OTHER TITLES OF INTEREST FROM LEARNINGEXPRESS

EMT Flash Review
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION....... vii
ABOUT THIS BOOK..... xiii

A ................. 1
B ................. 45
C ................. 57
D ................. 87
E ................. 123
F ................. 159
G ................. 173
H ................. 181
I ................. 189
J ................. 225
K ................. 229
L ................. 231
M ................. 243
N ................. 261
O ................. 267
P ................. 277
Q ................. 319
R ................. 327
S ................. 343
T ................. 379
U ................. 393
V ................. 397
W ................. 409
Z ................. 411
The GRE general test is designed to test applicants who are applying to graduate school. *GRE Vocabulary Flash Review* includes pronunciation guides, definitions, sample sentences, and synonyms for 600 of the words that most commonly appear on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) general test. Studying and learning these words will help you succeed on the Verbal Reasoning sections of the exam.

**About the GRE General Test**

Beginning in August 2011, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) is offering a revised version of the GRE general test. The following information reflects the format of the revised general test; changes from the previous version of the test are also noted.

Beginning in August 2011, the GRE will include six sections. (The previous version included fewer but longer sections.)
It includes:

- An **Analytic Writing** section, for which you will write two short essays.
- Two **Verbal Reasoning** sections, which test reading comprehension.
- Two **Quantitative Reasoning** sections, which test mathematical concepts and skills.
- An unidentified **experimental section**.

Altogether, the test takes about three and a half hours to complete. The Analytic Writing section is always administered first; the other sections may follow in any order. In addition, a research section may conclude the test. As with the experimental section, your answers on this section will not count toward your final score.

Go to the ETS website for detailed information about each of these exam sections:

www.ets.org/gre

**The Experimental Section**

The experimental section may be a third Verbal Reasoning section, or it may be a third Quantitative Reasoning section. Because this section is experimental, and only designed to test questions for use on future exams, your answers on it will not count toward your final score. However, you will not know which section is the experimental
section, so be sure to do your best on all parts of the exam.

**Computer-Based Testing**

All GRE general tests within the United States are administered by computer. (Only if you take the exam outside the United States, in an area where computer-based testing is unavailable, will you take a paper-based exam; these are administered a limited number of times each year.) Beginning in August 2011, the format of the computer-based exam will allow you to change answers within a section or skip questions and go back to them later—actions that were not permitted on the previous version of the computer-based exam. Although scratch paper is permitted, the exam is administered entirely by computer.

**Vocabulary on the GRE General Test**

Unlike the previous version of the GRE general test, the revised version does not include antonyms or analogies—question types that test the understanding of vocabulary out of context. This is good news for you! The context provided by a sentence or passage on which each question is based will help you determine the meaning of the words you study in this book and elsewhere.
Beginning in August 2011, the Verbal Reasoning sections of the GRE general test include the following three question types. **Reading Comprehension** questions test your understanding of a text. The GRE general test includes about 10 Reading Comprehension passages, ranging in length from one paragraph to several; as few as one and as many as six questions may be asked about a given passage. These will comprise about half of the questions you will see on the Verbal Reasoning sections.

There are three kinds of Reading Comprehension questions:

- Some questions are traditional multiple-choice questions, in which you select one correct answer from among five choices.
- Some questions require you to select one, two, or three correct answers from among three choices. You cannot receive partial credit for your responses to these questions; you receive credit for your response only if you select all of the correct answers and nothing else.
- Some questions, require you to click on the sentence within the passage that meets a particular description.

Some Reading Comprehension questions will ask directly about the meaning of words within
a passage. However, because the strength of your vocabulary is a crucial factor in your ability to understand what you read, vocabulary study should help you prepare for Reading Comprehension questions.

For **Text Completion** questions, you are presented with a brief passage, from which some words have been omitted. Your task is to select the words and/or phrases that complete the passage in a way that makes sense. If the passage includes just one blank, you will be offered five choices, only one of which fills in the blank correctly. If the passage includes two or three blanks, you will be offered three choices for each blank.

For **Sentence Equivalence** questions, you are presented with a single sentence that includes a blank. Your task is to select two words from among the choices provided, either of which could complete the sentence in a way that makes sense. The two completed sentences will be equivalent in meaning. You cannot receive partial credit for your responses to these questions; you receive credit for your response only if you select both correct answers.

Because of their more focused format, success with Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence questions depends greatly on the strength of your vocabulary.
ABOUT THIS BOOK

The 600 words in this book are presented in alphabetical order. Each page includes three words: On one side, the words are provided along with a guide to their pronunciation. On the reverse side, definitions, sample sentences, and synonyms are provided for each word. The pages are designed in this way so that you can quiz yourself on the meaning of each word.

The pronunciation of each word is given. Capital letters indicate stressed syllables, and the following spellings are used to represent some common sounds.

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The definitions provided for the words are not comprehensive, but rather focus your attention on the meanings that are the most common—and the most commonly tested. Synonyms are provided to further clarify the meaning of each word. Because the best way to learn vocabulary is to learn it in context, a sample sentence is provided for each word, to illustrate its use.

A word about spelling: yes, it does count! Take care to note and learn the distinction between such commonly confused words as *complacent* and *complaisant* and *discreet* and *discrete*. Also note the spelling of such words as *complement* (as opposed to *compliment*) and *imminent* (as opposed to *eminent*).
Using This Book for Vocabulary Study

In truth, vocabulary acquisition is the work of a lifetime. Don’t try to learn all 600 words in this book at once. The best approach is to study the words in sets of about 12 or 15 words (4 or 5 pages) each day. The following is a suggested program of study:

- Review a set of words in the morning. Say each word aloud. Try to think of your own sentences using the words.
- Write the words down on a sheet of paper, and keep the sheet with you, checking it throughout the day to familiarize yourself with the list.
- In the evening, quiz yourself on the meaning of the words. Use a pencil to write a check next to the words you define correctly; review the words you are unable to define, along with the words you will study the next day.
- Periodically quiz yourself on the words you have already studied, to check that you have learned them.

A Last Word on Vocabulary Study: Read, Read, Read

Vocabulary is learned best when it is learned in context—that’s why we’ve provided a sample
sentence for each word in this book. The more frequently you encounter words in a variety of contexts, the better you will be able to remember them, and even discern the nuances of their meaning. So, the best way to learn GRE vocabulary is to read, read, read!

If you are currently an undergraduate, you’re probably scrambling to keep up with your weekly reading assignments. As you read, pay attention to the vocabulary in each assignment. Take the time to note and look up the meaning of words you don’t know. If you come across one of the words in this book, note the context in which it is used. You might even want to jot down the sentence on the page with the word in this book.

If you are not currently in school, the type of reading that will best prepare you for the GRE general test is nonfiction. Read the newspaper. Read serious magazines, such as *New Yorker*, *The Economist*, or *The Nation*. Read biographies. Choose a subject that matters to you, and read everything you can find on the topic. As you read, pay attention to the vocabulary you encounter; learn the words that are new to you, and note the use of words you have learned from this book.
ABATE
(ah-BEYT)

ABDICATE
(AB-di-keyt)

ABERRANT
(ah-BER-uhnt)
to make or become less in degree, intensity, value, or amount

We waited for the storm to **abate** before we headed out.

**Synonyms:** decrease, diminish, reduce, subside

---

to give up a right or responsibility, especially formally

Elizabeth II of England would probably not have become queen if her uncle, King Edward VIII, had not **abdicated**.

**Synonyms:** relinquish, renounce, resign

---

going off the usual, normal, or right way; deviating from the usual or normal type

*The aberrant* weather during that rainy summer left many feeling as though there had not been any summer at all.

**Synonyms:** abnormal, atypical, deviant, unusual
ABEYANCE
(uh-BEY-uhns)

ABJECT
(AB-jekt)

ABJURE
(ab-JOOR)
a temporary state of inactivity
We kept our travel plans in **abeyance** and did not go until we were certain that we had enough money for the trip.

*Synonyms:* inactivity, recess, suspension

---

completely hopeless
They lost everything when their house burned down and have since lived in **abject** conditions, often homeless.

*Synonyms:* downtrodden, miserable, wretched

---

to formally reject, often under oath
Though she had completely changed her ways, she could not **abjure** her former friends.

*Synonyms:* forswear, renounce
ABSCOND  
(ab-SKOND)

ABSTEMIOUS  
(ab-STEEM-mee-uhhs)

ABYSMAL  
(uh-BIZ-muhl)
to leave secretly and suddenly

One minute the children were underfoot; the next minute, they *absconded* with all the cookies.

**Synonyms:** disappear, escape, vanish

restrained, especially with food and alcohol

Since she began to do yoga, she has also been *abstemious* with both alcohol and junk food.

**Synonyms:** frugal, moderate, restrained, temperate

like an abyss: immeasurably great or low; hopelessly bad

*He wrote the term paper all in one night, and the results were* *abysmal.*

**Synonyms:** bottomless, vast, wretched
ACCOLADE
(A-kuh-LEYD)

ACERBIC
(uh-SUHR-bik)

ACCRUE
(uh-KROO)
an award or other expression of honor or praise

Given the number of accolades she has received for her work on stage and in film, it is surprising just how humble she is.

Synonyms: award, honor

sour or harsh in taste, mood, or temperament

He tried to hide his bad mood, but his acerbic reply gave his anger away.

Synonyms: acidic, caustic, harsh, sharp

to grow through additions

As the years accrue, so does wisdom.

Synonyms: accumulate, collect, increase
ACUMEN
(A-kyuh-muhn)

ADAMANT
(A-duh-muhnt)

ADMONISH
(ad-MO-nish)
insight or shrewdness, especially in practical matters

*Due to the combination of her personal warmth and business* acumen, *her new company was an instant success.*

**Synonyms:** discernment, insight, judgment, perception

insistent, immovable

*Though the child protested, his parents were* adamant: *he had to be in bed by eight o’clock.*

**Synonyms:** determined, inflexible, resolute, stubborn, unyielding

to advise against something; to gently scold or warn

*The teacher* admonished *the children for tracking mud down the hallways of the school.*

**Synonyms:** advise, reprimand, warn
ADULATION
(a-juh-LEY-shun)

ADULTERATE
(uh-DUHL-tuh-REYT)

AESTHETIC
(es-THE-tik)
excessive admiration, praise, or devotion; flattery

The football star enjoyed the *adulation* of thousands of fans until it was revealed that he had cheated.

*Synonyms:* devotion, fawning, flattery, worship

---
to make impure by adding foreign or inferior elements, materials, or ingredients

Do not *adulterate* this cake batter by using flour of such poor quality!

*Synonyms:* cheapen, corrupt, dilute, weaken

---
having to do with beauty or the arts

Though the morality of the movie is questionable, its *aesthetic* qualities are admirable: it was beautifully filmed.

*Synonym:* artistic
AFFINITY
(uh-FL-ni-tee)

AGGRANDIZE
(uh-GRAN-dahyz)

AGGREGATE
(A-gre-guht or A-gre-GEYT)
an attraction, especially one based on a similarity in interests

Countless young women have read and reread Jane Eyre, feeling an affinity for its fierce heroine.

**Synonyms:** affection, fondness, sympathy

---
to make greater in size, power, or honor; to enhance the appearance of greatness

The dictator aggrandized his power by taking control of the press and all other media.

**Synonyms:** glorify, hype, inflate, strengthen

---
(adj.) formed by grouping elements into one larger body

The aggregate power of the teammates was far greater than you might imagine based on their individual talents.

**Synonyms:** accumulated, collective

(v.) to group elements into one larger body

We need to aggregate the survey results in order to have a clear picture of the overall data.

**Synonyms:** assemble, collect, combine

(n.) a body of associated elements

In the aggregate, her small daily efforts resulted in a gorgeous book of poems.

**Synonyms:** combination, mass, whole
ALACRITY
(uh-LA-kruh-tee)

ALCHEMY
(AL-kuh-mee)

ALLAY
(uh-LEY)
cheerful readiness

*He replied to the invitation with *alacrity*; he was eager for the opportunity to travel to Puerto Rico.*

**Synonyms:** liveliness, promptness, willingness

---

the power or process that can change something ordinary into something valuable; a medieval pseudoscience with the purpose of changing lead into gold

*The *alchemy* that transformed him into a dashingly handsome man in her eyes was love.*

**Synonyms:** enchantment, magic, sorcery

---

to put to rest; to decrease in strength or difficulty

*After they heard the coyotes howling, nothing but the dawn could *allay* their fears.*

**Synonyms:** alleviate, calm, ease, lessen, relieve
ALLELIVIATE
(uh-LEE-vee-eyt)

ALLOY
(A-loi)

ALLURE
(uh-LOOR)
to lessen the burden, make easier

*Her calm support did much to **alleviate** his difficulties with the task.*

**Synonyms:** allay, ease, lighten, relieve

---

a mixture of two or more different things; literally, a mixture of two or more metals or of a metal and nonmetal

*Even sterling silver is actually an **alloy** of silver with another metal, usually copper.*

**Synonyms:** blend, combination, composite, compound

---

(v.) to attract

*Only the possibility that his favorite singer might perform could **allure** him to attend the concert.*

**Synonyms:** charm, entice, tempt

(n.) that which attracts

*Easily nauseated, she could not see the **allure** of a roller coaster.*

**Synonyms:** appeal, charm
AMALGAMATE
(uh-MAL-guh-MEYT)

____________________________________

AMBIGUOUS
(am-BI-gyoo-wuhs)

____________________________________

AMBIVALENCE
(am-BI-vuh-luhns)
to mix or combine into one body

*The plan to **amalgamate** the two high schools was not well thought out, and the students did not easily unite into one school.*

**Synonyms:** blend, incorporate, integrate, merge

ill-defined or uncertain; possible to be understood in different ways

*Her habitual sarcasm rendered her statement **ambiguous**; no one could tell if she really meant what she said.*

**Synonyms:** cryptic, enigmatic, indefinite, indeterminate

uncertainty; the state of having two or more contradictory feelings about something at the same time

*His **ambivalence** about playing the piano went on for years, and he thought about quitting every day until he enrolled at the conservatory.*

**Synonyms:** doubt, indecision, uncertainty
AMELIORATE
(uh-MEEL-yuh-reyt)

AMENABLE
(uh-ME-nuh-buhl)

AMENITY
(uh-ME-nuh-tee)
Her illness was **ameliorated** by the fact that it permitted her finally to rest and get enough sleep.

**Synonyms:** alleviate, improve, relieve

agreeable, willing, or submissive; answerable or legally responsible; able to be examined or tested

Even though it would require him to redo much of the work he had done so far, he was **amenable** to the change in plans.

**Synonyms:** cooperative, manageable; accountable

the quality of being agreeable; a feature that increases value or comfort

He had become so used to the general **amenity** of the community that the rudeness of the grocery store clerk shocked him.

**Synonyms:** charm, pleasantness; advantage, convenience
ANACHRONISM  
(uh-NA-kruh-ni-zuhm)

ANALOGOUS  
(uh-NA-luh-guhs)

ANARCHY  
(A-nuhr-kee)
a person or thing that is out of place in time

*Her floor-length skirts and elaborately done up hair were *anachronisms* that she nevertheless pulled off with grace.*

**Synonym:** misplacement

---

comparable in such a way that an analogy can be drawn

*Freud viewed the mind as *analogous* to a steam engine, whereas today we are more likely to compare it to a computer.*

**Synonyms:** alike, corresponding

---

lack of government; complete disorder

*When the teacher was called out of the classroom, the children erupted into gleeful *anarchy*.*

**Synonyms:** chaos, confusion, turmoil
ANATHEMA
(uh-NA-thuh-muh)

ANODYNE
(A-nuh-dahyn)

ANOMALY
(uh-NO-muh-lee)
someone or something that is cursed or disliked intensely; a curse

*Except for carrots, vegetables were anathema to the toddler.*

**Synonyms:** abomination, pariah

something that comforts; a medicine that relieves pain

*The music of Bach was an anodyne to her through the months of mourning.*

**Synonyms:** balm; painkiller

something different, irregular

*His late submission was an anomaly; he was known for meeting his deadlines.*

**Synonyms:** aberration, exception, irregularity, oddity
ANTIPATHY
(an-TI-puh-thee)

APOSTATE
(uh-PO-steyt)

APOGEE
(A-puh-jee)
dislike, feeling against

*He could not overcome his antipathy for dogs, even to date a woman who had a poodle as a pet.*

**Synonyms:** aversion, disgust, loathing

---

one who renounces a previous loyalty, such as to a religion, nation, or party

*Though she had many disagreements with the party, she had no plans to become an apostate.*

**Synonyms:** defector, dissenter, heretic, nonconformist

---

the highest point; literally, the point at which an orbiting body is farthest from Earth

*Finalizing the deal that spring was the apogee of her career thus far.*

**Synonyms:** apex, climax, summit, zenith
APPEASE
(uh-PEEZ)

APPROBATION
(a-pruh-BEY-shuhn)
to bring to a state of peace

*Only singing her favorite song could* **appease** *the distressed child.*

**Synonyms:** calm, pacify, soothe

---

to inform

*He kept the radio on at all times, to be sure he was kept* **apprised** *of the latest weather report.*

**Synonyms:** advise, enlighten, notify

---

formal approval

*Make art to express yourself, not to win the* **approbation** *of others.*

**Synonyms:** approval, commendation, endorsement, recognition
appropriately
(uh-PRO-pree-eyt)

archaic
(ahr-KEY-ik)

arduous
(AHR-juh-wuhs)
to set apart for a specific use; to take for oneself

The army **appropriated** all vehicles in the region for military use.

**Synonyms:** confiscate, seize, steal, usurp

---

of the past; extremely old or out of date

Students think that the language of Shakespeare is **archaic** until they encounter the work of Chaucer, who lived about two centuries earlier.

**Synonyms:** ancient, obsolete, old-fashioned

---

extremely difficult; requiring much energy or effort

Running a marathon is **arduous** enough in itself; I can’t imagine doing it as the last leg of a triathlon.

**Synonyms:** exhausting, grueling, strenuous
ARTLESS
(AHRT-lee)

ASCETIC
(uh-SE-tik)

ASPERITY
(a-SPER-uh-tee)
natural, simple, and without artificiality; without knowledge or skill

*The child* artlessly won over even the crankiest adults simply by smiling at them.

**Synonyms:** genuine, straightforward, unaffected, uncultured

strictly self-denying, often for spiritual purposes

*The ascetic practices of a monk are certainly not for everyone.*

**Synonyms:** austere, disciplined, strict

severity of tone, manner, or temper; roughness

*The asperity with which she spoke revealed her anger about the situation.*

**Synonyms:** harshness, sharpness
ASPERSION
(uh-SPER-zuhn)

ASSIDUOUS
(uh-SI-juh-wuhs)

ASSUAGE
(uh-SWEYJ)
a false accusation intended to do harm

He cast **aspersions** on his rival, but everyone could see that his wild claims were not true.

**Synonyms:** defamation, slander

characterized by persistent and careful attention or effort

An **assiduous** student, she earned the highest grades despite her learning disability.

**Synonyms:** attentive, constant, persevering

to decrease the intensity or severity of

Nothing but time could **assuage** their grief after they lost their home.

**Synonyms:** calm, ease, relieve
ASTRINGENT
(uh-STRIN-juhnt)

ASYLUM
(uh-SAHY-luhm)

ATTENUATE
(uh-TEN-yuh-WEYT)
harsh, caustic, strict

*He was the only employee unafraid of the boss’s astringent tongue.*

**Synonyms:** biting, bitter, cutting, sharp

-----------------------------

a place or state of shelter and protection; a place for the care of the ill or insane

*The refugees found asylum at the monastery.*

**Synonyms:** refuge, retreat, sanctuary

-----------------------------

to make thin or weak

*Her enthusiasm was attenuated by the length of the event; she did not like to be kept awake so late.*

**Synonyms:** debilitate, lessen, weaken
AUDACIOUS
(aw-DEY-shuhs)

AUSTERE
(aw-STEER)

AUTONOMOUS
(aw-TO-nuh-muhs)
daring, recklessly brave; inventive, unconventional

I am hardly **audacious** enough to go scuba diving, let alone sky diving!

**Synonyms:** adventurous, bold, rash

---

somber, strict, or stern in manner or appearance

The house was plain and blended into the **austere** winter landscape.

**Synonyms:** ascetic, rigorous, serious, solemn

---

independent

There are many who wish that the city government were more **autonomous** and did not have to abide by the decisions made at the distant state capital.

**Synonyms:** self-governing, self-ruling, sovereign
AVARICE
(A-vuh-ruhs)

AVER
(uh-VUHR)

AVOCATION
(a-vuh-KEY-shun)
a greed for wealth that cannot be satisfied

His **avarice** was a source of great discontent; he could not be happy with what he already had.

**Synonyms:** covetousness, greed, rapacity

to declare or prove to be true

*I can **aver** that her story is true, because I was there and saw it happen myself.*

**Synonyms:** affirm, assert, claim, verify

an occupation pursued for enjoyment

*She pursued her **avocation** of designing jewelry in the evenings after returning home from her day job.*

**Synonyms:** diversion, hobby, pastime
AXIOMATIC
(AK-see-uh-MA-tik)
taken as an axiom, or self-evident truth

Until Copernicus showed otherwise, it was taken as *axiomatic* that the Earth was the center of the universe.

*Synonyms*: accepted, fundamental, given, obvious
BANAL
(buh-NAL)

BAWDY
(BAW-dee)

BEHEMOTH
(bi-HEE-muhth)
unoriginal, trite

The musical was unbelievably **banal**; the characters, plot, and music completely lacked originality.

**Synonyms**: bland, conventional, hackneyed

obscene, often in a boisterous or humorous way

Shakespeare’s language can be as **bawdy** as it is beautiful.

**Synonyms**: coarse, indecent, lewd, vulgar

something enormous in size or power

The company was a **behemoth**, associated with about 1,000 brands, some of them even competing with each other.

**Synonyms**: beast, giant, leviathan, mammoth
BELIE
(bi-LAYH)

BELLICOSE
(BEH-li-kohs)

BENEFICENT
(buh-NE-fuh-suhnt)
to reveal the falsehood of, contradict

*His blushing face believed his claim that he did not care.*

**Synonyms:** disprove, negate, repudiate

---

inclined or eager to fight

*The bellicose young man picked fights on the playground nearly every day.*

**Synonyms:** belligerent, combative, hostile, warlike

---

doing good

*Every fall, they celebrated the beneficent Earth for its rich harvest.*

**Synonyms:** benevolent, generous, kind
BLANDISHMENT
(BLAN-dish-muhnt)

BOLSTER
(BOHL-stuhr)

BOMBASTIC
(bom-BAS-tik)
flattery intended to persuade

*The blandishments* of the salesperson got the better of her judgment, and she purchased the stereo, only to return it the next day.

**Synonyms:** coaxing, fawning, wheedling

---
to give support

*The coach* bolstered *their spirits* after they played a poor first half, and ultimately they won the game.

**Synonyms:** brace, sustain, uphold

---
obnoxiously pretentious in speech or writing

After an evening of listening to *bombastic* speeches, I left the award ceremony with a headache.

**Synonyms:** pompous
BOORISH
(BOOR-ish)

BRAZEN
(BREY-zuhn)

BROACH
(brohch)
rude in a way that reveals insensitivity to others

_He lost several friends because of his boorish behavior at the party that night._

**Synonyms:** bad mannered, coarse, crude

shamelessly bold

_He was so brazen as to interrupt the guest speaker in the middle of her remarks._

**Synonyms:** audacious, cocky, impudent

to mention for the first time

_Though he loved her dearly, he was too timid to broach the topic of marriage._

**Synonyms:** introduce, propose, suggest
BUCOLIC
(byoo-KO-lik)

BURGEON
(BUHR-juhn)

BURNISH
(BUHR-nish)
having to do with shepherds or rural life

*He enjoyed their vacation in **bucolic** northern New England; she longed to return to the city.*

**Synonyms:** pastoral, rural, rustic

---

to sprout, bloom, and grow

*She **burgeoned** into an eager reader shortly after beginning first grade.*

**Synonyms:** blossom, flourish

---

to polish, especially by rubbing

*The carpenter **burnished** the surface of the table until it was smooth and glossy.*

**Synonyms:** brighten, rub, shine
BUTTRESS
(BUH-truhs)
to support, prop up

She listened to the anthem again and again, to **buttress** her courage.

**Synonyms:** bolster, brace, strengthen
CACOPHONY
(keh-KO-fuh-nee)

CALUMNY
(keh-LUM-nee)

CANON
(KA-nuhn)
harsh, discordant sound

*To her, it was powerfully stirring music; to her parents, it was unbearable *cacophony.*

**Synonyms:** discord, noise

false charges made with the intention of harming the reputation of another

*Despite the falseness of the charges, the *calumny* ended her career in politics.*

**Synonyms:** defamation, slander

a body of fundamental rules or standards; a set of sacred texts or other comprehensive list of texts

*Many of the books we take as part of the *canon* today may be forgotten in the next century.*

**Synonyms:** dogma, law, principle
CANT
(kant)

CAPRICIOUS
(kuhp-REE-shuhs)

CAPTIOUS
(KAP-shuhs)
the use of trite or stock language, especially for insincere expressions of enthusiasm or piety

*We were disgusted with the empty *cant* of the politicians, who had done nothing to prevent the disaster.*

**Synonyms:** hypocrisy, sanctimoniousness

---

impulsive, tending to act according to whim

*He was so *capricious* that he rarely kept a job longer than a few months.*

**Synonyms:** arbitrary, erratic, unpredictable

---

tending to find fault; designed to confuse

*The teacher’s feedback was more *captious* than instructive.*

**Synonyms:** cantankerous, faultfinding, finicky, nit-picking
CASTIGATION
(kas-ti-GEY-shuhn)

CATALYST
(KA-tuh-luhst)

CAUSAL
(KAW-zuhl)
severe criticism or punishment

*The children did not expect such *castigation* from their gentle teacher, who later apologized for reprimanding them so harshly.*

**Synonyms:** chastisement, discipline, invective

---

an agent that causes or speeds up a change or activity; literally, a substance that causes or speeds up a chemical reaction

*They had talked about moving for years; her pregnancy was the *catalyst* that finally spurred them to take action.*

**Synonyms:** impetus, stimulus

---

relating to a cause

*She understood the *causal* relationship between the care she took with her studies and her grades.*
CAUSTIC  
(KAWS-tik)

CAVIL  
(KA-vil)

CENSURE  
(SEN-sher)
able to burn or corrode; sarcastic

*Her caustic* tone and sarcastic words said everything we needed to know about her thoughts about getting fired.

**Synonyms:** acerbic, biting, harsh

to raise minor objections

*His tendency to cavil at new ideas made him a poor manager, and he was soon fired.*

**Synonyms:** criticize, quibble

blame, formal condemnation

*The censure of her colleagues did nothing to curb her illicit behavior.*

**Synonyms:** criticism, disapproval, reprimand
CHARY
(ChER-ee)


CHASTEN
(CHEY-suhn)


CHICANERY
(shi-KEYN-uh-ree)
cautious

She was **chary** of auditioning for another play after the last production ended in a debacle.

*Synonyms:* careful, restrained, wary

---

to correct through punishment

*The children were thoroughly *chastened* after they spent their weekend cleaning the playground they had damaged.*

*Synonyms:* discipline, humiliate, subdue

---

deception through trickery

*He won the competition through *chicanery,* not talent.*

*Synonyms:* artifice, cheating, subterfuge
CHIMERA
(kahy-MIR-uh)  

CIRCUITOUS
(suhr-KYOO-uh-tuhs)  

COAGULATE
(koh-A-gyu-leyt)
a terrible illusion, an imagined monster

The **chimera** that haunts him at night is his idea of himself in the future.

**Synonyms:** delusion, mirage

going in a winding, indirect way

Though it may have been quicker to go by the highway, we enjoyed the **circuitous** drive to the lake.

**Synonyms:** rambling, roundabout

to thicken; to gather in a mass

The milk became sour and began to **coagulate**.

**Synonyms:** congeal, clot, curdle, solidify
CODA
(KOH-duh)

COGENT
(KOH-juhnt)

COMMENSURATE
(keh-MEN-se-ruht)
the conclusion of a work of music, literature, drama, or film, often formally different from the rest of the work

We knew how the story was going to turn out long before the play reached its **coda**.

*Synonyms:* conclusion, ending, finale

---

very convincing and appealing to reason; relevant

The senator was not able to give a **cogent** argument in favor of his re-election.

*Synonyms:* apt, compelling, persuasive, telling

---

equal or corresponding in measure, degree, intensity, or duration

If your effort is **commensurate** with your desire, you are likely to succeed.

*Synonyms:* comparable, equivalent, proportionate
COMPENDIUM
(kuhm-PEN-dee-uhm)

COMPLACENT
(kuhm-PLEY-suhnt)

COMPLAISANT
(kuhm-PLEY-suhnt)
a summary of a larger work or body of knowledge; a complete list of items

*The thin volume included a **compendium** of all the different kinds of birds he had seen visiting the woods in his backyard.*

**Synonyms:** abstract, digest, overview, survey

---

satisfied with one’s own condition

*It is easy to be **complacent** with one’s own good fortune rather than to use it to better the lives of others.*

**Synonyms:** self-satisfied, smug, unconcerned

---

inclined to please

*The girl was shy but **complaisant**, and soon warmed up to the company.*

**Synonyms:** agreeable, gracious, obliging
COMPLEMENT
(KOM-pluh-ment)

COMPLIANT
(kuhm-PLAHY-uhnt)

CONCILIATORY
(kuhn-SI-lee-uh-taw-ree)
something that completes or perfects

For her, coffee is a necessary complement to breakfast.

Synonyms: counterpart, enhancement, supplement

conforming, submissive

Stand firmly on your ground—don’t be so compliant!

Synonyms: docile, obedient, obliging, yielding

tending to gain goodwill, overcome distrust

Upon hearing her conciliatory words, no one was in the mood to argue anymore.

Synonyms: appeasing, civil, placating
CONFOUND
(kuhn-FOUND)

CONNOISSEUR
(ko-nuh-SUHR)

CONTENTION
(kuhn-TEN-shuhn)
to confuse thoroughly

*The directions *confounded her so completely that she ended up on the wrong side of town.*

**Synonyms:** baffle, bewilder, frustrate, perplex

---

one who understands, appreciates, and can make judgments of an art or matter of taste

*Though he claimed to be a *connoisseur of twentieth century art, he could not even tell a Picasso from a Pollock.***

**Synonyms:** aficionado, expert, specialist

---

opposition, strife; an idea proposed and held in debate or argument

*The constant mishaps of her lackadaisical brother became a source of *contention with her husband.*

**Synonyms:** conflict, discord, quarrel
CONTIGUOUS
(kuhn-TI-gyoo-wuhs)

CONTRITE
(kuhn-TRAHYT)

CONTUMACIOUS
(kon-too-MEY-shuhs)
in contact, adjoining

*The state of Alaska is *contiguous* with Canada but not with the United States.*

**Synonyms:** adjacent, bordering, neighboring, touching

feeling or showing sorrow for wrongdoing

*Though he was *contrite* after their argument, she was not easily willing to forgive.*

**Synonyms:** apologetic, penitent, remorseful, sorry

stubbornly rebellious

*The *contumacious* little girl refused to listen to reason and to wear a jacket or shoes.*

**Synonyms:** headstrong, obstinate
CONUNDRUM  
(keh-noon-drum)

CONVENTION  
(keh-nuh-VEN-shuhn)

CONVIVIAL  
(keh-nee-vee-uhl)
a complicated problem; literally, a riddle with a pun or wordplay in its answer

The disorder in his bedroom every morning was a **conundrum**, until they realized that he was sleepwalking at night.

*Synonyms:* puzzle, riddle, trick

---

a meeting; an agreement; the standard or usual way of doing things

As e-mail has become the main form of written correspondence, many people are forgetting the **conventions** of letter writing.

*Synonyms:* custom, habit

---

enjoying company, food, and drink

A **convivial** person, she looks forward to the holidays even though they mark the beginning of winter.

*Synonyms:* agreeable, friendly, jovial
CONVOLUTED
(KON-vuh-loo-tuhd)

COPIOUS
(KOH-pee-uhs)

CRAVEN
(KREY-vuhn)
full of twists and turns, complicated

*His convoluted directions were unnecessary; all that he needed to say was, “Turn left at the corner.”*

**Synonyms:** complex, intricate, puzzling

---

numerous, plentiful

*She took *copious* notes and filled several notebooks every term.*

**Synonyms:** abundant, extensive, generous

---

completely lacking in courage

*Please tell me you are not so *craven* as to forfeit the game rather than face your fiercest opponent.*

**Synonyms:** cowardly, fearful, timid
CREDULOUS
(KRE-juh-luhs)

CULPABLE
(KUHL-puh-buhl)

CYNICISM
(SI-nuh-si-zuhm)
willing to believe; originating in credulity

As a teacher, he was far too credulous, and his students could get away with almost anything, so long as they could tell a story to explain it.

_Synonyms:_ believing, gullible, unsuspecting

---

deserving blame

Though she was clearly culpable, she was never even charged for the crime.

_Synonyms:_ blameworthy, guilty, liable

---

a complete lack of faith, especially in the values and motives of humans

Despite his cynicism, he was also charming, and soon everyone was seduced by his gloomy outlook.

_Synonyms:_ bitterness, negativism, pessimism, sarcasm
CYNOSURE
(Si-no-shor)
center of attraction

*The movie star is an unapologetic *cynosure*; she always expects all eyes to be on her.*

**Synonyms:** hotshot
DEARTH
(duhrth)

DEBACLE
(duh-BAH-kuhl)

DEBAUCHERY
(di-BAW-chuh-ree)
a shortage, an inadequate supply

*The dearth of clean water was due to the drought.*

**Synonyms:** deficiency, lack, scarcity

______________

a disaster or complete failure

*The play was supposed to be a tragedy, but the production was such a debacle that the audience laughed through the third act.*

**Synonyms:** breakdown, defeat, fiasco, wreck

______________

indulgence in physical pleasures

*His life of debauchery took a toll on his body, and he looked far older than his years.*

**Synonyms:** depravity, intemperance, revelry
DECORUM  
(dī-KOHR-uhm)

DEFAULT  
(dī-FAWLT)

DEFERENCE  
(DEH-fuh-ruhns)
propriety and good taste

*Please conduct yourselves with **decorum** during our visit to the mayor’s office.*

**Synonyms:** civility, convention, dignity

---

(n.) a failure to act or fulfill an obligation

*We hired him by **default**; none of the other applicants showed up for the interview.*

**Synonyms:** disregard, neglect

(v.) to fail to act or fulfill an obligation

*She **defaulted** on her mortgage payments after she lost her job.*

**Synonyms:** evade, neglect

---

respect for and submission to the judgment or will of another, especially an elder or superior

*The children treated their grandparents with **deference**.*

**Synonyms:** compliance, courtesy, esteem, regard
DEFUNCT
(di-FUHNGKT)

DELINEATE
(di-LI-nee-eyt)

DEMUR
(di-MUHR)
no longer working or in use; no longer existing

The organization had been **defunct** for nearly a decade when she decided to revive it.

**Synonyms:** obsolete; extinct

to describe or portray in detail

The CEO took the time to **delineate** her plans for the company, so that everyone would understand the direction they would be taking in the next year.

**Synonyms:** characterize, depict, draw, represent

to express disagreement, object

Everyone else was enthusiastic about the project, but she **demurred**, saying it would never succeed.

**Synonyms:** oppose, refuse
DENIGRATE  
(de-ni-GREYT)

DENOUEMENT  
(DEY-noo-mawn)

DERISION  
(di-RI-zuhhn)
to attack the reputation or achievements of another

He did nothing but **denigrate** his classmates’ artwork, but could hardly tolerate the most neutral comment about his own.

**Synonyms:** belittle, criticize, disparage

---

the outcome of a story or series of events

The **denouement** was unsatisfying: the hero woke up, and it turned out that the entire story had been his dream.

**Synonyms:** conclusion, culmination, resolution

---

ridicule, contempt

The poorly plotted film was the object of much **derision** from critics, but audiences loved it.

**Synonyms:** disdain, mockery, scorn
DERIVATIVE
(dii-RI-vuh-tiv)

DESICCATE
(DEH-si-keyt)

DESUETUDE
(DEH-swi-tood)
derived from something else, lacking in originality

His first album was **derivative** R & B, but his second album was completely original and propelled him to fame.

**Synonyms:** banal, copied, imitative

---

to dry up

The **desiccated** landscape had not seen rain in months.

**Synonyms:** dehydrate, deplete, wither

---

the state of no longer being in use

After the original members of the sorority graduated, many of their rituals were forgotten and soon fell into **desuetude**.

**Synonyms:** disuse, inactivity
DESLULTORY
(DE-suhl-tohr-ee)

DETERRENT
(di-TUHR-uhnt)

DETRACTION
(di-TRAK-shuhn)
lacking a plan or sense of purpose, disconnected

His **desultory** ways were maddening to her; she preferred to get right to the point.

**Synonyms:** aimless, chance, erratic, rambling

---

that which prevents

The new methods of policing the neighborhood turned out to be an effective **deterrent** to crime.

**Synonyms:** curb, hindrance, obstacle, restraint

---

a lessening of reputation, especially due to criticism; the act of taking away

As a result of the critics’ many **detractions** of the novel, it sold only a few dozen copies.

**Synonyms:** misrepresentation, slander
DIAPHANOUS
(dahy-A-fuh-nuhs)

........................................

DIATRIBE
(DAHY-uh-trahyb)

........................................

DICHOTOMY
(dahy-KO-tuh-mee)
extremely fine or delicate to the point of transparency; insubstantial

*The starlet’s* **diaphanous** *gown* was both gorgeous and scandalous.

**Synonyms:** gossamer, flimsy, sheer

---

a critical or abusive speech or piece of writing

*After taking in her boss’s long* **diatribe** *about her work, she simply quit.*

**Synonyms:** harangue, invective, tirade

---

a division into two opposite or mutually exclusive groups

*The* **dichotomy** *between her words and actions was startling; to hear her talk, you’d think she could do nothing right, whereas I had never seen her do anything wrong.*

**Synonyms:** bifurcation, difference, separation
DIDACTIC  
(dahy-DAK-tik)

DIFFIDENCE  
(DI-fi-duhns)

DIFFUSE  
(di-FYOOS)
tending or intended to inform or teach

Because our values are so different today, the **didactic** novels of the past are now more humorous than instructive.

**Synonyms:** academic, instructive, pendantic

-----

shyness, lack of confidence

He overcame his **diffidence** and gave a stirring speech at the rally.

**Synonyms:** hesitancy, insecurity, reluctance, reservation

-----

wordy and disorganized; not concentrated, spread around

The lecturer was so **diffuse** that although she shared a wealth of information, we hardly learned anything.

**Synonyms:** rambling; diluted, scattered, widespread
DIGRESSION
(dahy-GRE-shuhn)

DILETTANTE
(DI-luh-tahnt)

DIRGE
(duhrj)
a turning away from the main course or subject

This paragraph is a *digression* from the main topic of the essay, but it is more interesting to me than anything else.

**Synonyms:** departure, diversion, wandering

---

a lover of or dabbler in the arts

*He called himself a* *dilettante,* but he was actually an accomplished pianist.

**Synonyms:** amateur, connoisseur, rookie

---

a slow, mournful piece of music, especially one intended for a funeral or similar occasion

*The orchestra played the piece so slowly that it sounded like a* *dirge.*

**Synonyms:** lament, requiem
DISABUSE
(DIS-uh-byooz)

DISCERNING
(di-SUHR-ning)

DISCORDANT
(dis-KOR-duhnt)
to clear up an error or confusion

The nutritionist worked hard to **disabuse** the public of the notion that vegetarians cannot get enough protein.

*Synonyms*: correct, debunk, enlighten

---

having good judgment or understanding

*Only the most discerning* customers can tell the difference between this fabric and real silk.

*Synonyms*: discriminating, insightful, knowledgeable, perceptive

---

not in harmony, quarrelsome

She was a brilliant leader who could listen to the **discordant** voices of the Senate and somehow find a way to compromise.

*Synonyms*: cacophonous, contradictory, inconsistent
DISCREDIT
(dis-KRE-duht)

DISCREET
(dis-KREET)

DISCREPANCY
(dis-KRE-puhn-see)
to refuse to believe or cause others to disbelieve

*He had to* **discredit** the ridiculous idea that with a better diet, one could get by with only five hours of sleep each night.

*Synonyms:* doubt, question, reject

maintaining or respecting privacy, especially about something of a delicate nature

*They were so* **discreet** *about the affair that it was never discovered.*

*Synonyms:* cautious, modest, prudent, restrained

disagreement, inconsistency

*The investigation of a small* **discrepancy** *in an account revealed widespread fraud at that bank.*

*Synonyms:* conflict, difference, dissimilarity, variation
DISCRETE
(dis-KREET)

DISINGENUOUS
(dis-in-JEN-yoo-uhs)

DISINTERESTED
(dis-IN-truhs-tuhd)
separate, distinct

_The course was given in three **discrete** sessions; you could attend just one or two and still follow the material._

**Synonyms:** apart, detached, isolated

---
lacking in truth, often while giving the appearance of truthfulness

_Their advertising was **disingenuous**, featuring photographs that made their dumpy hotel look like a paradise._

**Synonyms:** deceitful, dishonest, insincere, hypocritical

---
not personally engaged, without emotional interest

_He could not participate on the jury; the victim was his cousin, and so he could not be **disinterested** in the outcome of the trial._

**Synonyms:** dispassionate, indifferent, unbiased, unconcerned
DISJOINTED
(dis-JOIN-tuhd)

DISMISS
(dis-MIS)

DISPARAGE
(di-SPER-ij)
disorderly, out of sequence

*She told the story in such a *disjointed* way that we asked her to repeat it so that we could understand.*

**Synonyms:** confused, disconnected, incoherent, rambling

---

to allow or cause to leave; to reject

She **dismissed** the proposal, saying that it would be too expensive to carry out.

**Synonyms:** discharge, release, send away; disregard

---

to speak of slightingly; to lessen the reputation of

*Do not disparage* your elders; they worked hard to build this community.

**Synonyms:** belittle, depreciate
DISPARATE
(DIS-puhr-uht)

DISSEMBLE
(di-SEM-buhl)

DISSEMINATE
(di-SE-muh-neyt)
essentially different

*The four musicians brought together their *disparate* talents and ideas to make a wild and beautiful collection of songs.*

**Synonyms:** dissimilar, diverse, various

to put on a false appearance

*The children tried to *dissemble* innocence, but the crumbs on their face gave them away.*

**Synonyms:** conceal, feign, simulate

to scatter, spread around

*Please *disseminate* the news; I want everyone to know about my candidacy.*

**Synonyms:** advertise, broadcast, disperse, publish
DISSIDENT
(DI-suh-duhnt)

DISSOLUTION
(DI-suh-loo-shuhn)

DISSONANCE
(DI-suh-nuhns)
disagreeing with an established belief or organization

*Under the rule of the dictator, people kept their **dissident** ideas to themselves.*

**Synonyms:** heretical, nonconforming, unorthodox

---

the act or process of falling apart

*The **dissolution** of their marriage was unexpected; they had seemed so happy.*

**Synonyms:** disintegration, rupture, separation

---

the clashing of ideas or sounds

*The music included much **dissonance**, and I left the concert hall with a headache.*

**Synonyms:** conflict, disagreement, discord
DISTEND
(dis-TEND)

DISTILL
(dis-TIL)

DIVEST
(dahy-VEST)
to expand, swell

Ironically, their **distended** bellies are a sign of their great hunger.

*Synonyms*: bloat, bulge, enlarge

---

to extract the essence of

*The professor could* **distill** complex ideas into a simple diagram or statement.

*Synonyms*: concentrate, purify, refine

---

to strip, deprive, or free from

*He divested* himself of most of his wealth and went off to live in the woods.

*Synonyms*: dismantle, dispossess, seize
DIVULGE  
(dahy-VUHLJ)

DOCTRINAIRE  
(dok-truh-NAIR)

DOGMATIC  
(dawg-MA-tik)
to make a secret known

*She refused to *divulge* what her sister had told her that evening.*

**Synonyms:** admit, disclose, tell

---

fanatic about a doctrine or theory

*An *doctrinaire* libertarian, she refused to pay any taxes.*

**Synonyms:** dogmatic, fanatical, impractical, inflexible

---

taken to expressing opinions as though they were facts

*She was turned off by his *dogmatic* assertions that reading his book would completely transform her life.*

**Synonyms:** fanatical, opinionated
DORMANT
(DAWR-muhnt)

DROSS
(dros)

DUPE
(doop)
inactive, asleep

*It is hard to believe that the tulip bulbs lie dormant in the earth under the winter snow.*

**Synonyms:** inert, latent, potential

---

waste, something that is inferior

*The art show was so full of dross that his beautiful piece stood out.*

**Synonyms:** refuse, scum, trash

---

one who is easily deceived or fooled

*He was a dupe to believe all of her lies.*

**Synonyms:** chump, fool
EBULLIENT
(i-BOOL-yuhnt)

ECCENTRIC
(ek-SEN-trik)

ECLECTIC
(e-KLEK-tik)
lively, enthusiastic
We soon were all carried away by her ebullient mood.

**Synonyms:** buoyant, high-spirited, vivacious

unconventional, irregular
Her staid outfits contrasted with her eccentric ideas.

**Synonyms:** odd, unusual, whimsical

choosing from a variety of sources; composed of a variety of styles, methods, or ideas
His taste in music was eclectic, including everything from opera to free jazz.

**Synonyms:** assorted, diverse, varied
EFFERVESCENCE
(e-fuhr-VE-sens)

EFFETE
(e-FEET)

EFFICACY
(EH-fi-kuh-see)
liveliness

*Her effervescence* was not appropriate for the solemn occasion.

**Synonyms:** enthusiasm, excitement

---

without strength or character

*The young men longed for war so that they could prove they had not grown effete.*

**Synonyms:** decadent, degenerate, sterile

---

the ability to produce the desired effect

*Her efficacy* was astonishing; within three days she got the project back on track.

**Synonyms:** capability, competence, effectiveness
EFFRONTERY
(i-FRUHN-tuh-ree)

ELEGY
(E-luh-gee)

ELICIT
(i-LI-suht)
shameless boldness

*He had the effrontery to demand a full refund, simply because he had not liked one of the performers.*

**Synonyms:** arrogance, disrespect, insolence

---

a poem or song expressing sorrow at the loss of one who has died

*After the poet read the elegy for her mother, not an eye was dry of tears.*

**Synonyms:** lament, requiem

---

to draw or bring out

*Her pointed questions elicited thoughtful replies.*

**Synonyms:** evoke, obtain
ELIXIR
(i-LIK-suhr)

ELOQUENT
(EH-luh-kwuhnt)

EMACIATED
(i-MEY-shee-ey-tuhd)
a sweetened mixture of alcohol and water having medicinal qualities

*He made a fortune selling an *elixir* that he claimed could preserve youth.*

**Synonyms:** medicine, solution

---

beautifully and fluently expressive

*She wrote an *eloquent* letter to thank her aunt for the gift.*

**Synonyms:** articulate, expressive

---

made thin and week

*The cat was *emaciated* when we found her, but now she is healthy though a bit plump.*

**Synonyms:** haggard, skinny, starved, wasted
EMBELLISH
(im-BE-lish)

EMOLLIENT
(i-MOL-yuhnt)

EMPIRICAL
(im-PIR-i-kuhl)
to add ornamentation

He **embellished** the story with little exaggerations to make it more interesting.

*Synonyms:* adorn, decorate, enhance

having the power to soothe or make soft and supple

*The midwife’s emollient words encouraged the woman in labor.*

*Synonyms:* healing, soothing; lotion, salve

based on observation or experience without resorting to theory

*Your arguments are too theoretical; only empirical evidence will persuade me.*

*Synonyms:* experimental, observed, practical
EMULATE
(EM-yuh-leyt)

ENCOMIUM
(en-KOH-mee-uhm)

ENDEMIC
(en-DEM-ik)
to try to equal or excel; to imitate

He had no desire to emulate his novelist father and instead became an accountant.

**Synonyms:** compete, follow, rival

---

praise, an expression of praise

The *encomium* from all the critics in the world did not matter so much to her as the praise her teacher heaped on her little book.

**Synonyms:** accolade, tribute

---

characteristic of or prevalent in a group of people or region

The Joshua tree is *endemic* to the Mojave Desert; it grows nowhere else.

**Synonyms:** aboriginal, local, regional
ENNERNATE
(E-nuhr-veyt)

ENGENDER
(en-JEN-duhr)

ENHANCE
(en-HANS)
to reduce the strength of

The heat and humidity **enervated** her so much that she did not even try to accomplish anything on that day.

**Synonyms:** debilitate, enfeeble, weaken

---

to bring into existence

*His unclear directions* **engendered** confusion.

**Synonyms:** beget, generate, originate, produce

---

to improve in quality, desirability, or value

*Her new hairstyle did much to **enhance** her appearance.*

**Synonyms:** augment, embellish, improve, intensify
ENIGMATIC
(e-nig-MA-tik)

ENNUI
(ahn-WEE)

ENUNCIATE
(ee-NUHN-see-eyt)
puzzling, mysterious

*He lay in bed that night trying to sort out the meaning of her* enigmatic *good-bye.*

**Synonyms:** ambiguous, perplexing

---------------

a feeling of weariness

*Despite the wealth of opportunities available to me, I could not shake the feeling of ennui at the very thought of starting another job.*

**Synonyms:** boredom, dullness, languor

---------------

to pronounce clearly; to announce

*I will enunciate my intentions only after my plans are settled.*

**Synonyms:** articulate; declare, proclaim
EPHEMERAL
(i-FEM-uh-ruhl)

EQUANIMITY
(e-kwuh-NI-muh-tee)

EQUIVOCATE
(i-KWI-vuh-keyt)
lasting a short time

*Pleasure may be ephemeral, but so is pain.*

**Synonyms:** brief, fleeting, momentary, passing

mental stability under stress

*The secret to her equanimity was that no matter how much she had to do, she always got enough sleep.*

**Synonyms:** calmness, composure, equilibrium, serenity

to speak without committing oneself

*When I ask this next question, don’t equivocate; just say directly what is on your mind.*

**Synonyms:** dodge, evade, prevaricate
ERRANT
(EH-ruhnt)

______________________________

ERUDITE
(ER-yuh-dahyt)

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ESCHEW
(e-SHOO)
given to wandering; tending to err

*The errant child soon lost her way.*

**Synonyms:** meandering, rambling, straying; fallible

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learned

*The professor was erudite, not only in her own field of scholarship but also in twentieth-century poetry.*

**Synonyms:** educated, knowledgeable, studious

-----------------------------------------------

to avoid, especially for ethical or practical reasons

A strict vegetarian, she *eschews* eggs and dairy products in addition to meat and fish.

**Synonyms:** abstain, renounce, shun
ESSAY
(e-SEY)

ESOTERIC
(e-suh-TEH-rik)

ESTIMABLE
(ES-tuh-muh-buhl)
to attempt, to try

I have **essayed** neither rock climbing nor sky diving, and probably never will try either activity.

*Synonyms:* test, undertake

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known only by the initiated

*The symbolism of the Tarot is hardly as **esoteric** as you might think.***

*Synonyms:* arcane, hidden, occult

-----------------------------

capable of being estimated; worthy of respect

*We practiced hard that week to prepare to face an **estimable** opponent.***

*Synonyms:* admirable, reputable, respectable
EULOGY
(YOO-luh-jee)

EUPHEMISM
(YOO-fuh-mi-zuhm)

EVANESCENT
(e-vuh-NEH-suhnt)
a speech or piece of writing given in honor of someone who has died

*Each of his five sons gave a brief and moving eulogy at his funeral.*

**Synonyms:** tribute

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the use of a neutral or vague word or phrase to replace a word or phrase that might offend or seem harsh or unpleasant

“To pass away” is a common **euphemism** for “to die.”

**Synonyms:** circumlocution, delicacy, pretense

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like vapor, tending to fade or vanish

*Young people do not know just how evanescent youth is.*

**Synonyms:** fleeting, passing, temporary, transient
EVINCE
(i-VINS)

EVOCATIVE
(i-VO-kuh-tiv)

EXACERBATE
(ig-ZA-suhr-beyt)
to give evidence of, reveal

*That he was able to read when he was only three years old evinced his intelligence and eagerness to learn.*

**Synonyms:** demonstrate, display, indicate, manifest, show

---

tending to call forth or suggest emotion or ideas

*Though the paintings were abstract, they were evocative of desert landscapes.*

**Synonyms:** expressive, suggestive

---

to make worse

*The couple was deep in debt, and so the loss of her job only exacerbated their problems.*

**Synonyms:** aggravate, infuriate, intensify
EXACT
(ig-ZAKT)

EXECRABLE
(EK-si-kruh-buhl)

EXCULPATE
(EK-skuhl-peyt)
to call for and obtain, demand

*The coach was so successful because she **exacted** the best effort from her teams.*

*Synonyms:* compel, require

detestable, very bad

*He was sentenced to a life in prison for his **execrable** crimes.*

*Synonyms:* abominable, disgusting, horrible, loathsome

to clear from guilt or blame

*Not only was she **exculpated** of the charge that she had cheated on the test, but her teacher apologized profusely.*

*Synonyms:* absolve, exonerate, vindicate
EXHORT
(ig-ZORT)

EXISTENTIAL
(eg-zi-STEN-shuhl)

EXIGENCE
(EK-suh-juhn-see)
to advise or urge strongly

*Though he **exhorted** his students to attend his evening study sessions, they were poorly attended.*

**Synonyms:** admonish, beseech, encourage, recommend

---

having to do with being and existence

*The philosopher’s concerns were **existential**; she questioned how and why human life came to be.*

---

that which is necessary in a given situation; an urgent situation

*He was ill prepared for the **exigencies** of life abroad.*

**Synonyms:** necessity, requirement; crisis, emergency
EXONERATE
(ig-ZO-nuh-reyt)

EXPIATE
(EK-spee-eyt)

EXPLICATE
(EKS-pli-keyt)
to clear from blame; to relieve of a responsibility

We were relieved to be **exonerated** of our cleaning duties that weekend.

*Synonyms*: absolve, exonerate, vindicate; discharge, liberate

---

to make amends

To **expiate** for their vandalism, they painted a beautiful mural over the graffiti.

*Synonyms*: atone, compensate, rectify

---

to explain in detail

*In her term paper, she **explicated** the meaning of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*

*Synonyms*: analyze, clarify, interpret
EXPOSITORY
(ik-SPO-zuh-taw-ree)

EXTEMPORANEOUS
(ek-stem-puh-REY-nee-uhs)

EXTIRPATE
(EK-stuhr-peyt)
conveying information or explanations

She enjoyed **expository** writing so much that she decided to pursue a career as a journalist.

*Synonyms:* explanatory, informative

made, done, or said at the spur of the moment

His **extemporaneous** speech was both funnier and more moving than his colleague’s carefully planned one.

*Synonyms:* impromptu, improvised, unrehearsed

to destroy at the roots

*The new police chief was determined to **extirpate** crime from the city.*

*Synonyms:* annihilate, demolish, eradicate, exterminate, extinguish
**EXTRANEOUS**
(ek-STREY-nee-uhs)

**EXTRAPOLATE**
(ik-STRAY-puh-leyt)

**EXTRINSIC**
(ek-STRIN-zik)
coming from without, extra

*Address the main topic only; leave out any **extraneous** details, however entertaining they might be.*

*Synonyms:* additional, external, foreign, superfluous, unessential

---

to infer, predict, or project based on given information

*Be careful not to **extrapolate** too wildly from the survey results; stick close to the data.*

*Synonyms:* conclude, envision

---

originating from without

*The movie reminded the critic of his childhood, but he recognized that these memories were **extrinsic** to the quality of the film itself.*

*Synonyms:* external, extraneous, unessential
FACETIOUS
(fuh-SEE-shuhs)

FACILITATE
(fuh-SI-luh-teyt)

FALLACY
(FA-luh-see)
not serious, inappropriately jokey

*The facetious tone of the guide regarding first aid was at odds with the serious of its purpose.*

**Synonyms:** amusing, frivolous, humorous

---

to make easier

To **facilitate** the discussion, please raise your hand if you wish to speak.

**Synonyms:** aid, assist, expedite, promote

---

a deceptive or mistaken idea or belief

*It is a fallacy to believe that humans evolved from chimpanzees; we do share a common ancestor, however.*

**Synonyms:** delusion, error, misconception
FALLOW
(FA-loh)

FATUOUS
(FA-choo-uhs)

FAWNING
(FAW-ning)
left uncultivated, inactive

*The farmer let that field lie fallow this year so that it would not be depleted.*

**Synonyms:** dormant, idle, resting

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foolish

*His fatuous comments during the interview made him seem untrustworthy, and so he was not hired.*

**Synonyms:** idiotic, mindless, ridiculous, silly

--------

showing affection or seeking favor through flattery

*Unable to trust the fawning attitudes of those around her, the celebrity relied on her family and oldest friends.*

**Synonyms:** flattering, ingratiating, pandering
FELICITOUS
(fi-LI-suh-tuhs)

FERVENT
(FUHR-vuhnt)

FILIBUSTER
(Fluh-buh-stuhr)
well expressed or well suited

*Her felicitous* remarks *put the students at ease before the test.*

**Synonyms:** apt, appropriate

intense

*His fervent* admiration of her went unreturned; she found him uninteresting.

**Synonyms:** ardent, heartfelt, passionate

the use of obstruction to prevent action, especially the passage of a law

*Due to the filibuster* by just one senator, there was no vote on the bill.

**Synonyms:** delay, hindrance, interference, opposition
FLAG
(flag)

FLEDGLING
(FLEJ-ling)

FLOUT
(flout)
to lose interest or spirit

Seeing that their enthusiasm for the hike was **flagging**, the guide decided that it was time to take a break.

**Synonyms:** dwindle, slump, wane

---

a beginner

I am learning Chinese, but I’m just a **fledgling** speaker, having studied the language for only six months.

**Synonyms:** novice, rookie

---

to neglect or treat with scorn

She showed her disrespect for her teachers by **flouting** their rules.

**Synonyms:** distain, disregard, insult
FOMENT
(foh-MENT)

FORESTALL
(fohr-STAWL)

FORTUITOUS
(fawr-TOO-uh-tuhs)
to promote the growth of

*The newspaper editor was accused of* **fomenting**
rebellion by publishing stories that were highly
critical of the government.

**Synonyms:** agitate, cultivate, encourage, foster

---

to hinder or delay

*The actions that the police took to* **forestall** a
riot might actually have caused it to occur.

**Synonyms:** prevent, thwart

---

lucky, happening by a lucky chance

*The weather on the day of the marathon could
not have been more* **fortuitous:** partly cloudy
and cool but not humid.

**Synonyms:** accidental, fortunate
**FRACTIOUS**
(FRAK-shuhs)

**FRUGALITY**
(froo-GA-luh-tee)

**FULMINATE**
(fuhl-muh-NEYT)
tending to be quarrelsome or troublesome

The boys had a reputation for being fractious, but I never saw them be anything other than polite and well behaved.

**Synonyms:** unruly, rebellious, wayward, wild

---

the tendency to be sparing with money and other resources, not wasteful

Her tendency to indulge in expensive shoes contrasted with her frugality in all other matters.

**Synonyms:** conservation, economy, prudence

---

to denounce strongly

The preacher fulminated against gambling and other forms of idleness and waste.

**Synonyms:** attack, condemn, criticize
FULSOME
(FUHL-sum)

FURTIVE
(FUHR-tiv)

FUTILE
(FYOO-tuhl or FYOO-tahyl)
characterized by excess

*The fulsome* celebration disgusted her; she would have preferred to enjoy her birthday quietly with family.

**Synonyms:** excessive, extravagant, grandiloquent

---

done secretly or in an underhanded way

*They stole many furtive glances into the guarded room but saw nothing.*

**Synonyms:** cunning, sly, stealthy

---

useless

*Their efforts to build a dam were futile, and their home was completely flooded.*

**Synonyms:** hopeless, ineffective, pointless
GAINSAY
(GEYN-sey)

GARRULOUS
(GAR-uh-kuhs)

GAUCHE
(gohsh)
to declare to be untrue

You cannot **gainsay** the fact that though he has much more to learn, he has improved a great deal.

**Synonyms:** contradict, deny, dispute, oppose

---

talkative, generally in a rambling or annoying way

_I was hoping to rest during the flight, but unfortunately I was seated next to a **garrulous** young man._

**Synonyms:** diffuse, verbose, wordy

---

lacking good manners or tact, especially due to a lack of experience

_I am embarrassed to think how **gauche** it was for me to have brought up that sensitive topic in the middle of the dinner party._

**Synonyms:** awkward, crude, insensitive, maladroit
GENIAL
(JEE-nyuhl)

GERMANE
(juhr-MEYN)

GLIB
(glib)
friendly, sympathetic

*His genial* manners were the result of great effort, as he actually tended to be rather grouchy.

**Synonyms:** cheerful, cordial, easygoing, gracious, kind

---

relevant, appropriate

*Because your concerns are germane to the topic of the meeting, I would like to ask you to speak first.*

**Synonyms:** applicable, connected, fitting, related

---

informal, without thought or sincerity

*His glib* comment might have been insulting, except that everyone knew that he generally did not mean what he said.

**Synonyms:** flip, offhand, slick
GOAD
(gohd)

GRANDIOLOQUENCE
(gran-DI-luh-kwuhns)

GREGARIOUS
(gri-GAR-ee-uhs)
to urge

*He might have quit years ago if his brother had not *goaded *him on.*

**Synonyms:** encourage, incite, stimulate

---

lofty or extravagant manner, especially in speech

*The children giggled at the *grandiloquence *of the principal’s speech on the first day of school; it would have been better for him to speak more simply.*

**Synonyms:** bombast, grandiosity, pomposity

---

tending to be social

*A *gregarious *young woman, she held dinner parties at her home every Friday.*

**Synonyms:** convivial, friendly, outgoing
GUILELESS  
(GAHYL-uhs)

GUIDE 
(gahyz)

GULLIBLE  
(GUH-luh-buhl)
innocent, without deceit

His phone call to his ex-girlfriend was truly guileless; he simply wanted to know whether or not she was well.

Synonyms: honest, frank, sincere, straightforward

appearance; style of dress

The spy gained entry to the office in the guise of a job applicant.

Synonyms: facade, posture, pretense

easily duped

I hope that you are not so gullible as to believe a single word of his tall tales.

Synonyms: naive, trusting
HACKNEYED
(HAK-need)

HALCYON
(HAL-see-uhn)

HALLOWED
(HA-lohd)
lacking originality

*The critics panned the film because of its hackneyed boy-meets-girl plot.*

**Synonyms:** banal, cliche, stale, trite

---
calm, peaceful

*I love the *halcyon* days of mid-August, while we are still on vacation and before the mad rush of preparations for school begins.*

**Synonyms:** soothing, tranquil

---
holy, sacred

*The cemetery grounds are *hallowed* by those who are buried there.*

**Synonyms:** blessed, venerated
HARANGUE
(huh-RANG)

HARROWING
(HAR-oh-ing)

HEDONISM
(HEE-duh-ni-zuhm)
We were taken aback by his bitter harangue against youth.

*Synonyms*: diatribe, jeremiad, tirade

---

extremely distressing or difficult

Watching the horror movie was harrowing to her; she had no idea how her boyfriend could have enjoyed it.

*Synonyms*: distressing, excruciating, grievous, terrifying

---

devotion to pleasure, the doctrine that pleasure is the greatest good

The *hedonism* of fraternity life enticed him.

*Synonyms*: debauchery, indulgence
HEGEMONY
(hi-JE-muh-nee)

HERETICAL
(huh-RE-ti-kuhl)

HETERODOX
(HE-tuh-ruh-doks)
pervasive influence or authority

*The cultural hegemony of the United States reaches every corner of the world.*

**Synonyms:** command, domination, power

---

departing from accepted beliefs, characterized by heresy

*In the Middle Ages, it was dangerous to profess heretical beliefs.*

**Synonyms:** dissident, unorthodox

---

contrary to an accepted standard, tradition, or belief, especially in religion

*She holds the heterodox view that the capacity for empathy evolved in humans before language did.*

**Synonyms:** dissident, unconventional, unorthodox
**HOMOGENEOUS**
(hoh-muh-JEE-nee-uhs or hoh-muh-JEE-nyuhs)

**HUBRIS**
(HYOO-bris)

**HYPERBOLE**
(hahy-PUHR-buh-lee)
It took some time for him to get used to the **homogeneous** population of his new home; he was accustomed to the diversity of the city.

**Synonyms:** alike, consistent, uniform

---

arrogance, pride

*It takes a certain amount of** hubris **to run for the office of the president of the United States.*

**Synonyms:** audacity, presumption, vanity

---

composed of parts that are all alike; extravagant and intentional exaggeration

*His claim that it took him years to read the book was** hyperbole **; it actually took him only two weeks to finish.*

**Synonyms:** embellishment, hype, overstatement
ICONOCLAST
(ahy-KO-nuh-klast)

IDOLATRY
(ahy-DO-luh-tree)

IMBROGLIO
(im-BROHL-yoh)
one who attacks accepted beliefs or institutions

*Charles Darwin delayed publication of the work introducing his theory of evolution for years, perhaps anticipating that he would be seen as an **iconoclast**.*

**Synonyms:** dissident, heretic, radical, rebel

------------

excessive or blind devotion

*Her devotion to the pop star bordered on **idolatry**; her bedroom was covered with images of him cut from magazines.*

**Synonyms:** adoration, adulation, fervor

------------

a complicated situation or painful misunderstanding, scandal

*The election devolved into an **imbroglio**, in which each side accused the other of fraud.*

**Synonyms:** brouhaha, dispute, quandary
IMMINENT
(I-muh-nuhnt)

IMMUTABLE
(i-MYOO-tuh-buhl)

IMPAIR
(im-PAIR)
ready or about to occur

*Her departure is *imminent*—ask her now!*

**Synonyms:** approaching, forthcoming, impending

not subject to change

*They proclaimed their *immutable* devotion to each other in their wedding vows.*

**Synonyms:** constant, enduring, permanent, perpetual, unchangeable

to damage

*Better to wear the ugly safety goggles than to suffer an injury that could *impair* your vision.*

**Synonyms:** diminish, harm, hurt, injure
IMPASSIVE
(im-PA-siv)

IMPECUNIOUS
(im-pi-KYU-nee-uhs)

IMPEDE
(im-PEED)
not subject to pain, without feeling or emotion

Though he seemed **impassive** at the collapse of his company, his wife could see that he was in despair.

**Synonyms:** apathetic, dispassionate, stoic, unmoved

having little or no money

The **impecunious** poet believed he was far happier than the wealthiest businessperson.

**Synonyms:** destitute, impoverished, penniless, poor

to hinder, get in the way of

An unexpected visit from friends from out of town **impeded** on her plan to paint the living room.

**Synonyms:** hamper, interfere, obstruct
IMPERMEABLE  
(im-PUHR-mee-uh-buhl)

IMPERTURBABLE  
(im-puhr-TUHR-buh-buhl)

IMPERVIOUS  
(im-PUHR-vee-uhs)
incapable of being penetrated or passed through

*The jacket is coated with a substance that renders it *impermeable *by water.*

**Synonyms:** impassable, impervious

---

incapable of being disturbed

*By maintaining an *imperturbable *air throughout the crisis, she emerged as a steady and trustworthy leader.*

**Synonyms:** calm, composed, immovable, unexcited

---

not allowing entrance, incapable of being harmed or disturbed

*He was *impervious *to criticism, which enabled him to experiment freely in his artwork.*

**Synonyms:** immune, resistant, unaffected
IMPETUOUS
(im-PE-chuh-wuhs)

Implacable
(im-PLA-kuh-buhl)

IMPLAUSIBLE
(im-PLAW-zi-buhl)
passionately impulsive

*Her impetuous decision to go to Brazil took a moment to make, and transformed her life forever.*

**Synonyms:** impulsive, spontaneous, unexpected

impossible to appease

*Although the team had been eliminated from contention in the playoffs, it proved to be an implacable opponent.*

**Synonyms:** inflexible, merciless, relentless, uncompromising, unyielding

unbelievable

*He might have gotten away with the prank if his cover story had not been so implausible.*

**Synonyms:** improbable, inconceivable, incredible, unreasonable
IMPLICIT
(im-PLI-suht)

IMplode
(im-PLOHD)

IMPUNITY
(im-PYOO-nuh-tee)
implied, existing as a potential within  

*Implicit* in the many warnings that preceded their trip was the fact that their destination was a dangerous place.

_Synonyms:_ understood, latent

---

to violently collapse inward

*The building suddenly imploded* under the weight of the snow.

_Synonyms:_ cave in, fold

---

freedom from punishment or harm

*Because his father was the headmaster, he thought he could break the rules with impunity.*

_Synonyms:_ freedom, license, privilege
INADVERTENT
(in-uhd-VUHR-tuhnt)

INCHOATE
(in-KOH-uht)

inciPIENT
(in-SI-pee-uhnt)
unintentional, characterized by lack of thought or attention

*The error was both* inadvertent *and catastrophic.*

**Synonyms:** careless, negligent, thoughtless

not yet developed, incompletely formed

*The first draft of her novel was an* inchoate *mess; with two years of revision she transformed it into a masterpiece.*

**Synonyms:** amorphous, formless, incoherent, rudimentary

coming into being

*At this time, our travel plans are only* incipient; *check with us again next week and we will be able to tell you exactly where we are going and when.*

**Synonyms:** developing, inchoate, nascent
INCONGRUOUS  
(in-KON-gruh-wuhs)

INCONSEQUENTIAL  
(in-kon-suh-KWEN-shuhl)

INCORPORATE  
(in-KOR-puh-reyt)
out of place, lacking harmony, inconsistent

*Her genius was such that she could compose a work for such incongruous instruments as a banjo and saxophone and have it sound not just beautiful, but inspired.*

**Synonyms:** conflicting, discordant, incompatible

unimportant

*The paper was so brilliant that the few lapses in spelling and punctuation were inconsequential.*

**Synonyms:** insignificant, irrelevant, negligible, trivial

to include, to unite in one body; to embody

*I will incorporate your ideas into the next draft of the plan.*

**Synonyms:** assimilate, combine, integrate
INDETERMINATE
(in-di-TUHR-muh-nuht)

INDIFFERENT
(in-DI-fruhnt)

INDIGENCE
(IN-di-juhnts)
not fixed or defined, vague

*The CEO was of an **indeterminate** age: she had gray hair and a lined face but spoke and moved with the energy of a teenager.*

**Synonyms:** indefinite, uncertain, undetermined, unsettled

unbiased; not interested or concerned

**Indifferent** to the results of the election, many voters stayed home.

**Synonyms:** detached, disinterested, unconcerned; apathetic

complete poverty

*After losing what little they had in the earthquake, the villagers were left in a state of **indigence**.*

**Synonyms:** destitution, need, privation, want
INDOLENT
(IN-duh-luhnt)

INERT
(i-NUHRT)

INFELICITOUS
(in-fi-LI-suh-tuhs)
lazy

*He was accused of being indolent when in truth he lacked energy because of illness.*

**Synonyms:** idle, inactive, slothful, sluggish

---

having no power to act or move

**Inert** *and silent as rocks, the children sat and watched TV.*

**Synonyms:** dormant, inactive, motionless

---

not appropriate, awkward

*Your joke about divorce was especially infelicitous, considering that our hostess and her husband have just separated.*

**Synonyms:** inapt, inappropriate, unfortunate, unsuitable
INGENUOUS
(in-JEN-yuh-wuhs)

INHERENT
(in-HEHR-uhnt)

INIMICAL
(i-NI-mi-kuhl)
characterized by childlike innocence or sincerity

When she brought a bouquet of wildflowers to thank him, the *ingenuous* gesture won her his devotion.

**Synonyms:** artless, candid, naive

---

essential to the character or nature of

*Human babies have inherent needs to suckle and be held.*

**Synonyms:** characteristic, fundamental, intrinsic, innate

---

hostile, like an enemy

*Poor hygiene is inimical to good health.*

**Synonyms:** adverse, opposed, unfriendly, unwelcoming
INNOCUOUS
(i-NO–kyuh-wuhs)

INSENSIBLE
(in-SEN-suh-buhl)

INSINUATE
(in-SIN-yuh-weyt)
harmless, unlikely to offend

_The dog looked fierce, but she was as innocuous as a gerbil._

**Synonyms:** innocent, inoffensive, unobjectionable

-----------------------------

not able to feel or perceive; unaware

**Insensible** to the boredom of his students, the professor droned on and on.

**Synonyms:** indifferent, oblivious, unconscious, unfeeling

-----------------------------

to introduce in a subtle or gradual way; to imply

_Do you mean to insinuate that it was I who took the cookies from the kitchen?_

**Synonyms:** allude, intimate, mention
INSIPID
(in-SI-puhd)

INSULARITY
(in-syuh-LA-ruh-tee)

INTANGIBLE
(in-TAN-juh-buhl)
lacking taste, dull

He may have been a charming performer, but the music he played was **insipid** and full of clichés.

**Synonyms:** banal, inane, vapid

---

isolation; narrow-mindedness

The **insularity** of her views was understandable—if you considered just how little of the world she had seen.

**Synonyms:** bigotry, parochialism, provinciality

---

not tangible, incapable of being touched

The things she loved best were **intangible:** sunny mornings and moonlit nights.

**Synonyms:** immaterial, impalpable, incorporeal
INTERPOLATE
(in-TUHR-puh-leyt)

INTIMATE
(IN-tuh-meyt)

INTRACTABLE
(in-TRAK-tuh-buhl)
to add words into a conversation or text

While listening to them discuss the movie, he couldn’t help but **interpolate** with his enthusiasm for the acting.

**Synonyms**: inject, insert, interject

---

to communicate indirectly

*Did you mean to **intimate** that I do not deserve the job?*

**Synonyms**: hint, imply, suggest

---

not easily managed, manipulated, or cured

*The child’s difficulties in school had grown to seem **intractable**, but all it took to help her was a new teacher who encouraged her to read about topics that interested her.*

**Synonyms**: obstinate, stubborn
INTRANSIGENT
(in-TRAN-si-juhnt)

INTROSPECTION
(in-truh-SPEK-shuhn)

INTREPID
(in-TRE-puhd)
refusing to compromise

The congressman made a big show of being **intransigent** on the issue of budget cuts, but quickly changed his position after seeing the results of the poll.

_Synonyms_: inflexible, obstinate, resolute, stubborn, tenacious

looking inward at one’s own thoughts and feelings

Arlo generally spent the last hour of each day in quiet **introspection**, sometimes listening to music and sometimes writing in his journal.

_Synonyms_: contemplation, reflection

courageous

The men who attempted to be the first to the South Pole were all **intrepid** explorers, but not all of them were fortunate, and some died in the attempt.

_Synonyms_: bold, brave, fearless
INUNDATE
(I-nuhn-deyt)

INURED
(i-NYOORD)

INVECTIVE
(in-VEK-tiv)
to flood or overwhelm

After her controversial speech, the mayor’s office was **inundated** with letters, both pro and con.

*Synonyms*: bury, drown, engulf, immerse, overflow, submerge

---

accustomed to difficulty or pain

By the middle of January, we were **inured** to the darkness and cold of the northern winter.

*Synonyms*: hardened, toughened

---

abusive language

The **invective** she heaped on her colleague was completely out of proportion with the small error she had made.

*Synonyms*: berating, diatribe, tirade
INVEIGH
(in-VEY)

INVEIGLE
(in-VEY-guhl)

INVETERATE
(in-VEH-tuh-ruht)
to protest or complain

Several teachers wrote letters to the editor to **inveigh** against the proposed school budget cuts.

**Synonyms:** admonish, denounce

---

to win over or obtain

The twins tried every trick in the book to **inveigle** permission from their parents to go to bed later.

**Synonyms:** beguile, entice, manipulate, wheedle

---

firmly established as a habit, practice, or feeling

An **inveterate** gambler, he gradually lost everything he owned over the course of a decade.

**Synonyms:** chronic, confirmed, entrenched, habitual
IRASCIBLE
(i-RA-suh-buhl)

IRRESOLUTE
(i-RE-zuh-loot)

ITINERANT
(ahy-TI-nuh-ruhnt)
having a hot temper, easily angered

To our surprise, our irascible neighbor lightened up after he adopted a stray dog.

**Synonyms:** cranky, fractious, grouchy, irritable, touchy

not sure how to act

Herman was **irresolute** in all things, from deciding what to eat for breakfast to choosing which college to attend.

**Synonyms:** doubtful, hesitant, indecisive, tentative, uncertain, vacillating

going from place to place

The **itinerant** preacher usually passed through our town in August.

**Synonyms:** nomadic, unsettled, vagrant, wandering
JAUNDICED
(JAWN-duhsd)

JOCOSE
(juh-KOHS)

JUGGERNAUT
(juh-guhr-NAWT)
showing or feeling resentment or hostility

*She walked around the gallery with a jaundiced air, bitter that her paintings were not among the work selected to be shown.*

**Synonyms:** bitter, envious

---

tending to joke, characterized by joking

*Your jocose spirits have certainly brightened my day!*

**Synonyms:** humorous, jesting, merry, playful, witty

---

a large and powerful movement or object that destroys anything in its path

*The radio personality became a political juggernaut that those in office had to reckon with.*
JUNTA
(HOON-tuh)

JUXTAPOSE
(juhk-stuh-POHZ)
a group ruling a country after having seized power, a council

He was the only member of the junta who had not participated directly in the coup.

**Synonyms:** assembly, faction

to place together, side by side

She liked to **juxtapose** contrasting images in her poems.

**Synonym:** connect
KUDOS
(KOO-dohs)
fame earned or praise given for an accomplishment

*Her colleagues gave her *kudos* for the well-deserved promotion.*

**Synonyms:** credit, esteem
LACONIC  
(luh-KO-nik)  

LAMBASTE  
(lam-BAST)  

LASCIVIOUS  
(luh-SI-vee-uhs)
using few words

*His laconic replies of a sentence or two unfairly earned him a reputation for being rude.*

*Synonyms:* brusque, concise, succinct

---

to attack violently or verbally

*In the days leading up to the game, she lambasted her opponent with a series of insults and threats.*

*Synonyms:* berate, censure

---

given to lust; arousing desire

*Though they show nudes, these paintings are not intended to be lascivious.*

*Synonyms:* lewd, lustful, wanton
LASSITUDE
(LA-suh-tood)

LAUD
(lawd)

LETHARGIC
(luh-THAHR-jik)
a lack of energy, weariness

*Her lassitude during the winter contrasted greatly with her energy and high spirits during the spring and summer.*

**Synonyms:** fatigue, languor, lethargy, listlessness

to praise

*At the award ceremony, the philanthropist was lauded for her generosity.*

**Synonyms:** acclaim, celebrate, extol

drowsy, sluggish

*We could not help but feel lethargic on that hot, humid, August afternoon.*

**Synonyms:** indolent, lazy, listless
LEVEE
(LEH-vey)

LEVITY
(LEH-vi-tee)

LIBERAL
(LI-buh-ruhl)
an embankment designed to prevent flooding

The **levee** held back the river, even through the record-breaking rainfall.

**Synonyms**: bank, dam

---

a lightness of character, attitude, or behavior

The professor’s jokes brought some **levity** to his discussion of the otherwise dull topic.

**Synonyms**: buoyancy, frivolity

---

characterized by generosity; not strict; tending to support political liberalism

As a philanthropist, he was **liberal**, often giving large gifts to his favorite causes.

**Synonyms**: altruistic, benevolent; progressive
LIBERTINE
(LI-buhr-teen)

LIBIDO
(luh-BEE-doh)

LITANY
(LI-tuh-nee)
a free thinker, one who is unbound by convention or morality

Though she was a serious student, she was a **libertine** when it came to food and wine.

**Synonym**: debauchee

sexual drive

He claimed that he had an uncontrollable **libido**, and could not therefore be expected to be faithful to just one girlfriend.

**Synonyms**: lust, passion

a lengthy account or recitation

To visit Mrs. Earnshaw was to subject oneself to a **litany** of complaints about everything—from her long-dead husband to the neighbor’s dog.

**Synonyms**: catalogue, petition
LOG
(lawg)

LOQUACIOUS
(loh-KWEY-shuhs)

LUCID
(LOO-suhd)
the record of a voyage or of other events or activities

They studied the captain’s log in the hopes of discovering when and how the ship went astray.

**Synonyms:** account, journal, register

---
tending to or characterized by excessive talk

Emily’s *loquacious* roommate constantly distracted her from her studies.

**Synonyms:** talkative, verbose, wordy

---
full of light; clear to the understanding

We were confident in our ability to complete the task after her *lucid* explanation of what needed to be done.

**Synonyms:** bright, brilliant, radiant, shining; evident, intelligible, obvious
LUMINOUS
(LOO-muh-nuhs)

LUSTROUS
(LUHS-truhs)
illuminated in or shining with light

*The full moon cast a **luminous** path of light across the ocean to the horizon.*

**Synonyms:** bright, brilliant, glowing, radiant, shining

---

radiantly glowing

*We polished the floors until they took on a **lustrous** sheen.*

**Synonyms:** luminous, polished, shining
MACHIAVELLIAN  
(ma-kee-uh-VEH-lee-uhn)

MACHINATION  
(ma-kuh-NEY-shun)

MAGNANIMITY  
(mag-nuh-NI-mi-tee)
characterized by cunning and duplicity

*Her plan to win the election was truly Machiavellian:* she made many promises that she had no intention of keeping once she was in office.

**Synonyms:** deceitful, devious, unscrupulous

---

an artful or scheming act or design, which is aimed at an evil purpose

*All his machinations were aimed at framing her for the crime that he himself had committed.*

**Synonyms:** conspiracy, intrigue, strategem

---

the possession of a courageous spirit and noble mind

*Her magnanimity was such that she never gossiped or even worried what others said about her.*

**Synonyms:** chivalry, generosity, philanthropy
MALEVOLENT
(muh-LE-vuh-luhnt)

MALIGN
(muh-LAHYN)

MALINGER
(muh-LING-guhr)
characterized by ill will or hatred

*His angry glare gave away his *malevolent intentions.*

**Synonyms:** evil, hateful, vicious, vindictive

---

to speak ill of, often falsely

*They *malign*ed her academic record with false reports of her cheating.*

**Synonyms:** defame, misrepresent, slander

---

to pretend illness in order to avoid an obligation or work

*His *malingering* cost him the friendships of many whom he had let down.*

**Synonyms:** dodge, evade, shirk
MALLEABLE
(MA-lee-uh-buhl)

MARTIAL
(MAHR-shuhl)

MAVERICK
(MAV-rik)
capable of being shaped or influenced

*Her opinions were so **malleable** that she tended to agree with whomever she had spoken to most recently.*

**Synonyms:** adaptable, pliable, supple, yielding

having to do with war or military life

*His years in the Marines were apparent in his **martial** bearing.*

**Synonyms:** military, soldierly, warlike

an independent or dissenting individual

*The senator’s reputation for being a **maverick** was unearned; he tended to vote with his party.*

**Synonyms:** dissenter, nonconformist
MENAGERIE
(muh-NA-juh-ree)

MENDACIOUS
(men-DEY-shuhs)

MERCURIAL
(muhr-KYOOR-ee-uhl)
a collection of animals or the place where they are exhibited; a varied group of people

*Over the past century, this zoo has grown from the menagerie of its original benefactor to a great research institution.*

*Synonyms:* collection, exhibition

---

dishonest

*Though the widely spread rumor of his affair was proven to be mendacious, it ruined his political career.*

*Synonyms:* deceitful, false, insincere

---

characterized by quickly changing moods

*The toddler’s mercurial temperament improved when he began to nap more regularly.*

*Synonyms:* changeable, erratic, fickle, flighty, unpredictable, volatile
MESMERIZE
(MEZ-muh-rahyz)

METAMORPHOSIS
(me-tuh-MAWR-fuh-suhs)

METICULOUS
(muh-TI-kyuh-luhs)
to hypnotize

The music **mesmerized** us with its repetitive, pulsing sounds.

**Synonym:** spellbind

---

a change in physical form, substance, or character, often through supernatural means

The summertime seemed to work a **metamorphosis** on her, as all her anxiety about her schoolwork was lifted.

**Synonyms:** mutation, rebirth, transformation

---

taking care of details

Her **meticulous** approach to language served her well in her work as an editor.

**Synonyms:** exacting, finicky, fussy, painstaking, scrupulous, thorough
METTLE
(ME-tuhhl)

MILITATE
(MI-luh-teyt)

MINUSCULE
(mi-nuh-SKYOOL)
strength of spirit or temperament

*She showed her mettle by completing the marathon.*

*Synonyms:* courage, fortitude, stamina

---

to work against or fight

*Though the issue was settled, they continued to militate against the mayor’s choice for a deputy.*

---

tiny

*The type was so miniscule that she needed a magnifying glass to read it.*

*Synonyms:* little, miniature, minute
MISANTHROPE
(Mi-suhn-throhp)

MISCELLANY
(mi-suh-LEY-nee)

MISOGYNIST
(mi-SO-juh-nist)
one who tends to dislike or distrust humanity

*The hermit was a misanthrope who preferred the company of trees to that of humans.*

**Synonyms:** cynic, skeptic

a collection of different writings; a varied group

*The small volume was a miscellany of journal entries, haiku, and to-do lists.*

**Synonyms:** assortment, hodgepodge

one who hates women

*He was a misogynist who tried to pay female employees less than their male counterparts.*
MITIGATE
(MI-tuh-geyt)

MNEMONIC
(ni-MO-nik)

MOLLIFY
(MO-luh-fahy)
to make less hostile or severe

Though she knew that her phobia was irrational, little could be done to mitigate her fear of even the most harmless snakes.

**Synonyms:** allay, alleviate, assuage, ease, moderate, mollify

--------------

(adj.) helping the memory, related to memory

Acronyms like PEMDAS can be useful **mnemonic** devices.

(n.) something that aids the memory

I use the **mnemonic** PEMDAS to help me remember the order of operations: parentheses, exponents, multiplication and division, and addition and subtraction.

**Synonyms:** cue, hint, prompt, reminder

--------------

to soften the temper or feeling

The children’s sincere apology mollified their offended neighbor.

**Synonyms:** appease, mellow, mitigate, pacify, placate
MONOLITHIC
(mo-nuh-LI-thik)

MOROSE
(muh-ROHS)

MUNDANE
(muhn-DEYN)
huge, forming one giant whole

The monolithic statues on Easter Island are haunting and mysterious.

Synonyms: colossal, enormous, massive

.......................
gloomy or sullen in mood or temperament

Hating the fact that he was only getting older, he was especially morose on his birthday.

Synonyms: dour, melancholy, pessimistic

.......................
earthly, practical, ordinary

The philosopher could speak brilliantly and at length about the most abstract ideas, but had trouble taking care of such mundane matters as washing the dishes and paying the bills.

Synonyms: banal, common, everyday, prosaic, unimaginative
**NASCENT**
(NEY-suhnt)

**NEBULOUS**
(NE-byuh-luhs)

**NEGATE**
(ni-GEYT)
just coming into existence

*The crocuses were the first sign of the nascent spring.*

**Synonyms:** burgeoning, fledgling, incipient

vague

*He had only nebulous ideas of what type of profession he might like to pursue.*

**Synonyms:** confused, hazy, indefinite, indistinct, unclear

to deny the truth or existence of; to make ineffective

*The teacher’s feedback is intended to help you improve your writing, and should not be seen as negating your effort or accomplishments.*

**Synonyms:** annul, cancel, contradict, invalidate, nullify, refute
NEOLOGISM  
(nee-O-luh-ji-zuhm)

NEOPHYTE  
(NEE-uh-fahyt)

NOSTALGIA  
(nuh-STAL-juh)
a new word

The rapid development of technology in recent years has required the creation of many neologisms.

**Synonym:** coinage

-------------------

a beginner or new convert

Though he claimed to be an expert, he made the mistakes of a neophyte.

**Synonyms:** novice, recruit, rookie

-------------------

a state of longing for the past

I always feel such nostalgia for my childhood home when I smell the scent of baking bread.

**Synonyms:** homesickness, longing, yearning
NOXIOUS
(NOK-shuhs)
poisonous or corrupting

*The burning garbage emitted* **noxious** fumes.

**Synonyms:** deadly, injurious, harmful, pernicious, toxic
OBDURATE
(Ob-duh-ruht)

OBFUSCATE
(Ob-fuh-skeyt)

OBSEQUIOUS
(uhb-SEE-kwee-uhs)
unyielding to persuasion or softening feelings; persistent in doing wrong

Though the evidence showed otherwise, he was **obdurate** in his belief that his employees were stealing from the till.

**Synonyms:** implacable, inflexible, obstinate, stubborn

---

to confuse or make obscure

The more information he gave us in an attempt to clarify what he was saying, the more he actually **obfuscated** his meaning.

**Synonyms:** baffle, bewilder, conceal, perplex

---

characterized by fawning or servile attentiveness

Your **obsequious** behavior is not going to earn you any favors from the teacher; it would be better simply to attend to your studies.

**Synonyms:** deferential, groveling, submissive, subservient
OBSTINATE
(Ob-stuh-nuht)

OBTUSE
(ob-TOOS)

OBViate
(Ob-vee-eyt)
persistent in a belief or behavior; not easily remedied, changed, or controlled

The **obstinate** toddler refused to wear shoes.

**Synonyms:** determined, dogged, stubborn, unyielding

---

lacking quickness or insight in perception or intelligence

*I apologize for being so **obtuse,** but could you please explain the procedure one more time?*

**Synonyms:** dense, dull, imperceptive, stupid

---

to prevent or make unnecessary through anticipation

*Our careful preparations for the move **obviated** the expense of having the movers help us pack.*

**Synonyms:** avert, hinder, preclude
OCCLUDE
(uh-KLOOD)

ODIOUS
(OH-dee-uhs)

OFFICIOUS
(uh-Fl-shuhs)
to block off or conceal

A lunar eclipse results when the Moon **occludes** the light from the Sun.

**Synonyms:** hinder, impede, obstruct

causing or deserving of hatred

After they were found guilty of vandalism, the teens were punished for their **odious** behavior.

**Synonyms:** detestable, disgusting, loathsome, offensive, repugnant

giving service where none was asked for

Her **officious** contributions to the project were more a hindrance than a help, and we ended up having to redo much of what she had done.

**Synonyms:** intrusive, meddlesome, pushy
ONEROUS
(OH-nuhr-uhs)

OPAQUE
(oh-PEYK)

OPPROBRIUM
(uh-PRO-bree-uhm)
burdensome

*The homework proved to be far less onerous than we had expected, and we finished it all in less than an hour.*

*Synonyms:* arduous, oppressive, troublesome

blocking light, dark; difficult to understand

*The reading assignment was only eight pages long, but the text was so opaque that it took me two hours to read it.*

*Synonyms:* cloudy, impenetrable, murky; concealed, incomprehensible, obscure, unclear

public disgrace or something that causes disgrace

*Fearing the opprobrium that would result if his secrets were revealed, he quietly left town, never to return.*

*Synonyms:* dishonor, disrepute, infamy
OSCILLATE  
(O-suh-leyt)

OSTENTATIONOUS  
(os-tuhn-TEY-shuhs)
to swing back and forth; to vary in opinions, beliefs, or conditions

After her busy week was over, she found herself oscillating between a fierce desire to go out dancing and a just as fierce desire to snuggle up in bed.

*Synonyms:* fluctuate, vacillate

---

classified by showy or pretentious display

*Her philanthropy always struck me as ostentatious:* done to impress others rather than for the purpose of giving itself.

*Synonyms:* conspicuous, extravagant, flamboyant, flashy
PAEAN
(PEE-uhn)

PALLID
(PA-luhd)

PARAGON
(PAR-uh-gon)
a song of praise, thanksgiving, or triumph

*Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” is a *paean* to the *kinship* of all humanity.*

**Synonyms:** anthem, hymn, laud, ode

---
lacking color or energy

*Brad claimed that he felt just fine, but his *pallid* skin indicated otherwise.*

**Synonyms:** dull, pale, wan

---
an example of excellence

*As a student, Gina was thought to be a *paragon*, but her English teacher noticed that she excelled only because she refused to take any risks.*

**Synonyms:** epitome, exemplar, nonpareil, standard
PARODY
(PAR-roh-dee)

PARTISAN
(PAHR-tuh-zuhn)

PATHOLOGICAL
(pa-thuh-LO-ji-kuhl)
a work of literature, music, theater, or film that imitates the style of another, for humorous or satirical effect

*The seniors performed a *parody *of Hamlet that had us all in stitches.*

*Synonyms:* caricature, spoof

committed to or biased toward a party, cause, or person

*It seems that *partisan *politics are getting in the way of the ability of Congress to get anything done.*

*Synonyms:* factional, partial, prejudiced

caused by or symptomatic of disease or mental disturbance

*His dread of travel was so extreme as to seem *pathological.*
PAUCITY
(PAW-suh-tee)

PEDAGOGY
(PEH-duh-goh-jee)

PEDANTIC
(pi-DAN-tik)
scarcity

The paucity of information about the region has led many myths to take hold about it and those who live there.

Synonyms: dearth, deficiency, lack

the art or science of teaching

A successful teacher needs both a thorough grounding in his or her subject area and a solid understanding of pedagogy.

Synonyms: education, study

ostentatious and unimaginative in one’s learning

You might excite more of your students if your approach to your subject were less pedantic.

Synonyms: academic, didactic, scholastic
PENCHANT
(PEN-chuhnt)

PENURY
(PEN-yuh-ree)

PEREMPTORY
(puh-REMP-tuh-ree)
a strong inclination

*With her penchant for working with her hands, she is likely to enjoy her new job at the botanic garden.*

**Synonyms:** fondness, liking, tendency

---

extreme poverty

*He spent his childhood in a state of such penury that it affected his health for the rest of his life.*

**Synonyms:** dearth, destitution, indigence, scarcity

---

allowing of no contradiction; characterized by arrogance

*After his promotion, his peremptory attitude toward his former colleagues alienated them from him.*

**Synonyms:** imperative, unconditional; dictatorial, imperious
PERENNIAL
(puh-RE-nee-uhl)

PERFIDY
(PUHR-fuh-dee)

PERFUNCTORY
(puhr-FUHNGK-tuh-ree)
lasting a long time, persistent, constant

Their **perennial** complaint was that management did not budget sufficient resources for them to do their work properly.

**Synonyms:** continuing, everlasting, perpetual, recurrent

an act of disloyalty, treachery

His scoring a touchdown for the opposing team was not an act of **perfidy** so much as a stupid mistake.

**Synonyms:** betrayal, duplicity, infidelity

done in a routine, superficial, or indifferent way

Maggie’s **perfunctory** greeting indicated that we were not the visitors she was hoping to see.

**Synonyms:** automatic, mechanical, offhand, unthinking
PERMEABLE  
(PUHR-mee-uh-buhl)

PERNICIOUS  
(puhr-NI-shuhs)

PERSPICACIOUS  
(puhr-spuh-KAY-shuhs)
able to be permeated or penetrated

We cannot use this fabric to make a tent because it is permeable to water.

Synonyms: absorbent, penetrable, porous

destructive or deadly

These pernicious lies could ruin more than just your career.

Synonyms: detrimental, harmful, injurious, noxious, ruinous

extremely perceptive

The perspicacious child knew long before he was told that his mother was pregnant again.

Synonyms: discerning, intelligent, keen, shrewd
PERTURB
(puhr-TUHRB)

PERUSE
(puh-ROOZ)

PERVADE
(puhr-VEYD)
to disturb mentally

*I was so *perturbed* by that movie that I had nightmares every night for more than a week afterward.*

**Synonyms:** agitate, derange, trouble, unsettle, upset

---

to study with attention to detail; to look over casually

*Please *peruse* the report carefully before the meeting.*

**Synonyms:** analyze, examine, inspect; browse, scan, skim

---

to become spread throughout

*The scent of his heavy cologne *pervaded* every corner of the office.*

**Synonyms:** diffuse, infuse, permeate
PETULANT
(PE-chuh-luhnt)

PHLEGMATIC
(fleg-MA-tik)

PIOUS
(PAHY-uhs)
characterized by rudeness or ill humor

*The petulant* child just needed some rest; after her nap, she was perfectly cheerful.

**Synonyms:** crabby, fractious, grouchy, irritable, moody

having an unexcitable or sluggish temperament

*The brothers could not have been any more different: whereas Tom was loud and quick tempered, Tim was phlegmatic.*

**Synonyms:** apathetic, dispassionate, indifferent, lethargic, unemotional

characterized by religious devotion or by conspicuous and hypocritical virtue

*Our pious neighbor goes to church every day.*

**Synonyms:** devout, religious, reverent, righteous, sanctimonious, scrupulous
PINE
(payhn)

PIRATE
(PAHY-ruht)

PITHY
(PI-thee)
to long painfully, often for something unattainable; to waste away from grief

*The new father* **pined** *for his family through his first day back to work after the birth of his child.*

**Synonyms:** grieve, yearn

---

to take or reproduce without the right to do so

*We did not* **pirate** *the recordings; the band gave us permission to distribute their work.*

**Synonyms:** copy, plagiarize, steal

---

brief and meaningful

*Benjamin Franklin’s proverbs are* **pithy** *statements about living well.*

**Synonyms:** cogent, expressive, pointed, succinct, terse
PLACATE
(PLEY-keyt)

PLAINTIVE
(PLEYN-tiv)

PLASTICITY
(pla-STI-suh-tee)
to calm or pacify, especially by giving concessions

To **placate** the disappointed children, the teacher promised that the outing would be rescheduled for a time after the rain cleared.

**Synonyms:** appease, assuage, conciliate, mollify, soothe

expressing sorrow

The **plaintive** call of the loon seemed to be telling of our own sadness on the morning we left the lake for good.

**Synonyms:** melancholy, mournful

the capacity to be changed or molded

The play dough lost much of its **plasticity** after just one day, and the following day it was as hard as a rock.

**Synonyms:** malleability, pliancy
**PLATITUDE**
(PLA-tuh-tood)

**PLETHORA**
(PLE-thuh-ruh)

**PLUMMET**
(PLUH-muht)
a banal or trite statement

*The fortune teller studied my palm and then uttered a series of platiitudes that could be true for just about anyone.*

**Synonym:** commonplace

---

an excess or abundance of

*The plethora of fruits and vegetables at the farmers’ market overwhelmed us; we had no idea what to choose.*

**Synonyms:** glut, surplus

---

to fall or drop sharply and suddenly

*In her terror of heights, she kept imagining herself plummeting from the edge of the loft, even though a barrier made it nearly impossible to fall off.*

**Synonyms:** collapse, plunge
POLEMICAL
(puh-LEM-i-kuhl)

POROUS
(POHR-uhs)

PRAGMATIC
(prag-MA-tik)
controversial; tending toward disputes or controversy

Though the essay was not intended to be *polemical*, it inspired many angry letters to the editor of the publication.

*Synonyms:* argumentative, contentious

having pores, permeable to fluids

Some rocks, like pumice, are actually *porous* and can absorb water.

*Synonyms:* absorbent, penetrable

oriented toward the practical

Our *pragmatic* mother preferred to receive useful gifts for her birthday.

*Synonyms:* businesslike, efficient, utilitarian
PRATTLE
(PRA-tuhl)

PRECARIOUS
(pri-KER-ee-uhs)

PRECIPITATE
(pri-SI-puh-teyt)
chatter or babble
The **prattle** and laughter of her students filled Ms. Shapiro’s classroom.
*Synonym*: idle talk

dependent on uncertain or chance circumstances
*Her position at the company felt increasingly **precarious** as more and more of her colleagues were let go.*
*Synonyms*: contingent, insecure, perilous, shaky, unreliable

to cause, to bring about in a rushed or sudden way; to come out of solution
*His idle remark **precipitated** an argument between his parents*
*Synonyms*: hasten, hurry, speed
PRECURSOR
(pri-KUHR-suhr)

PREDILECTION
(pre-duh-LEK-shuhn)

PREEN
(preen)
that which precedes or anticipates another

Athenian democracy is regarded as a **precursor** to ours, although it functioned very differently than any democracy does today.

**Synonyms:** forerunner, predecessor

---

a preference for something

The boss’s **predilection** for loud jazz music was barely tolerable to anyone he worked with.

**Synonyms:** bias, inclination, penchant, tendency

---

to groom, to dress smartly; to congratulate oneself for an accomplishment

You may **preen** yourself until you look as glamorous as can be, but if you behave rudely, you will not impress.

**Synonym:** primp
PREMONITION
(pre-muh-NI-shuhn)

PRESCIENCE
(PRE-shuhns)

PRESUMPTUOUS
(pri-ZUHMP-choo-uhs)
a sense of anticipation of a future event

*Her premonition* of failure had everything to do with her anxiety and little to do with reason.

**Synonyms:** forewarning, presiment

---

foresight, through either divine means or normal human anticipation

*Even though the day began without a cloud in the sky, he had the prescience to bring rain gear.*

**Synonym:** foreknowledge

---

overstepping bounds, such as of courtesy

*May I be so presumptuous as to suggest that you repaint your living room walls?*

**Synonyms:** audacious, bold, overconfident
PREVARICATE
(pri-VAR-uh-keyt)

PRISTINE
(pris-TEEN)

PROBITY
(PROH-buh-tee)
to lie

Do not *prevaricate* about who did what or why; simply tell me how the vase got broken.

*Synonyms*: deceive, equivocate, misrepresent

fresh, unspoiled, clean

*She gazed at the* **pristine** *canvas, enjoying the possibilities it offered while still untouched by her paints.*

*Synonyms*: immaculate, pure

maintenance of virtue and honesty

*In To Kill a Mockingbird, the* **probit** *y of Atticus Finch is such that he is the same man in his living room as out on the street.*

*Synonyms*: fidelity, integrity, sincerity, uprightness
PROBLEMATIC
(prob-luh-MA-tik)

PROCLIVITY
(proh-KLIV-uh-tee)

PRODIGAL
(PRO-di-guhl)
posing a problem, unsettled

Your claim is **problematic**, insofar as it does not apply to those who earn below the median household income.

**Synonyms:** doubtful, questionable, uncertain

---

tendency

*Her* **proclivity** toward fussy tidiness was severely challenged when her baby became a spirited and messy toddler.

**Synonyms:** inclination, predilection, propensity

---

characterized by lavish, wasteful, or reckless expense; abundant

*Nature is* **prodigal** *in its resources; unfortunately, humanity is prodigal in using those resources.*

**Synonyms:** excessive, extravagant; bountiful
PRODIGIOUS
(pruh-DI-juhs)

PROFLIGATE
(PRO-fli-guht)

PROFUSE
(pruh-FYOOS)
inspiring wonder; extraordinary in size or degree

*They celebrated the grand wedding with a prodigious* feast.

**Synonyms:** exceptional, extraordinary, fabulous, marvelous; huge, enormous

given to dissipation or extravagance

*After your profligate behavior all semester long, how could you expect anything but the poorest grades?*

**Synonyms:** corrupt, immoral, licentious, shameless, wanton

abundant without restraint

*Their profuse compliments were as unexpected as they were welcome.*

**Synonyms:** excessive, generous, liberal, plentiful
PROLIFIC
(pruh-LI-fik)

PROPENSITY
(pruh-PEN-suh-tee)

PROPITIATE
(proh-PI-shee-eyt)

[ 313 ]
abundantly productive, fertile

*She is not only a talented writer, but *prolific*, completing one or two novels every year.*

**Synonyms:** bountiful, fruitful, teeming

---

a natural tendency or preference

*I have a *propensity* to eat too much when I am nervous.*

**Synonyms:** inclination, predilection, proclivity

---

to gain or regain the favor of

*To *propitiate* her boss, she began to bring him snacks and coffee in the afternoon.*

**Synonyms:** appease, conciliate
PROPRIETY
(pruh-PRAHY-uh-tee)

PROSAIC
(proh-ZEY-ik)

PROSCRIBE
(pro-SKRAHYB)
Gre Vocabulary

the state of being proper or appropriate

**Propriety** in speech was so important to him that even in his most heated moments he never used harsh language.

**Synonyms:** appropriateness, correctness, decorum, respectability

---

dull, factual

She once had romantic visions of life as the editor of a literary magazine; the reality was **prosaic**, involving demanding production schedules and temperamental writers.

**Synonyms:** commonplace, unimaginative

---

to forbid

After the accident, all alcoholic beverages were **proscribed** from the stadium.

**Synonyms:** banish, condemn, outlaw, prohibit
PUNGENT
(PUHN-juhnt)

PURPORT
(puhr-POHRT)

PUTREFY
(PYOO-truh-fahy)
sharp, painful, to the point

The rejection was brief and **pungent**.

*Synonyms:* acrid, biting, caustic

---

to claim or pretend

This manuscript **purports** to be the original, but it looks like a copy to me.

*Synonyms:* allege, assert

---

to rot

The fruit that fell from the trees began to **putrefy** within a day or two.

*Synonyms:* decay, spoil, stink
QUAFF
(kwof)

QUAGMIRE
(KWAG-mahyr)

QUALIFIED
(KWO-luh-feyd)
to drink deeply with great enjoyment

We shall raise our glasses high in a toast and then quaff our ale in celebration!

*Synonyms:* down, imbibe

soft land that gives underfoot; a difficult situation

The couple was sinking in a quagmire of debt.

*Synonyms:* bog; predicament, quandary

to be suitable for a particular purpose; modified or restricted in some way

Her acceptance of our invitation was qualified: she could come only if she could find a ride home.

*Synonyms:* capable, competent, proper, skillful; conditional, contingent
QUALM  
(kwom)

QUERY  
(KWEER-ee)

QUERULOUS  
(KWER-uh-luhs)
a feeling of apprehension or uneasiness, often for reasons of conscience or propriety

He had many **qualms** about living on the other side of the country from his aging parents.

**Synonyms:** apprehension, misgiving, uncertainty

---

**question**

*Your lengthy explanation certainly answered my **query,** and more!*

**Synonym:** inquiry

---

given to complaining

*Few of his classmates liked the **querulous** child, which only made him more irritable.*

**Synonyms:** dissatisfied, fretful, whining
QUIBBLE
(KWI-buhl)

QUIESCENT
(kwayh-EH-suhnt)

QUIXOTIC
(kwik-SAHT-tik)
to evade a point through ambiguous or irrelevant arguments

They **quibbled** over the details so long that they went over budget and failed to meet their deadline.

**Synonyms**: bicker, equivocate

---

at rest, latent

*My mind is hardly **quiescent** in sleep: my dreams are busy, sometimes even panicked.*

**Synonyms**: dormant, inactive, motionless, quiet, still

---

eextravagantly foolish or romantic in the pursuit of ideals

*I am not so **quixotic** to think that my leadership can transform this school in just one year, but I do believe that I can make a difference.*

**Synonyms**: chivalrous, impractical, visionary
QUOTIDIAN
(kwoh-TI-dee-uhn)
ordinary

After our arduous journey, it was good to return to our *quotidian* concerns: getting the children to school and ourselves to work.

*Synonyms:* commonplace, daily, everyday, usual
RANCOROUS
(RANG-kuh-ruhs)

RAREFIED
(RER-uh-fahyd)

RATIONALE
(ra-shuh-NAL)
characterized by deep ill will

Over the course of a few days, their argument became so **rancorous** that reconciliation seemed impossible.

**Synonyms:** bitter, virulent

---

elevated; related to or appealing to a small, elite group

Vivian does not share her parents’ **rarefied** taste for the work of minimalist composers; she prefers rock ‘n’ roll.

**Synonyms:** esoteric, lofty, select

---

the basis of an opinion or belief

*Her rationale* for stealing towels from hotels was that everyone else does it too.

**Synonyms:** explanation, justification, reason
RECALCITRANT
(ri-KAL-suh-truhnt)

RECLUSE
(REH-kloos)
stubbornly defiant, unmanageable, resistant

The class of third-grade students proved to be **recalcitrant** to all the demands of the inexperienced substitute teacher.

**Synonyms:** disobedient, intractable, uncontrollable

---

to openly and formally withdraw or disavow a statement or belief

Regrettable as they were, she refused to **recant** the rash statements she had made the night before.

**Synonyms:** nullify, retract, void

---

one who has withdrawn from society

We rarely see my brother, a **recluse** who lives in the woods with only his dog.

**Synonym:** hermit
RECONDITE
(RE-kuhn-dahyt)

REDOUBTABLE
(ri-DOU-tuh-buhl)

REFRACTORY
(ri-FRAK-tuh-ree)
hidden, difficult to understand

*Her book dealt with such **recondite** matters as Kantian ethics.*

**Synonyms:** esoteric, mysterious, obscure, profound

inspiring fear or respect

*He is a **redoubtable** scholar whose works are as entertaining as they are impressive.*

**Synonyms:** awesome, eminent, formidable, illustrious

resistant to authority; resistant to treatment

*As **refractory** as a mule, he never earned his diploma because he refused to complete the necessary battery of tests.*

**Synonyms:** disobedient, rebellious, uncontrolable, unyielding
REFULGENT
(ri-FUHL-juhnt)

REFUTE
(ri-FYOOT)

RELEGATE
(RE-luh-geyt)
shining brightly

Even from a distance, the **refulgent** city seemed to light up the sky.

**Synonyms:** brilliant, gleaming, radiant

---

to prove wrong, to deny

*He could not refute the evidence against him, and in the end, he confessed to the crime.*

**Synonyms:** disprove, invalidate, repudiate

---

to banish, to assign to an insignificant or inferior place or role

*After the offices were renovated, we were relegated to a central room with no windows.*

**Synonyms:** demote, displace
RENEGE
(ri-NEG)

REPARATION
(re-puh-REY-shuhn)

REPROACH
(ri-PROHCH)
to go back on a commitment
Karen *reneged* on her promise to come out with us only because of illness.

*Synonym:* default

making amends for damages or a wrong

*In reparation* for years of neglect, the town finally invested an unprecedented amount in the schools, streets, and park in its poorest neighborhood.

*Synonyms:* atonement, compensation, satisfaction

(n.) an expression of disapproval or the act of expressing disapproval

The teacher’s *reproaches* fell on deaf ears, and the students continued to chatter while working on their writing.

*Synonyms:* criticism, rebuke

(v.) to express disapproval

Trevor’s mother *reproached* him for failing to write a thank-you note to his grandmother.

*Synonyms:* admonish, criticize, disparage a depraved person
REPROBATE
(RE-pruh-beyt)

REPUDIATE
(ri-PYOO-dee-eyt)

RESCIND
(ri-SIND)
He was a **reprobate** who occasionally even stole cash from his elderly mother’s purse.

pariah, fiend, miscreant

---

to disown or reject

*Consider your words carefully before you decide to publicly **repudiate** the claims made by your boss.*

**Synonyms:** condemn, disown, renounce

---

to take away or cancel

*She could not **rescind** the order she had mistakenly made for a bridesmaid dress in the wrong color.*

**Synonyms:** annul, invalidate, retract, revoke
RETICENT
(RE-tuh-suhnt)

REVERENCE
(REV-ruhnts)

RHETORIC
(RE-tuh-rik)
tending to be uncommunicative or silent

*Thinking her parents would not approve, Hannah was **reticent** about her plans to move to Brazil.*

**Synonyms:** reserved, restrained

---

**feelings of honor or respect**

*Bruce treated the baseball with **reverence** after his favorite pitcher signed it.*

**Synonyms:** awe, deference, veneration

---

**the study or art of the use of language in speech or writing**

*The electorate did not care for his highfalutin **rhetoric** and voted him out of office after just one term.*
RUE (roo)

RUSE (rooz)
discourse

to feel regret or sorrow, to wish that something had never been

*I rue the day that I first took up this game: I’ve found it to be completely addictive!*

*Synonyms:* deplore, grieve, mourn, regret

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da trick

*What he could not get directly through hard work, he decided to acquire indirectly through a ruse.*

*Synonyms:* artifice, deceit, stratagem, subterfuge
SAGE
(sey)

SALUBRIous
(suh-LOO-bree-uhs)

SANCTION
(SANGK-shuhn)
one who is wise

They treated me as a **sage** simply for having worked there longer than anyone else.

**Synonyms**: guru, master

---

healthful

This purportedly **salubrious** drink is actually hardly more than sugar water.

**Synonyms**: beneficial, wholesome

---

to approve, give permission

*I cannot believe that your parents would **sanction** such rude behavior.*

**Synonyms**: allow, authorize, endorse
SARDONIC
(sahr-DON-ik)

SATIATE
(SEY-shee-eyt)

SATIRE
(SA-tahyr)
disdainfully or skeptically humorous or mocking

Joseph’s sardonic attitude toward his parents’ interests was somewhat insulting, but also expected from a teenager.

**Synonyms:** cynical, scornful, sneering

---

to satisfy fully or supply to excess

*This Thanksgiving dinner will surely satiate even the hungriest of us all!*

**Synonyms:** fill, gratify, indulge

---

the use of irony or ridicule to expose human folly

*The novel is meant to be a satire; the author is ridiculing the views of the characters, not endorsing them.*

**Synonyms:** irony, mockery, parody
SATURATE  
(SA-chuh-reyt)

SAVOR  
(SEY-vuhr)

SECRETE  
(si-KREET)
to fill completely or infuse with something until nothing more can be absorbed

*The air in and around the garden was saturated with the scent of lilacs.*

**Synonyms:** drench, soak

to taste or smell with pleasure, enjoy

*I eat lobster once every year, while I’m on vacation, and I savor it each time.*

**Synonyms:** appreciate, relish

to give off or release a substance or secretion such as sweat; to hide

*The tree secreted a sticky sap from the area of the trunk that was injured.*

**Synonyms:** discharge, emit; conceal
SEDULOUS
(SE-juh-luhs)

SENSUAL
(SEN-shuh-wuhl)

SENSUOUS
(SEN-shuh-wuhs)
characterized or produced by perseverance

Through **sedulous** effort, Karen mastered conversational French in just six months.

**Synonyms:** diligent, industrious, tireless

related to the senses, especially with the gratification of or indulgence in the senses or appetites

Their interest in each other was purely **sensual**, and so their relationship was passionate but brief.

**Synonyms:** carnal, materialistic

affecting the senses, aesthetically gratifying to the senses

The singer was beloved for her **sensuous** style.

**Synonyms:** luxurious, pleasurable
SENTIENT  
(SEN-shee-uhnt)

SERVILE  
(SUHR-vahyl)

SHARD  
(shahrd)
conscious, able to perceive

*The forest seemed to be haunted, as though the trees were* **sentient**.

**Synonym:** aware

---

submissive, like a slave

*Though yours is the lowest position in the firm, there is no need to behave in such a* **servile**
*way, especially if you hope to be promoted.**

**Synonyms:** abject, obedient, subservient

---

a fragment of a hard or brittle substance

*After he glued together the* **shards** *of the broken vase, the resulting vessel was off-kilter and oddly beautiful.*

**Synonym:** scrap
SINGULAR
(SING-gyuh-luhr)

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SKEPTIC
(SKEP-tik)

..........................................................  

SOLICITOUS
(suh-LI-suh-tuhs)
unique, unusual
Leonardo da Vinci’s genius was **singular**; who else has been so talented in so many different disciplines?

**Synonyms**: exceptional, individual, odd, peculiar

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a person who is given to skepticism, who tends to doubt or disbelieve

*When it comes to matters of faith, I tend to be a **skeptic**; I prefer to believe only when there is evidence for belief.*

**Synonyms**: disbeliever, doubter

------------------------

showing concern or care; eager

*I was irritated by their overly **solicitous** questions and fussing after my illness.*

**Synonyms**: anxious, attentive, careful, worried
SOLVENT
(SOL-vuhnt)

SOPORIFIC
(soh-puh-RI-fik)

SORDID
(SAWR-did)
(adj.) able to pay debts; having the power of dissolving

After two difficult years, business was good again and at last we were **solvent**.

stable

(n.) a substance, usually a liquid, in which other substances can be dissolved

Water is a **solvent** for a variety of substances, such as salt.

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tending to cause sleep, related to sleep or sleepiness

While I am energized by the music of Bach, my husband finds it **soporific** and often actually falls asleep while listening to it.

**Synonyms:** calming, dull, hypnotic, soothing

..............................................................

characterized by baseness, filthy

The story of his ascent to power was a **sordid** one of greed, betrayal, and even murder.

**Synonyms:** degenerate, miserable, squalid, vile
**SPARSE**
(spahrs)

**SPECIOUS**
(SPEE-shuhs)

**SPECTRUM**
(SPEK-truhm)
thinly settled or grown, meager

*After the long, dry summer, the grass was* **sparse** **underfoot**.

**Synonyms:** inadequate, scanty, skimpy

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having the appearance of goodness or truth, attractive in a deceptive way

*Despite her* **specious** **arguments, the candidate attracted an enthusiastic following**.

**Synonyms:** false, illusory, misleading, plausible

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a series or range of related things or ideas

*Roxanne has a wide* **spectrum** **of interests, including everything from martial arts to bird watching**.

**Synonyms:** continuum, span
SPENDTHRIFT
(SPEND-thrift)

SPORADIC
(spuh-RA-dik)

SPURIOUS
(SPYOOR-ee-uhs)
a person who spends wastefully

One of my uncles is frugal and has accumulated a staggering fortune, and the other is a spendthrift who has accumulated a staggering debt.

**Synonyms:** spender, squanderer

---

happening occasionally or irregularly

The children were given to sporadic bursts of enthusiasm that their teacher was determined to cultivate.

**Synonyms:** isolated, occasionally, scattered

---

not genuine or true

Not wanting to hurt his feelings, she gave a spurious reason for rejecting his invitation to the movies.

**Synonyms:** contrived, counterfeit, deceitful, deceptive
SQUALID
(SKWO-lid)

SQUANDER
(SKWON-duhr)

STATIC
(STA-tik)
filthy from neglect or poverty

Once anything makes its way into my little brother’s _squalid_ bedroom, it rarely makes its way out.

**Synonyms:** disgusting, miserable, sordid

to spend or use wastefully, to scatter

You worked hard to earn that money, so don’t _squander_ it on silly things like video games!

**Synonyms:** dissipate, misuse, waste

showing a lack of change or movement

_In literature, a _**static**_ character is one who is the same from the beginning to the end of the story._

**Synonyms:** fixed, inactive, unchanging
STIGMA
(STIG-muh)

STINT
(stint)

STIPULATE
(STI-pyuh-leyt)
a mark or sign of disgrace

Wendy bore the **stigma** of having been fired from three jobs, until she found a suitable career and thrived.

*Synonyms*: blemish, brand, scar, stain

--

a period of time spent doing a specific activity

*I had a brief **stint** in college but dropped out to start my own business.*

*Synonym*: term

--

to set conditions of agreement, to make a specific demand

*The printer **stipulated** that the files should be ready no later than the last day of June.*

*Synonyms*: contract, designate, require, settle
STOIC
(STOH-ik)

STOLID
(STO-lid)

STRATIFIED
(STRA-tuh-fahyd)
not showing feeling

Our mother’s **stoic** attitude toward her struggle to make a living for our family was an inspiration to us.

**Synonyms**: dispassionate, indifferent, philosophic, self-controlled

---

having or showing no feelings

Nobody understood what she saw in him, but she knew that his **stolid** exterior hid a sensitive soul.

**Synonyms**: impassive, indifferent, unemotional

---

arranged in layers or hierarchical classes

The **stratified** cliffs of the Grand Canyon display a record of geological time.

**Synonym**: ordered
STRIATED
(STRAHY-ey-ted)

STRIENT
(STRAHY-duhnt)

STRUT
(struht)
marked with grooves, scratches, or stripes

*The striated* rocks give evidence of the glaciers that once covered this region, scraping and scoring any exposed surfaces as they moved.

**Synonyms:** furrowed, streaked, striped

characterized by harsh and insistent sound, commanding attention

*His strident* voice could be heard throughout the entire building.

**Synonym:** loud

to walk in a proud or pompous way

*Now that Henry is the boss of our division, he struts* around as though he owns the place.

**Synonyms:** flaunt, parade, swagger
STUPEFY
(STOO-puh-fahy)

STYMIE
(STAHY-mee)

SUBPOENA
(suh-PEE-nuh)
to make stupid or numb; to astonish

This economics textbook is so dull that it **stupifies** more than it instructs.

**Synonyms:** benumb, daze, deaden; bewilder, confound, flabbergast

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to get in the way of

Our ambitions were **stymied** by our lack of funds.

**Synonyms:** block, hinder, impede, obstruct, thwart

---------------------

a written command to appear in court

Unless the judge issues a **subpoena**, there is no way I will appear in court.

**Synonym:** summons
SUBSIDE
(suhb-SAHYD)

SUBSTANTIATE
(suhb-STAN-shee-eyt)

SUBTLE
(SUH-tl)
to settle down or become quiet

*Before long, the storm had **subsided** and the sun appeared.*

**Synonyms:** abate, diminish

---

to give evidence for or prove; to give form to

*It took six weeks of research for her to gather the evidence to **substantiate** her claims, and the resulting article won several awards.*

**Synonyms:** demonstrate, establish; embody, materialize

---

delicate or elusive, difficult to perceive or understand; insightful, skillful

*The argument was so **subtle** that I had to read the essay several times to appreciate its conclusions.*

**Synonyms:** indistinct, suggestive; penetrating, perceptive
SUBVERSIVE
(suhb-\textit{VUHR}-siv)

Succinct
(suhk-\textit{SINGKT})

Succor
(SUH-\textit{kuhr})
tending to undermine, intending to overthrow

Because their aims were **subversive**, they distributed the pamphlets quietly, so as not to call the attention of the authorities.

**Synonyms**: destructive, rebellious

precise, using few words

*His succinct* explanation was far more helpful than anything in our 48-page manual.

**Synonyms**: blunt, concise, pithy

relief or help; that which gives relief or help

*The missionaries vowed to give* **succor** *to the poor.*

**Synonyms**: aid, assistance
SUPERFLUOUS
(soo-PUHR-floo-uhs)

SUPERSEDE
(soo-puhr-SEED)

SUPPLANT
(suh-PLANT)
more than what is needed, extra, unnecessary

Though I’m certainly grateful, your praise of my performance was superfluous; being able to make music is joy enough in itself.

_Synonyms:_ excessive, expendable, gratuitous

---

to take the place or position of, displace

In the twentieth century, the physics that followed from Einstein’s theories _superseded_ Newtonian physics.

_Synonyms:_ replace, succeed, supplant

---

to take the place of, especially by force, through treachery, or through superiority

The rebels overthrew the government, only to _supplant_ one tyranny with another.

_Synonyms:_ overthrow, succeed, supersede, undermine, uproot
SUPPOSITION
(suh-puh-ZI-shuhn)

SURFEIT
(suhr-feht)

SYNTHESIS
(SIN-thuh-suhs)
the act of supposing or something that is supposed

Your supposition that I am not up to the job seems to be based more on stereotypes than on familiarity with my work.

*Synonyms:* assumption, hypothesis

an excessive amount or indulgence in something

December seems to be characterized by a surfeit in all things: food, drink, and gifts.

*Synonyms:* glut, overindulgence, satiety, surplus

the combination of different things or ideas to form one substance or whole

The show was a remarkable synthesis of different art forms: drama, music, and dance combined in one extravagant spectacle.

*Synonyms:* amalgamation, integration, unification
TACIT
(TA-suht)

TANGENTIAL
(tan-JENT-shuhl)

TAUTOLOGICAL
(taw-tuh-LO-ji-kuhl)
expressed or done without words, implied

No words on the matter were actually spoken between our neighbors and us; we simply came to a tacit agreement that any apples that fell onto our yard from their tree were ours.

Synonyms: implicit, silent, suggested, unspoken

touching or connected only slightly, as a tangent line

Her paper was marred by the inclusion of too much information that was only tangential to her main point.

Synonyms: digressive, divergent, incidental

characterized by unnecessary repetition

Always saying “a variety of different things” is tautological because the word variety already implies difference; you can simply say “a variety of things.”

Synonym: redundant
TENACITY
(tuh-NA-suh-tee)

TENET
(TE-nuht)

TENUOUS
(TEN-yuh-wuhs)
persistence

Against all odds, with great **tenacity**, and not a little luck, she worked her way through college.

**Synonyms:** determination, resolve

---

a principle or belief, especially one held by a particular group of people

*The main tenet of attachment theory is that the healthy development of a child requires the secure attachment to at least one caregiver.*

**Synonyms:** doctrine, precept

---

thin in form or density; lacking substance, strength, clarity, or a sound basis in reasoning

*We questioned her **tenuous** reasons for her three-day absence, but she refused to clarify her story.*

**Synonyms:** flimsy, rare; questionable, unsubstantial, vague, weak
TERSE
(tuhrs)

TIRADE
(TAHY-reyd)

TOME
(tohm)
concise, sometimes abruptly so

His **terse** reply hinted at darker reasons for his condition, and so I did not press him to say more.

**Synonyms:** brief, curt, pithy, succinct

---

a long and angry speech

Our neighbor subjects all visitors to a **tirade** on the perceived wrongdoings of his ex-wife.

**Synonyms:** diatribe, harangue, invective

---

a large, weighty, or scholarly book; one volume of a larger work

What she originally envisioned as a brief novella developed into a 600-page **tome**, dramatizing the lives and relationships of some half-dozen characters.

**Synonym:** opus
TORPOR
(TAWR-puhr)

TORQUE
(tawrk)

TORTUOUS
(TAWRCHASE-wuhs)
a state of mental and physical inactivity accompanied by a loss of feeling; a lack of energy

*During my illness, the fever did not trouble me so much as the **torpor**—I hate to be slowed down!*

**Synonyms:** apathy, dullness, lethargy

---

a force that causes twisting or rotation, or the measurement of this force

*The carpenter’s drill supplied enough **torque** to drive screws into the very dense wood.*

**Synonyms:** force, rotation

---

having many twists or turns; characterized by indirect methods

*We made our way back and forth up the **tortuous** path through the woods.*

**Synonyms:** circuitous, crooked, winding; convoluted, devious
TOUT
(tout)

TRACTABLE
(TRAK-tuh-buhl)

TRANSGRESSION
(tranz-GREH-shuhn)
to solicit support for, to promote

*Mr. Franklin takes every opportunity to tout the accomplishments of his three grandchildren.*

**Synonyms:** acclaim, herald, praise

easily led, trained, or controlled; easily handled

*He has a tractable dog that learns tricks easily.*

**Synonyms:** docile, submissive, yielding; malleable

an act of violating a command or law or of going beyond some limit

*Although our transgression was unintentional, we still had to pay a fine for breaking the law.*

**Synonyms:** breach, crime, sin, violation
TRANSIENT
(TRAN-shuhnt)

TRANSLUCENT
(tranz-LOO-suhnt)

TRENCHANT
(TREN-chuhnt)
passing swiftly in and out of existence, lasting or staying only a short time

Though they seem long, the days of summer are **transient**, and before you know it, winter has come again.

**Synonyms**: ephemeral, fleeting, temporary, transitory

allowing the passage of light but diffusing it so that objects on the other side are not clearly visible; clearly understandable; clear

**Translucent** panels were set into the wall, so that you could see blurry figures passing through the hallway on the other side.

**Synonyms**: semitransparent; lucid

keen, articulate, or perceptive (describing language or a person); energetic, effective; sharply defined

*His* **trenchant** criticism could be hard to take, but the students who listened were better writers for it.

**Synonyms**: caustic, cutting; vigorous; clear-cut, distinct
TRUCULENT
(truh-kyuh-luhnt)

TRYST
(trist)
feeling or showing ferocity; deadly, harsh, or aggressive

The discipline of playing football transformed the **truculent** boy into a mild young man; he reserved his aggression for the field.

**Synonyms:** brutal, cruel, fierce, savage; belligerent, hostile

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an appointment to meet, especially one made secretly between lovers

*In the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, a **tryst** between the two lovers ends in tragedy when Pyramus believes that Thisbe has been devoured by a lioness.*

**Synonyms:** date, engagement, rendezvous
UBIQUITOUS
(yoo-BI-kwi-tuhs)

UNCANNY
(uhn-KA-nee)

UNFEIGNED
(uhn-FEYND)
existing everywhere at once

That hit song was ubiquitous all summer long: I heard it at the beach, at the grocery store, waiting on line at the deli, and on the radio just about every time I turned it on.

**Synonyms:** omnipresent, pervasive, widespread

seeming to be supernatural in nature, extraordinary

She had an uncanny way of knowing that someone was seriously ill, sometimes even before the person knew of the illness him or herself.

**Synonyms:** eerie, mysterious, spooky, weird

genuine, sincere

I love to be with children, because their delight is always unfeigned and spontaneous.

**Synonyms:** honest, real, true, unaffected
UNTENABLE
(uhn-TEN-uh-buhl)

URBANE
(uhr-BEYN)
incapable of being defended (describing an argument or belief); unsuitable for occupation

The more evidence we gathered, the more clearly we saw how **untenable** our original hypothesis was, and it took us several months to devise another one.

**Synonyms:** illogical, indefensible, unsound

polite, polished, or elegant in manner

When I was new to the city and unaccustomed to sophisticated conversation, I was thoroughly intimidated by his **urbane** wit.

**Synonyms:** civilized, cultured, elegant, refined, sophisticated
VACILLATE
(VA-suh-leyt)

VACUOUS
(VA-kyuh-wuhs)

VAPID
(VA-puhd)
to sway or fluctuate; to waver in feeling or hesitate in making a decision

Roberta **vacillated** for so long that by the time she decided to go to the show, the tickets were all sold out.

**Synonyms:** oscillate, stagger, swing; alternate, hedge, pause

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empty, lacking ideas or seriousness, idle

*I’ve been known on occasion to indulge in those ridiculous paperback romances—the more **vacuous**, the better.*

**Synonyms:** foolish, inane, purposeless, silly, stupid

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lacking energy or flavor

*The conversation at the dinner party that night was as **vapid** as the tasteless meal.*

**Synonyms:** dull, flat, insipid, tedious
VARIEGATED
(VER-ee-uh-gey-tuhd)

VENERATE
(VE-nuh-reyt)

VERACITY
(vuh-RA-suh-tee)
marked by a variety of colors; varied

*I love the *variegated *landscape in autumn.*

*Synonyms*: kaleidoscopic, motley, mottled; assorted, diverse, mixed

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to regard with reverence, to honor

*The basketball star was *venerated *by the citizens of the small town where he grew up.*

*Synonyms*: revere, worship

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truthfulness or accuracy

*She was a scrupulous journalist, and when she could not check the *veracity *of the claim, she struck all mentions of it from her article.*

*Synonyms*: authenticity, credibility, honesty
VERBOSE
(vuhr-BOHS)

VEXATION
(vek-SEY-shuhn)

VIABLE
(VAHY-uh-buhl)
tending to use more words than necessary, wordy

Warren tends to write **verbose** e-mails that nobody in the company has the time to read.

**Synonyms:** garrulous, long-winded, loquacious

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the act of troubling or agitating; the state of being troubled or agitated

*To be alive is to experience vexation; you will be happier if you accept that you will encounter annoyances.*

**Synonyms:** annoyance, irritation, nuisance

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capable of living, growing, and developing; able to function properly

*Though the idea was brilliant, it also involved a greater expense than was viable, given our budget at the time.*

**Synonyms:** functioning; feasible, possible, practicable, reasonable, workable
VIGILANT
(VI-juh-luhnt)

VILIFY
(VI-luh-fahy)

VIRTUOSO
(vir-choo-OH-soh)
alert, watchful

*Touristsmust be* **vigilant** *when walking through that part of town, as the locals there tend to be especially hostile toward foreigners.*

**Synonyms:** attentive, guarded, wary

to slander

*How dare you* **vilify** *my name in the newspaper when you are the one who has been squandering city funds.*

**Synonyms:** attack, censure, defame, denigrate, disparage

(n.) one who excels at an art

*Picasso was a* **virtuoso** *who continuously explored different styles, materials, and themes.*

**Synonyms:** genius, master, prodigy

(adj.) displaying excellence

*The audience erupted in applause for the pianist’s* **virtuoso** *performance of the Liszt étude.*

**Synonyms:** masterful, skilled
VIRULENT
(VIR-uh-lunt)

VISCOUS
(VIS-kuhs)

VITUPERATIVE
(vi-TOO-puh-ruh-tiv)
poisonous, highly infective, or deadly; malicious or harsh

_The 1918 influenza virus was especially **virulent**, resulting in a pandemic that killed some 50 million people._

**Synonyms:** destructive, noxious; hostile, spiteful

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adhesive, sticky, thick (describing a liquid)

_This varnish is **viscous** when applied and dries to a hard gloss in just a few hours._

**Synonyms:** gelatinous, gummy

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characterized by harsh or abusive language

_The **vituperative** editorial put the mayor on the defensive._

**Synonyms:** abusive, derisive, scolding
VOGUE
(vohg)

VOLATILE
(VO-luh-tl)

VORACIOUS
(vaw-REY-shuhs)
something that is in fashion, currently popular, or favored

*If there was ever a time when Mrs. Henderson’s hairstyle was in *vogue*, it was long before any of us was born.*

*Synonyms:* fashion, mode, popularity

 evaporating easily; explosive, changeable

*Fearing the substitute teacher’s *volatile* temperament, the children were quiet and obedient.*

*Synonyms:* gaseous; capricious, unstable

 having a large appetite, insatiable

*The film festival briefly satisfied their *voracious* appetite for new movies.*

*Synonyms:* avid, gluttonous, ravenous
WARRANTED
(WAW-ruhn-tuhd)

WARY
(WER-ee)

WAVER
(WEY-vuhr)
Your angry outburst at the child was simply not **warranted**; he is only two years old and simply does not know any better.

**Synonyms**: authorized, sanctioned

cautious, watchful, on guard

Our cat is **wary** of visitors, often hiding when they first arrive.

**Synonyms**: attentive, vigilant

to sway back and forth; to become unsteady, shake, or tremble; to vacillate in making a decision or in opinion

*In the twenty-first mile of the marathon, she **wavered** in her determination to complete the race, but the spectators cheered her on.*

**Synonyms**: flutter, wobble; alternate, fluctuate
WELTER
(WEL-tuhr)

WHIMSICAL
(HWIM-zi-kuhl)

ZEALOUS
(ZE-luhs)
(v.) to roll or toss, as in waves; to wallow or become immersed or involved

The children **weltered** about in the piles of fallen leaves.

**Synonyms**: heave, tumble

(n.) a state of disorder, a jumble

The check was lost in the **welter** of books and papers that cluttered her desk.

**Synonyms**: confusion, turmoil

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full of whims, characterized by sudden and eccentric ideas

She designs fabrics with **whimsical** patterns that are suitable for children’s clothing.

**Synonyms**: fanciful, playful, wayward

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characterized by passionate loyalty and zeal for a person or idea

A **zealous** fan of the handsome young rock star, she traveled from city to city to see him perform.

**Synonyms**: ardent, dedicated, devoted, impassioned