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wilful, *a.*¹ (*adv.*, *n.*)

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(ˈwɪlfʊl) Compared **wilfuller**, **wilfullest** (both *rare*). Also 3-4 **wil(le)uol**, **wyl(le)fol**, 3-7 **wilfull**, 3-5, 7-8 (9 *U.S.*) **willful**, 4 **wyluolle**, (**weleful**), 4-5 **willef(f)ul**, 4-6 *Sc.* **vilful(l)**, also various forms with *y*, *ll*, *ff*, with or without final *e*. [f. **WILL** *n.*¹+ **-FUL**: not recorded in OE. (but see **WILFULLY**): cf. **WILLESFUL**.]

A. adj.

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 5.)

c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 75 *Pertinaces in malo eliminat ecclesia holie chirche deleþ fro cristendom, þo þe wilfulle ben here sinnes to luuen.* **c1250** in *O.E. Misc.* 184 Hwan þu sixst on leode King þat is wilful. **c1374** **CHAUCER** *Troylus* 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 *Leadam Sel. Cases Star Chamber* (Selden Soc.) II. 34 The seid Henry is sklanderus and a wylfull person and wyll not be ordered but after his owne wyll. **1570-6** **LAMBARDE** *Peramb. Kent* 256 Some blinde and wilfull worshipper. **1579** **LYLY** *Euphues* 43 He that to day is not willyng, will to morrow bee more wilful. **1605** **SHAKES.** *Lear* II. iv. 305 To wilfull men, The iniuries that they themselues procure, Must be their Schoole-Masters. **1773** **MRS. CHAPONE** *Improv. Mind* (1774) II. vi. 24 The smallest disappointment..will put wilful young people out of temper. **1821** **SHELLEY** *Adonais* xi, One..in her wilful grief would break Her bow and winged reeds. **1867** **SWINBURNE** *Blake* (1868) 190 These opinions, and stranger than these, he put forth in the cloudiest style, the wilfullest humour, and the stormiest excitement.

Comb. **1632** **LITHGOW** *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. *Obs. rare.*

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

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

1877 [see *meal-drift* s.v. **MEAL** *n.*¹ 3a].

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

1340 *Ayenb.* 162 Nou yziþ ane yongne boryeis and ane newene kniþt. Mochel habbeþ þos of uele þoþtes newe diuerses and wyluolle. þe borgeys wylneþ to chapfari..þe knyþt..wilneþ corteysyes to

done an largeliche yeue. **1375** BARBOUR *Bruce* II. 345 Arayit rycht awisely, Willful to do chawalry. **1390** GOWER *Conf.* I. 361 Whan that he..hadde his wilful pourpos wonne Of al this Erthe under the Sonne. **1400** *Destr. Troy* 725 [She] Wan þe thy worship & wilfull desire. **1500** *Ratis Raving* 2919 Wysmen ar wylfull to do grace, & mercyable in petwous cas. **1513** DOUGLAS *Æneis* XII. Prol. 270 On fut I sprent into my bayr sark, Wilfull for till compleyt my langsum wark. **1573-80** TUSSER *Husb.* (1878) 77 Be wilfull to kill and vnskilfull to store, And looke for no foison.

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

1375 BARBOUR *Bruce* XI. 266 The worthy kyng, quhen he has seyn His host..wilfull to fulfill His liking, with gud hert and will. **1456** SIR G. HAYE *Law Arms* (S.T.S.) 207 Gif thai lordis..defendis maliciously the ref, and is nocht wilfull to mak reformacioun and redress. **1460** *Oseney Reg.* 39 With þe wilfull consent of þe Kyng and of the Aduocates of the same church. **1475** *Partenay* 1641 With A wilfull hert full gentilly resceyuung..thys souerayn. **1590** SHAKES. *Mids. N. v.* i. 211 When Wals are so wilfull, to heare without warning. **1598** — *Merry W.* III. ii. 44, 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 A. 1b, 3. *Obs.*

1374 CHAUCER *Boeth.* III. pr. xi. (1868) 98, I ne trete nat heere now of weleful moeuynge of the sowle. **1380** WYCLIF *Wks.* (1880) 14 Men þat haue..taken cristis mekenesse and gret pouert bi wilful profession. **1400** *Rule St. Benet* (prose) 142 The secunde is, þat þe behouis liue in wilfull powerte. **1470** HENRY *Wallace* x. 218 The gret debait in Wallace wit can waid, Betwix kyndnes and wylfull wow he maid. **1480** HENRYSON *Fox & Wolf* xxvi. (Bann.), Do wil~full pennance here, and 3e sall wend..to ioy withouttin end. **1531** TINDALE *Expos. 1 John* (1538) 37b, By wylfull keypyng of the commaundement we be sure that we loue God. **1613** PURCHAS *Pilgrimage* II. ix. 131 He there died..through his wilfull want of bread and water. **1667** MILTON *P.L.* 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 & P.* II. 715 The silent stranger stood amazed to see Contempt of wealth, and wilful poverty.

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

1533 BELLENDEN *Livy* III. xviii. (S.T.S.) II. 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 1) implying 'perverse, obstinate'. Also *transf.* of the agent, as **wilful murderer**, one who commits wilful murder.

1300 *Cursor M.* 9633 It was his aun..wilful sin þat did vs all fra him to tuin. **1526** *Pilgr. Perf.* (W. de W. 1531), Mortall synnes, & carnall consentes to the same, and wylfull delectacyons in synne. **1548** HALL *Chron., Edw. V* 9b, Wylfull murtherers, whom God commaundeth to be taken from the aulter. **1583** STUBBES *Anat. Abus.* II. (1882) 13 Although it be wilfull and purposed murther. **1591** SHAKES. *1 Hen. VI, IV.* i. 142 How will their grudging stomackes be prouok'd To wilfull Disobedienc, and Rebell? **1625** FLETCHER *Nice Valour* v. ii, Can there be wilfuller destruction? **1736** BAILEY (fol.) s.v. *Waste*, Wilful Waste makes woful Want. **1781** COWPER *Truth* 20 Charge not..Your wilful suicide on God's decree. **1844** THIRLWALL *Greece* lxvi. VIII. 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. as *adv.*

†**1.** = WILFULLY 4, 5. *Obs.*

c1300 Cursor M. 16429 To þaa wilful wod he taght þe lauerd es al-weldand. **c1381** CHAUCER *Parl. Foules* 429 Dishobeyaunt or wilful negligent. ?**1541** COVERDALE *Confut. Standish* (1547) dvij, Forgetfull what ye sayd afore, or els wilfull blind. **1592** KYD *Sp. Trag.* I. iii, Could she [Fortune] heare, yet is she wilfull mad. **1595** SHAKES. *John* v. ii. 124 The Dolphin is too wilfull opposite And will not temporize with my intreaties. **1596** [see BLAME v. 6]. **c1600** SHAKES. *Sonn.* li. 13 Since from thee going, he went wilfull slow. **1611** — *Wint. T.* I. ii. 255 If euer I were wilfull-negligent.

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

c1380 WYCLIF *Wks.* (1880) 87 So þat whanne þei schulden ben most wilful pore & preche þe gospel of cristis pouert & his apostlis. **1450-1530** *Myrr. our Ladye* II. 161 The sete of dome where the wylfull powre shall sytte and deme wyth cryste.

C. as *n.* A wilful person; *rarely*, a wilful act.

1819 SCOTT *Ivanhoe* xxxi, Nay, then, if wilful will to water, wilful must drench. **1829** — *Anne of G.* xvi, That is as much as to say, wilful will to it. **1875** TENNYSON *Q. Mary* III. v, 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.

Hence †**wilfulhead** (whence irreg. †**wilfulheadness** in same sense), †**wilfulship**, wilfulness; †**wilfulling** *nonce-wd.* [irreg. f. *wilful* + -ING¹], a wilful act.

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

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

1605 SYLVESTER *Du Bartas* II. iii. III. *Law* 610 No more bay with thy *wilfullings His wrath's dread Torrent.

c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 205 þat oðer is *wilfulshipe and lichamliche lustes. **c1280** *MS. Douce* 139 lf. 157 þe idel mon..þat þurstes of wilfulscipe and drinket sorwenesse.

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(*wɪlfʊli*) Forms: see [WILFUL](#) *a.*¹ [Late OE. *wilfullíce*, f. **wilfull* [WILFUL](#) *a.*¹ (cf. OE. *carfull* careful, *carfullíce* carefully): see [-LY](#)².]

†**1.** Willingly, readily, without reluctance; patiently, submissively (with *suffer*, etc.); gladly, 'fain' (with *will* vb. expressing desire: cf. **3**). *Obs.*

a1100 *Gloss. Ælfric's Colloq.* 146 (Napier 225/1) *Uolenter*, wilful[lice]. **a1240** *Wohunge* in *O.E. Hom.* I. 279 Alle þat clenli for þi luue mesaise and pouerte wilfulliche þolien. **1357** *Lay Folks' Catech.* (L.) 1100 Men schuld wilfully fede pore hungry men and þrusty. **1375** [BARBOUR](#) *Bruce* II. 172 He serwynt ay lelely; And the tothir full wilfully,..Rewardyt him weile his seruce. **1382** [WYCLIF](#) *Acts* xxi. 17 Whanne we camen to Jerusalem, bretheren resceyueden vs wilfulli. **c1460** *Godstow Reg.* 132 Mansel..willid & acceptid wilfulli þe gifte þat Raph bloet made to þe church. **1493** *Festivall* (W. de W. 1515) 9 He must..suffre trybulacyon mekely, and do almes dedes wylfully. **1513** [DOUGLAS](#) *Æneis* VIII. iii. 89 Wilfully I obey thair command.

†**b.** With good will, heartily; 'with a will'.

1375 [BARBOUR](#) *Bruce* II. 386 And with that word sa wilfully He dang on. *Ibid.* VIII. 462 Thai..priket furth sa vilfully To vyn the ladis at thai saw pass. **c1430** [LYDG.](#) *Min. Poems* (Percy Soc.) 7 First understand, and willfully procede.

†**2.** Of one's own free will, of one's own accord, voluntarily. Rarely in reference to an inanimate thing: Spontaneously, 'of itself'. *Obs.*

c1000 in *Haupt's Zeitschr. f. deutsches Alt.* IX. 435/2 *Sponte*, wilful[l]ice. **1357** *Lay Folks' Catech.* (L.) 1163 How moche more be þei cursyd of god; þat bynde hem-self wil~fully. **1377** [LANGL.](#) *P. Pl.* B. xx. 48 Syth he þat wrou3te al þe worlde was wilfullich nedy. **c1400** [MANDEVILLE](#) xvi. (1839) 176 Hem that sleen hem self wilfully, for love of here Ydole. **a1425** tr. *Arderne's Treat. Fistula* etc. 87 If þe puluis putte in go willfully out with þe dede flesch þi nede is wele sped. **c1440** *Gesta Rom.* lxiv. 277 (Add. MS.) Do of thi clothes wilfully, or thou shalt agayn thi wille. **a1536** [TINDALE](#) *Exam. W. Thorpe* in *Foxe A. & M.* (1563) 155/1 The night before y^t Christ Jesu wold suffer wilfullye passion for mankinde. **1590** [SPENSER](#) *F.Q.* II. i. 15 She wilfully her sorrow did augment. **1642** [FULLER](#) *Holy & Prof. St.* V. xi. 403 Martyrs are to die willingly but not wilfully. **1705** [CLARKE](#) *Disc. Nat. Relig.* (1706) 103 A Man is obliged not to depart wilfully out of this Life, which is the general Station that God has appointed him.

†**b.** According to one's own will; at will, freely. *Obs.*

1340-70 *Alex. & Dind.* 604 But 3e, folliche folk 3our fals godus alle Wil-fully worschpen wiþ wordliche godus. **c1350** *Will. Palerne* 1782 To me tended þei nou3t bot tok forþ here wey wilfulli to sum wilderness. **c1475** *Partenay* 327 Ouer all thys hors so went wylfully here and there ouer all where at hys lust wold. **c1600** [SHAKES.](#) *Sonn.* lxxx. 8 But since your worth (wide as the Ocean is) The humble as the proudest saile doth beare, My sawsie barke (inferior farre to his) On your broad

maine doth wilfully appeare.

†3. With desire, longingly. *Obs. rare.*

c1350 *Will. Palerne* 3300 þat quen & hire douȝter & meliors þe schene wayteden out at a windowe wilfulli in-fere. **c1611** CHAPMAN *Iliad* VIII. 497 And all did wilfully expect, the siluer-throned morne.

4. Purposely, on purpose, by design, intentionally, deliberately. Chiefly, now always, in bad sense (cf. WILFUL *a.*¹ 5); often with admixture of, or passing into, sense 5; occas. implying 'maliciously'.

c1374 CHAUCER *Troilus* II. 284 Yf þat he wole take of it no cure, Whan þan it cometh, but wyfully it weyuen. **1377** LANGL. *P. Pl.* B. XVII. 285 How myȝte he axe mercy, or any mercy hym helpe, þat wykkedlich & willefullich wolde mercy anynte? **c1400** *Pilgr. Sowle* (Caxton) II. li. (1859) 54 He that wylfully deceyued hym self, who may hym releue of myschyef? **1477** *Rolls of Parlt.* VI. 184/2 Money so molten, beten or wilfully broken. **1526** R. WHITFORD *Martiloge* 67b, The feest also of saynt Dace bysshop of mylen, y^t in his journey toward constantynople was wylfully lodged in a hous y^t was occupyed w^t wycked spirytes. **1617** J. TAYLOR (Water P.) *Three Weekes Observ.* C3, For those that set houses on fire wilfully, they are smoked to death. **1726** G. SHELVOCKE *Voy. round World* (1757) 242 Deaf to all I could say, and so wilfully insensible of the impendant destruction. **1819** SCOTT *Ivanhoe* xliv, His administration was wilfully careless, now too indulgent, and now allied to despotism. **1849** MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* v. I. 545 Instead of the money came excuses..which ought to have opened the eyes of all who were not wilfully blind. **1879** *Cassell's Techn. Educ.* VIII. 107 A mill containing 500 of his looms was wilfully burnt down. **1911** *Ac. 1 & 2 Geo. V c. 6 §1* If any person lawfully sworn as a witness..wilfully makes a statement..which he knows to be false.

5. In a self-willed manner, perversely, obstinately, stubbornly.

a1586 SIDNEY *Arcadia* I. v. (1912) 33 The mother..beyng determinately (least I shoulde say of a great Lady, wilfully) bent to marrie her to Demagoras. *Ibid.* II. xiii. 232 Now so evill could she conceale her fire, and so wilfully persevered she in it, that [etc.]. **1595** SHAKES. *John* III. i. 142, I..demand Why thou against the Church, our holy Mother, So wilfully dost spurne. **1596** SPENSER *State Irel. Wks.* (Globe) 654/1 Surely of such desperat persons as will willfully followe the course of theyr owne follye, there is noe compassion to be had. **a1694** TILLOTSON *Serm., Luke xii. 47, 48* Wks. 1717 I. 425 He that first acknowledgeth him for his Prince, and then affronts him, deserves to be prosecuted with the utmost severity, because he did it wilfully, and in meer contempt. **1726-** [see 4].