

THE ETYMOLOGY OF "INMATE"

Inmate

noun & adjective (plural in·mates)

[pronounced in màyt]

ORIGIN Prob. orig. from INN noun (later assoc. with IN adverb) +
MATE noun

1. An occupier or inhabitant of an institution such as an asylum, or sometimes a prison under current Southern usage; used to dehumanize non-mental health prisoners; derogatory.

Ex. The nurse at the asylum was aware of the inmates outside of their rooms.

2. A person that is a stranger; not native to the location in which he (or she) is found to be living. *Antiquated*
3. Not to be confused with prisoner. An inmate is a person that presents a danger to themselves (or others), and in most cases are not aware of their own situation. The inmate is the dangerous version of patient that receives care for mental illness in a controlled environment; whereas, a prisoner is someone undergoing a form of societal reconditioning known as rehabilitation, before being re-integrated as a productive and conformed denizen.

Ex. The inmates of the asylum consider themselves to be prisoners in cells; but, the prisoners in the jail take offense at being called inmates due to the word's mental health connotations - nor do they approve of their cells being called rooms - or the building dorms.

Attrib. or as adjective. *That prisoner is not technically an inmate.*

SYN. CAPTIVE, detainee, internee; *informal* jailbird, convict, con, yardbird, lifer, prisoner