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prescribe, v.

Pronunciation: Brit. /prɪˈskrʌɪb/, U.S. /priˈskraɪb/, /prəˈskraɪb/

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Forms:

α. I ME— **prescribe**, 15–16 **praescribe**, 15–16 **prescrybe**, 16 **praescrybe** (Sc.).

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Etymology: < classical Latin *praescribere*...

I. To make an authoritative ruling.

1.

a. intr. To lay down rules, laws, etc.; to dictate, direct; to make a ruling.

Also, of a law, custom, etc.: to have force or power.

1445 in E. A. Webb *Rec. St. Bartholomew's Priory* (1921) I. 500 Wherfore please hit youre said gode lordship the premisses considere, if to grante a writte of subpena to be directe to the said Jhn. Bell to apere afore youe atte a certeyn day, to be examyned thereupon the premisses, and doo and prescribe in that particular.

1564 tr. P. M. Vermigli *Most Fruitfull & Learned Comm.* 189^v, These prescribe not, when as they are manifestly vicious and euyll. But that custome prescribeth, which is neither against the woord of God, nor the law of nature, nor the common lawe.

c1595 COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE *Psalme* cv. 44 in *Coll. Wks.* (1998) II. 164 He Rulers rules,..prescribes and all obay.

1610 G. CARLETON *Iurisdict.* 278 This Synode prescribed against the Pope's jurisdiction.

1703 J. COLLIER *Ess. Moral Subj.* II. 67 None so fit to prescribe, to direct the enterprise, and secure the main-chance.

a1716 R. SOUTH *Serm.* (1727) IV. ix. 387 Nothing..being so tyrannical as Ignorance, where Time and long Possession enables it to prescribe.

1844 R. W. EMERSON *Ess.* 2nd Ser. v. 179 Love, which is the genius and god of gifts..to whom we must not affect to prescribe.

1961 *Parthenon* (Marshall Univ., W. Va.) 10 Nov. 3/3 The 'Third Unabridged' does not, of course, pretend to prescribe. It seeks, rather, to describe.

1992 P. W. BIRNIE & A. E. BOYLE *Internat. Law & Environment* v. iii. 208 The power to enforce coastal state laws within the EEZ is more restricted than the power to prescribe.

b. trans. To write or lay down as a rule or direction to be followed; to impose authoritatively; to ordain, decree; to assign. Freq. with *to*, *for*, or indirect object. Sometimes with clause as object.

c1487 J. SKELTON tr. Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* (1956) III. 176 And the motive is vnto theym prescribed by circuyt contynuall.

- 1534 *Prymer in Eng.* sig. K.j^v, Let vs prescribe hym no tyme, but euer submyt our willes to his.
- 1538 T. CROMWELL in R. B. Merriman *Life & Lett. Cromwell* (1902) II. 153 The workes of charite marcy and faithe specially prescribed and commaunded in scripture.
- 1576 A. FLEMING tr. Cicero in *Panoplie Epist.* 93 Reason prescribeth..that Whatsoever we attempt in the course of our life, blame may be auoyded.
- a1648 LD. HERBERT *Life Henry VIII* (1649) 199* Your Master ought not to prescribe me what I am to doe.
- 1684 R. HOWLETT *School Recreat.* 19 If the Hound chance to cross them, Sport may be had. But no Rule can be prescribed how to find or hunt them.
- 1724 SWIFT *Let. to People of Ireland* 3 Wood prescribes to the News-Mongers in London what they are to write.
- 1793 J. BOSWELL *Life Johnson* (ed. 2) anno 1778 III. 91 [Johnson:] Verses..were prescribed as an exercise.
- 1843 SIR J. T. COLERIDGE in A. P. Stanley *Life of Dr. Arnold* (1844) I. i. 9, I know not whether the statutes prescribe the practice.
- 1895 I. K. FUNK et al. *Standard Dict. Eng. Lang.* 1000/1 at *Lane-route*, One of the routes prescribed for transatlantic steamers in Northern waters.
- 1939 *Classical Q.* **33** 86 Their [*sc.* the Spartans'] regular practice was to prescribe to neighbouring States taken into their alliance a constitution..of the predemocratic type.
- 1978 P. ROTH *Professor of Desire* 178 She has gone out of her way to unlock the gate on a day other than the one prescribed for tourists.
- 1999 *Alumnus* (National Univ. Singapore) July 21/1 Mediators..prescribe to each party the correct way to interact, thus reinforcing the standards of *zuo ren*.

†**c.** *trans.* To order (a person) to do something; to ordain a particular fate or punishment for (a person). *Obs. rare.*

- 1616 B. JONSON *Epicæne* IV. iv, in *Wks.* I. 574 So they were prescrib'd to goe to church.
- 1879 R. BROWNING *Ned Bratts* 37 And ten were prescribed the whip, and ten a brand on the cheek.

2. *trans.* To limit, restrict, restrain, circumscribe; to confine within bounds. *rare.*

- c1485 (1456) G. HAY *Bk. Knychthede* (1914) 21/35 Saufand kingis that ar privilegit or prescribit in thaire power imperiale.
- 1605 M. DRAYTON *Legend Robert Duke of Normandie* in *Poems* sig. Ee5, Prescrib'd to one poore solitarie place, Whose lawfull bounds the ocean did embrace.
- 1688 M. PRIOR *Ode Exod.* iii. 14 14 vii, Laws to his Maker the learn'd wretch can give: Can bound that Nature, and prescribe that Will, Whose pregnant word did either ocean fill.
- 1726 D. DEFOE *Polit. Hist. Devil* II. iii. 216 The Faculties of Man..are prescribed on the other hand, and can't sally out without Leave.
- 1919 K. ROUTLEDGE *Mystery of Easter Island* viii. 116 As both the lifeboat and the cutter were carried in the waist of the ship when we were at sea, the space available for 'constitutionals' was prescribed.

3.

a. trans. To advise or order the use of (a medicine, remedy, treatment, etc.), esp. by a written prescription. With *to* or indirect object. Also *fig.*

- 1533 tr. Erasmus *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* Pref. sig. aiv, In lyke maner as if a phisycien shulde prescribe [L. *praescribat*] vnto him that lyeth sicke in parell of deth to rede Iacobus de partibus, or suche other huge volumes, sayeng that there he shuld fynde remedy for his disase.
- 1581 G. PETTIE tr. S. Guazzo *Ciuile Conuersat.* (1586) II. 54, I prescribe for his health this medicine.
- 1607 E. TOPSELL *Hist. Foure-footed Beastes* 227 Pliny describeth a man which twinkleth with his eies, and cannot looke stedfastly, to weare in a chaine the tongue of a foxe.
- 1676 W. HUBBARD *Happiness of People* 40 To prescribe to the people poysonous Drugs instead of wholesome food or physick.
- 1758 J. SPARROW tr. H. F. Le Dran *Observ. Surg.* (1771) 324 He was..prescribed a..Ptisan.
- 1785 *Mem. Amer. Acad. Arts & Sci.* 1 466 The juice is prescribed along with that of oranges, by the name of antiscorbutic juices.
- 1806 BOSANQUET & PULLEN *New Rep.* I. 196 The Defendant as apothecary made up the medicines prescribed by the Plaintiff for the patient.
- 1843 R. J. GRAVES *Syst. Clin. Med.* ix. 97 To leech his head and prescribe tartar emetic.
- 1878 C. T. KINGZETT *Animal Chem.* 201 Lithia water is often prescribed to gouty..persons.
- 1904 H. JAMES *Golden Bowl* II. xxxix. 309 He had possibly prescribed contrition—he had at any rate quickened in her the beat of..false repose.
- 1957 B. SPOCK *Baby & Child Care* (Cardinal ed., rev.) 89 The physician may prescribe an ointment for the sore nipple.
- 1995 *Guardian* 5 Apr. II. 8/4 To my relief, my doctor prescribed me fenfluramine hydrochloride and wished me good luck in my pound-shedding endeavours.
- 2005 *Daily Express* (Sc. ed.) (Nexis) 25 May 4 She had been prescribed five times the recommended dose of the powerful drug fluticasone.

b. intr. To advise or order the use of a medicine, etc. Also *fig.* Now *rare*.

- 1602 SHAKESPEARE *Merry Wives of Windsor* II. ii. 231 Mee thinks you prescribe verie proposterously To your selfe.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Timon of Athens* (1623) v. v. 89, I will..make each Prescribe to other, as each others Leach.
- 1674 R. GODFREY *Var. Injuries in Physick* 200 This Doctor..Prescribes, and..gives order for a Preventive Purge to be taken next morning.
- 1737 R. WEST *Let.* c2 Dec. in T. Gray *Corr.* (1971) I. 70 If..‘Friendship be the physic of the mind’, prescribe to me, dear Gray,..I shall be a most obedient patient.
- 1756 *Devil upon Crutches* (ed. 2) 19 Remember..your last Illness..when the whole College of Physicians refused to proscribe for you.
- 1779 *Mirror* No. 42. 5 The surgeon, who arrived soon after, prescribed a little, and nature did much for him; in a week he was able to thank his benefactor.
- 1899 *Daily News* 13 Mar. 7/1 His motto was that no statesman should prescribe until he was called in.
- 1993 *Brit. Med. Jnl.* (BNC) 27 Mar., A decision not to prescribe or an underestimate of need..may

aggravate or precipitate a distressing withdrawal state.

II. To make use of or be subject to legal prescription.

†**4.** *trans.*

a. To hold by prescription (PRESCRIPTION *n.*¹ 1). *Obs. rare.*

1455 *Rolls of Parl.* V. 337/1 By the olde liberte and fredom of the Comyns of this Lande had, enjoyed, and prescribed, fro the tyme that no mynde is, alle suche persones as..been assembled in eny Parlement..ought to have their fredom to speke and sey in the Hous of their assemble, as to them is thought convenyent or resonable, withoute eny maner chalange, charge, or punycion.

b. To claim by prescription. *Obs. rare.*

1607 J. COWELL *Interpreter* sig. Eee2^v/2, A seruant prescribeth liberty after a yeare.

5. intr. To make a claim on the basis of prescription (PRESCRIPTION *n.*¹ 1); to assert a prescriptive right or claim (*to* or *for* something). Also †*fig.* Also *trans.* with infinitive or clause as object.

1530 *St. German's Secunde Dyaloge Doctour & Student* l. f. cxxxiii, If a hole countrey prescrybe to pay no tythes for corne or hey nor suche other, [shewe me] whether thou thynke that that prescripcyon ys good.

1544 tr. T. Littleton *Tenures* (new ed.) II. xi. 47 b, If a lord of a manour wyl prescrybe that it hath ben accustomed within his manoure tyme out of mynde that euery tenaunt [etc.].

a1620 M. FOTHERBY *Atheomastix* (1622) I. ix. §2. 62 Time, which prescribeth against all humane inuentions, and which chalengeth the honour of Antiquity from them.

1641 W. SHEPPARD *Offices & Duties of Constables* ix. 326 A man cannot prescribe to have a Seat in the Body of the Church, as belonging to his house.

1650 T. FULLER *Pisgah-sight of Palestine* II. xii. 260 Presuming on their former victories, that in so fortunate a place they might prescribe for conquest.

1712 H. PRIDEAUX *Direct. Church-wardens* (ed. 4) 75 The Lord of a Manor..may prescribe to a Seat in the Body of the Church, which he and his Ancestors have immemorially used.

1766 W. BLACKSTONE *Comm. Laws Eng.* II. xvii. 264 Formerly a man might, by the common law, have prescribed for a right which had been enjoyed by his ancestors or predecessors at any distance of time.

1817 W. SELWYN *Abridgem. Law Nisi Prius* (ed. 4) II. 1119 If the party has a general common, and prescribes for common for any particular sort of cattle, this will be good.

1844 J. WILLIAMS *Real Property Law* (1875) 450 A man might..prescribe that he and his ancestors had from time immemorial exercised a certain right in gross.

1919 *Law Rep.: King's Bench Div.: Appeal Cases* (Lexis) 1 223 One copyhold tenant cannot prescribe for a right of way against another copyhold tenant or against his lord.

1980 *Law Rep.: Chancery Div.: Appeal Cases* (Lexis) 119 The plaintiffs are..claiming a specially high degree of light, which they cannot have because..one can only prescribe for light which is required for ordinary residence.

2000 *All Eng. Law Rep.* (Lexis) 1 22 A landowner might prescribe for an easement to discharge a defined watercourse on his land onto the adjoining land of another.

†**6.** *intr.* Of a person: to plead prescription of time (PRESCRIPTION *n.*¹ 2) *against* an action, statute, or penalty; to cease to be liable on account of lapse of time. *Obs.*

1595 *Expos. Terms Law* 145 b, But one may not prescribe against a statute except he haue an other statute that serueth for him.

1670 T. BLOUNT *Law Dict.* at *Prescription*, A Judge or Clerk convicted for false entring of Pleas, &c. may be Fined within two years; the two years being past, he prescribes against the punishment of the said Statute.

7. *intr. Sc. Law.* Of an action: to suffer prescription (PRESCRIPTION *n.*¹ 1); to lapse, to become invalid or void through passage of time. Of a crime, claim, debt, etc.: to be no longer capable of being prosecuted. Also *fig.*

1617 *Sc. Acts James VI* c. 12 All actions of warrandice..shall not præscriybe [1816 prescryve], from the date of the band..but only from the date of the distresse.

1722 W. FORBES *Institutes* I. II. 64 Some things prescribe in 40, some in 20, some in 13, some in 10, some in 5, some in 4, and others in 3 years.

1751 D. HUME *Justice in Ess.* (1817) II. 235 Bills of exchange and promissory notes, by the laws of most countries, prescribe sooner than bonds, and mortgages.

1838 W. BELL *Dict. Law Scotl.* 773 By the act 1579, c. 82, actions of removing prescribe within three years from the term at which the tenant has been warned to remove.

1847 T. DE QUINCEY *Spanish Mil. Nun* xv, in *Wks.* (1853) III. 37 The grasp of the church never relaxed, never 'prescribed', unless freely and by choice.

1874 *Act 37 & 38 Vict.* c. 94 §42 All inhibitions..shall prescribe on the lapse of five years from the date.

1904 A. M. ANDERSON *Criminal Law* 248 There is nothing in the common law of Scotland to support the view that crimes ever prescribe.

1985 *Times* 24 July 8/8 It was well settled in the law of Scotland that heritable rights and rights of blood did not prescribe unless there had been adverse possession.

†**III.** To write before.

†**8.** *trans.*

a. To write first or beforehand; to describe in writing beforehand; to write (something) in front. Also: to write with foreknowledge; to predict in writing. *Obs.*

?a1475 (1425) tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (Harl.) (1865) I. 21 When the compiler [sc. Ranulphus] spekethe, the letter shall be proscibede [L. *præscribitur*] in this forme folowenge [R].

1549 J. LELAND *Laboryouse Journey* D iij, There hath bene to the nombre of a full hundreth or mo, that..hath..prescribed the actes of your moste noble predecessours.

1570 J. DEE in H. Billingsley tr. Euclid *Elements Geom.* Pref. sig. dij, So to Paint, and prescribe the

Sunnes Motion, to the breadth of a heare.

- 1612 J. BRINSLEY *Ludus Lit.* To Rdr. sig. *2^v, For the manner of proceeding used in this worke, it is prescribed in the Preface.
- 1651 C. CARTWRIGHT *Certamen Religiosum* I. 133 Except you rightly understand the words of Berengarius, (hee might have said of Pope Nicolas, who did prescribe them).
- 1653 H. WHISTLER *Aime at Up-shot Infant Baptisme* 102 Esaias prescribed it excellently; The wolf shall dwell with the Lamb.

b. To inscribe on the front or forepart. *Obs. rare.*

- 1608 G. CHAPMAN *Conspiracie Duke of Byron* Ded., (Hauing heard your approbation of these in their presentment) I could not but prescribe them with your name.

9. trans. To set out a description of (a person or thing) before someone.

Obs. rare.

- 1582 *Bible (Rheims)* Gal. iii. 1, O sensles Galatians, who hath bewitched you, not to obey the truth, before whose eies Iesus Christ was proscribed [Gk. προεγραφη; Vulg. *præscriptus est*; 1388 Wyclif exilid; Tindale, Coverd. described; 1611 evidently set forth; 1881 *R.V.* openly set forth], being crucified among you?

DERIVATIVES

† **prescribement** *n.* *Obs. rare*⁻¹ prescription, prescribing.

- 1563 J. FOXE *Actes & Monuments* 26/2 The matter being decised betwixt them after the popes own prescribement, themperour taketh his iourny to Papia.
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