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dic·tum  (dĭk təm)

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n. pl. dic·ta (-tə) or *dic·tums*

1. An authoritative, often formal pronouncement: *"He cites Augustine's dictum that 'If you understand it, it is not God'" (Joseph Sobran).*
2. *Law* A side remark made in a judicial opinion that is not necessary for the decision in the case and therefore is not to be regarded as establishing the law of the case or setting legal precedent. Also called *obiter dictum*.

[Latin, from neuter past participle of *dĭcere*, to say; see **deik-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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