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preside, v.

Pronunciation: Brit. /prɪˈzɪd/, U.S. /prəˈzaɪd/, /priˈzaɪd/

Forms: IME– **preside**, 16 **praeside**, 16 **precide**; Sc. pre-17 **preceid**, pre-17 **preseid**, pre-17 17– **preside**.

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: A borrowing from French. **Etymon:** French *présider*.

Etymology: < Middle French, French *présider* to govern or control (c1365), to have the seat of authority at an assembly, to act as chairman or president (1388), to direct, control (1545) < classical Latin *praesidēre* to exercise superintendence at official functions or ceremonies, to govern, control, to guard < *prae-* PRE- *prefix* + *sedēre* to sit (see *SEDENT adj.*). Compare Old Occitan *presidir* (1400), Catalan *presidir* (second half of the 15th cent.), Spanish *presidir* (a1457), Portuguese *presidir* (15th cent.), Italian *presiedere* (a1375).

1. intr. To exercise authority or control *over*; to rule, govern. Also *fig.*: to reign supreme.

- 1490 CAXTON *Eneydos* xix. sig. Evii Pou art of thire, come from the meane regyons of fenyce to enhabyte in libye..presently for to preside in hit forsakyng the swete grounde moder to thy byrth.
- 1616 B. JONSON *Masque Ld. Hadington's Marriage* in *Wks.* I. 941 Twelue sacred powers, That are praesiding at all nuptiall howers.
- 1675 J. OGILBY *Britannia* Introd. 3 One Alderman to each Ward, over which he Presides.
- 1728 E. YOUNG *Love of Fame: Universal Passion* (ed. 2) I. 201 How comes it then to pass we see preside On both their brows an equal share of pride?
- 1754 J. WOOLMAN *Wks.* (1840) 198 When self-love presides in our mind our opinions are biased in our own favour.
- 1796 J. MORSE *Amer. Universal Geogr.* (new ed.) I. 279 In none of their meetings have they [*sc.* the Quakers] a President; as they believe Divine Wisdom alone ought to preside.
- 1823 T. DE QUINCEY *Lett. Young Man* in *London Mag.* Feb. 192/1 The same ideal must have presided.
- 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* II. vi. 14 Others presided over important departments of the civil administration.
- 1869 H. F. TOZER *Res. Highlands of Turkey* II. 282 Some law must have presided over their formation.
- 1921 M. CRAM in B. Williams *O. Henry Prize Stories of 1921* (1922) 130 Unquestionably, Esther Levenson was his mistress, since she presided over his house in Cheyne Walk.
- 1966 C. ACHEBE *Man of People* i. 17 She presided over the entire trade in imported second-hand clothing.
- 1989 P. LIVELY *Passing On* ix. 118 He saw himself as a wise and benign deity, presiding over his kingdom.

2. intr.

a. To occupy the seat of authority at an assembly or meeting; to act as chairman or president.

- 1581 P. WIBURN *Checke or Reproofe M. Howlets Shreeching* f. 48 The councell, holden at Rome vnder Iohn the 23. where one of your predecessours, a foule Madge howlet presided.
- 1638 R. BAKER tr. J. L. G. de Balzac *New Epist.* III. 152 Nor [do I] suspect the integritie of the Judges that præside there.
- 1695 R. BLACKMORE *Prince Arthur* VI. 168 None more fit in Council to preside, And in a Storm, the lab'ring State to guide.
- 1702 *Clarendon's Hist. Rebellion* I. I. 37 By his place, he presided in all Publick Councils.
- 1782 J. PRIESTLEY *Hist. Corruptions Christianity* I. III. 310 Remi himself presided.
- 1839 T. KEIGHTLEY *Hist. Eng.* II. 104 Norfolk presided as lord high Steward.
- 1898 *Daily News* 29 Jan. 7/3 The Moravian Diet at Brünn... The Landmarshal, who was presiding, asked them to leave the Diet.
- 1946 *Nature* 21 Dec. 918/1 Dr. W. H. Taylor presided over a well-attended meeting.
- 1976 *Daily Tel.* 20 July 3/1 Judge Abdela, presiding at the Old Bailey trial..had failed to warn the jury of the 'lurking danger' in identification evidence.
- 2004 *Vanity Fair* (N.Y.) May 230/2 Libby had presided over a meeting..in which he laid out the case against Iraq.

b. To sit at the head of the table.

- [a1626 F. BACON *Let. to James I in Baconiana* (1679) 48 Your Majesties Arm hath been over mine in Council, when you presided at the Table.]
- 1709 *Tatler* 16–18 Feb. 2/1 I frequented the Ordinary of the Black-horse in Holborn, where the Person that usually presided at the Table, was a rough old-fashioned Gentleman.
- 1798 M. WOLLSTONECRAFT *Maria* I. viii. 175 The young 'squire having taken his father's place, and allowing, for the present, his sister to preside at his table.
- 1847 C. BRONTË *Jane Eyre* I. v. 77 A little and dark personage..installed herself at the top of one table, while a more buxom lady presided at the other.
- 1871 R. ELLIS tr. Catullus *Poems* xxvii. 3 So Postumia, queen of healths presiding, Bids.
- 1900 'S. GRAND' *Babs* xxiv He led his guests into the dining-room..'Will you preside, dear lady?' he said.
- 1925 E. WAUGH *Let.* Jan. (1980) 21 So far I have had nothing to do except preside at a sausage tea and say grace for it.
- 1986 'J. LE CARRÉ' *Perfect Spy* ix. 233 Brotherhood had been promoted to head of the table, where he presided like an old grey bird glowering down on his prey.

†**c.** To lead a procession, chase, etc.; to be first. *Obs. rare.*

- 1735 W. SOMERVILE *Chace* II. 236 In the rapid Course Alternate they preside, and justling push To guide the dubious Scent.

d. To officiate at a religious ceremony; (*Christian Church*) to act as the celebrant at a Eucharist; to say mass (cf. *PRESIDENT n.* 2f). Frequently with *at*.

- 1841 *U.S. Mag. & Democratic Rev.* Sept. 284 It was necessary that he should sacrifice at the shrine where he presided.
- 1850 *Ladies' Repository* Sept. 290/1 None ever left the communion table where he presided without deep solemnity of thought.
- 1912 *Jrnl. Hellenic Stud.* **32** 154 The leader of the Tekmoreian Association..had to preside at a ritual meal.
- 1961 F. W. DILLISTONE & P. HAMMOND *Liturgy & Archit.* iii. 19 Except on the rare occasions when the bishop presided at the eucharist, the whole of the *synaxis* was read by the celebrant from the altar itself.
- 2002 *Church Times* 9 Aug. 9/1 A week of church-related events, the highlight of which was a huge outdoor mass presided at by the Pope.

3. trans. To direct, control; to chair.

- 1665 T. MANLEY tr. H. Grotius *De Rebus Belgicis* 649 Some accusing the unskilfulness of those that were to preside the Naval Affairs.
- 1827 J. BENTHAM *Rationale Judicial Evid.* II. III. vi. 119 A trial before a jury, presided by one of the twelve judges.
- 1837 T. CARLYLE *French Revol.* I. III. iii. 103 He..sits there, since he must sit, presiding that Bureau of his.
- 1910 F. H. O'DONNELL *Hist. Irish Parl. Party* II. xxvi. 351 Here are an average ten days of an average month, showing League meetings presided by Irish Catholic priests.
- 1967 *Decision & Decision-makers in Mod. State* (Unesco) 82 The council is presided by the President or the Vice-President.
- 1981 *Eng. World-wide* **2** I. 46 The court presided by X..found them guilty after a four-month trial.
- 2005 *Hindustan Times* (Nexis) 10 Nov. The Congress Steering Committee, presided by Sonia Gandhi and attended by the PM, adopted a resolution on Thursday.

†**4. intr.** To have greater weight or importance than; to preponderate.
Obs. rare.

- 1718 J. FOX *Wanderer* 12 These were no sooner in the Scales, but I perceiv'd that [scale] to preside, which held so unhappy a Part of the Female World.

5. intr. to preside at the piano (also organ, harpsichord, etc.): to play the piano, etc., at a gathering; *spec.* to conduct or lead an orchestra or band while playing the specified instrument.

In the 18th cent. the chief musician in a concert or opera commonly sat at a keyboard instrument

with the score in front of him, but seems to have guided, not conducted, the orchestra. See also *New Grove Dict. Music* (1980) IV. 643.

- 1795 *Mystic Cottager Chamouny* xx. 162 Lady Louisa presided at the grand piano forte, Lady Adela exquisitely touched her harp,..and Lord Edwin took his animating mellifluous flute.
- 1799 *Chron. in Ann. Reg.* (1801) 451/1 *Preside* is the word now applied—not to the leader of the band, but to some distinguished performer—as, ‘Mr. — will preside at the harpsichord’. Dr. Johnson did not live long enough to insert this meaning of the word, or to inquire whether it had any.
- 1838 DICKENS *Oliver Twist* II. xxvi. 96 A professional gentleman, with a bluish nose and his face tied up for the benefit of a toothache presided at a jingling piano in a remote corner.
- 1893 *Amer. Missionary* July 229 The school marched across from the boarding-hall to the church, one of their number presiding at the organ.
- 1907 *West Cumberld. Times* 4 Dec. 2/6 The hymn ‘Rock of ages’ was then sung by the congregation, Mr. T. L— presiding at the organ.
- 1922 J. JOYCE *Ulysses* II. xii. [Cyclops] 314 Senhor Enrique Flor presided at the organ with his wellknown ability.
- 2003 *Boston Herald* (Nexis) 13 June E27 Music Director Jeffrey Brody..presided at the piano with his typically unbreakable gusto.

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