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**specific gravity** *n.* The ratio of the mass of a solid or liquid to the mass of an equal volume of distilled water at 4°C (39°F) or of a gas to an equal volume of air or hydrogen under prescribed conditions of temperature and pressure. Also called *relative density*.

**specific heat** *n.* 1. The ratio of the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of a unit mass of a substance by one unit of temperature to the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of a similar mass of a reference material, usually water, by the same amount. 2. The amount of heat, measured in calories, required to raise the temperature of one gram of a substance by one Celsius degree.

**specific humidity** *n.* The ratio of the weight of water in a volume of air to the weight of the dry air alone, usually expressed in grams per kilogram.

**specific impulse** *n.* A performance measure for rocket propellants that is equal to units of thrust per unit weight of propellant consumed per unit time. Also called *specific thrust*.

**specific performance** *n. Law* The carrying out of a contract according to its particular terms, especially as ordered by a court instead of paying damages for failing to carry out the contract.

**specific resistance** *n.* Electrical resistivity.

**specific thrust** *n.* See **specific impulse**.

**spec-i-fy** (spēs'ə-fī') *tr.v. -fied, -fy-ing, -fies 1.* To state explicitly or in detail: *specified the amount needed; specified what was wrong with the program.* 2. To include in a specification. 3. To determine or bring about (a specific result): *a gene that specifies the synthesis of a single protein.* [Middle English *specifien* < Old French *specifier* < Medieval Latin *specificāre* < *specificus*, *specific*; see **SPECIFIC**.] —**spec'i-fi'er** *n.*

**spec-i-men** (spēs'ə-mən) *n.* 1. An individual, item, or part representative of a class or whole. See **Synonyms at example**. 2. An organism, part of an organism, or fossil that has been collected and usually preserved, especially for display or scientific research. 3. A sample, as of tissue, blood, or urine, used for analysis and diagnosis. 4. *Informal* An individual; a person: *a disagreeable specimen.* [Latin, *example* < *specere*, to look at; see **spek-** in App. I.]

**spe-cious** (spēs'shəs) *adj.* 1. Having the ring of truth or plausibility but actually fallacious: *a specious argument.* 2. Deceptively appealing: *"It is easy enough to give the old idea [of programmatic music] a specious air of modernity"* (Aaron Copland). [Middle English, *attractive* < Latin *speciōsus* < *speciēs*, appearance; see **spek-** in App. I.] —**spe'ci-ous-ly** *adv.* —**spe'ci-ous'i-ty** (-shē-ōs'ī-tē), **spe'ci-ous-ness** (-shəs-nis) *n.*

**speck** (spæk) *n.* 1. A small spot, mark, or discoloration. 2. A tiny amount; a bit: *not a speck of truth in her story.* ❖ *tr.v. specked, speck-ing, specks* To mark with specks. [Middle English *specke* < Old English *specca*.]

**speck-le** (spæk'ləl) *n.* A speck or small spot, as a natural dot of color on skin, plumage, or foliage. [Middle English *spakle*.] —**speck'le** *v.*

**speck-led** (spæk'əld) *adj.* Dotted or covered with speckles, especially flecked with small spots of contrasting color.

**speckled perch** *n.* See **crappie**.

**speckled trout** *n.* 1. See **brook trout**. 2. See **spotted seatrout**.

**specs** also **specks** (spēks) *pl.n. Informal* Eyeglasses; spectacles.

**spec-ta-cle** (spæk'tə-kəl) *n.* 1a. Something that can be seen or viewed, especially something of a remarkable or impressive nature. b. A public performance or display, especially one on a large or lavish scale. c. A regrettable public display, as of bad behavior: *drank too much and made a spectacle of himself.* 2. *spectacles* a. A pair of eyeglasses. b. Something resembling eyeglasses in shape or suggesting them in function. [Middle English < Old French < Latin *spectāculum* < *spectāre*, to watch, frequentative of *specere*, to look at; see **spek-** in App. I.]

**spec-ta-cled** (spæk'tə-kəld) *adj.* 1. Wearing spectacles. 2. Having markings suggesting spectacles. Used of animals.

**spectacled bear** *n.* A bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) having black to brown fur with light-colored markings around the eyes and inhabiting forested regions from Venezuela to Bolivia. It is the only bear species native to South America. Also called *Andean bear*.

**spec-tac-u-lar** (spæk'tāk'yə-lər) *adj.* Of the nature of a spectacle; impressive or sensational. ❖ *tr.v. -lar'ly (-lār'ī-tē)* *n.* —**spec-tac'u-lar-ly** *adv.*

**spec-tate** (spæk'tāt) *intr.v. -tat-ed, -tat-ing, -tates* To attend (a sporting event, for example) as a spectator. [Back-formation < **SPECTATOR**.]

**spec-ta-tor** (spæk'tā-tər) *n.* An observer of an event, especially a sports contest. [Latin *spectātor* < *spectāre*, to watch; see **SPECTACLE**.] —**spec'ta-to'ri-al** (-tə-tōr'ē-əl) *adj.* —**spec'ta-tor-ship** *n.*

**spec-ter** (spæk'tər) *n.* 1. A ghostly apparition; a phantom. 2. A haunting or disturbing image or prospect: *the terrible specter of nuclear war.* [French *spectre* < Latin *spectrum*, appearance, apparition; see **SPECTRUM**.]

**spec-ti-no-my-cin** (spæk'tə-nō-mī'sin) *n.* A broad-spectrum antibiotic, C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>24</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub>, obtained from a species of gram-negative bacteria (*Streptomyces spectabilis*) or produced synthetically and used in its hydrochloride form especially in the treatment of penicillin-resistant gonorrhea. [New Latin *spec(abilis)*, specific epithet (< Latin, visible < *spectāre*, to watch; see **SPECTACLE**) + (ACT)INOMYCIN.]

**spec-tra** (spæk'trə) *n.* A plural of **spectrum**.

**spec-tral** (spæk'trəl) *adj.* 1. Of or resembling a specter; ghostly. 2. Of, relating to, or produced by a spectrum. —**spec-tral'i-ty** (-trāl'ī-tē), **spec'tral-ness** (-trəl-nis) *n.* —**spec'tral-ly** *adv.*

**spectral line** *n.* An isolated bright or dark line in a spectrum produced by emission or absorption of light of a single wavelength.

**spec-tre** (spæk'tər) *n.* Chiefly British Variant of **specter**.

**spec-trin** (spæk'trɪn) *n.* A protein of high molecular weight that is a major component of the membrane of red blood cells. [**SPECTR**(E)R (so called because a red blood cell without hemoglobin is called a *ghost*) + -IN.]

**spectro-** *pref.* **Spectrum:** *spectrograph*. [< **SPECTRUM**.]

**spec-tro-gram** (spæk'trə-grām) *n.* A graphic or photographic representation of a spectrum. Also called *spectrograph*.

**spec-tro-graph** (spæk'trə-grāf) *n.* 1. A spectroscope equipped to photograph or otherwise record spectra. 2. See **spectrogram**. —**spec'tro-graph'ic** *adj.* —**spec'tro-graph'i-cal-ly** *adv.* —**spec-trog'ra-phy** (-trɔg'grə-fē) *n.*

**spec-tro-he-li-o-gram** (spæk'trō-hē'lē-ə-grām) *n.* A photograph of the sun taken in a narrow wavelength band centered on a selected wavelength.

**spec-tro-he-li-o-graph** (spæk'trō-hē'lē-ə-grāf) *n.* An instrument used to make spectroheliograms. —**spec'tro-he'li-o-graph'ic** *adj.* —**spec'tro-he'li-og'ra-phy** (-ɔg'grə-fē) *n.*

**spec-tro-he-li-o-scope** (spæk'trō-hē'lē-ə-skɔp) *n.* An instrument that combines a solar telescope and a spectroscope and is used to observe a narrow band of solar radiation. —**spec'tro-he'li-o-scop'ic** (-skɔp'īk) *adj.*

**spec-trom-e-ter** (spæk'trɔm'ē-tər) *n.* A spectroscope equipped with scales for measuring wavelengths or indexes of refraction. —**spec'trom'e'tric** (-trə-mē'trɪk) *adj.* —**spec'trom'e-try** *n.*

**spec-tro-pho-tom-e-ter** (spæk'trō-fō-tɔm'ē-tər) *n.* An instrument used to determine the relative intensity of various wavelengths in a spectrum of light. —**spec'tro-pho'to-m'e'tric** (-fō'tə-mē'trɪk) *adj.* —**spec'tro-pho-tom'e-try** *n.*

**spec-tro-scope** (spæk'trə-skɔp) *n.* Any of various instruments used to analyze a sample by separating its components into a spectrum. —**spec'tro-scop'ic** (-skɔp'īk), **spec'tro-scop'i-cal** (-i-kəl) *adj.* —**spec'tro-scop'i-cal-ly** *adv.*

**spectroscopic analysis** *n.* Analysis of a spectrum to determine characteristics of its source; for example, analysis of the optical spectrum of an incandescent body to determine its composition or motion.

**spectroscopic binary** *n.* A binary star whose components are identified by periodic Doppler shifts of the system's spectral lines as the orbital motion along the line of sight alternates toward and away from Earth.

**spec-tros-co-py** (spæk'trɔs'kɔ-pē) *n., pl. -pies 1.* The study of spectra, especially experimental observation of optical spectra or mass spectra, to determine the properties of their source. 2. A variety or instance of such study. —**spec-tros'co-pist** *n.*

**spec-trum** (spæk'trəm) *n., pl. -tra* (-trə) or *-trums 1. Physics* a. The entire range over which some measurable property of a physical system or phenomenon can vary, such as the frequency of sound, the wavelength of electromagnetic radiation, or the mass of specific kinds of particles. b. A graphic or photographic representation of such a measurable range: a spectrogram. 2. A range of radio frequencies assigned by a regulatory agency for use by a given group or organization. 3a. A range of values of a quantity or set of related quantities. b. A broad sequence or range of related qualities, ideas, or activities: *the whole spectrum of 20th-century thought.* [Latin, appearance < *specere*, to look at; see **spek-** in App. I.]

**spec-u-la** (spæk'yə-lə) *n.* A plural of **speculum**.

**spec-u-lar** (spæk'yə-lər) *adj.* Of, resembling, or produced by a mirror or speculum. —**spec'u-lar-ly** *adv.*

**spec-u-late** (spæk'yə-lāt) *v. -lat-ed, -lat-ing, -lates —intr. 1.* To engage in a course of reasoning often based on inconclusive evidence; conjecture or theorize. 2. To engage in the buying or selling of a commodity with an element of risk on the chance of profit. —*tr.* To assume to be true without conclusive evidence: *speculated that high cholesterol was a contributing factor to the patient's health problems.* [Latin *speculārī*, *speculārī*, to observe < *specula*, watchtower < *specere*, to look at; see **spek-** in App. I.]

**spec-u-la-tion** (spæk'yə-lā'shən) *n.* 1a. Reasoning based on inconclusive evidence; conjecture or supposition. b. A conclusion, opinion, or theory reached by conjecture. c. *Archaic* Contemplation or consideration of a subject; meditation. 2a. Engagement in risky business transactions on the chance of quick or considerable profit. b. A commercial or financial transaction involving speculation.

**spec-u-la-tive** (spæk'yə-lā-tīv, -lā'-) *adj.* 1a. Given to, characterized by, or based upon speculation or conjecture: *speculative articles about the origin of language.* b. Expressing inquisitive interest: *raised a speculative eyebrow.* 2a. Engaging in, given to, or involving financial speculation: *speculative brokers; speculative stocks.* b. Spent in speculation: *speculative funds.* c. Involving chance: *risky; speculative business enterprises.* —**spec'u-la-tive-ly** *adv.*

**spec-u-la-tor** (spæk'yə-lā'tər) *n.* One that speculates: *a commodities speculator.*

**spec-u-lum** (spæk'yə-ləm) *n., pl. -la* (-lə) or *-lums 1.* A mirror or polished metal plate used as a reflector in optical instruments. 2. An instrument for dilating the opening of a body cavity for medical examination. 3. *Zoology* a. A bright, often iridescent patch of color on the wings of certain birds, especially ducks. b. A transparent spot in the wings of some butterflies or moths. [Middle English, surgical speculum < Latin, mirror < *specere*, to look at; see **spek-** in App. I.]

**sped** (spēd) *v.* A past tense and a past participle of **speed**.

**speech** (spēçh) *n.* 1a. The faculty or act of speaking. b. The faculty



**spectacled bear**  
*Tremarctos ornatus*