

# Nota Bene: P

## P

**pacify:** to bring to a point of peace

**paean:** a joyous expression of praise

**pagination:** the numbers by which one marks the pages in a book

**paladins:** outstanding protagonists of a cause

**palatable:** agreeable in taste

**palaver:** a parley or conference; charming but insubstantial talk meant to persuade or cajole

**palpable:** touchable or able to be perceived

**pandemic:** widespread

**pandemonium:** chaos; wild, uproarious, and noisy tumult

**pander:** to appeal to the worst in someone

**pantheism:** all God; the identification of God with the physical world

**papal:** pertaining to the pope

**par nobile fratrum:** a noble pair of brothers

**parable:** to set alongside; to equal

**paradigm:** an example; an ideal; a pattern

**paradox:** a seemingly self-contradictory statement that expresses a valid idea or potentially true statement

**paragon:** a peerless model or pattern of perfection

**paralysis:** loss or damage of movement ability; the loss of feeling in a part of the body due to disease or injury

**parameter:** limit or boundary

**parenthetical:** contained within parenthesis; something that qualifies or explains in a manner setting it off from a main idea

**pariance:** a way of speaking

**parody:** an imitation created for comic effect; a caricature

**paroxysm:** an outburst

**parse:** to break a sentence down into grammatical components; to analyze bit by bit

**parsimonious:** stingy

**particular:** an instantiation of a universal

**particular quantifier:** *something* is such that ...

**partisan:** reflecting strong allegiance to a particular party or cause

**passim:** throughout (abbreviated pass.)

**pastoral:** simple and rustic, bucolic, rural, country

**pater patriæ:** the father of his country

**pathos:** a quality arousing or evoking pity or sorrow

**patrician:** from patricius, a member of a noble Roman family

**patrimony:** heritage or legacy; a church endowment

**patron:** a special guardian or protector; a wealthy or influential supported of the arts

**paucity:** smallness of number

**pax vobiscum:** peace be with you

**pay:** from pacare - to make peace

**peccadillo:** a minor offense, a lapse

**pecuniary:** pertaining to money

**pedagogue:** an educator or schoolteacher

**pedantic:** ostentatious in one's learning

**pedestrian:** unimaginative, ordinary

**pejorative:** disparaging

# Nota Bene: P

**penultimate:** next-to-last  
**penurious:** miserly  
**per annum:** per year  
**per capita:** per head  
**per diem:** per day  
**per cent:** per the hundred  
**per contra:** contrariwise  
**per se:** per itself; by itself considered  
**perambulate:** to walk around  
**peregrinations:** to travel or journey  
**peremptory:** allowing for no rebuttal or overturning  
**perennial:** enduring  
**perfidious:** disloyal, treacherous  
**perfunctory:** mundane, routine  
**perimeter:** the outer edge of an enclosed shape or area; in mathematics, the measure of the distance described by this edge  
**peripatetic:** wandering; moving or traveling from place to place  
**periphery:** the area at the extreme of a given boundary; the outskirts  
**perjure:** to live or give false and misleading testimony; testifying in court to something one knows is untrue  
**permeate:** to spread through or penetrate  
**pernicious:** tending to cause insidious harm or injury  
**perpetuate:** to make everlasting; to prolong memory or use (of a thing)  
**persnickety:** fussy and over attentive to small details  
**perspicacity:** insightfulness  
**perspicuity:** clear or easy to understand  
**persona:** an actor's mask, a character in a play, the person  
**persona non grata:** an unpleasing person  
**personification:** the embodiment of a thing or an abstract idea in human form  
**peruse:** to read through with attention  
**pervasive:** spreading throughout  
**petitio principii:** see **begging the question**  
**petulant:** impatiently peevish; showing annoyance or irritation with minor problems  
**phenomenalism:** the view that what we know is mind-dependent, so that knowledge is limited to appearance (the data of inner or outer sense)  
**philander:** to engage in amorous flirtations or exploits with someone who one cannot or does not intend to marry (in reference to men)  
**philanthropy:** altruistic concern for human welfare and advancement  
**philately:** the collection of stamps or other postal matter as a hobby  
**philistine:** someone who is smugly ignorant and uncultured  
**philology:** the study of literary texts and written records; the establishment of their authenticity and their original form  
**philosophy:** the love of wisdom  
**physiognomy:** the law of the face; to determine one's character by the study of one's facial features  
**physicalism:** pure and absolute empiricism  
**picayune:** petty; something trifling or unimportant  
**picturesque:** reminiscent of or suggesting a (painted) picture; a striking or unusually interesting scene  
**piety:** devotion; religious reverence  
**pinnacle:** the topmost point

# Nota Bene: P

**pique:** to injure a person's pride and thereby engender harsh feelings

**pith:** the core, the essential part; in biology, the central strand of tissue in the stems of most vascular plants

**placate:** to soothe or appease

**placebo:** a medicine having no fixed medical purpose or healing property given either to pacify a patient or, as a control method, to test the effectiveness of another drug

**placid:** unmarked by disturbance; complacent

**plaintive:** expressing suffering or melancholy

**plague:** a broad-based affliction

**plastic:** able to be molded or reshaped

**platitude:** a commonplace or useless remark

**platonic:** free from sexual desire

**plaudit:** an expression of gratitude or praise

**plausible:** apparently believable

**platitute:** a trite remark or saying; a cliché

**plebeian:** from plebeius meaning "common people"

**plenitude:** abundance

**plethora:** excessive oversupply

**pliant:** supple

**plight:** predicament, especially arising from a solemn obligation

**plummet:** to dive or plunge

**plutocracy:** rule by the rich

**poignant:** appealing to the emotions

**poisoning the well:** an informal logical fallacy, a variety of the abusive **ad hominem** argument so named because, by attacking the good faith or intellectual honesty of the opponent, it undermines continued rational exchange

**polarize:** to encourage elements or components to occupy opposite ends of a spectrum; something that divides or sows discord

**polemic:** a controversial argument

**polity:** a system of government

**polyglot:** a person who speaks a number of languages

**polymath:** a person who understands most, if not all, the many fields of mathematics

**polyphony:** having two or more voices or parts, each with an independent melody, but all harmonizing; contrapuntal (counterpoint)

**ponderous:** unwieldy and bulky; oppressively dull

**pons asinorum:** the bridge for donkeys or dunces

**pontifex maximus:** high priest

**pontificate:** to speak in a pompous, arrogantly dogmatic manner

**portend:** to suggest or foretell

**poseur:** someone who pretends to be what he is not

**posit:** to stipulate; to present or assume something

**positivism:** a philosophy that assumes that the only true knowledge is scientific or empirical knowledge

**possibility:** it *may* be the case that ...

**possible world:** a situation associated with another, *s*, where things actually are as they merely might be in *s*.

**post hoc ergo propter hoc:** after this, therefore because of it; a variety of the fallacy of false cause, so-called because it concludes that what occurs after an event occurs because of that event

**post mortem:** after death

# Nota Bene: P

**postulate:** an hypothesis or special notion; an assumption applicable to a specific field of knowledge

**potable:** drinkable

**potentate:** a powerful person

**praemonitus praemunitus:** forewarned, forearmed

**pragmatism:** the view that the meaning of a statement is its practical consequences in experience, and that truth is satisfactory problem-solving (i.e., success); mere “know-how” without inspiration, unless it is the inspiration of monetary profit

**precarious:** insecure

**precedent:** an earlier occurrence that serves as an example for a decision

**precept:** a general principle or law

**precipice:** a cliff

**precipitate:** to spur or activate

**preclude:** to prevent, to hinder

**precursor:** a forerunner, a predecessor

**precocious:** unusually advance or mature in development

**predicate:** for the grammatically simplest kind of sentence, the part which expresses whatever is said about what the sentence is about

**preemptive:** possessing and acting on a prior right; to act before others can

**premise:** in an argument, the propositions upon which inference is based

**preponderance:** a superiority in weight, size or quantity; a majority

**presage:** to foretell, to anticipate

**prescience:** foreknowledge or foresight

**presentiment:** a sense that something (good or evil) is about to happen

**presumption:** an informal logical fallacy committed when the conclusion of an argument depends critically upon some tacit assumption that is dubious, or unwarranted, or false

**presupposition:** an elementary assumption or starting point; a basic commitment or foundational perspective

**pretentious:** characterized by assumption of dignity or importance

**prevaricate:** to lie, to equivocate, to avoid revealing the true nature of one's position

**prima donna:** the leading female singer in an opera company; a self-centered member of a group or organization who feels that his contributions are so important as to merit special treatment

**prima facie:** at first appearance; before investigation

**prima lux:** dawn or first light

**primacy:** state of being the utmost in importance; preeminence

**primordial:** original

**primum mobile:** first cause of motion

**principle of Indifference:** given a number of possibilities, with no relevant difference between them, they all have the same probability

**prior probability:** the probability of some statement before any evidence is taken into account

**pristine:** pure, undefiled

**pro bono publico:** for the public good

**pro et con:** for and against

**pro patria:** for my country

**pro re nata:** as occasion requires; for a special emergency

**pro tempore:** for the time being, temporarily

**probity:** goodness, integrity

**proclivity:** a predisposition

**procure:** to obtain by using particular care and effort

# Nota Bene: P

**process philosophy:** the view that all reality is united into one interdependent, evolving whole  
**procrustean:** the name of a fabled thief of ancient Greece who stretched or amputated his victims in order to make them fit a bed exactly; seeking to enforce doctrines or theories by violently eliminating all possible alternative viewpoints  
**procure:** to obtain  
**prodigal:** with reference to the parable of the prodigal son in the Gospels, one who wanders about wantonly wasting his family inheritance; wasteful or extravagant  
**prodigality:** the condition of being wastefully extravagant  
**prodigy:** a person possessing extraordinary skill or talent  
**profligate:** shamelessly immoral  
**profundity:** depth of reasoning or insight  
**progenitor:** an ancestor who can be traced back through the direct line  
**prognosticate:** to predict  
**progressive:** forward-moving  
**proliferate:** to increase or multiply  
**prolixity:** a diffuseness; a rambling and verbose quality  
**promiscuity:** indiscriminate choice of sexual partners  
**promulgate:** to put forward publicly  
**prophetic:** auspicious, predictive of what is to come  
**propagate:** to cause to grow; to foster  
**proper name:** a name that is not a description  
**propinquity:** nearness, especially with regard to place, sequence, or heredity  
**propitiation:** to appease the wrath of someone; to make favorably inclined  
**proposition:** a statement, what is typically asserted using a declarative sentence, and hence always either true or false (although its truth or falsity may be unknown)  
**propound:** to set forth  
**propriety:** closeness, nearness  
**prosaic:** commonplace or workaday  
**proscribe:** to prohibit  
**proselytize:** to attempt to convert to one's own religious faith  
**protasis:** the antecedent in a hypothetical argument  
**portean:** capable of taking many shapes  
**protégé:** a person under the patronage, protection, or care of someone interested in his or her career or welfare  
**protocol:** formal etiquette, especially as practiced in diplomatic circles  
**prototype:** first kind or model  
**proverbial:** calling to mind (a familiar) proverb  
**providence:** divine care  
**provocative:** stimulating or combative  
**proximate:** nearest to; in a chain of causes and effects, the proximate cause is the event nearest to the event whose explanation is sought  
**prudent:** exercising due care with regard to one's interests  
**prurient:** lewd; an excessive focus on sex  
**psychosomatic:** pertaining to disorders having emotional or mental (rather than physical) causes  
**puerile:** boyish; juvenile  
**pugilism:** boxing  
**pugnacious:** prone to quarrels or fights  
**pugnis et calcibus:** with fists and feet; with all the might

# Nota Bene: P

**pulchritude:** beauty

**punctilious:** overly attentive to trifling details

**pundit:** someone who offers opinions in an authoritative style

**pungency:** marked by having a sharp, biting quality

**purify:** to make pure, clean, or perfect

**puritanical:** reminiscent of the Puritans (in terms of their so-called “strict” lifestyle and “narrow” view of morality), sometimes used as a pejorative by those who oppose such a lifestyle

**purlieu:** neighborhood

**purported:** supposed

**putative:** reputed or generally regarded by common assent

**pyrrhic:** refers to the ancient King Pyrrhus of Epirus, who observed after a particularly bloody battle that another similar victory would destroy his kingdom; gained at an unjustifiably high cost