

LESSONS 15 AND 16

The Shapes of Things

LESSON 15

Redit agricolis labor actus in orbem.
The farmer's work returns in a circle. —VIRGIL

Key Words		
circuitous	configuration	figurative
circumference	cyclic	orb
circumspect	encyclopedic	orbit

Familiar Words

circle
circuit
circular
circulate
circumstance
circumvent
circus

CIRCUM <L. "around"

1. **circuitous** (sər kyŭō'ə təs)
adj. Roundabout; indirect.

Driven off course by storms and deterred by adventures, Aeneas travels from Troy to Rome in a **circuitous** journey around the Mediterranean.

circuitously, *adv.*; **circuitousness**, *n.*; **circuituity**, *n.*

2. **circumspect** (sūr'kəm spēkt) [*spectare* <L. "to look at"]
adj. Cautious and watchful; prudent.



Challenge Words

circa
 circlet
 circumambulate
 circumcise
 circumlocution
 circumlunar
 circumsolar
 cirque

Despite her mother's reminder to be **circumspect** on the way to Grandmother's house, Little Red Riding Hood reveals her destination to the ostensibly friendly wolf.

circumspection, *n.*; **circumspectly**, *adv.*

3. **circumference** (sər kŭm'fər əns) [*ferre* <L. "to carry"]
n. The outer boundary of a circle; the perimeter.

An ancient defensive wall still stands unbroken on the **circumference** of the French town of Carcassonne, encircling its medieval city limits.

circumferential, *adj.*

NOTA BENE: The prefix *circum* appears in more than twenty-five words listed in most dictionaries. In many words, *circum* is joined to a noun suffix that names the thing around which something moves or exists. For example:

- *circumlunar*—"around the moon"
- *circumsolar*—"around the sun"
- *circumpolar*—"around the pole"
- *circumterrestrial*—"around the earth"

In a large number of words, *circum* is followed by a verb suffix that shows the action by which something moves "around":

- *circumambulate*—"to walk around"
- *circumcise*—literally "to cut around"
- *circumlocution*—literally "talking around" or "using roundabout language"
- *circumrotate*—literally "to roll around" or "rotate"
- *circumspect*—literally "to look around" or "be cautious"
- *circumvent*—literally "to come around" or "overcome"

Challenge Word
orbicular

ORBIS <L. "circle," "anything round"

ORBITA <L. "wheel"



4. **orbit** (ɔr'bit)

n. 1. Path of one body as it revolves around another body.

Several dozen human-made satellites are now in **orbit** around the Earth.

2. A sphere of influence; a range of action or experience.

Since the death of her husband, Martin Luther King, Jr., the **orbit** of Coretta Scott King's influence has increased to make her one of America's most important women.

orbital, *adj.*; **orbiter**, *n.*