forcible, **adj.**

**Pronunciation:** /ˈfɔːstəb(ə)l/

**Forms:** Also 15–17 *forceable*, 17 *forciable*.

**Frequency (in current use):**

**Etymology:** < Old French *forcible*, < *force* FORCE n.¹ The form *forceable* is as if < *FORCE n.* + *-ABLE* suffix.

1. Done by force; involving the use of force or violence: esp. in Law, *forcible detainer, forcible entry* (see quot. 1769 at (a)).

(a.)

[1391 *Act 15 Rich. II* c. 2   A toutz les foitz que tielx forcibles entrees soient faitz.]

c1422 T. Hoccleve *Learn to Die, Joys Heaven* For the kyngdam of heuene souffrith forcible and mighty assautes of vertu.

1527 J. Rastell *Abridgem. Statutes* 96   Them that make forcyble entre in beneficis.

1555 R. Eden tr. Peter Martyr of Angleria *Decades of Neuwe Worlde* f. 273   They prouided for thindemnity of theyr owne estate by forcible extenuatinge the gooddes..of them whom they desired to kepe in subiection.

1651 T. Hobbes *Leviathan* II. xxi. 113   That Liberty of Forcible Entry, was taken away by a Statute made in Parliament.

1667 Milton *Paradise Lost* II. 793   In embraces forcible and foule.

1767 W. Blackstone *Comm. Laws Eng.* II. 390   The stealing, or forcible abduction, of such property as this, is also felony.

1769 W. Blackstone *Comm. Laws Eng.* IV. xi. 147   A forcible entry or detainer; which is committed by violently taking or keeping possession, with menaces, force, and arms, of lands and tenements, without the authority of law.

1815 J. Scott *Visit to Paris* (ed. 2) Pref. p. xlvi   A forcible dissolution of it [sc. the Chamber] was intended.


1846 H. H. Wilson *Hist. Brit. India 1805–35* II. vii. 316   To compel, by forcible means..submission to the authority which was to be substituted.

1868 E. A. Freeman *Hist. Norman Conquest* (1876) II. vii. 152   He determined..on a forcible return to his country.

(β.)

1548 N. Udall et al. tr. Erasmus *Paraphr. Neuwe Test.* I. Luke v. f. 19   The shame of forceable breakyng into this or that mannnes house.

1683 W. Salmon *Doron Medicum* I. 50   Which is a forceable drawing away.
1688 in *Colonial Rec. Pennsylvania* (1852) I. 236  Praying relief against a forceable Entry and Deteiner.

2. Possessing force.

†a. Of persons, material things, natural agencies, etc.: Strong, powerful.

α.

1555 R. EDEN tr. Peter Martyr of Angleria *Decades of Neue Worlde* f. 311† Dryuen by forcyble wynde to an vnknowen lande.

?1567 M. PARKER *Whole Psalter* ex. 325 Most forcible, He shall great kyngs: and Cesars wound, In day of wrath.

1578 J. BANISTER *Hist. Man* III. f. 42 In the inside of the wrest, is a forcible Ligament.

1614 W. RALEIGH *Hist. World* I. V. vi. §11. 765 He prepared a forcible armie to attend him.

a1676 M. HALE *Primitive Originat. Mankind* (1677) I. i. 29 Those subtil, invisible and forcible Engins which we call the Animal Spirits.

1709 M. PRIOR *Carmen Seculare* (new ed.) in *Poems Several Occasions* 159 Like mingl'd Streams, more forcible, when join'd.

1803 W. BINGLEY *Animal Biogr.* III. 166 So thick and so forcible was the shoal, as to carry before it every other kind of fish.

β.

1561 T. NORTON tr. J. Calvin *Inst. Christian Relig.* II. f. 158 Strong forceable defences, whereby it may be safe against outward violence.

a1618 W. RALEIGH *Prerogatiue Parl.* (1628) 19 The forceable Lords his enemies.

a1661 W. BRERETON *Trav.* (1844) 54 The wind..was so forceable as it repelled the waters.

†b. followed by to with infinitive. Obsolete.

α.

1593 R. HOOKER *Of Lawes Eccl. Politie* III. x. 153 That punishment which hath bene sometimes forcible to bridle sinne.

1601 R. JOHNSON tr. G. Botero *Travellers Breuiat* 104 Cosimus, a kinde of charmed sower mares milke very forcible to turne the braine.

1658 R. ALLESTREE *Pract. Christian Graces; or, Whole Duty of Man* x. §8. 210 There being generally nothing more forcible to bring men into any sinful practice, then the seeing it used by others.

β.

1576 A. FLEMING tr. Cicero in *Panoplie Epist.* 34 Which reasons of his, are verie forceable to make him yeald to the foresaid matter in question.

a1641 R. MONTAGU *Acts & Monuments* iii. 222 Nothing is more forceable to convince all forrainers.
These [pills] are forceable to bring the necessary Pains in Child-Birth.


α.
1573 G. HARVEY Let.-bk. (1884) 47 So forcible an antecedent it was most likely there would follow as effectual a consequent.
1594 T. BOWES tr. P. de la Primaudaye French Acad. II. 527 But that argument of all others is most forcible.
1726 Bp. J. BUTLER 15 Serm. iv. 58 We may observe somewhat very forcible and expressive in these Words.
1790 E. BURKE Refl. Revol. in France 105 Reasons, at least as forcible as those which [etc.].
1864 DICKENS Our Mutual Friend (1865) I. i. vi. 57 With the natural need of a strong rough man in anger, to do something forcible.
1874 L. STEPHEN Hours in Libr. 1st Ser. 19 One man sees everything in the forcible light and shade of Rembrandt.
1884 R. W. CHURCH Bacon ix. 223 His Latin.. is singularly forcible and expressive.

β.
1576 W. LAMBARDE Perambulation of Kent 394 Against which assertion, that which is said 10. H. 3... is not greatly forcible.
1738 W. WARBURTON Divine Legation Moses I. 54 In Beasts the Instinct is invincibly forceable.

d. Hence of an author, painter, etc.
1787 G. GREGORY tr. R. Lowth Lect. Sacred Poetry Hebrews II. xxi He is at once elegant and sublime, forcible and ornamented.
1791 E. BURKE Let. to H. Langrishe in Wks. (1842) I. 560 I might have been more forcible and more clear, if I had not been interrupted as I have been.
1828 I. D'ISRAELI Comm. Life Charles I II. xi. 286 The most forcible of portrait-painters.


1574 E. HELLOWES tr. A. de Guevara Familiar Epist. 109 Their forcible and necessary perilles.
1622 R. HAWKINS Observ. Voiage South Sea xxxii. 76 Our forcible businesse being ended.

†4. ‘Valid, binding, obligatory’ (Johnson). Obsolete.
1587  D. FENNER *Def. Godlie Ministers* sig. Viii  The Lawe was enacted, and stoode forceable.

5. quasi-*adv.* = FORCIBLY *adv.*

α.

1582  N. LICHEFIELD tr. F. L. de Castanheda *1st Bk. Hist. Discouerie E. Indias* iii. 8 b  Sea Woulfes..so wilde and fierce, that they do forcible set vpon men.

1601  P. HOLLAND tr. Pliny *Hist. World* II. 621  Neither doth it strike or pierce the sight so forcible as the Rubies do.

β.

1598  J. MANWOOD *Treat. Lawes Forrest* i. f. 6  The more forceable to shew the same, there is vsed this woord.

**DERIVATIVES**

`forcibleness n.`

1563  W. FULKE *Goodle Gallerye Causes Meteors* III. f. 24  Either for y` smal quantitie, & lesse forcibles [? a misprint; or perh. for forciblesse].

a1586  SIR P. SIDNEY *Apol. Poetrie* (1595) sig. K4  Bewrayed, by that same forciblenes..of the writer.

a1652  J. SMITH *Select Disc.* (1660) VI. iv. 208  The forcibleness of its operation upon the heart of the Prophet.

1890  T. DE W. TALMAGE *From Manger to Throne* 244  Mark's greater forcibleness of statement.

This entry has not yet been fully updated (first published 1897).