# Words in Context Questions

This is the complete Words in Context Word Bank, sorted by meaning: every word and phrase that has appeared as an answer choice in an official Words in Context question, right or wrong, with the official right answers marked ★ and an alphabetical index at the end. Its companion, the Word Bank A–Z, gives the same entries in alphabetical order for quick lookups.

## Words in Context Word Bank (by Topic)

This bank gathers every word and phrase that has appeared as an answer choice in an official Words in Context question: the 119 medium and hard questions in the College Board Question Bank plus 56 more from the official practice tests, 175 questions in all. Their 162 fill-in-the-blank questions use 538 different words and phrases, counted as word families (so *validate* and *validated* count once). A ★ marks the 158 that were the right answer at least once. The others were wrong answers, and they deserve your time too: 87 words came back in two or more questions, and a word you can define at a glance is a word you can rule out at a glance.

**How the bank is organized.** The words are sorted into 31 meaning groups. In each group, the left column holds words for one idea and the right column holds words for the opposite or contrasting idea. So near-synonyms run down each column and opposites sit side by side, which is how the test builds its traps: the right answer shares an idea with the clue, and the opposite is one of the most tempting wrong choices. Some words could live in more than one group; each appears once, under the sense the test used.

**How to read an entry.** Each entry gives the word in bold, a ★ if it was an official right answer, its part of speech, a short meaning in the sense SAT texts use, and an example phrase in italics. A small word in parentheses, as in *contingent* (*on*), is the preposition that came with the word in the official choice. Learn the pair, because the whole pair has to fit the blank. A line marked ▸ flags a second meaning, a look-alike, or a prefix trap: in an argument, for example, to *discount* a claim is to dismiss it, not to lower its price.

**How to use it.** Don't try to learn 538 words in a week. Take one or two groups a day. Cover the meanings, define each word aloud, and check yourself. Then, for every starred word, name a word in the other column that means roughly the opposite. Mark any word you can't define in about five seconds and come back to it two days later. After the groups, a short table lists the 13 "most nearly mean" questions, where the test asked for a less familiar sense of a familiar word, and an alphabetical index at the end shows where to find every word.

### 1 · Back Up or Prove ↔ Doubt or Disprove

| Back Up or Prove | Doubt or Disprove |
|---|---|
| **validate** ★ (v.) — show that a claim or idea is right. *results that validate her early hunch* | **refute** (v.) — prove wrong with evidence or reasoning. *tests that refute rumors of tainted water* |
| **corroborate** ★ (v.), **corroboration** (n.) — back up with additional proof. *a witness who corroborates the driver's story* | **invalidate** ★ (v.) — prove false or cancel out. *one flawed sample can invalidate the whole study* |
| **substantiate** (v.) — give solid proof for a claim. *receipts that substantiate her expense claim* | **negate** ★ (v.) — undo or cancel the effect of. *late-night snacks that negate the morning workout* |
| **buttress** ★ (v.) — prop up or add support to. *quotes that buttress the essay's main point*<br>▸ Tip: literally a support built against a wall; think prop up | **nullify** ★ (v.) — wipe out the force or effect of. *a court ruling that nullified the contract* |

| Back Up or Prove | Doubt or Disprove |
|---|---|
| **confirm** ★ (v.) — show to be true or make definite. *a blood test that confirmed the diagnosis* | **discount** (v.) — dismiss as unimportant or not worth believing. *experts who discounted the farmer's warnings*<br>▸ Tip: in arguments it means dismiss, not lower the price |
| **authenticate** (v.) — prove to be real, not fake. *a painting authenticated by museum experts* | **question** (v.), **questionable** (adj.) — raise doubts about or challenge. *fans who questioned the referee's call*<br>▸ Also: questionable = doubtful, possibly untrue or dishonest |
| **reinforce** (v.) — make stronger, often by adding support. *evidence reinforcing the link between sleep and memory* | **doubt** (v.) — feel unsure whether something is true. *a coach who doubted the rookie's speed* |
| **establish** (v.) — prove or show beyond doubt. *records that establish the violin's true age*<br>▸ Also: set up or start, as in establish a new club | **challenge** (v.) — argue that something is wrong. *a young chemist challenging the textbook view* |
| **defend** ★ (v.) — argue for an idea that others attack. *rising to defend the new homework policy* | **repudiate** ★ (v.) — firmly reject or disown. *voters repudiating the mayor's unpopular plan*<br>▸ Not recant, which is taking back your own earlier statement |
| **warranted** (adj.) — justified or deserved given the facts. *a warranted complaint about the broken heater* | **recant** (v.) — publicly take back something you said. *the critic recanted his harsh early review* |
| | **deny** (v.) — say that something is not true. *the suspect denied ever visiting the shop* |

## 2 · Guess or Theorize ↔ Observe, Test, or Measure

| Guess or Theorize | Observe, Test, or Measure |
|---|---|
| **hypothesis** (n.), **hypothesize** (v.) — a proposed explanation still to be tested. *testing the hypothesis that plants like music* | **empirical** (adj.) — drawn from what is observed or measured. *empirical data gathered from twenty field sites* |
| **theory** ★ (n.) — an idea that explains why something happens. *a theory about why dinosaurs died out* | **evidence** (n.) — facts that show whether something is true. *muddy footprints offered evidence of a visitor* |
| **theoretical** (adj.) — existing as an idea, not tested in practice. *a theoretical risk that has never occurred* | **experiment** (n.) — a careful test to find something out. *a classroom experiment with magnets and iron filings*<br>▸ Also: a verb; experiment with means try something new |
| **conjecture** ★ (n.) — a guess made without full proof. *pure conjecture about who wrote the letter* | **replicable** (adj.) — able to be repeated with the same results. *replicable results confirmed by three other labs* |
| **supposition** ★ (n.) — something accepted as true without proof. *acting on the supposition that rain would stop* | **repeatable** (adj.) — able to be done or said again. *a quick, repeatable warm-up routine* |
| **surmise** ★ (v.) — guess from the clues available. *surmised from her grin that she had won* | **quantify** (v.) — put a number or amount on. *a survey that quantifies student stress* |
| **speculate** ★ (v.) — make guesses when facts are missing. *neighbors speculating about the empty storefront*<br>▸ Also: invest riskily hoping for a big profit | **calibration** (n.) — careful adjusting so measurements are accurate. *a scale that needs calibration before each use* |
| **presume** (v.) — take for granted without checking. *we presumed the bus would be on time*<br>▸ Also: dare to act without the right, as in presume to judge | **discover** (v.) — find or learn something for the first time. *divers who discovered a sunken ship* |
| **presuppose** (v.) — treat as already true from the start. *a plan that presupposes everyone will agree* | **conclusion** (n.) — a judgment reached by reasoning from facts. *reaching a conclusion after weighing the clues* |

| Guess or Theorize | Observe, Test, or Measure |
|---|---|
| **postulate** (v.) — propose an idea as a basis for reasoning. *astronomers who postulated an unseen planet* | |
| **guess** (v.) — give an answer without being sure. *guessing the number of jellybeans in a jar* | |
| **notional** ★ (adj.) — existing in theory, not in actual fact. *a notional border that exists only on paper* | |
| **counterfactual** ★ (adj.) — imagining how events could have gone differently. *a counterfactual tale in which Rome never fell* | |
| **imagine** (v.) — picture something in your mind. *imagining life on the ocean floor* | |
| **approximate** (adj.) — close to exact but not quite. *an approximate head count of two hundred*<br>▸ Also: a verb meaning come close to, as in approximate the original | |
| **probability** (n.) — the chance that something will happen. *a seventy percent probability of rain* | |
| **paradigm** (n.) — a standard model or way of thinking. *a paradigm shift in how schools teach* | |

## 3 · Certain or Solid ↔ Uncertain or Shaky

| Certain or Solid | Uncertain or Shaky |
|---|---|
| **indisputable** (adj.) — too certain to be argued about. *indisputable proof caught on a security camera* | **tentative** ★ (adj.) — not final and open to change. *a tentative date for the class picnic*<br>▸ Also: hesitant or unsure, as in a tentative first step |
| **undeniable** (adj.) — so plainly true it cannot be rejected. *her undeniable talent for drawing faces* | **tenuous** ★ (adj.) — weak and easily broken or doubted. *a tenuous link between diet and dreams*<br>▸ Not tenacious, which means holding on firmly |
| **unassailable** (adj.) — too strong to be attacked or doubted. *an unassailable lead with two laps left* | **inconclusive** (adj.) — not settling the question either way. *inconclusive test results that need a retest* |
| **infallible** (adj.) — never wrong or mistaken. *no weather forecast is infallible* | **precariousness** (n.) — the state of being unsteady or at risk. *the precariousness of a cliffside cabin* |
| **inevitable** (adj.) — sure to happen no matter what. *the inevitable traffic after a big game* | **uncertain (about)** (adj.) — not sure what to think or do. *uncertain about which college to choose* |
| **decisive** (adj.), **decisiveness** (n.) — settling a question beyond doubt. *a decisive goal in the final minute*<br>▸ Also: quick to make firm choices, as in a decisive leader | |
| **compelling** (adj.) — very convincing or hard to ignore. *compelling evidence that swayed the jury* | |
| **authoritative** (adj.) — reliable because it comes from experts. *the most authoritative guide to local birds*<br>▸ Not authoritarian, which means demanding strict obedience | |
| **confident** (adj.) — sure of yourself or of an outcome. *a confident smile before her piano solo* | |
| **ensure** (v.) — make certain that something happens. *backups that ensure no files are lost*<br>▸ Watch: you assure a person but ensure an outcome | |

## 4 · Visible or Open ↔ Hidden or Hard to Perceive

| Visible or Open | Hidden or Hard to Perceive |
|---|---|
| **overtly** ★ (adv.) — openly, in a way anyone can see. *a film that overtly mocks greed*<br>▸ Not covertly, which means secretly; overt and covert are opposites | **conceal** (v.) — keep hidden from others. *a drawer concealed behind a sliding panel* |
| **conspicuous** (adj.) — standing out and easy to notice. *a conspicuous red hat in the crowd* | **secretive** (adj.) — inclined to hide things from others. *a secretive club with a hidden entrance* |
| **obvious** (adj.) — easy to see or understand. *an obvious typo in the headline* | **surreptitiously** ★ (adv.) — secretly, so no one notices. *surreptitiously checking her phone during class* |
| **observable** (adj.) — able to be seen or detected. *observable shifts in the moon's position* | **unobtrusive** (adj.) — quiet and not drawing attention. *an unobtrusive waiter refilling glasses* |
| **manifest (in)** ★ (adj.) — clearly shown or revealed. *her joy was manifest in every brushstroke*<br>▸ Also: a verb meaning show or reveal, as in symptoms manifest slowly | **imperceptible** (adj.) — too slight or small to notice. *an imperceptible change in the room's temperature* |
| **prominent** (adj.) — well known or easy to notice. *a prominent scientist invited to speak* | **inconspicuousness** (n.) — being hard to notice or easy to overlook. *the inconspicuousness of a moth on bark* |
| **expose** (v.) — uncover or reveal something hidden. *a reporter who exposed the fake charity* | **intangible** ★ (adj.) — not physical; impossible to touch or measure. *intangible rewards such as pride and trust* |
| **feature** ★ (v.) — include or show as a main part. *a museum show featuring local painters* | **indistinct** (adj.) — not clear or sharp; faint or blurry. *indistinct voices behind the closed door* |
| **highlight** (v.) — point out as especially important. *a chart highlighting the busiest hours* | **obscure** (adj.) — little known, or hard to understand. *an obscure poet rediscovered after her death*<br>▸ Also: a verb meaning hide or blur, as in fog obscured the road |
| **underscore** (v.) — stress how important something is. *a crash that underscored the need for helmets* | **latent** ★ (adj.) — present but hidden and not yet active. *a latent talent that blossomed in college* |
| | **implicit** (adj.) — hinted at rather than stated outright. *an implicit warning in his calm tone*<br>▸ Also: complete and unquestioning, as in implicit trust |

## 5 · Clear or Simple ↔ Confusing or Complex

| Clear or Simple | Confusing or Complex |
|---|---|
| **straightforward** ★ (adj.) — simple and free of complications. *straightforward directions anyone could follow*<br>▸ Also: honest and direct, as in a straightforward answer | **ambiguous** (adj.), **ambiguity** ★ (n.) — uncertain, or having more than one possible meaning. *a contract clause full of ambiguity*<br>▸ Not ambivalent, which means having mixed feelings |
| **simple** (adj.) — having few parts; easy to grasp. *a simple tool made from one stick* | **opaque** ★ (adj.) — not see-through; hard to understand. *opaque rules that no one could explain* |
| **accessible** ★ (adj.) — clear enough for ordinary readers to follow. *an accessible book about black holes*<br>▸ Also: easy to reach or enter, as in an accessible entrance | **arcane** (adj.) — mysterious and known mainly to specialists. *arcane terms used only by sailors* |
| **explicable** (adj.) — able to be explained. *a strange noise, easily explicable by the wind* | **mystifying** (adj.) — deeply puzzling; impossible to figure out. *a mystifying light hovering over the lake* |
| **succinctly** (adv.) — briefly and clearly, with no extra words. *summing up the plot succinctly in one sentence* | **inexplicable** (adj.) — having no clear explanation. *the inexplicable disappearance of the cookies*<br>▸ Watch: in- means not; inexplicable is the opposite of explicable |

| Clear or Simple | Confusing or Complex |
|---|---|
| | **impenetrable** ★ (adj.) — impossible to get through or understand. *a forest so dense it was impenetrable* |
| | **indecipherable** (adj.) — impossible to read or make out. *indecipherable handwriting on an old postcard* |
| | **confusing (for)** (adj.) — unclear and hard to follow. *a map that was confusing for tourists* |
| | **complicated (by)** (adj.) — made harder to handle or understand. *a rescue complicated by thick fog* |
| | **intricate** ★ (adj.) — having many small, detailed parts. *intricate lace patterns on the wedding veil* |

## 6 · Alike or Matching ↔ Different or Opposed

| Alike or Matching | Different or Opposed |
|---|---|
| **homogeneous** ★ (adj.) — made up of parts that are all alike. *a homogeneous mixture with no visible layers* | **heterogeneity** (n.) — a mix of different parts or kinds. *the heterogeneity of soil across the farm*<br>▸ Not homogeneity (sameness); hetero- means different, homo- means same |
| **uniform** ★ (adj.) — evenly the same throughout. *a uniform temperature throughout the room* | **diverse** ★ (adj.) — including many different kinds. *a reef home to diverse sea life* |
| **unvarying** (adj.) — never changing; always the same. *the clock's unvarying tick through the night* | **disparate** ★ (adj.) — so different they're hard to compare. *disparate hobbies like chess and rock climbing*<br>▸ Not desperate (hopeless); disparate means very different |
| **similar (to)** (adj.), **similarity (with)** (n.) — alike in some ways. *a melody similar to an old folk tune* | **individualistic** (adj.) — valuing personal independence over fitting in. *an individualistic artist who ignored every trend* |
| **commonality (with)** ★ (n.) — a feature or quality two things share. *noticed commonalities with her new roommate* | **incongruous** (adj.) — oddly out of place; not fitting in. *an incongruous tuxedo at a beach picnic*<br>▸ Watch: in- means not; incongruous = not fitting together |
| **analogous** (adj.), **analogy** ★ (n.), **analogical** (adj.) — alike in a way that allows comparison. *an analogy comparing the heart to a pump*<br>▸ Tip: an analogy (n.) is a comparison showing how two things are alike | **antithetical** (adj.) — directly opposed to something. *values antithetical to fair play* |
| **comparable (to)** ★ (adj.) — close to something in size, amount, or quality. *a cost comparable to last year's* | **contradiction** (n.) — a clash between things that can't both be true. *a contradiction between her words and actions* |
| **interchangeable** (adj.) — able to be swapped for each other. *interchangeable parts that fit either bike* | **diverge** (v.) — split off and go different ways. *where the trail diverges into two paths*<br>▸ Not converge (come together); diverge means move apart |
| **consistent** ★ (adj.) — staying the same, time after time. *her consistent effort all semester long*<br>▸ Also: in agreement with, as in results consistent with a theory | **deviate** ★ (v.) — move away from the usual path or rule. *a recipe I rarely deviate from* |
| **imitate** (v.), **imitation** (n.) — copy someone's actions or follow their example. *a parrot that imitates its owner's voice* | |
| **mimic** (v.) — copy closely in look, sound, or action. *insects that mimic dead leaves to hide* | |

## 7 · Ordinary or Widespread ↔ Unusual or New

| Ordinary or Widespread | Unusual or New |
|---|---|
| **common** (adj.), **commonplace** (adj.) — happening often or found in many places. *a common bird in city parks* | **atypical** ★ (adj.) — unlike what is normal for its kind. *an atypical snowfall in late May*<br>▸ Watch: a- means not; atypical is the opposite of typical |
| **ordinary** (adj.) — normal and not special. *an ordinary Tuesday with nothing unusual* | **anomaly** ★ (n.) — something that breaks an expected pattern. *one anomaly in otherwise steady data* |
| **routine** (adj.) — regular and expected, part of the usual pattern. *a routine checkup at the dentist* | **oddity** ★ (n.) — a strange or surprising thing. *a two-headed snake, a real oddity* |
| **unremarkable** (adj.) — not special enough to notice. *an unremarkable gray building on the corner* | **infrequent** (adj.) — not happening often. *infrequent buses on the rural route* |
| **unoriginal** (adj.) — copied or done before; not fresh. *an unoriginal plot borrowed from older films* | **unpredictable** (adj.) — likely to change without warning. *unpredictable mountain weather that shifts hourly* |
| **ubiquitous** (adj.), **ubiquity** ★ (n.) — seeming to be everywhere at once. *the ubiquity of plastic in the ocean* | **novel** (adj.) — new and unlike anything before. *a novel approach to an old problem*<br>▸ Not the book here: as an adjective, novel means new |
| **widespread** ★ (adj.) — found or happening over a large area. *widespread flooding after the spring storms* | **innovative** (adj.) — using new ideas or methods. *an innovative design for cheaper solar panels* |
| **universal** (adj.) — true for or shared by everyone. *a universal love of music across cultures* | **inventive** ★ (adj.) — good at thinking up new things. *an inventive cook who improvises with leftovers* |

## 8 · Important or Central ↔ Minor, Extra, or Unneeded

| Important or Central | Minor, Extra, or Unneeded |
|---|---|
| **important** ★ (adj.) — having great value, effect, or influence. *an important invention that changed farming* | **negligible** ★ (adj.) — so small it hardly matters. *a negligible difference of one cent*<br>▸ Not negligent (careless); negligible means too small to matter |
| **significant** (adj.) — important enough to notice or matter. *a significant drop in test scores* | **inconsequential (to)** ★ (adj.) — having little or no importance. *a detail inconsequential to the final result* |
| **substantial** ★ (adj.) — large in amount or degree. *a substantial meal that kept us full* | **irrelevant (to)** ★ (adj.) — unrelated to what is being discussed. *a question irrelevant to today's lesson* |
| **profound** (adj.) — very deep or far-reaching. *a profound change in how we live* | **extraneous** (adj.) — extra and unrelated to the main point. *cutting extraneous details from an essay* |
| **integral** ★ (adj.) — needed as a basic part of something. *an integral part of the team's success* | **tangential** (adj.) — only slightly related to the main topic. *a tangential remark that derailed the meeting* |
| **powerful** (adj.) — very strong or forceful. *a powerful current that swept the raft downstream* | **peripheral** ★ (adj.) — on the outer edge; not central. *glimpsed in my peripheral vision*<br>▸ Also: minor or less important, as in a peripheral issue |
| | **superficial** (adj.) — only on the surface; not deep or thorough. *a superficial review that missed key errors* |
| | **unimportant** ★ (adj.) — not worth much attention. *an unimportant typo in the footnote* |
| | **unnecessary** (adj.) — not needed; able to be left out. *an unnecessary second coat of paint* |
| | **redundant** (adj.) — extra because it repeats what's already there. *a redundant sentence that repeats the last one* |
| | **marginalize** ★ (v.) — push a person or group to the sidelines. *a club that marginalized its newest members* |

| Important or Central | Minor, Extra, or Unneeded |
|---|---|
| | **accessory** (n.) — an extra item that adds to something. *a scarf, the perfect accessory for the coat*<br>▸ Also: someone who helps commit a crime, an accomplice |
| | **ornamental** (adj.) — for decoration rather than use. *ornamental plants grown just for their looks* |
| | **adorn** (v.) — make beautiful by adding decorations. *paintings that adorn the hallway walls*<br>▸ Tip: adornments are extras, decorative rather than essential |

## 9 · Plenty, Size, or Thoroughness ↔ Too Little or Less

| Plenty, Size, or Thoroughness | Too Little or Less |
|---|---|
| **profusion (of)** (n.) — a huge amount, more than enough. *a profusion of wildflowers after the rain* | **paucity (of)** ★ (n.) — too small an amount; a shortage. *a paucity of fresh food in winter* |
| **fecundity** (n.) — power to produce many young or much growth. *the fecundity of fast-breeding rabbits* | **lacking** (adj.) — missing or not present enough. *evidence for the claim was lacking* |
| **saturated (with)** ★ (adj.) — completely soaked or filled with something. *a sponge saturated with soapy water* | **depleted (of)** (adj.) — used up or greatly reduced. *a battery depleted of its charge* |
| **fruitful** ★ (adj.) — producing good or useful results. *a fruitful meeting that solved three problems* | **inadequate** ★ (adj.) — not enough or not good enough. *inadequate funding to repair the bridge* |
| **exhaustive** ★ (adj.) — thorough, leaving nothing out. *an exhaustive search of every room*<br>▸ Not tiring: exhaustive means thorough, not exhausting | **fruitless** (adj.) — failing to produce any results. *hours of fruitless digging for treasure* |
| **extensive** ★ (adj.) — large in area, amount, or range. *extensive damage from the earthquake* | **modest** ★ (adj.) — fairly small; not large or extreme. *a modest increase in ticket prices*<br>▸ Also: humble, not bragging about yourself |
| **supply** (n.) — a stock of something ready to use. *the town's water supply during the drought* | **diminish** ★ (v.) — grow or make smaller or weaker. *pain that diminished after a few days* |
| **scale** ★ (n.) — the overall size or reach of something. *the sheer scale of the ancient pyramids* | **reduce** ★ (v.) — bring down in amount or size. *reduce noise by closing the windows* |

## 10 · Lasting or Active ↔ Brief, Ended, or Inactive

| Lasting or Active | Brief, Ended, or Inactive |
|---|---|
| **permanent** (adj.) — lasting forever or for a very long time. *a permanent scar from the old injury* | **defunct** ★ (adj.) — no longer active or in use. *a defunct railway line overgrown with weeds* |
| **perpetual** (adj.) — going on without stopping, seemingly forever. *the perpetual hum of city traffic* | **dormant** ★ (adj.) — inactive for now but able to restart. *a dormant volcano that could erupt again*<br>▸ Not dead or defunct: dormant things can become active again |
| **enduring** (adj.) — lasting through many years. *an enduring friendship since kindergarten* | **hibernation** (n.) — a deep winter sleep some animals take. *bears emerging from hibernation in spring* |
| **persistent** ★ (adj.) — going on and on; refusing to go away. *a persistent cough that lasted weeks*<br>▸ Also: determined, not giving up, as in a persistent student | **reprieve** (n.) — a temporary break from trouble or punishment. *a brief reprieve from the summer heat* |
| **ongoing** (adj.) — still happening; not yet finished. *an ongoing investigation into the fire* | |

| Lasting or Active | Brief, Ended, or Inactive |
|---|---|
| **protracted** (adj.) — dragged out longer than expected. *a protracted legal battle over the land* | |
| **prolong** (v.) — make last longer. *packed in ice to prolong freshness* | |
| **retain** (v.) — keep or continue to hold. *stones that retain heat after sunset* | |
| **operative** (adj.) — working or in effect. *a rule still operative after fifty years* | |
| **existence** (n.) — the fact of being real or present. *doubts about the existence of the lost city* | |

## 11 · Change, Shift, or Replace ↔ Stay the Same or Settle In

| Change, Shift, or Replace | Stay the Same or Settle In |
|---|---|
| **evolving** (adj.) — changing and developing over time. *the city's evolving skyline* | **constant** (n.) — something that stays the same. *temperature kept as a constant in the experiment*<br>▸ Also: adj. never stopping, as in constant noise |
| **dynamic** (adj.) — full of energy and frequent change. *a dynamic classroom full of lively debate* | **inertia** ★ (n.) — a tendency to stay the same or not act. *the inertia that kept old rules in place*<br>▸ Also: in physics, an object's resistance to changing its motion |
| **variable** ★ (adj.) — likely to shift or differ. *variable winds that kept changing direction*<br>▸ Also: n. a factor that can change, as in an experiment | **entrench** (v.) — fix firmly so it's hard to change. *a habit entrenched by years of repetition* |
| **fluctuation (in)** ★ (n.) — an uneven rise and fall. *small fluctuations in body temperature* | **habituate (to)** (v.) — make or become used to something. *city pigeons habituated to crowds* |
| **elasticity** ★ (n.) — ability to stretch or adjust and bounce back. *the elasticity of a rubber band* | |
| **adapt (to)** ★ (v.) — change to suit a new situation. *animals that adapt to colder climates*<br>▸ Not adopt (take as your own); adapt means adjust | |
| **adjust** (v.) — change slightly to fit or work better. *adjust the mirror before driving* | |
| **develop** (v.) — build up or grow over time. *develop a new vaccine in the lab* | |
| **development (of)** (n.) — the process of growing or advancing. *the development of a child's language* | |
| **redefine** (v.) — change what something means or how it's seen. *a discovery that redefined what a planet is* | |
| **reconstitute (as)** (v.) — put together again, often in a new form. *the old committee reconstituted as a new board*<br>▸ Also: restore dried food with water, as in reconstituted soup | |
| **transpose** (v.) — switch the order or positions of two things. *two digits transposed by mistake* | |
| **replace** (v.) — take the place of, or put back in place. *replace the cap after each use* | |
| **relocate (from)** (v.) — move to a new place to live or work. *families forced to relocate from the floodplain* | |

| Change, Shift, or Replace | Stay the Same or Settle In |
|---|---|
| **supersede** ★ (v.) — replace something older or outdated. *a new law that supersedes the old one* | |
| **turnover** (n.) — the rate at which people or things are replaced. *high staff turnover at the busy restaurant* | |
| **condition** (v.) — train or shape through repetition. *dogs conditioned to expect a treat*<br>▸ Also: n. the state something is in, or a requirement | |

## 12 · Encourage or Cause ↔ Hinder or Block

| Encourage or Cause | Hinder or Block |
|---|---|
| **foster** ★ (v.) — help something grow or develop. *a coach who fosters teamwork* | **hinder** ★ (v.) — get in the way of; slow down. *heavy snow that hindered the rescue effort* |
| **encourage** (v.) — support and urge on; make more likely. *teachers who encourage questions in class* | **stymie** ★ (v.) — block or stop the progress of. *a missing part that stymied the repair* |
| **provoke** (v.) — cause a strong reaction, often anger. *a rude remark that provoked an angry reply* | **hamper** ★ (v.) — slow down or make more difficult. *a sprained ankle that hampered her running*<br>▸ Also: as a noun, a large basket, like a laundry hamper |
| **engender** ★ (v.) — cause or give rise to. *unfair rules that engender resentment*<br>▸ Not endanger (put at risk); engender = bring about | **inhibit** (v.) — hold back or slow down. *cold nights that inhibit plant growth*<br>▸ Also: an inhibited person is shy and holds back feelings |
| **cause** (n.) — the reason something happens. *investigators searching for the fire's cause* | **curtail** (v.) — cut back, shorten, or limit. *budget cuts that curtailed library hours* |
| **catalyst (of)** ★ (n.) — something that sparks change or action. *a speech that became the catalyst of reform*<br>▸ Also: in chemistry, a substance that speeds up a reaction | **restrict** (v.) — put limits on; keep within bounds. *a law that restricts fishing in spring* |
| **inducement** ★ (n.) — a reward that persuades someone to act. *free pizza as an inducement to volunteer* | **constraint** (n.) — a limit that holds something back. *a tight budget, our biggest constraint* |
| **incentive (for)** (n.) — something that motivates people to act. *discounts as an incentive for early sign-ups* | **confine (to)** ★ (v.) — keep within certain limits. *a flu that confined me to bed* |
| **inspire** ★ (v.), **inspirational** (adj.) — fill with ideas or the urge to create. *a dance inspired by ocean waves*<br>▸ Watch: inspired by = prompted by; inspirational = uplifting | **deterrent (to)** (n.) — something that discourages an action. *high fines as a deterrent to littering* |
| **influence** ★ (v.) — have an effect on; help shape. *a teacher who influenced my career choice* | **discourage** (v.) — make less likely; try to prevent. *signs that discourage swimming near the rocks* |
| **enhance** (v.) — improve or increase the quality of. *spices that enhance a stew's flavor* | **repress** (v.) — hold down or keep in check. *protests repressed by the army* |
| **popularize** ★ (v.) — make widely known or liked. *radio broadcasts that popularized jazz* | **preclude** (v.) — rule out before it can happen. *an injury that precluded her from competing*<br>▸ Tip: pre- = before; preclude = shut out ahead of time |
| **sponsor (of)** (n.) — a backer who pays for or supports something. *the main sponsor of the charity race* | **obviate** (v.) — remove the need for. *a dishwasher that obviates scrubbing by hand*<br>▸ Not make obvious; obviate = make unnecessary |
| **proponent (of)** ★ (n.) — a person who argues in favor of. *a strong proponent of later school start times*<br>▸ Tip: related to propose; a proponent puts forward and backs an idea | **preventable** ★ (adj.) — possible to stop before it happens. *most kitchen fires are preventable* |

| Encourage or Cause | Hinder or Block |
|---|---|
| **attract** (v.) — draw in or pull toward. *a street fair that attracted huge crowds* | |

## 13 · Make Worse ↔ Make Better or Restore

| Make Worse | Make Better or Restore |
|---|---|
| **aggravate** (v.) — make a problem worse. *scratching will only aggravate the rash*<br>▸ Also: in everyday speech, annoy, as in an aggravating delay | **ameliorate** ★ (v.) — make a bad situation better. *steps to ameliorate classroom overcrowding* |
| **exacerbate** (v.) — make a bad situation even worse. *dry winds that exacerbated the wildfire* | **mitigate** ★ (v.) — lessen the harm or force of. *sandbags to mitigate flood damage*<br>▸ Not militate (weigh against); mitigate = lessen |
| **compound** (v.) — add to; make bigger or worse. *lies that compound the original mistake*<br>▸ Also: n. a combination of parts, as in a chemical compound | **moderate** (v.), **moderation** (n.) — make less extreme or intense. *ocean breezes that moderate summer heat* |
| **weaken** (v.) — make less strong. *rust that weakened the old bridge* | **rectify** ★ (v.) — set right; fix what is wrong. *a refund to rectify the billing error* |
| | **redress** ★ (v.) — fix or make up for a wrong. *a law to redress unfair pay gaps*<br>▸ Not dress again; redress = set right an unfair situation |
| | **counteract** (v.) — act against and cancel out. *an antidote that counteracts the poison* |
| | **correct** (v.) — fix or make right. *spelling errors corrected by an editor* |
| | **improve (on)** (v.) — do better than an earlier version. *a sequel that improves on the original* |
| | **optimize** ★ (v.) — make work as well as possible. *tweaking settings to optimize battery life* |
| | **restore** (v.) — bring back to an earlier, better state. *volunteers who restored a faded mural* |
| | **replenish** ★ (v.) — fill up or build back up again. *spring rain that replenishes the reservoir* |

## 14 · Safe, Helpful, or Successful ↔ Harmful, Risky, Costly, or Vulnerable

| Safe, Helpful, or Successful | Harmful, Risky, Costly, or Vulnerable |
|---|---|
| **innocuous** ★ (adj.) — harmless and unlikely to offend. *an innocuous joke that offended no one*<br>▸ Tip: in- here means not: innocuous = not harmful | **dangerous** (adj.) — likely to cause harm. *dangerous ice on the mountain road* |
| **healthy** ★ (adj.) — in good condition; thriving. *a healthy forest full of young trees* | **risky** (adj.) — involving a chance of loss or harm. *a risky bet on an unknown team* |
| **beneficial** (adj.), **beneficially** (adv.) — helpful or good for something. *sleep is beneficial to memory* | **aggressive** (adj.) — ready to attack or confront. *an aggressive dog barking at strangers*<br>▸ Also: bold and forceful, as in an aggressive savings goal |
| **advantageous** ★ (adj.) — giving an edge or a benefit. *height is advantageous in basketball* | **abrasive** (adj.) — rough or rude in an annoying way. *an abrasive boss who snaps at everyone*<br>▸ Also: literally rough and scraping, like sandpaper |

| Safe, Helpful, or Successful | Harmful, Risky, Costly, or Vulnerable |
|---|---|
| **useful** (adj.) — helpful for doing something. *a useful tool for opening jars* | **predatory** (adj.) — hunting and eating other animals. *predatory hawks circling the field*<br>▸ Also: unfairly taking advantage of others, as in predatory lending |
| **appropriate** (adj.) — suitable or right for the situation. *appropriate clothes for a job interview*<br>▸ Also: as a verb, take for your own use, often without permission | **disastrous** (adj.) — causing great damage or failure. *a disastrous first attempt at baking bread* |
| **acceptable** (adj.) — good enough; allowed. *jeans are acceptable at casual events* | **costly** (adj.) — very expensive, or causing great loss. *a costly mistake that lost the game* |
| **satisfactory** (adj.) — good enough but not outstanding. *a satisfactory grade, though not a great one*<br>▸ Not satisfying (pleasing); satisfactory = acceptable, just good enough | **expensive** (adj.) — costing a lot of money. *front-row seats that are too expensive* |
| **successful** ★ (adj.) — achieving what was hoped for. *a successful fundraiser for the school band* | **fragile** ★ (adj.) — easily broken or damaged. *fragile glass ornaments wrapped in paper* |
| **lucrative** (adj.) — making a lot of money. *a lucrative business selling used textbooks* | **susceptible (to)** (adj.) — easily affected or harmed by. *young seedlings susceptible to frost* |
| **beneficiary (of)** (n.) — someone who gains from something. *the sole beneficiary of her aunt's will*<br>▸ Not benefactor (the giver); a beneficiary receives the benefit | |
| **resilient** (adj.), **resilience** (n.) — able to recover quickly from hardship. *resilient plants that survive long droughts* | |
| **invulnerable** (adj.) — impossible to harm or damage. *a fortress that seemed invulnerable to attack* | |

## 15 · Easy, Practical, or Doable ↔ Hard or Unworkable

| Easy, Practical, or Doable | Hard or Unworkable |
|---|---|
| **facile** (adj.) — overly simple and shallow. *a facile answer to a complex problem*<br>▸ Watch: usually critical, not praise; a facile argument ignores complexity | **arduous** ★ (adj.) — very hard and tiring. *an arduous climb up the steep trail* |
| **manageable** (adj.) — possible to handle or deal with. *a manageable amount of homework* | **insurmountable** ★ (adj.) — too great to overcome. *a lead that seemed insurmountable at halftime* |
| **feasible** (adj.) — possible and practical to do. *a feasible plan that fits our budget* | **tedious** (adj.) — boring because long or repetitive. *tedious hours of copying notes by hand* |
| **pragmatic** (adj.) — practical; focused on what works. *a pragmatic compromise rather than an ideal solution* | **impractical** (adj.) — not sensible or useful in real life. *high heels are impractical for hiking* |
| **expediency** (n.) — choosing what is quick and convenient. *skipping steps for the sake of expediency*<br>▸ Watch: often negative: convenience chosen over what is right | **unworkable** (adj.) — not able to work in practice. *an unworkable schedule with no breaks* |
| **smoothly** (adv.) — without bumps, pauses, or problems. *the meeting ran smoothly from start to finish* | **ineffectual** (adj.) — failing to produce the desired result. *an ineffectual warning that everyone ignored* |
| | **struggling** (adj.) — having great difficulty; barely managing. *a struggling shop with few customers* |
| | **strenuously** (adv.) — with great force and effort. *she strenuously objected to the new rule* |
| | **grapple (with)** (v.) — struggle to deal with something hard. *coastal towns grappling with rising seas* |

## 16 · Basic or Unskilled ↔ Skilled or Refined

| Basic or Unskilled | Skilled or Refined |
|---|---|
| **rudimentary** ★ (adj.) — simple and only partly developed. *a rudimentary raft of logs and rope* | **sophisticated** (adj.) — advanced and complex; worldly and cultured. *a sophisticated alarm system with face scanning* |
| **immature** (adj.) — not fully grown or developed. *immature birds without adult feathers yet* | **nuanced** (adj.) — showing fine, subtle differences. *a nuanced review praising some scenes, not others* |
| **awkward** (adj.) — clumsy; not smooth or skilled. *an awkward dancer stepping on toes* | **refinement (of)** (n.) — an improved, more polished version. *a refinement of last year's recipe*<br>▸ Also: elegance and good manners, as in a person of refinement |
| | **proficient** (adj.) — highly skilled through practice. *proficient in three languages* |
| | **competent** ★ (adj.) — able to do something well enough. *a competent driver even in heavy rain* |
| | **mastery (over)** (n.) — complete control or skill. *gaining mastery over his fear of heights* |

## 17 · Planned or Careful ↔ Unplanned or Careless

| Planned or Careful | Unplanned or Careless |
|---|---|
| **premeditated** (adj.) — planned or thought out beforehand. *a premeditated prank planned for weeks* | **haphazard** ★ (adj.) — random and messy, with no plan. *a haphazard pile of shoes by the door* |
| **predetermined** (adj.) — decided or fixed in advance. *runners followed a predetermined route through town* | **desultory** (adj.) — aimless and halfhearted, without a plan. *a desultory attempt at cleaning his room* |
| **arrange** ★ (v.) — organize or put in order. *arrange the chairs in a neat circle* | **offhand** (adj.) — casual and said without much thought. *an offhand remark that hurt her feelings* |
| **schedule** (v.) — set a time or date for. *schedule the dentist visit for Friday* | **accidental** ★ (adj.) — happening by chance, not on purpose. *an accidental discovery in the chemistry lab* |
| **scheme** (n.) — an organized plan or system. *a color scheme of navy and gold*<br>▸ Also: a sneaky plot, as in a scheme to cheat | **inadvertently** (adv.) — by accident, without meaning it. *inadvertently deleted the whole essay* |
| **careful** (adj.) — paying close attention to avoid mistakes. *careful steps across the icy sidewalk* | **unintended** (adj.) — not planned or meant. *an unintended side effect of the medicine* |
| **prudent** ★ (adj.) — wise and careful about risks. *a prudent choice to save half her paycheck* | **involuntarily** ★ (adv.) — automatically, without conscious choice. *blinked involuntarily at the bright flash* |
| **shrewd** (adj.) — sharp and clever at judging situations. *a shrewd trader who spotted the bargain* | **coincidence** (n.) — a surprising chance overlap of two events. *by coincidence, we wore matching jackets*<br>▸ Also: a point where things match, as in a coincidence of interests |
| **discretion** (n.) — wise care about what to say or reveal. *trusted his discretion with the surprise party plans*<br>▸ Also: freedom to decide, as in at the teacher's discretion | **incident** (n.) — an event, often unusual or unpleasant. *a minor incident on the school bus* |
| **vigilance** (n.) — alert watchfulness for danger or trouble. *constant vigilance by the lifeguard on duty* | **improvise** (v.) — make up on the spot, unprepared. *improvise a speech after losing her notes* |
| **exactitude** ★ (n.) — great precision and accuracy. *measured each ingredient with exactitude* | |

## 18 · Agree or Cooperate ↔ Disagree or Resist

| Agree or Cooperate | Disagree or Resist |
|---|---|
| **consensus** ★ (n.) — general agreement within a group. *the team reached a consensus on the logo* | **controversial (among)** (adj.), **controversy** (n.) — causing disagreement or debate. *a controversial rule banning phones at lunch* |
| **uncontroversial** (adj.) — accepted by nearly everyone; not disputed. *an uncontroversial plan that everyone supported* | **contentious** (adj.) — likely to stir up arguments. *a contentious debate over the town budget* |
| **collaboration** ★ (n.) — teamwork on a shared project. *a collaboration between two young muralists* | **dispute** (v.) — argue against or question the truth of. *dispute the referee's call on the field* |
| **cordially** (adv.) — in a warm, friendly way. *cordially welcomed the new neighbors* | **quarrel (about)** (n.) — an angry argument. *a quarrel about whose turn it was* |
| **thoughtfulness** (n.) — kind attention to what others need. *the thoughtfulness of a handwritten thank-you note* | **antagonistic (toward)** (adj.) — openly unfriendly and opposed. *grew antagonistic toward his former teammates* |
| **reciprocate** (v.), **reciprocity** (n.) — return a favor or feeling in kind. *reciprocate a friend's kindness with a gift*<br>▸ Also: reciprocity = mutual give-and-take between two sides | **animosity (toward)** (n.) — strong dislike or hostility. *lasting animosity between the feuding families* |
| **accommodate** (v.) — make room for or adjust to fit. *a ramp built to accommodate wheelchairs* | **rival** (n.) — someone competing for the same prize. *beat her longtime chess rival in the final*<br>▸ Also: as a verb, equal or match, as in few cakes rival hers |
| | **retaliate** (v.) — strike back after being wronged. *vowed to retaliate after the surprise raid* |
| | **recalcitrant** (adj.) — stubbornly refusing to obey or cooperate. *a recalcitrant mule that refused to budge* |
| | **subversive** (adj.) — aiming to weaken established power or rules. *a subversive poem mocking the king* |

## 19 · Praise or Approve ↔ Criticize or Scorn

| Praise or Approve | Criticize or Scorn |
|---|---|
| **extol** (v.) — praise with great enthusiasm. *extol the benefits of daily exercise* | **criticize** (v.) — point out faults in. *criticize the plan for costing too much* |
| **praise** (v.) — express approval or admiration for. *praise the volunteers for their hard work* | **critical** (adj.) — quick to find fault; disapproving. *a critical review of the new film*<br>▸ Also: very important, as in a critical step |
| **compliment** (v.) — say something kind or admiring about. *compliment the chef on the soup*<br>▸ Not complement (complete a set); compliment = praise | **disparage** (v.) — speak of as worthless or bad. *disparage a rival's work to look better* |
| **esteem** ★ (n.) — deep respect and admiration. *held in high esteem by her classmates* | **denigrate** (v.) — unfairly put down or belittle. *denigrated the painter's work as childish* |
| **endorse** (v.) — publicly support or vouch for. *the mayor endorsed the new park plan* | **despise** (v.) — strongly dislike and look down on. *despise cruelty in any form* |
| **sanction** (v.) — officially approve or permit. *the school officially sanctioned the chess club*<br>▸ Watch: also means penalize, the opposite, as in trade sanctions | **misanthropic** (adj.) — disliking and distrusting people in general. *a misanthropic hermit who avoided the village*<br>▸ Tip: Greek miso- (hate) + anthrop- (human); not the mis- in mistake |

| Praise or Approve | Criticize or Scorn |
|---|---|
| **recommend** (v.) — suggest as worth trying or doing. *recommend a good novel to a friend* | **incensed (by)** (adj.) — furious and deeply offended. *incensed by the unfair penalty*<br>▸ From the verb incense, to enrage; not the scented smoke |

## 20 · Hopeful, Eager, or Drawn To ↔ Doubtful, Worried, or Indifferent

| Hopeful, Eager, or Drawn To | Doubtful, Worried, or Indifferent |
|---|---|
| **sanguine** ★ (adj.) — cheerfully hopeful and confident. *sanguine about the team's playoff chances* | **skeptical** (adj.) — doubtful and not easily convinced. *skeptical of the miracle diet's claims* |
| **optimistic** (adj.) — hopeful that things will turn out well. *optimistic about passing the driving test* | **ambivalence (toward)** ★ (n.), **ambivalent** (adj.) — torn feelings, partly for and partly against. *ambivalence toward moving to a new city*<br>▸ Not indifferent; ambivalence means feeling pulled two ways |
| **enthusiasm (for)** ★ (n.) — eager excitement and interest. *enthusiasm for the upcoming science fair* | **indifference (to)** (n.) — lack of interest or concern. *shrugged in indifference to the final score* |
| **interest** (n.) — curiosity or attention toward something. *a growing interest in local history* | **resigned** (adj.) — accepting something unpleasant that can't be changed. *resigned to a long wait at the airport*<br>▸ Not quitting a job here; it means calmly accepting |
| **affection** (n.) — warm, fond liking. *deep affection for the old family dog* | **worry** (v.) — feel uneasy or anxious. *worry that the bus will be late* |
| **affinity** (n.) — a natural liking or sense of connection. *a natural affinity for jazz piano*<br>▸ Also: a close likeness, as in an affinity between two languages | **concern (about)** ★ (n.), **concerning** (adj.) — a feeling of worry or unease. *concerns about the old bridge's safety*<br>▸ Also: concerning (adj.) = worrying, as in a concerning trend |
| **propensity** (n.) — a strong leaning toward some behavior. *a propensity to oversleep on weekends* | **regret** (v.), **regrettable** (adj.) — feel sorry about something done. *regret skipping the last practice*<br>▸ Also: regrettable = unfortunate, as in a regrettable mistake |
| **receptive (to)** ★ (adj.) — open-minded and ready for new ideas. *receptive to feedback on her essay* | |
| **attractive (to)** ★ (adj.) — appealing and able to draw interest. *bright flowers attractive to bees* | |

## 21 · Honest, Plain, or Fair ↔ False, Showy, or Biased

| Honest, Plain, or Fair | False, Showy, or Biased |
|---|---|
| **sincerity** (n.) — real, heartfelt truthfulness. *the sincerity of her apology* | **deceptive** (adj.) — likely to trick or give a false idea. *a deceptive ad hiding extra fees* |
| **earnest** (adj.) — serious and wholehearted. *an earnest effort to fix the mistake* | **misleading** (adj.) — pointing someone toward a wrong belief. *a misleading graph with a stretched scale* |
| **outspoken** (adj.) — bold in stating opinions openly. *an outspoken critic of the new curfew* | **disingenuously** (adv.) — in a falsely innocent or sincere way. *disingenuously claimed she had never seen the note*<br>▸ Not ingenious (clever); disingenuous = falsely sincere |
| **unpretentious** (adj.) — simple and modest, not showy. *an unpretentious diner with great pancakes* | **spurious** (adj.) — fake, despite seeming genuine. *a spurious claim backed by no data* |

| Honest, Plain, or Fair | False, Showy, or Biased |
|---|---|
| **unassuming** ★ (adj.) — quiet and modest, not drawing attention. *an unassuming hero who refused any medal*<br>▸ Not about assumptions; it means humble and low-key | **contrive** (v.) — cleverly plan or invent, often slyly. *contrive a clever way to escape chores*<br>▸ Also: contrived (adj.) = forced and artificial, as in a contrived plot |
| **restrained** (adj.) — calm and controlled, not over the top. *a restrained design with soft, simple colors* | **contrivance (of)** (n.) — a clever, often artificial, invention or scheme. *a plot contrivance that felt too convenient* |
| **veritable** (adj.) — truly deserving the name; genuine. *a veritable mountain of laundry* | **pretentious** (adj.) — showing off to seem more important. *a pretentious speech full of fancy words* |
| **legitimate** (adj.) — reasonable and acceptable, or lawful. *a legitimate reason for missing class* | **misrepresent** (v.) — describe falsely or unfairly. *misrepresent the survey results in a report* |
| **verisimilitude (in)** (n.) — the look or feel of being real. *costumes that add verisimilitude to the play*<br>▸ Watch: means seeming true, not actually proven true | **distort** (v.) — twist out of its true shape or meaning. *headlines that distort the study's findings* |
| **unbiased** (adj.) — fair and free of favoritism. *an unbiased judge for the art contest* | **misconstrue** (v.) — take the wrong meaning from. *misconstrue a joke as an insult* |
| **impartial** (adj.) — fair, not favoring either side. *an impartial jury that heard both sides*<br>▸ Tip: partial can mean biased, so impartial = unbiased | **dogmatic** ★ (adj.) — insisting beliefs are right, closed to debate. *a dogmatic coach who never changed tactics* |
| **dispassionately** (adv.) — calmly, without letting emotions sway judgment. *reported the tragic news dispassionately* | |

## 22 · Calm, Pleasing, or Interesting ↔ Unsettling or Reacting

| Calm, Pleasing, or Interesting | Unsettling or Reacting |
|---|---|
| **tranquil** ★ (adj.) — calm, quiet, and peaceful. *a tranquil lake just before sunrise* | **disconcerting** (adj.) — unsettling; making you feel uneasy. *a disconcerting silence after the announcement* |
| **unbothered (by)** (adj.) — not worried or upset by something. *unbothered by the noisy construction next door* | **disorienting** (adj.) — making you lose your sense of direction. *a disorienting maze of identical hallways* |
| **amusing** (adj.) — making people smile or laugh. *an amusing story about a runaway goat* | **distract** (v.), **distraction (for)** (n.) — pull attention away from something. *a buzzing phone that distracts the driver* |
| **musical** (adj.) — relating to music, or sweet to hear. *the musical sound of a mountain stream* | **diversion (from)** (n.) — a turn away from the usual path or focus. *a short diversion from the hiking trail*<br>▸ Also: entertainment, as in a pleasant diversion on a rainy day |
| **satisfying** (adj.) — pleasing because it gives what you wanted. *a satisfying end to a long season* | **surprise (at)** (n.), **surprising** (adj.) — the feeling caused by something unexpected. *her surprise at the sudden snowfall* |
| **intriguing** (adj.) — so interesting it makes you curious. *an intriguing clue hidden in the diary* | **react (to)** (v.) — respond to something said or done. *how plants react to an early frost* |
| | **responsiveness (to)** (n.) — the quality of reacting quickly and willingly. *a teacher's responsiveness to student questions* |
| | **overreact** (v.) — respond more strongly than needed. *an immune system that overreacts to pollen* |

## 23 · Aware or Noticing ↔ Unaware or Overlooking

| Aware or Noticing | Unaware or Overlooking |
|---|---|
| **apprise (of)** (v.) — let someone know about something. *apprise the team of the schedule change*<br>▸ Not appraise (judge the value); apprise means inform | **insensible (to)** (adj.) — not noticing or feeling something. *climbers almost insensible to the bitter cold*<br>▸ Watch: means unaware or numb, not lacking good sense |
| **observant** ★ (adj.) — quick to notice things. *an observant birdwatcher spotting a rare owl* | **unknown** (adj.) — not known or identified by people. *a species unknown to science until recently* |
| **perceive** (v.) — notice through the senses or the mind. *perceive a faint smell of smoke*<br>▸ Also: view or regard, as in perceived as a threat | **overlooked** (adj.) — not noticed or given attention. *an overlooked step in the recipe* |
| **discern** ★ (v.), **discernible** (adj.) — spot or make out something not obvious. *discern a pattern in the scattered data* | **neglect** ★ (v.) — fail to give needed care or attention. *neglect a garden until weeds take over* |
| **recognizable** ★ (adj.), **recognize** (v.), **recognition** (n.) — easy to identify or know on sight. *a melody recognizable from the first note* | **underestimate** (v.) — judge something as smaller or weaker than it is. *underestimate how long the project will take* |
| **remember** (v.) — keep in mind and not forget. *remember the steps of the lab procedure* | |

## 24 · Look Closely or Weigh ↔ Sort, Rank, or Decide

| Look Closely or Weigh | Sort, Rank, or Decide |
|---|---|
| **evaluate** (v.) — judge the value or quality of. *evaluate each essay using a rubric* | **categorize** (v.) — sort things into groups by type. *categorize the rocks by hardness* |
| **appraise** (v.) — judge the worth or importance of. *appraise an antique clock before the auction* | **rank** (v.) — place in order from best to worst. *rank the runners by finishing time* |
| **inspect** ★ (v.) — look over carefully to check or study. *inspect the bridge for cracks* | **prioritize** (v.) — treat as most important and do first. *prioritize safety over speed* |
| **scrutinize** (v.) — study every detail very carefully. *scrutinize the contract before signing it* | **select** (v.) — pick out from a group. *select a captain for the soccer team* |
| **examination** (n.) — a careful look at something to learn about it. *an examination of the patient's x-rays* | **decide** (v.) — make up your mind about something. *decide between two summer jobs* |
| **deliberation** (n.) — long, careful thought or discussion before deciding. *the jury reached a verdict after long deliberation* | **determine** (v.) — find out or settle for certain. *tests to determine the cause of the fire*<br>▸ Also: control or shape, as in weather determines the harvest |
| **interpret** ★ (v.), **interpretation** (n.) — work out and explain what something means. *interpret the symbols on an ancient map* | |
| **conceptualize** (v.) — work out a clear mental picture of. *struggling to conceptualize the size of the universe* | |

## 25 · Say, State, or Tell ↔ Show, Stand For, or Suggest

| Say, State, or Tell | Show, Stand For, or Suggest |
|---|---|
| **assert** ★ (v.) — state firmly that something is true. *the author asserts that cities need more parks* | **illustrate** (v.) — make clear by using examples or pictures. *a diagram that illustrates the water cycle* |
| **proclaim** (v.) — announce publicly and proudly. *the mayor proclaimed a citywide holiday* | **epitomize** (v.) — be the perfect model or example of. *a sprinter who epitomizes speed and focus* |

| Say, State, or Tell | Show, Stand For, or Suggest |
|---|---|
| **announce** (v.) — tell people publicly and officially. *announce the winners at the assembly* | **exemplification** (n.) — an example that shows a general idea. *a clear exemplification of teamwork* |
| **acknowledge** ★ (v.) — recognize as true, real, or important. *widely acknowledged as the town's best baker* | **example (of)** (n.) — one thing that shows what others are like. *an example of a mammal that lays eggs* |
| **concede** ★ (v.) — admit, often reluctantly, that something is true. *concede that the other team played better*<br>▸ Also: give up, as in concede defeat | **represent** (v.), **representative (of)** (adj.) — stand for, show, or picture. *a dove representing peace on the poster*<br>▸ Tip: representative of means typical of, as in a representative sample |
| **report** (v.) — tell what was found or what happened. *report the survey results to the class* | **indicate** (v.), **indication (of)** (n.) — show or point to; be a sign of. *dark clouds indicating that a storm is near* |
| **advise** (v.) — suggest what someone should do. *advise travelers to pack light*<br>▸ Not advice (the noun); advise is the verb | **reflect** ★ (v.) — show or reveal, as a mirror does. *grades that reflect weeks of hard study*<br>▸ Also: think carefully, as in reflect on a mistake |
| **demand** (v.) — ask for forcefully, as if owed. *demand a refund for the broken lamp* | **characterization** (n.) — how a writer shows what a character is like. *the play's vivid characterization of the villain*<br>▸ Also: any description, as in her characterization of the plan as risky |
| **describe** (v.) — tell what something is like. *describe the view from the summit* | **proxy (for)** ★ (n.) — a stand-in used to measure something else. *tree rings as a proxy for past rainfall* |
| **discuss** (v.) — talk about with others. *discuss the novel's ending in small groups* | **implication** (n.) — something suggested without being said directly. *the implication that the test was unfair*<br>▸ Also: a likely result, as in the implications of a new law |
| **relate** (v.) — tell about events, as in a story. *relate the tale of the shipwreck*<br>▸ Also: connect, as in relate cause and effect | |
| **refer (to)** (v.) — mention or point to something. *refer to the chart on page twelve* | |
| **cite** (v.) — mention as proof or an example. *a study cited in many textbooks* | |
| **interject** (v.) — suddenly add a remark while others talk. *interject a question during the lecture* | |
| **annotate** (v.) — write explaining comments on a text. *annotate a poem in the margins* | |
| **rationalize** (v.) — explain with reasons, often as an excuse. *rationalize skipping practice by blaming the rain* | |
| **summarize** (v.) — give the main points briefly. *summarize the chapter in three sentences* | |
| **summation** (n.) — a final summary of the main points. *a quick summation at the end of class* | |
| **synopsis** (n.) — a brief summary of a story or work. *a one-page synopsis of the film* | |

## 26 · Get or Keep ↔ Give, Spread, or Use

| Get or Keep | Give, Spread, or Use |
|---|---|
| **obtain (from)** ★ (v.) — get hold of, often through effort. *obtain permission from the principal* | **provide** ★ (v.) — give what is needed or wanted. *provide shade for the young plants* |

| Get or Keep | Give, Spread, or Use |
|---|---|
| **acquire** (v.) — gain or come to have over time. *acquire a taste for spicy food* | **yield** (v.) — produce or give as a result. *a field yielding a large wheat harvest*<br>▸ Also: give way, as in yield to traffic or pressure |
| **receive** (v.) — get something that is given or sent. *receive a letter from a pen pal* | **disseminate** (v.) — spread information to many people. *disseminate health tips through flyers* |
| **collect** ★ (v.) — gather things up from different places. *collect water samples from three streams* | **dispersed** (adj.) — spread out over a wide area. *small farms dispersed across the valley* |
| **hoard** (v.) — secretly store away a large supply. *squirrels hoarding acorns for winter*<br>▸ Not horde (a big crowd); a hoard is a hidden store | **delegate** (v.) — give a task or duty to someone else. *delegate chores to each roommate*<br>▸ Also: as a noun, a person sent to speak for others |
| **reserve (for)** (v.) — set aside or hold back for later. *seats reserved for the guest speakers* | **exploit** ★ (v.) — make full use of and benefit from. *farmers exploiting the rich river soil*<br>▸ Also: use unfairly, as in exploit workers |
| **occupy** (v.) — fill, take up, or live in a space. *boxes occupying half the garage* | **monetize** (v.) — find a way to make money from. *monetize a popular cooking blog* |
| | **commercialization** (n.) — turning something into a business for profit. *the commercialization of space travel* |
| | **reuse** ★ (n.) — putting something to use again. *the reuse of glass jars for storage* |
| | **waste** (n.) — leftover material that is thrown away. *kitchen waste turned into compost* |

## 27 · Come From ↔ Make or Put Into Action

| Come From | Make or Put Into Action |
|---|---|
| **originate (from)** (v.) — begin in or come from a place. *a dance style that originated in Brazil*<br>▸ Also: start or invent, as in originate a new method | **create** ★ (v.) — make or bring into being. *create a mural for the school hallway* |
| **derive (from)** (v.) — get or develop from a source. *words derived from Latin roots* | **invent** (v.) — think up and make something new. *invent a tool for picking fruit* |
| **source** ★ (n.) — the place or thing something comes from. *beans as a cheap source of protein* | **produce** (v.) — make, create, or cause to happen. *a volcano producing clouds of ash* |
| | **handmade (from)** ★ (adj.) — made by hand, not by machine. *a violin handmade from spruce and maple* |
| | **compose** (v.) — write or create, as music or poetry. *compose a song for the graduation*<br>▸ Also: make up, as in a team composed of veterans |
| | **imaginative** (adj.) — showing creativity and original ideas. *an imaginative design for a treehouse* |
| | **enact** (v.) — make into law or officially put in place. *the council enacted a ban on fireworks*<br>▸ Also: act out, as in enact a scene from a play |
| | **implement** ★ (v.) — put a plan or decision into action. *implement a new recycling program at school*<br>▸ Also: as a noun, a tool, as in farm implements |

## 28 · Follow or Be Bound By ↔ Avoid, Escape, or Give Up

| Follow or Be Bound By | Avoid, Escape, or Give Up |
|---|---|
| **adhere (to)** ★ (v.) — stick closely to a rule or plan. *adhere to the lab safety rules* | **avoid** (v.) — stay clear of or keep from doing. *took back roads to avoid traffic* |
| **conform (to)** ★ (v.) — match the expected rules or pattern. *new houses that conform to the fire code* | **circumvent** (v.) — get around a rule or obstacle. *a detour that circumvents the flooded bridge* |
| **follow** (v.) — come or go after. *ducklings following their mother across the road*<br>▸ Also: obey, as in follow the rules | **evasion** (n.) — the act of dodging or avoiding. *her evasion of every direct question* |
| **require** ★ (v.) — need; make necessary. *a recipe that requires three eggs* | **disengage** (v.) — pull away or detach from. *bored students who disengage from the lesson* |
| **mandatory** (adj.) — required; not a matter of choice. *helmets are mandatory for all riders* | **withdraw** (v.) — take back or pull out. *withdrew from the contest after an injury* |
| **obligated (to)** (adj.) — bound by duty or a promise. *felt obligated to return the favor* | **waive** (v.) — give up or set aside a right or rule. *agreed to waive the late fee*<br>▸ Not wave (move a hand); waive means give up a right |
| **prescribe** ★ (v.) — set as a rule or required step. *the steps the manual prescribes for setup*<br>▸ Not proscribe (forbid); prescribe sets a rule to follow | **renounce** (v.), **renunciation (of)** (n.) — formally give up a claim or belief. *renounce violence and seek peace* |
| **commit** (v.) — pledge yourself to a plan or cause. *commit to a full year of practice* | |

## 29 · Give In ↔ Win Out or Go Beyond

| Give In | Win Out or Go Beyond |
|---|---|
| **succumb** (v.) — give in to a stronger force. *finally succumbed to sleep at midnight* | **prevail** (v.) — win out or prove stronger. *the home team prevailed in overtime*<br>▸ Also: be widespread, as in the prevailing view |
| **indulge** ★ (v.) — give in to someone's wishes too easily. *grandparents who indulge every whim*<br>▸ Also: allow yourself a treat, as in indulge in dessert | **overcome** ★ (v.) — get past or defeat a difficulty. *overcame her fear of public speaking* |
| **appeasement** (n.) — giving in to demands for the sake of peace. *appeasement that only made the bully bolder* | **exceed** (v.) — be more than a limit or amount. *fined for exceeding the speed limit* |
| | **outstrip** (v.) — grow faster or larger than. *demand for tickets outstripped supply* |
| | **surpass** (v.) — go past; do better than. *a record later surpassed by a younger runner* |
| | **overshadow** ★ (v.) — make something seem minor by comparison. *a strong debut overshadowed by one costly error* |
| | **transcend** ★ (v.) — go beyond the usual limits. *music that transcends language barriers* |

## 30 · Linked or Combined ↔ Separate or Limited

| Linked or Combined | Separate or Limited |
|---|---|
| **contingent (on)** ★ (adj.) — depending on something else happening. *a picnic contingent on sunny weather* | **independent (of)** ★ (adj.) — unaffected by; separate from. *a solar clock independent of the power grid* |

| Linked or Combined | Separate or Limited |
|---|---|
| **mediate** ★ (v.) — bring about or influence as a middle step. *exercise's effect on mood, mediated by sleep*<br>▸ Also: help two sides settle a dispute | **decouple (from)** (v.) — detach one thing from another. *decouple the last car from the train* |
| **complementary** ★ (adj.) — completing each other by filling gaps. *a cook and baker with complementary skills*<br>▸ Not complimentary (praising or free); complementary means completing | **demarcate (from)** ★ (v.) — mark off with a clear boundary. *flower beds demarcated from the lawn by stones* |
| **supplement** (v.), **supplemental (to)** (adj.) — fill out or boost by adding more. *supplement class notes with online videos*<br>▸ Also: noun, an add-on, as in a supplement to the course | **isolate** (v.) — set apart from others. *isolate a sick plant from healthy ones* |
| **cohesion** (n.) — the state of sticking together as one. *the cohesion of a close-knit team* | **exclusive** (adj.) — limited to a select few. *an exclusive club with a long waitlist* |
| **synchronization** ★ (n.) — timing things so they happen together. *the swimmers' synchronization, every kick in unison* | **localized** (adj.) — limited to one small area. *localized flooding near the river* |
| **intersect** ★ (v.) — cross or overlap at some point. *where the two hiking trails intersect* | **concentrated (among)** ★ (adj.) — gathered mostly in one group or place. *power concentrated among a few nobles* |
| **attach** (v.) — fasten or connect to something. *attach the photo to the email* | |
| **conflate (with)** (v.) — merge or confuse two things as one. *people often conflate weather with climate* | |
| **subsume** (v.) — include within a larger group. *an old category subsumed in a broader one* | |
| **encompass** (v.) — contain within; include or surround. *a park that encompasses three lakes* | |
| **comprise** ★ (v.) — consist of; be made up of. *the committee comprises five members*<br>▸ Tip: the whole comprises its parts; the parts compose it | |
| **engulf** (v.) — swallow up or surround completely. *flames that engulfed the old barn* | |

## 31 · Before or Ahead ↔ After, Looking Back, or at the Same Time

| Before or Ahead | After, Looking Back, or at the Same Time |
|---|---|
| **antecedent (to)** (adj.) — coming before in time or order. *warning signs antecedent to the collapse*<br>▸ Also: noun, what comes before, like a pronoun's antecedent | **subsequent** (adj.) — coming after; later. *improved in each subsequent draft*<br>▸ Watch: means later in time, not caused by |
| **precursor (of)** (n.) — an earlier form that led to another. *the telegraph, a precursor of the telephone* | **retrospective** (adj.) — looking back on the past. *a retrospective review of the past season*<br>▸ Also: noun, a show of an artist's past work |
| **prefigure** (v.) — hint at something that comes later. *early sketches that prefigure her later paintings* | **contemporary (with)** (adj.) — existing or happening at the same time. *artists contemporary with the American Revolution*<br>▸ Also: modern or current, as in contemporary design |
| **impending** ★ (adj.) — about to happen soon. *dark clouds signaling an impending storm* | |

| Before or Ahead | After, Looking Back, or at the Same Time |
|---|---|
| **anticipate** (v.) — expect and prepare for ahead of time. *anticipating crowds, the cafe added tables*<br>▸ Also: be an early forerunner of, as in inventions that anticipated computers | |
| **foretell** (v.) — say ahead of time what will happen. *a legend that foretells the hero's return* | |
| **predict** ★ (v.), **prediction** (n.), **predictive (of)** (adj.) — say what is likely to happen later. *forecasters predict snow by Friday* | |

## One Word, Several Meanings: The "Most Nearly Mean" Words

In 13 of the official questions, the word wasn't a blank to fill but an underlined word to define. Most of these questions test a less familiar sense of a word you already know, so several wrong choices are real meanings of the word that just don't fit the text. Here are all 13, with the sense the test wanted (★). The phrase in the last column is our own and shows that sense at work.

| Underlined word | The sense the test wanted | The other choices | That sense in a phrase |
|---|---|---|---|
| **answers** | Fulfills ★ | Explains, Rebuts, Defends | a design that *answers* every need |
| **clear** | Transparent ★ | Simple, Understandable, Obvious | water so *clear* you can count the pebbles |
| **completing** | Finishing ★ | Destroying, Advertising, Rejecting | *completing* the last chapter of a draft |
| **consider** | Take into account and follow ★ | Admire steadily and praise, Come to a decision about, Have an opinion on | *consider* the coach's advice before the race |
| **consideration** | Calculation ★ | Deference, Courtesy, Indecision | a move made after cool *consideration* |
| **determine** | Dictate ★ | Conclude, Evaluate, Select | rules that *determine* who may vote |
| **disputing** | Providing resistance to ★ | Arguing about, Disapproving of, Asserting possession of | troops *disputing* every inch of the hill |
| **manifest** | Perceptible ★ | Realized, Situated, Dwindling | her relief was *manifest* to everyone |
| **quality** | Characteristic ★ | Standard, Prestige, Accomplishment | a dreamy *quality* in his voice |
| **reaching across to** | Stretching toward ★ | Joining with, Gaining on, Arriving at | *reaching across to* the salt shaker |
| **reserve** | Constraint ★ | Modesty, Misgiving, Composure | praised the plan without *reserve* |
| **a singular** | An extraordinary ★ | A lonely, A disagreeable, An acceptable | *a singular* gift for melody |
| **trace** | Evidence ★ | Blemish, Amount, Sketch | vanished without a *trace* |

## Word Bank Index

Every word in the bank, in alphabetical order, with the number of its meaning group. A ★ marks an official right answer.

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acceptable **14**
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adhere (to) ★ **28**
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adorn **8**
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ambiguous **5**
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ambivalent **20**
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