

**fifty-fifty** ADJECTIVE, ADVERB

- 1 to split or divide something (such as money)  
fifty-fifty is to divide it evenly between two people or groups
- 2 a fifty-fifty chance is an even chance of something happening or not happening

**fig** NOUN figs

a soft fruit with a dark purplish skin and many small seeds

**fight** NOUN fights

- 1 a physical struggle against an opponent using hands or weapons
- 2 an attempt to achieve or overcome something ♦ *A campaign focusing on the fight against obesity is being launched this month.*

**fight** VERB fights, fighting, fought

- 1 to have a fight with a person, animal, or group
- 2 to fight for or against something is to try to achieve or overcome it

▷ **fighter** NOUN**figment** NOUN figments

a **figment of your imagination** is something that you only imagine and is not real

**figurative** ADJECTIVE

(Language) figurative language uses figures of speech, and is meant to be understood in a metaphorical rather than a literal sense

▷ **figuratively** ADVERB**figurative language**

**Figurative language** uses words for the effects they create, rather than their literal meanings. It often produces vivid images and sounds in the mind of the reader or listener. In these two examples, the first description of the sea is literal and the second is figurative:

*Ahead of us the sea formed a spiralling whirlpool. Ahead of us the sea was being churned by an unseen hand, and we were being scooped like so many currants into a giant's mixing bowl.*

Types of figurative language are also called **figures of speech**. The most common types are:

- **simile** and **metaphor**, which describe something by comparing or likening it to something else: *an expression as cold as ice; his eyes were pools of ice*
- **personification**, which describes something inanimate as if it were human: *the waves rocked us to sleep*
- **onomatopoeia**, in which words have sounds that seem to imitate what they describe: *the engine chugged and chuffed up the hill.*

See also the panels on **simile and metaphor** and **onomatopoeia**.

**figure** NOUN figures

- 1 the symbol of a number
- 2 an amount or value
- 3 a diagram or illustration
- 4 a shape

- 5 the shape of a person's, especially a woman's, body

*Clover was a stout motherly mare approaching middle life, who had never quite got her figure back after her fourth foal. — George Orwell, *Animal Farm**

- 6 a person

*The doorway was blocked by a figure hooded and draped in oilskins. — Alan Garner, *The Owl Service**

- 7 a representation of a person or animal in visual art

**figure** VERB figures, figuring, figured

to appear or feature as part of something  
**to figure something out** is to come to understand or realize something by thinking about it

**figurehead** NOUN figureheads

- 1 a carved figure decorating the prow of a sailing ship
- 2 a person who is head of a country or organization but has no real power

**figure of speech** NOUN figures of speech

a word or phrase used for special effect and not intended literally, e.g. 'flood' in *a flood of emails*

**filament** NOUN filaments

a thread or thin wire, especially one in a light bulb

**WORD HISTORY** from Latin *filum* 'thread'

**filch** VERB filches, filching, filched

(informal) to steal something slyly

**file** NOUN files

a metal tool with a rough surface that is rubbed on things to shape them or make them smooth

**file** VERB files, filing, filed

to shape or smooth an object, or the edge of your nails, with a file

**file** NOUN files

- 1 a folder or box for keeping papers in order
  - 2 a collection of data stored under one name in a computer
  - 3 a line of people one behind the other
- file** VERB files, filing, filed
- 1 to put a piece of paper or information into a file
  - 2 people file into or out of a place when they enter or leave it in a line

*As they filed out of the classroom, Harry saw Professor Umbridge approach the teacher's desk. — J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix**

**WORD HISTORY** from Latin *filum* 'thread', because a string or wire was put through papers to hold them in order