

Doublets and triplets

There is a curious historical tendency in legal English to string together two or three words to convey what is usually a single legal concept. Examples of this include *null and void*, *fit and proper*, *perform and discharge*, *dispute, controversy or claim*, and *promise, agree and covenant*.

These are often called 'doublets' or 'triplets'. These should be treated with caution, since sometimes the words used mean, for practical purposes, exactly the same thing (*null and void*); and sometimes they do not quite do so (*dispute, controversy or claim*).

Modern practice is to avoid such constructions where possible and use single word equivalents instead. For example, the phrase *give, devise and bequeath* could be replaced by the single word *give* without serious loss of meaning. However, the pace of change in legal usage is slow, and as a result it is still quite common to see certain typical doublets and triplets in certain legal documents. Some of the most common of these are listed below (with suggested equivalents in brackets).

Able and willing	(=able)
Agree and covenant	(=agree)
All and sundry	(=all)
Authorise and direct	(=authorise)
Cancelled and set aside	(=cancelled)
Custom and usage	(=custom)
Deem and consider	(=deem)
Do and perform	(=perform)
Due and owing	(=owing)
Fit and proper	(=fit)
Full and complete	(=complete)
Goods and chattels	(=goods)
Keep and maintain	(=maintain)
Known and described as	(=known as)
Legal and valid	(=valid)
Null and void	(=void)
Object and purpose	(=object OR purpose)
Order and direct	(=order)
Over and above	(=exceeding)
Part and parcel	(=part)
Perform and discharge	(=perform OR discharge)
Repair and make good	(=repair)
Sole and exclusive	(=sole OR exclusive)
Terms and conditions	(=terms)
Touch and concern	(=concern)
Uphold and support	(=uphold)