n* a Greek island in the Ionian Sea, the smallest of the Ionian Islands; regarded as the home of Homer's *Odyssey*. Area: 93 sq. km (36 sq. miles). Modern Greek name: **Itháki** (i'thaki). ▶ **Ithacan *n, adj***

ither (i'thər) *determiner* a Scot. word for **other**.

ithunn (i'tʊn) *n* a variant of **Idun**.

ithyphallic (i'thɪ'fælkɪk) *adj* 1 *Prosody*, (in classical verse) of or relating to the usual metre in hymns to Bacchus. 2 of or relating to the phallus carried in the ancient festivals of Bacchus. 3 (of sculpture and graphic art) having or showing an erect penis. ♦ *n* 4 *Prosody*, a poem in ithyphallic metre. [C17: from Late Latin, from Greek *ithyphallos*, from *ithuphallos* erect phallus, from *ithus* straight + *phallos* PHALLUS]

itinerancy (i'tɪnərənsɪ, aɪ-) or **itinerancy *n*** 1 the act of itinerating. 2 *Christy Methodist Church*, the system of appointing a minister to a circuit of churches or chapels. 3 itinerants collectively.

itinerant (i'tɪnərənt, aɪ-) *adj* 1 itinerating. 2 working for a short time in various places, esp. as a casual labourer. ♦ *n* 3 an itinerant worker or other person. [C16: from Late Latin *itinerārī* to travel, from *iter* a journey] ▶ **itinerantly adv**

itinerary (aɪ'tɪnərɪ, i-) *n, pl -aries*. 1 a plan or line of travel; route. 2 a record of a journey. 3 a guidebook for travellers. ♦ *adj* 4 of or relating to travel or routes of travel. 5 a less common word for **itinerant**.

itinerate (aɪ'tɪnə,reit, i-) *vb* (*intr*) to travel from place to place. ▶ **itineration *n***

-itious *suffix forming adjectives*, having the nature of; characterized by: *nutritious*; *supposititious*. [from Latin *-icius*, *-itiosus*]

-itis *suffix forming nouns*. 1 indicating inflammation of a specified part: *tonsillitis*. 2 *Informal*, indicating a preoccupation with or imaginary condition of illness caused by: *computeritis*; *telephonitis*. [New Latin, from Greek, feminine of *-ites* belonging to; see *-ITE*]

it¹ (i't¹) *contraction* of it will or it shall.

ito (i'təu) *n* Prince **Hirobumi** (hi'rəb'u:mi). 1841–1909, Japanese statesman; premier (1884–88; 1892–96; 1898; 1900–01). He led the movement to modernize Japan and helped to draft the Meiji constitution (1889); assassinated.

ITO *abbrev. for* International Trade Organization.

-itol *suffix forming nouns*, indicating that certain chemical compounds are polyhydric alcohols: *inositol*; *sorbitol*. [from *-ITE*² + *-OL*]

its (ɪts) *determiner* a of, belonging to, or associated in some way with: *its left rear wheel*. **b** (as pronoun): *each town claims its is the best*.

it's (ɪts) *contraction* of it is or it has.

itself (ɪt'self) *pron* 1a the reflexive form of **it**. 1b (intensifier): *even the money itself won't convince me*. 2 (preceded by a copula) its nonnal or usual self: *my cat isn't itself today*.

itsy-bitsy ('ɪtsɪ'bitɪs) or **itty-bitty** ('ɪtɪ'bitɪ) *adj* *Informal*, very small; tiny. [C20: baby talk alteration of *little bit*]

ITU *abbrev. for*: 1 *Intensive Therapy Unit*. 2 *International Telecommunications Union*.

Iturbide (Spanish 'iβturedɛ) *n* **Agustín de** (ayus'tɪn de). 1783–1824, Mexican

nationalist and emperor (1822–23). He was forced to abdicate and later executed.

ITV (in Britain) *abbrev. for* Independent Television.

-ity *suffix forming nouns*, indicating state or condition: *technicality*. [from Old French *-ite*, from Latin *-itās*]

i-type semiconductor *n* another name for **intrinsic semiconductor**.

IU *abbrev. for*: 1 immunizing unit. 2 international unit.

IU(CD) *abbrev. for* intrauterine (contraceptive) device.

Iulus (aɪ'ju:ləs) *n* 1 another name for **Ascanius**. 2 the son of Ascanius, founder of the Julian gens or clan.

-ium or *sometimes -um* *suffix forming nouns*. 1 indicating a metallic element: *platinum*; *barium*. 2 (in chemistry) indicating groups forming positive ions: *ammonium chloride*; *hydroxonium ion*. 3 indicating a biological structure: *syncytium*. [New Latin, from Latin, from Greek *-ion*, diminutive suffix]

i.v. *abbrev. for*: 1 initial velocity. 2 Also: **IV**, intravenous(ly).

Ivan III ('aɪvən) *n* known as **Ivan the Great**. 1440–1505, grand duke of Muscovy (1462–1505). He expanded Muscovy, defeated the Tatars (1480), and assumed the title of Ruler of all Russia (1472).

Ivan IV *n* known as **Ivan the Terrible**. 1530–84, grand duke of Muscovy (1533–47) and first tsar of Russia (1547–84). He conquered Kazan (1552), Astrakhan (1556), and Siberia (1581), but was defeated by Poland in the Livonian War (1558–82) after which his rule became increasingly oppressive.

Ivanovo (Russian i'vanəvə) *n* a city in W central Russia, on the Uvod River: textile centre. Pop.: 474000 (1995 est.). Former name (1871–1932): **Ivanovo-Voznesensk** (-vəznɪ'sjensk).

IVB *abbrev. for* invalidity benefit.

I've (aɪv) *contraction* of I have.

-ive *suffix*. 1 (*forming adjectives*) indicating a tendency, inclination, character, or quality: *divisive*; *prohibitive*; *festive*; *massive*. 2 (*forming nouns of adjectival origin*): *detective*; *expletive*. [from Latin *-ivus*]

ivermectin (aɪv'mektɪn) *n* a drug that kills parasitic nematode worms, mites, and insects. It is used to treat a variety of parasitic infections in domestic animals and has shown encouraging results in preliminary trials for treating onchocerciasis in humans.

Ives (aɪvz) *n* 1 **Charles Edward**. 1874–1954, U.S. composer, noted for his innovative use of polytonality, polyrhythms, and quarter tones. His works include *Second Piano Sonata: Concord* (1915), five symphonies, chamber music, and songs. 2 **Frederick Eugene**. 1856–1937, U.S. inventor of halftone photography.

IVF *abbrev. for* in vitro fertilization.

ivied ('aɪvɪd) *adj* covered with ivy.

Izba (Spanish i'βa) *n* a variant spelling of **Ibiza**.

Ivorian (aɪ'vɔ:riən) *n* 1 a native or inhabitant of the Côte d'Ivoire. ♦ *adj* 2 of or relating to the Côte d'Ivoire or its inhabitants.

ivorries ('aɪvərɪz, -vɪz) *pl n* *Slang*. 1 the keys of a piano. 2 another word for **teeth**. 3 another word for **dice**.

ivory ('aɪvəri, -vɪ) *n, pl -ries*. 1a a hard smooth creamy white variety of dentine that makes up a major part of the tusks of elephants, walrus, and similar animals. 1b (as modifier): *ivory ornaments*. 2 a tusk made of ivory. 3a a yellowish-white colour; cream. 3b (as adj): *ivory shoes*. 4 a substance resembling elephant tusk. 5 an ornament, etc., made of ivory. 6 **black ivory**. *Obsolete*. Black slaves collectively. ♦ See also **ivorries**. [C13: from Old French *ivurie*, from Latin *evoreus* made of ivory, from *ebur* ivory; related to Greek *elephas* IVORY, ELEPHANT] ▶ **ivory-like adj**

Ivory ('aɪvəri) *n* **James**, born 1928, U.S. film director. With the producer Ismael Merchant, his films include *Shakespeare Wallah* (1964), *Heat and Dust* (1983), *A Room With a View* (1986), and *The Remains of the Day* (1993).

ivory black *n* a black pigment obtained by grinding charred scraps of ivory in oil.

Ivory Coast *n* the former name (until 1986) of **Côte d'Ivoire**.

ivory gull *n* a white gull, *Pagophila* (or *Larus*) *eburmeus*, mostly confined to arctic regions.

ivory nut *n* 1 the seed of the ivory palm, which contains an ivory-like substance used to make buttons, etc. 2 any similar seed from other palms. ♦ Also called: **vegetable ivory**.

ivory palm *n* a low-growing South American palm tree, *Phytelephas macrocarpa*, that yields the ivory nut.

ivory tower ('taʊə) *n* a seclusion or remoteness of attitude regarding real problems, everyday life, etc. **b** (as modifier): *ivory-tower aestheticism*. ▶ **ivory-towered adj**

ivorywood ('aɪvən,wʊd) *n* 1 the yellowish-white wood of an Australian tree, *Siphonodonta australe*, used for engraving, inlaying, and turnery. 2 the tree itself: family *Siphonodontaceae*.

IVR *abbrev. for* International Vehicle Registration.

ivy ('aɪvɪ) *n, pl ivies*. 1 any woody climbing or trailing araliaceous plant of the Old World genus *Hedera*, esp. *H. helix*, having lobed evergreen leaves and black berry-like fruits. 2 any of various other climbing or creeping plants, such as Boston ivy, poison ivy, and ground ivy. [Old English *ifig*; related to Old High German *ebah*, perhaps to Greek *iphuon* a plant] ▶ **ivy-like adj**

Ivy League *n* U.S. a the. a group of eight universities (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth College, Harvard, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Yale) that have similar academic and social prestige in the U.S. to Oxford and Cambridge in Britain. **b** (as modifier): *an Ivy-League education*.

iwi ('ɪwi) *n* N.Z. a Maori tribe. [Maori]

iwis or **ywis** ('ɪwɪs) *adv* an archaic word for **certainly**. [C12: from Old English *gewiss* certain]

Iwo ('i:wəʊ) *n* a city in SW Nigeria. Pop.: 353000 (1995 est.).

Iwo Jima ('dʒɪ:mə) *n* an island in the W Pacific, about 1100 km (700 miles)

mean lethal dose *n* another term for **median lethal dose**.

mean life *n* *Physics*. the average time of existence of an unstable or reactive entity, such as a nucleus, elementary particle, charge carrier, etc.; lifetime. It is equal to the half-life divided by 0.693 15. Symbol: τ

means (mi:nz) *n* 1 (*functioning as sing or pl*) the medium, method, or instrument used to obtain a result or achieve an end: *a means of communication*. 2 (*functioning as pl*) resources or income. 3 (*functioning as pl*) considerable wealth or income: *a man of means*. 4 **by all means**. without hesitation or doubt; certainly: *come with us by all means*. 5 **by means of**. with the use or help of. 6 **by no manner of means**. definitely not: *he was by no manner of means a cruel man*. 7 **by no (or not by any) means**. on no account; in no way: *by no means come!*

mean sea level *n* (in the UK) the sea level used by the Ordnance Survey as a datum level, determined at Newlyn in Cornwall. See **sea level**.

means of production *pl n* (in Marxist theory) the raw materials and means of labour (tools, machines, etc.) employed in the production process.

mean solar day *n* the time between two successive passages of the mean sun across the meridian at noon. It equals the earth's rotation period, which is not precisely constant at 24 hours when checked against atomic time.

means test *n* a test involving the checking of a person's income to determine whether he qualifies for financial or social aid from a government. Compare **needs test**. ▶ **'means-tested** *adj*

mean sun *n* an imaginary sun moving along the celestial equator at a constant speed and completing its annual course in the same time as the sun takes to move round the ecliptic at a varying speed. It is used in the measurement of mean solar time.

meant (ment) *vb* the past tense and past participle of **mean**¹.

mean time or **mean solar time** *n* the time, at a particular place, measured in terms of the passage of the mean sun; the timescale is not precisely constant. See **mean solar day**.

meantime ('mi:n,taim) *n* 1 the intervening time or period, as between events (esp. in the phrase *in the meantime*). ♦ *adv* 2 another word for **meanwhile**.

mean-tone tuning *n* See **temperament** (sense 4).

meanwhile ('mi:n,wail) *adv* 1 during the intervening time or period. 2 at the same time, esp. in another place. ♦ *n* 3 another word for **meantime**.

meany ('mi:ni) *n* *Informal*. a variant spelling of **meanie**.

Mearns (me:nz) *n* the. another name for **Kincardineshire**.

meas. *abbrev.* for **measure**.

measled ('mi:zld) *adj* (of cattle, sheep, or pigs) infested with tapeworm larvae; measly.

measles ('mi:zls) *n* (*functioning as sing or pl*) 1 a highly contagious viral disease common in children, characterized by fever, profuse nasal discharge of mucus, conjunctivitis, and a rash of small red spots spreading from the forehead down to the limbs. Technical names: **morbilli**, **rubeola**. See also **German measles**. 2 a disease of cattle, sheep, and pigs, caused by infestation with tapeworm larvae. [C14: from Middle Low German *masele* spot on the skin; influenced by Middle English *mesel* leper, from Latin *misellus*, diminutive of *miser* wretched]

measly ('mi:zli) *adj* -**slier**, -**sliest**. 1 *Informal*. meagre in quality or quantity. 2 (of meat) measled. 3 having or relating to measles. [C17: see **MEASLES**]

measurable ('me:zəbəl, 'me:zə-) *adj* able to be measured; perceptible or significant. ▶ **'measurability** or **'measurableness** *n* ▶ **'measurably** *adv*

measure ('me:ʒə) *n* 1 the extent, quantity, amount, or degree of something, as determined by measurement or calculation. 2 a device for measuring distance, volume, etc., such as a graduated scale or container. 3 a system of measurement: *give the size in metric measure*. 4 a standard used in a system of measurements: *the international prototype kilogram is the measure of mass in SI units*. 5 a specific or standard amount of something: *a measure of grain*; *short measure*; *full measure*. 6 a basis or standard for comparison: *his work was the measure of all subsequent attempts*. 7 reasonable or permissible limit or bounds: *we must keep it within measure*. 8 degree or extent (often in phrases such as **in some measure**, **in a measure**, etc.): *they gave him a measure of freedom*. 9 (*often pl*) a particular action intended to achieve an effect: *they took measures to prevent his leaving*. 10 a legislative bill, act, or resolution: *to bring in a measure*. 11 *Music*. another word for **bar**¹ (sense 15a). 12 *Prosody*. poetic rhythm or cadence; metre. 13 a metrical foot. 14 *Poetic*. a melody or tune. 15 the act of measuring; measurement. 16 *Archaic*. a dance. 17 *Printing*. the width of a page or column of type. 18 **for good measure**. as an extra precaution or beyond requirements. 19 **get the measure of** or **get someone's measure**. to assess the nature, character, quality, etc., of someone or something. 20 **made to measure**. (of clothes) made to fit an individual purchaser. ♦ *vb* 21 (*tr*; often foll. by *up*) to determine the size, amount, etc., of by measurement. 22 (*intr*) to make a measurement or measurements. 23 (*tr*) to estimate or determine: *I measured his strength to be greater than mine*. 24 (*tr*) to function as a measurement of: *the ohm measures electrical resistance*. 25 (*tr*) to bring into competition or conflict: *he measured his strength against that of his opponent*. 26 (*intr*) to be as specified in extent, amount, etc.: *the room measures six feet*. 27 (*tr*) to travel or move over as if measuring. 28 (*tr*) to adjust or choose: *he measured his approach to suit the character of his client*. 29 (*intr*) to allow or yield to measurement. ♦ See also **measure off**, **measure out**, **measures**, **measure up**. [C13: from Old French, from Latin *mēnsūra* measure, from *mēnsus*, past participle of *mētiri* to measure] ▶ **'measurer** *n*

measured ('me:ʒd) *adj* 1 determined by measurement. 2 slow, stately, or leisurely. 3 carefully considered; deliberate. ▶ **'measuredly** *adv* ▶ **'measuredness** *n*

measured daywork ('dei:wɜ:k) *n* a system of wage payment, usually determined by work-study techniques, whereby the wage of an employee is fixed on the understanding that a specific level of work performance will be maintained.

measureless ('me:ʒləs) *adj* limitless, vast, or infinite. ▶ **'measurelessly** *adv* ▶ **'measurelessness** *n*

measurement ('me:ʒəmənt) *n* 1 the act or process of measuring. 2 an amount, extent, or size determined by measuring. 3 a system of measures based on a particular standard.

measurement ton *n* the full name for **ton**¹ (sense 5).

measure off or **out** *vb* (*tr, adv*) to determine the limits of; mark out: *to measure off an area*.

measure out *vb* (*tr, adv*) 1 to pour or dole out: *they measure out a pint of fluid*. 2 to administer; mete out: *they measured out harsh punishments*.

measures ('me:ʒəz) *pl n* rock strata that are characterized by a particular type of sediment or deposit: *coal measures*.

measure up *vb* 1 (*adv*) to determine the size of (something) by measurement. 2 **measure up to**. to fulfil (expectations, standards, etc.).

measuring jug *n* a graduated jug used in cooking to measure ingredients.

measuring worm *n* the larva of a geometrid moth: it has legs on its front and rear segments only and moves in a series of loops. Also called: **looper**, **inchworm**.

meat (mi:t) *n* 1 the flesh of mammals used as food, as distinguished from that of birds and fish. 2 anything edible, esp. flesh with the texture of meat: *crab meat*. 3 food, as opposed to drink. 4 the essence or gist. 5 an archaic word for **meal**¹. 6 **meat and drink**. a source of pleasure. 7 **have one's meat and one's manners**. *Irish informal*. to lose nothing because one's offer is not accepted. [Old English *mete*; related to Old High German *maz* food, Old Saxon *meti*, Gothic *mats*] ▶ **'meatless** *adj*

meataxe ('mi:t,æks) *n* 1 a cleaver. 2 **mad as a meataxe**. *Austral. and N.Z. informal*. raving.

meatball ('mi:t,bɔ:l) *n* 1 minced beef, shaped into a ball before cooking. 2 *U.S. and Canadian slang*. a stupid or boring person.

Meath (mi:ð, mi:θ) *n* a county of E Republic of Ireland, in Leinster province on the Irish Sea: formerly a kingdom much larger than the present county; livestock farming. County town: Trim. Pop.: 105 370 (1991). Area: 2338 sq. km (903 sq. miles).

meatus (mi:'etəs) *n, pl -tuses or -tus*. *Anatomy*. a natural opening or channel, such as the canal leading from the outer ear to the eardrum. [C17: from Latin: passage, from *meāre* to pass]

meaty ('mi:tɪ) *adj* **meatier**, **meatiest**. 1 of, relating to, or full of meat: *a meaty stew*. 2 heavily built; fleshy or brawny. 3 full of import or interest: *a meaty discussion*. 4 *Judaism*. another word for **fleishik**. ▶ **'meatily** *adv* ▶ **'meatiness** *n*

mecamylamine (,mekə'mɪlə,mɪ:n) *n* a drug administered orally to lower high blood pressure. Formula: $C_{17}H_{21}N.HCl$. [C20: from *ME*(THYL) + *cam*(phane) (a former name of bormane) + -YL + AMINE]

Mecca or **Mekka** ('mekə) *n* 1 a city in W Saudi Arabia, joint capital (with Riyadh) of Saudi Arabia; birthplace of Mohammed; the holiest city of Islam, containing the Kaaba. Pop.: 630 000 (1991 est.). Arabic name: **Makkah**. 2 (*sometimes not cap.*) a place that attracts many visitors: *Athens is a Mecca for tourists*.

Meccano (mi:'kɑ:nəʊ) *n* *Trademark*. a construction set consisting of miniature metal or plastic parts from which mechanical models can be made.

mech. *abbrev.* for: 1 **mechanical**. 2 **mechanics**. 3 **mechanism**.

mechanic (mi:'kænik) *n* 1 a person skilled in maintaining or operating machinery, motors, etc. 2 *Archaic*. a common labourer. [C14: from Latin *mēchanicus*, from Greek *mēkhanikos*, from *mēkhanē* MACHINE]

mechanical (mi:'kænikəl) *adj* 1 made, performed, or operated by or as if by a machine or machinery: *a mechanical process*. 2 concerned with machines or machinery. 3 relating to or controlled or operated by physical forces. 4 of or concerned with mechanics. 5 (of a gesture, etc.) automatic; lacking thought, feeling, etc. 6 *Philosophy*. accounting for phenomena by physically determining forces. 7 (of paper, such as newsprint) made from pulp that has been mechanically ground and contains impurities. ♦ *n* 8 *Printing*. another name for **camera-ready copy**. 9 *Archaic*. another word for **mechanic** (sense 2). ▶ **'me'chanicalism** *n* ▶ **'me'chanically** *adv* ▶ **'me'chanicalness** *n*

mechanical advantage *n* the ratio of the working force exerted by a mechanism to the applied effort.

mechanical drawing *n* a drawing to scale of a machine, machine component, architectural plan, etc., from which dimensions can be taken.

mechanical engineering *n* the branch of engineering concerned with the design, construction, and operation of machines and machinery. ▶ **'mechanical engineer** *n*

mechanical equivalent of heat *n* *Physics*. a factor for converting units of energy into heat units. It has the value 4.1855 joules per calorie. Symbol: *J*

mechanical instrument *n* a musical instrument, such as a barrel organ or music box, that plays a preselected piece of music by mechanical means.

mechanician (,mekə'nɪʃən) or **mechanist** *n* a person skilled in making machinery and tools; technician.

mechanics (mi:'kæniks) *n* 1 (*functioning as sing*) the branch of science, divided into statics, dynamics, and kinematics, concerned with the equilibrium or motion of bodies in a particular frame of reference. See also **quantum mechanics**, **wave mechanics**, **statistical mechanics**. 2 (*functioning as sing*) the science of designing, constructing, and operating machines. 3 the working parts of a machine. 4 the technical aspects of something: *the mechanics of poetic style*.

mechanism ('mekə,nɪzəm) *n* 1 a system or structure of moving parts that performs some function, esp. in a machine. 2 something resembling a machine in the arrangement and working of its parts: *the mechanism of the ear*. 3 any form of mechanical device or any part of such a device. 4 a process or technique, esp. of execution: *the mechanism of novel writing*. 5 *Philosophy*. 5a the doctrine

that human action can be explained in purely physical terms, whether mechanical or biological. **5b** the explanation of phenomena in causal rather than teleological or essentialist terms. **5c** the view that the task of science is to seek such explanations. **5d** strict determinism. ♦ Compare **dynamism**, **vitalism**. **6 Psychoanal.** **6a** the ways in which psychological forces interact and operate. **6b** a structure having an influence on the behaviour of a person, such as a defence mechanism.

mechanist ('mekənɪst) *n* **1** a person who accepts a mechanistic philosophy. **2** another name for a **mechanician**.

mechanistic (ˌmekə'nɪstɪk) *adj* **1** *Philosophy.* of or relating to the theory of mechanism. **2** *Maths.* of or relating to mechanics. ▶ **'mecha'nistically** *adv*

mechanize or mechanise ('mekəˌnaɪz) *vb* (*tr*) **1** to equip (a factory, industry, etc.) with machinery. **2** to make mechanical, automatic, or monotonous. **3** to equip (an army, etc.) with motorized or armoured vehicles. ▶ **'mechan'ization or 'mechani'sation** *n* ▶ **'mecha,nizer or 'mecha,niser** *n*

mechanoreceptor (ˌmekənəʊ'reptə) *n* *Physiol.* a sensory receptor, as in the skin, that is sensitive to a mechanical stimulus, such as pressure.

mechanotherapy (ˌmekənəʊ'therəpi) *n* the treatment of disorders or injuries by means of mechanical devices, esp. devices that provide exercise for bodily parts.

mechatronics (ˌmekə'trɒnɪks) *n* (*functioning as sing*) the combination of mechanical engineering and electronics, as used in the design and development of new manufacturing techniques. [C20: from MECHA(NICS) + (ELEC)TRONICS]

Mechelen ('mekələn) *n* a city in N Belgium, in Antwerp province: capital of the Netherlands from 1507 to 1530; formerly famous for lace-making; now has an important vegetable market. Pop.: 75 718 (1995 est.). French name: **Malines**. English name: **Mechlin**.

Mechlin ('meklɪn) *n* the English name for **Mechelen**.

Mechlin lace *n* bobbin lace made at Mechlin, characterized by patterns outlined by a heavier flat thread. Also called: **malines**.

meck (mek) *n* *Northeastern Scot. dialect.* a variant of **maik**.

Mecklenburg ('meklənˌbʊg; *German* 'meklənburk) *n* a historic region and former state of NE Germany, along the Baltic coast; now part of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania: formerly (1949–90) in East Germany.

Mecklenburg-West Pomerania (ˌpɒmə'reɪniə) *n* a state of NE Germany, along the Baltic coast: consists of the former state of Mecklenburg and those parts of W Pomerania not incorporated into Poland after World War II: part of East Germany until 1990. Pop.: 1 832 300 (1995 est.).

MEcon *abbrev. for* Master of Economics.

meconium (mɪˌkəʊniəm) *n* **1** the dark green mucoid material that forms the first faeces of a newborn infant. **2** opium or the juice from the opium poppy. [C17: from New Latin, from Latin: poppy juice (used also of infant's excrement because of similarity in colour), from Greek *mēkōneion*, from *mēkōn* poppy]

meconopsis (ˌmekə'nɒpsɪs) *n* any plant of the mostly Asiatic papaveraceous genus *Meconopsis*, esp. *M. betonicifolia* (the Tibetan or blue poppy), grown for its showy sky-blue flowers. *M. cambrica* is the Welsh poppy. [New Latin, from Greek *mēkōn* poppy + *-opsis*]

Med (med) *n* the. *Informal.* the Mediterranean region.

MEd *abbrev. for* Master of Education.

MED (in New Zealand) *abbrev. for* Municipal Electricity Department.

med. *abbrev. for:* 1 medical. 2 medicine. 3 medieval. 4 medium.

médaillons (medar'jɔ̃) *pl n* *Cookery.* small round thin pieces of meat, fish, vegetables, etc. Also called: **medallions**. [C20: French: medallions]

medal ('medl) *n* **1** a small flat piece of metal bearing an inscription or image, given as an award or commemoration of some outstanding action, event, etc. ♦ *vb* **-als, -alling, -aled** or *U.S. -als, -aling, -aled*. **2** (*tr*) to honour with a medal. [C16: from French *médaille*, probably from Italian *medaglia*, ultimately from Latin *metallum* METAL] ▶ **'medallic** (mɪ'dærlɪk) *adj*

medallion (mɪ'dæljən) *n* **1** a large medal. **2** an oval or circular decorative device resembling a medal, usually bearing a portrait or relief moulding, used in architecture and textile design. [C17: from French, from Italian *medaglione*, from *medaglia* MEDAL]

medallist or *U.S. medalist* ('med'lst) *n* **1** a designer, maker, or collector of medals. **2** *Chiefly sport.* a winner or recipient of a medal or medals.

Medal of Bravery *n* a Canadian award for courage. Abbrev.: **MB**.

Medal of Honor *n* the highest U.S. military decoration, awarded by Congress for conspicuous bravery in action: instituted in 1861 (Navy), 1862 (Army).

medal play *n* *Golf.* another name for **stroke play**.

Medan ('meda:n) *n* a city in Indonesia, in NE Sumatra: seat of the University of North Sumatra (1952) and the Indonesian Islam University (1952). Pop.: 1 685 972 (1990).

Medawar ('medəwə) *n* Sir **Peter Brian**. 1915–87, English zoologist, who shared the Nobel prize for physiology or medicine (1960) with Sir Macfarlane Burnet for work on immunology.

meddle ('medl) *vb* (*intr*) **1** (usually foll. by *with*) to interfere officiously or annoyingly. **2** (usually foll. by *in*) to involve oneself unwarrantedly: *to meddle in someone's private affairs*. [C14: from Old French *medler*, ultimately from Latin *miscere* to mix] ▶ **'meddler** *n* ▶ **'meddling** *adj* ▶ **'meddlingly** *adv*

meddlesome ('medl'səm) *adj* intrusive or meddling. ▶ **'meddlesomely** *adv* ▶ **'meddlesomeness** *n*

Mede (mɪd) *n* a member of an Indo-European people of West Iranian speech who established an empire in SW Asia in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. ▶ **'Median** *n, adj*

Medea (mɪ'diə) *n* *Greek myth.* a princess of Colchis, who assisted Jason in obtaining the Golden Fleece from her father.

Medellin (Spanish mede'li:n) *n* a city in W Colombia, at an altitude of 1554 m (5100 ft.): the second largest city in the country, with three universities; impor-

tant coffee centre, with large textile mills; dominated by drug cartels in recent years. Pop.: 1 621 356 (1995 est.).

medevac ('medə,væk) *n* *Military.* the evacuation of casualties from forward areas to the nearest hospital or base. [C20: from *med(ical) evac(uation)*]

medfly ('med,flaɪ) *n, pl -fly or -flies.* another name for **Mediterranean fruit fly**.

media¹ ('mi:diə) *n* **1** a plural of **medium**. **2** the means of communication that reach large numbers of people, such as television, newspapers, and radio. ♦ *adj* **3** of or relating to the mass media: *media hype*.

USAGE When *media* refers to the mass media, it is sometimes treated as a singular form, as in: *the media has shown great interest in these events*. Many people think this use is incorrect and that *media* should always be treated as a plural form: *the media have shown great interest in these events*.

media² ('mi:diə) *n, pl -diae* (-di:ɪ). **1** the middle layer of the wall of a blood or lymph vessel. **2** one of the main veins in the wing of an insect. **3** *Phonetics.* **3a** a consonant whose articulation lies midway between that of a voiced and breathed speech sound. **3b** a consonant pronounced with weak voice, as *c* in French *second*. [C19: from Latin *medius* middle]

Media ('mi:diə) *n* an ancient country of SW Asia, south of the Caspian Sea: inhabited by the Medes; overthrew the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C. in alliance with Babylonia; conquered by Cyrus the Great in 550 B.C.; corresponds to present-day NW Iran.

mediacy ('mi:diəsi) *n* **1** the quality or state of being mediate. **2** a less common word for **mediation**.

mediad ('mi:diəd) *adj* *Anatomy, zoology.* situated near the median line or plane of an organism.

mediaeval (ˌmedi'ivl) *adj* a variant spelling of **medieval**.

media event *n* an event that is staged for or exploited by the mass media, whose attention lends it an apparent importance.

medial ('mi:diəl) *adj* **1** of or situated in the middle. **2** ordinary or average in size. **3** *Maths.* relating to an average. **4** another word for **median** (senses 1, 2, 3). **5** *Zoology.* of or relating to a media. ♦ **n** **6** *Phonetics.* a speech sound between being fortis and lenis; media. [C16: from Late Latin *mediālis*, from *medius* middle] ▶ **'medially** *adv*

median ('mi:diən) *adj* **1** of, relating to, situated in, or directed towards the middle. **2** *Biology.* of or relating to the plane that divides an organism or organ into symmetrical parts. **3** *Statistics.* of or relating to the median. ♦ **n** **4** a middle point, plane, or part. **5** *Geometry.* **5a** a straight line joining one vertex of a triangle to the midpoint of the opposite side. See also **centroid**. **5b** a straight line joining the midpoints of the nonparallel sides of a trapezium. **6** *Statistics.* the middle value in a frequency distribution, below and above which lie values with equal total frequencies. **7** *Statistics.* the middle number or average of the two middle numbers in an ordered sequence of numbers: **7 is the median of both 1, 7, 31 and 2, 5, 9, 16**. **8** the Canadian word for **central reserve**. [C16: from Latin *mediānus*, from *medius* middle] ▶ **'medianly** *adv*

median lethal dose or **mean lethal dose** *n* **1** the amount of a drug or other substance that, when administered to a group of experimental animals, will kill 50 per cent of the group in a specified time. **2** the amount of ionizing radiation that will kill 50 per cent of a population in a specified time. ♦ Abbrev.: **LD₅₀**.

median strip *n* the U.S. term for **central reserve**.

mediant ('mi:diənt) *n* *Music.* **a** the third degree of a major or minor scale. **b** (as *modifier*): *a mediant chord*. [C18: from Italian *mediante*, from Late Latin *mediāre* to be in the middle]

mediastinum (ˌmi:diə'staɪnəm) *n, pl -na* (-nə). *Anatomy.* **1** a membrane between two parts of an organ or cavity such as the pleural tissue between the two lungs. **2** the part of the thoracic cavity that lies between the lungs, containing the heart, trachea, etc. [C16: from medical Latin, neuter of Medieval Latin *mediastinus* median, from Latin: low grade of servant, from *medius* mean] ▶ **'mediastinal** *adj*

mediate ('mi:di,et) *vb* (*intr*; usually foll. by *between or in*) to intervene (between parties or in a dispute) in order to bring about agreement. **2** to bring about (an agreement). **3** to bring about (an agreement) between parties in a dispute. **4** to resolve (differences) by mediation. **5** (*intr*) to be in a middle or intermediate position. **6** (*tr*) to serve as a medium for causing (a result) or transferring (objects, information, etc.). ♦ *adj* ('mi:diət). **7** occurring as a result of or dependent upon mediation. **8** a rare word for **intermediate**. **9** *Logic.* (of an inference) having more than one premise, esp., being syllogistic in form. [C16: from Late Latin *mediāre* to be in the middle] ▶ **'mediately** *adv* ▶ **'mediateness** *n* ▶ **'mediative, 'mediatory, or 'media'torial** *adj* ▶ **'mediator** *n* ▶ **'media'torially** *adv*

mediation (ˌmi:di'eɪʃən) *n* **1** the act of mediating; intercession. **2** *International law.* an attempt to reconcile disputed matters arising between states, esp. by the friendly intervention of a neutral power. **3** a method of resolving an industrial dispute whereby a third party consults with those involved and recommends a solution which is not, however, binding on the parties.

mediate or mediatise ('mi:diə,təɪz) *vb* (*tr*) to annex (a state) to another state, allowing the former ruler to retain his title and some authority. [C19: from French *mediatiser*; see **MEDIATE**, *-IZE*] ▶ **'mediat'ization or 'mediat'isation** *n*

medic¹ ('medɪk) *n* *Informal.* a doctor, medical orderly, or medical student. [C17: from **MEDICAL**]

medic² ('medɪk) *n* the usual U.S. spelling of **medick**.

medicable ('medɪkəbəl) *adj* potentially able to be treated or cured medically. ▶ **'medicably** *adv*

Medicaid ('medɪ,ketɪd) *n* *U.S.* a health assistance programme financed by federal, state, and local taxes to help pay hospital and medical costs for persons of low income. [C20: **MEDIC**(AL) + **AID**]