



ORIGIN V, F, U and W all come from the same letter in the Phoenician alphabet – a shape that looked like the letter Y and represented either a peg or a hook. It had the sound of ‘w’ and was called *waw*. The shape of the letter V has not changed much since then. When the Phoenician Y passed into Latin, the Romans removed its stem to create the V shape we know today. It had either a ‘u’ sound, as in *TEMPVS* (‘time’), or a ‘w’ sound, as in *VIDI* (‘I saw’). In Latin, V and U had the same ‘u’ and ‘w’ sounds so the Romans could also write *TEMPUS* and *UIDI*.

V
the Roman numeral for the number 5

vacancy *noun* **vacancies**

1 a room that is not being used, for example in a hotel, so that someone can stay there *No vacancies* (sign at a hotel showing that it's full).

2 a job, for example in an office, shop or factory, that is not being done by anyone so someone needs to be found who will do it *There's a vacancy for a maths teacher in our school.*

vacant *adjective*

1 used about something such as a room, toilet or hospital bed that is not being used

2 used about a seat that no-one is sitting in

3 used about a job that no-one is doing and that needs someone to do it

4 used about an empty or stupid look on someone's face that shows they are not interested in anything or thinking about anything in particular *Granddad was looking out of the window with a vacant stare.* **vacantly** *adverb*

vacate *verb*

vacates, vacating, vacated

1 to leave something such as a room or seat so that someone else can use it or sit in it

2 to leave a job so someone else needs to be found who will do it

vacation *noun* **vacations**

a holiday *the summer vacation; Ravi's going on vacation to Florida.*

LANGUAGE EXTRA used especially in American English

vaccinate ['vak-sin-ayt'] *verb*

vaccinates, vaccinating, vaccinated

if a doctor or nurse vaccinates you, they stop you from getting an illness by putting a vaccine (weak form of the germ that causes the illness) into your body, usually by touching your skin with a special needle *Have you been vaccinated against measles?*

vaccination *noun*

vaccine ['vak-seen'] *noun* **vaccines**

a substance that contains a weak form of the germ that causes a particular illness. It is put into people's bodies to stop them from getting the illness.

ORIGIN from Latin *vaccina* 'connected with cows' (Latin *vacca* 'cow'). In the 18th century, Dr Edward Jenner used cows to make a vaccine to protect people against smallpox.

vacuum ['vak-yoo-erm'] *noun* **vacuums**

1 a space that contains no air or any other gas so that it is completely empty

2 a vacuum cleaner is a piece of equipment for cleaning carpets and floors. It uses air to suck up dust and dirt.

SYNONYM Hoover

3 a vacuum flask is a container shaped like a tube, with hollow walls that have no air between them. It is used for keeping liquids hot or cold.

SYNONYM Thermos flask

vacuum ['vak-yoo-erm'] *verb*

vacuums, vacuuming, vacuumed
to clean a carpet or floor with a vacuum cleaner

SYNONYM to Hoover

vagina ['ver-jye-ner'] *noun* **vaginas**

a passage in the body of a female person or animal that goes from the outside of the body to the womb (the part where babies develop)

vague *adjective* **vaguer, vaguest**

1 used about something that is not explained clearly or is not easy to understand *The instructions are a little vague.*

2 used when you are not certain about something *a vague memory; vague suspicions; I'm still a bit vague about which way to go.*

3 not telling someone much about something *Dad's answer was very vague.*

4 used about something such as a feeling that you have only slightly *a vague feeling of dizziness*

vagueness *noun*

vaguely *adverb*

1 in a way that is not clear, for example when you are not certain about something or when something is not easy to understand *I only vaguely remember her. She explained the instructions so vaguely that we still didn't know what to do.*

2 slightly *It was vaguely embarrassing.*

3 without paying attention to what you are doing or saying *He vaguely mentioned something about coming round to see us.*

vain *adjective* **vainer, vainest**

1 someone who is vain has too high an opinion of their own qualities. For example, they think they are very attractive or very intelligent.

2 used about something such as an action, attempt or hope that does not produce the sort of result you want *Dad jumped into the water in a vain effort to save the dog* (his efforts were unsuccessful).

3 **in vain** without having any success *We waited in vain for the bus* (it didn't come).

4 **in vain** also used when you mean for no reason or purpose *The sick boy did not die in vain* (for example, doctors learnt things that helped them cure other people).

vainly *adverb*

1 without having any success *I vainly tried to reinstall the software.*

2 in a way that shows someone thinks too highly about their own qualities *He was looking at himself vainly in the mirror.*

Vaisakhi ['vy-sa-kee'] *noun*

a Sikh festival that takes place in April to celebrate the new year

LANGUAGE EXTRA also spelt *Baisakhi*

valentine *noun* **valentines**

1 a card that someone sends on Valentine's Day

2 the person that someone sends a card to on Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day *noun* **Valentine's Days**

a special day (14 February) when people give cards and presents to people they have (or would like to have) a love relationship with

LANGUAGE EXTRA also called *Saint Valentine's Day*

valiant *adjective*

used about someone (or someone's efforts) to show that they are very brave and that nothing will stop them from doing something that needs to be done *Mum made a valiant attempt to rescue the drowning dog.* **valiantly** *adverb*

valid *adjective*

1 if a document or card or something such as a ticket or passport is valid, it can be officially used and accepted because it has all the correct and latest information on it. It usually has a date on it showing the latest time it can be used. *Your library card isn't valid – it's expired.*

2 allowed by the law or the rules *a valid agreement; That's not a valid move in chess.*

3 if something such as a password or filename is valid, it works correctly on a computer

4 if something such as a reason, argument or idea is valid, it is reasonable and acceptable to most people *Oversleeping isn't a valid excuse for being late for school.*

validity *noun*

validate *verb*

validates, validating, validated

1 if someone validates something such as a ticket, token or piece of software, they make it valid so it can be used *You have to validate your bus ticket by putting it in a special machine before you travel.*

2 to show or check that something is true *Ed showed his passport to validate his age.*

valley *noun* **valleys**

a long low area of land between hills, often with a river running through it

valour *noun*

when someone is not afraid to face danger, especially in a battle or war

SYNONYM bravery