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wilful, *adj.*¹, *adv.*, and *n.*

Pronunciation: /'wɪlfʊl/

Forms: Compared **wilfuller**, **wilfullest** (both *rare*). Also ME **wil(le)uol**, **wyl(le)fol**, ME -16 ...

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < WILL *n.*¹ + -FUL *suffix*: not recorded in Old English (but see WILFULLY *adv.*): compare ...

A. *adj.*¹

1.

a. Asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason; determined to take one's own way; obstinately self-willed or perverse. (Of persons or personal attributes, or *transf.* of actions: see also A. 5)

c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 75 *Pertinaces in malo eliminat ecclesia* holie chirche deleð fro cristendom, þo þe wilfulle ben here sinnes to luuen.

c1250 in *Old Eng. Misc.* 184 Hwan þu sixst on leode King þat is wilful.

c1374 CHAUCER *Troilus & Criseyde* III. 935 For verray slouþe and oþere wilful tacches.

c1400 *Rule St. Benet* (verse) 280 Men or wemen of wilful mode, þat order of religion takes.

1529 in I. S. Leadam *Select Cases Star Chamber* (1911) II. 34 The seid Henry is sklanderus and a wylfull person and wyll not be ordered but after his owne wyll.

1576 W. LAMBARDE *Perambulation of Kent* 256 Some blinde & wilfull worshipper.

1578 J. LYLY *Euphues* f. 40^v He that to day is not willyng, will to morrowe bee more wilfull.

1608 SHAKESPEARE *King Lear* vii. 459 To wilfull men The iniuries that they themselues procure, Must be their schoolemasters.

- 1773 H. CHAPONE *Lett. Improvem. Mind* II. 24 The smallest disappointment..will put wilful young people out of temper.
- 1821 SHELLEY *Adonais* xi. 10 Another in her wilful grief would break Her bow and winged reeds.
- 1868 A. C. SWINBURNE *W. Blake* 190 These opinions, and stranger than these, he put forth in the cloudiest style, the wilfullest humour, and the stormiest excitement.

Comb.

- 1632 W. LITHGOW *Total Disc. Trav.* I. 34 What wilfull-hearted man can be so apt to belieue, that our blessed Lady had such estimation of mortar and stones?

†**b.** In good sense: Strong-willed, strongly persistent.

Obsolete. rare.

- c1330 R. MANNYNG *Chron. Wace* (Rolls) 5663 A myghtful [*v.r.* wilfull] man was Maryus, Of fair speche merueillous.
- 1633 T. JAMES *Strange Voy.* 92 Being now become wilfull in our indeauours.

c. In nonce *Comb.* with *wavy*.

- 1877 G. M. HOPKINS *Poems* (1967) 70 What lovely behaviour Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

†**2.** Having the will *to do* something; purposing, intending; wishful, desirous. Also said of the purpose or desire: Eager, earnest. *Obsolete.*

- 1340 *Ayenbite* (1866) 162 Nou yziȝ ane yongne boryeis and ane newene kniȝt. Mochel habbeȝ þos of uele þoȝtes newe diuerses and wyluolle. Þe borgeys wylneȝ to chapfari..þe knyȝt..wilneȝ corteysyes to done an largeliche yeue.
- 1390 J. GOWER *Confessio Amantis* I. 361 Whan that he..hadde his wilful pourpos wonne Of al this Erthe under the Sonne.
- 1489 (▶a1380) J. BARBOUR *Bruce* (Adv.) II. 348 Arayit rycht awisely, Willful to do chewalry.
- a1500 *Ratis Raving* 2919 Wysmen ar wylfull to do grace, & mercyable in petwous cas.

- 1513 G. DOUGLAS in tr. Virgil *Aeneid* XII. Prol. 270 On fut I sprent into my bayr sark,
 Wilfull for till compleyt my langsum wark.
- c1540 (▶?a1400) *Destr. Troy* 725 [She] Wan þe thy worship & wilfull desire.
- 1573 T. TUSSER *Fiue Hundreth Points Good Husbandry* (new ed.) f. 32^v Be wilfull to
 kill, and vnskilfull to store, and looke not for foyzen.

†3. Willing; consenting; ready to comply with a request,
 desire, or requirement. *Obsolete*.

- c1460 *Oseney Reg.* 39 With þe wilfull consent of þe Kyng and of the Aduocates of
 the same church.
- c1475 *Partenay* 1641 With A wilfull hert full gentilly resceyuyng..thys souerayn.
- c1485 (▶1456) G. HAY *Bk. Law of Armys* (2005) 195 Gif thai lordis..defendis
 maliciously the ref, and is nocht wilfull to mak reformacioun and redress.
- 1487 (▶a1380) J. BARBOUR *Bruce* (St. John's Cambr.) XI. 266 The worthy kyng,
 quhen he has seyn His host..wilfull to fulfill His liking, with gud hert and will.
- 1600 SHAKESPEARE *Midsummer Night's Dream* V. i. 207 When wals are so wilfull,
 to heare without warning.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1623) III. ii. 38 I will..divulge
 Page..for a secure and wilfull Acteon.

†4.

a. Proceeding from the will; done, undertaken, assumed,
 or undergone of one's own free will or choice; not
 compulsory or enforced: = VOLUNTARY *adj.* 3 *Obsolete*.

- c1374 CHAUCER tr. Boethius *De Consol. Philos.* (1868) III. pr. xi. 98 I ne trete nat
 heere now of weleful moeuynges of the sowle.
- c1380 WYCLIF *Wks.* (1880) 14 Men þat haue..taken cristis mekenesse and gret
 pouert bi wilful profession.
- c1400 *Rule St. Benet* (prose) 142 The secunde is, þat þe behouis liue in wilfull
 powerte.
- 1488 (▶c1478) HARY *Actis & Deidis Schir William Wallace* (Adv.) (1968–9) XI. l.
 218 The gret debait in Wallace wit can waid Betwix kyndnes and wyllfull wow
 he maid.
- ▶?a1500 R. HENRYSON tr. *Æsop Fables: Fox & Wolf* l. 794 in *Poems* (1981) 34 Do
 wilfull pennance here; and 3e sall wend..to blis withouttin end.

- 1531 TYNDALE *Expos. 1 John* (1538) 37 b By wylfull keypyng of the commaundement we be sure that we loue God.
- 1613 S. PURCHAS *Pilgrimage* II. ix. 131 He there died..through his wilfull want of bread and water.
- 1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* X. 1042 No more be mention'd then of violence Against our selves, and wilful barrenness, That cuts us off from hope.
- 1687 DRYDEN *Hind & Panther* II. 72 The silent stranger stood amaz'd to see Contempt of wealth, and wilfull poverty.

b. Involving unfettered exercise of will; arbitrary; **wilful empire**, absolute sovereignty, autocracy. *Obsolete.*

- 1533 J. BELLENDEN tr. Livy *Hist. Rome* (1903) II. III. xviii. 24 Thus sall It be clerely schewin..quhidder wilfull empire or public liberte be erast establist be þir lawis.

5. Done on purpose or wittingly; purposed, deliberate, intentional; not accidental or casual. Chiefly, now always, in bad sense, of an action either evil in itself or blameworthy in the particular case; often (with colour of sense A. 1) implying 'perverse, obstinate'. Also *transf.* of the agent, as **wilful murderer**, one who commits wilful murder.

- a1400 (▶a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Trin. Cambr.) l. 9633 It was his aun..wilful sin þat did vs all fra him to tuin.
- 1526 *Pilgr. Perf.* (1531) Mortall synnes, & carnall consentes to the same, and wylfull delectacyons in synne.
- 1548 *Hall's Vnion: Edward V* f. ix^v Wylfull murtherers, whom God commaundeth to be taken from the aluter.
- 1583 P. STUBBES *Second Pt. Anat. Abuses* sig. C5 Although it be wilfull and purposed murther.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Henry VI, Pt. 1* (1623) IV. i. 142 How will their grudging stomackes be prouok'd To wilfull Disobedience, and Rebell?
- a1627 J. FLETCHER & T. MIDDLETON *Nice Valour* v. ii, in F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher *Comedies & Trag.* (1647) sig. Xxx2/1 Can there be wilfuller destruction?
- 1736 N. BAILEY et al. *Dictionarium Britannicum* (ed. 2) at *Waste* Wilful Waste makes woful Want.

- 1781 W. COWPER *Truth* 20 Charge not..Your wilful suicide on God's decree.
- 1844 C. THIRLWALL *Hist. Greece* VIII. lxvi. 387 Though his character has..been misrepresented through hostile prejudices and wilful calumny.
- 1883 D. C. MURRAY *Hearts* xxviii On a charge of wilful and corrupt perjury.

B. *adv.*

†1. = WILFULLY *adv.* 4, 5 *Obsolete.*

- c1381 CHAUCER *Parl. Foules* 429 Dishobeysaunt or wilful necligent.
- a1400 (▷a1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 16429 To þaa wilful wod he taght þe lauerd es al-weldand.
- ?1541 COVERDALE *Confut. Standish* sig. dvij Forgetfull what ye sayd afore, or els wilfull blind.
- 1592 T. KYD *Spanish Trag.* I. sig. B2^v Could she [sc. Fortune] heare, yet is she wilfull mad.
- 1598 SHAKESPEARE *Henry IV, Pt. 1* III. i. 173 In faith my Lord you are too wilfull blame.
- 1609 SHAKESPEARE *Sonnets* li. sig. D3^v Since from thee going he went wilfull slow.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Winter's Tale* (1623) I. ii. 257 If euer I were wilfull-negligent.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *King John* (1623) V. ii. 124 The Dolphin is too wilfull opposite And will not temporize with my intreaties.

†2. Voluntarily, of free will: = WILFULLY *adv.* 2.

- c1380 WYCLIF *Wks.* (1880) 87 So þat whanne þei schulden ben most wilful pore & preche þe gospel of cristis pouert & his apostlis.
- 1530 *Myroure Oure Ladye* (Fawkes) (1873) II. 161 These myghty are they that..god throwyth downe from..the sete of dome where the wylfullwyth powre shall sytte and deme wyth cryste.

C. *n.*

A wilful person; *rarely*, a wilful act.

- 1819 SCOTT *Ivanhoe* III. i. 25 Nay, then, if wilful will to water, wilful must drench.

- 1829 SCOTT *Anne of Geierstein* II. iv. 103 That is as much as to say, wilful will to it.
- 1875 TENNYSON *Queen Mary* III. v. 162 One of those wicked wilfuls that men make,
Nor shame to call it nature.
- 1885 *Academy* 14 Nov. 322/1 The unfortunates or the wilfuls who are under
restraint.

DERIVATIVES

† **wilfulhead** *n.* *Obsolete* = *wilfulness* *n.*

- c1385 CHAUCER *Legend Good Women* Prolog. 355 Lyk tyrauntis of lumbardye That vsyn
wilfulhed & tyrannye.
- c1400 *Pilgr. Sowle* (1483) IV. xii. 63 Only that thyng euery wyght may which he may
by ryght and nought of wilful-hede.

wilfulheadness *n.* = *wilfulness* *n.*

- 1485 *Coventry Leet Bk.* 523 Yf any personne of obstinacie or wilful-hednesse will
withstand..the said..Rules.

† **wilfulling** *n.* [irregularly < *wilful* + -ING suffix¹] *Obsolete*
nonce-word a wilful act.

- 1606 J. SYLVESTER tr. G. de S. Du Bartas *Deuine Weekes & Wks.* (new ed.) II. iii. 75 No
more bay with thy wilfullings His Wrath's dread Torrent.

† † **wilfulness** *n.* *Obsolete* wilfulness.

- c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 205 Þat oðer is wilfulness and lichamliche lustes.
- c1280 *MS Douce 139* lf. 157 Þe idel mon..Þat þurstes of wilfulness and drinket
sorwenesse.

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