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discriminate, v.

Pronunciation: Brit. /dɪ'skrɪmɪneɪt/, U.S. /dɪ'skrɪmə,neɪt/

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: A borrowing from Latin. **Etymons:** Latin *discrīmināt-*, *discrīmināre*.

Etymology: < classical Latin *discrīmināt-*, past participial stem (see *-ATE suffix*³) of *discrīmināre* to divide, separate, to distinguish, differentiate < *discrīmin-*, *discrīmen* division, distinction (see *DISCRIMEN n.*).

Compare *DISCRIMINATE adj.*, *DISCRIMINATION n.*

1. trans. Of a feature, quality, etc.: to serve to differentiate; to distinguish.

Frequently with *from*.

In quot. 1615 with reference to physical separation.

- 1615 H. CROOKE *Μικροκοσμογραφία* 914 [Ligaments serve] to discriminate or separate the right muscles from the left.
- 1628 W. PRYNNE *Vnlouelinesse of Louelockes* 26 Who poll one side of their heads—of purpose to discriminate themselues from others.
- 1666 R. BOYLE *Origine Formes & Qualities* 204 Such slight differences as those, that discriminate these Bodies.
- 1769 E. BURKE *Observ. Late State Nation* 67 Their different principles compose some of the strongest political lines which discriminate the parties even now subsisting amongst us.
- 1774 T. WARTON *Hist. Eng. Poetry* I. Diss. i. sig. j No peculiarity...more strongly discriminates the manners of the Greeks and Romans from those of modern times.
- 1818 W. HENRY *Elements Exper. Chem.* (ed. 8) II. 1. xx. 274 Inulin has..been examined by M. Gaultier de Claubry, who has pointed out the following characteristics as discriminating it from fecula or starch.
- 1871 G. GROTE *Fragm. Ethical Subj.* (1876) iii. 59 Capacities which discriminate one individual from another.
- 1913 P. J. R. SCHMAHL tr. R. KRAUSE *Course Normal Histol.* II. II. v. 110 Another peculiarity of the heart muscle discriminates it from the skeleton muscle absolutely.
- 1994 J. M. GOTTMAN *What predicts Divorce?* iii. 38 I review research on Terman's question of what discriminates satisfied from dissatisfied marriages.

2.

a. trans. To distinguish with the mind or intellect; to perceive, observe, or note the difference in or between. Frequently with *from*.

- 1637 Bp. J. HALL *Remedy Prophanenesse* II. xvii. 224 The differences whereby we may discriminate counterfeit vertues from true.
- 1665 R. HOOKE *Micrographia* 66 The surfaces..being so neer together, that the eye cannot discriminate them from one.

- a1677 I. BARROW *Several Serm. Evil-speaking* (1678) viii. 64 We take upon us..to discriminate the Goats from the Sheep.
- 1749 *Philos. Trans. 1748* (Royal Soc.) 45 402 My present Design..is to give a List of Vowels, whereby to discriminate, as conveniently as may be, all the Instances of Vocality that occur, distinctly, in the English Language.
- 1796 W. TAYLOR in *Monthly Rev.* 19 513 Adaptability to define and discriminate contiguous shades of idea.
- 1836 J. GILBERT *Christian Atonem.* v. 192 It is in the nature of the reward sought..that we discriminate a mean from a noble transaction.
- 1891 *Nation* (N.Y.) 52 244/1 How is one..to discriminate the teachings of Dr. Trench's reviser from those of Dr. Trench himself?
- 1922 *Bull. U.S. Geol. Surv.* No. 708. 296 Quartz can readily be discriminated by its index of refraction, low interference color, and lack of cleavage.
- 2000 J. F. ROSENBERG 3 *Conversat. about Knowing* iii. 38 The problem is that he can't discriminate real barns from fake barns just by looking.

b. intr. To make or recognize a distinction; to distinguish *among* or *between*; to exercise discernment.

- 1645 A. ROSS *Philos. Touch-stone* 95 You must discriminate between voluntary and natural agents.
- 1685 W. PENN *Perswasive to Moderation to Dissenting Christians* 37 He sees the Where and What of Persons and Things: He discriminates, and makes that a rule of conduct.
- 1774 J. BRYANT *New Syst.* II. 522 The purport of the term, which discriminates, may not be easy to be deciphered.
- 1784 W. RICHARDSON *Anecd. Russ. Empire* xlii. 357 A judge might indeed be allowed to discriminate among a number of criminals, and allot to each of them the degree of punishment which he thought proper.
- 1857 H. T. BUCKLE *Hist. Civilisation Eng.* I. vii. 321 It is by reason, and not by faith, that we must discriminate in religious matters.
- 1876 J. R. GREEN *Stray Stud. Eng. & Italy* 26 He would discriminate between temporary and chronic distress.
- 1921 G. C. L. HOWELL *Ocean Res. & Great Fisheries* xxviii. 160 He does not as a rule discriminate much in his diet.
- 2007 J. GOODE in B. C. Smith *Questions of Taste* iv. 85 Whereas there are just five basic tastes, we can discriminate among many thousands of volatile compounds.

3. intr. Econ. (orig. U.S.). To treat goods, trading partners, etc., more or less favourably according to circumstances. Frequently with *against* (also *in favour of*). Also in prepositional passive with *against*. Cf. DISCRIMINATING *adj.*

3, DISCRIMINATION *n.* 5.

- 1786 T. COXE *Let.* 13 Sept. in *Amer. Mus. (Philadelphia)* (1790) June 293/2 They do not discriminate against ships belonging to the other states, in any charge whatever.
- 1806 T. COXE *Thoughts on Subj. Naval Power in U.S.A.* 33 The conduct of Great Britain herself, in previously discriminating against us, may be forgotten by her government.
- 1885 *Pall Mall Gaz.* 24 Feb. 8/1 The action of the German Government in discriminating against certain imports from the United States.
- 1912 W. W. WILLOUGHBY *Princ. Constit. Law. U.S.* xxxii. 257 It was held that so long as the articles brought in are not discriminated against, no interference with interstate commerce is caused by their taxation.

- 1952 *Times* 22 Feb. 7 This form of tax exemption discriminated against imports.
- 2008 *Dispute Settlement Rep. 2006* (World Trade Organization) I. 99 Mexico's tax discriminates in favour of Mexican soft drinks and syrups sweetened with cane sugar.

4. intr. To treat a person or group in an unjust or prejudicial manner, esp. on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.; frequently with *against*. Also (with *in favour of*): to treat a person or group more favourably than others, in order to compensate for disadvantage or lack of privilege. Also in prepositional passive with *against*. Cf. DISCRIMINATION *n.* 6.

- 1857 *Olive-branch, or, White Oak Farm* xii. 142 The African race is placed under disabilities in every State in the Union but one... As a race, the laws discriminate against them.
- 1880 'M. TWAIN' *Tramp Abroad* xliii. 505 I did not propose to be discriminated against on account of my nationality.
- 1913 *Fort Wayne (Indiana) News* 10 Dec. 1/4 Civil service rules barred him from discriminating in favor of the jobless and against men who worked on the streets.
- 1920 *Iron Age* 11 Mar. 758/1 Employers should not discriminate on account of membership in unions.
- 1968 *Listener* 3 Oct. 427/2 If you move around for ever with the expectation of being discriminated against, the chances are you won't ever be disappointed.
- 1984 T. L. VERGARA in R. Schoenberg et al. *Homosexuality & Social Work* 26 Influencing interactions between organizations and institutions, influencing policy, and not discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation.
- 2004 H. KENNEDY *Just Law* (2005) v. 128 I have frequently criticised judges for their hidebound attitudes to women or their unwillingness to see how the system discriminates.

DERIVATIVES

di'scriminated *adj.* distinguished from others; perceived as distinct; differentiated.

- 1673 J. HORNE *Brazen Serpent* xxvi. 405 Discriminated persons only in Gods secret purpose.
- 1783 J. YOUNG *Crit. Gray's Elegy* 26 The discriminated catalogue of the dead.
- 1848 R. I. WILBERFORCE *Doctr. Incarnation* v. 170 The two titles [sc. Father and Son] imply a real co-existence of discriminated Persons.
- 1921 B. GRAHAM *Bookman's Man*. iii. 23 The 'Concise Oxford' pronounces only a small number of the words it lists, and it has no discriminated synonyms.
- 2007 L. FOGASSI in S. Funahashi *Representation & Brain* v. 143 The discriminated motor acts belong to specific chains, each of which leads to a specific final goal.

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