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March 15th, 2011

Dear Student,

Thank you for picking up one of the Manhattan GRE Strategy Guides—we hope that it ends up being just what you need to prepare for the new GRE.

As with most accomplishments, there were many people involved in the book that you're holding. First and foremost is Zeke Vanderhoek, the founder of MG Prep. Zeke was a lone tutor in New York when he started the Company in 2000. Now, eleven years later, the Company has Instructors and offices nationwide and contributes to the studies and successes of thousands of students each year.

Our Manhattan GRE Strategy Guides are based on the continuing experiences of our Instructors and our students. On the Company side, we are indebted to many of our Instructors, including but not limited to Roman Altshuler, Chris Berman, Faruk Bursal, Jen Dziura, Dmitry Farber, Stacey Koprince, David Mahler, Seb Moosapoor, Stephanie Moyerman, Chris Ryan, Michael Schwartz, Tate Shafer, Emily Sledge, Tommy Wallach, and Ryan Wessel, all of whom either wrote or edited the books to their present form. Dan McNaney and Cathy Huang provided their formatting expertise to make the books as user-friendly as possible. Last, many people, too numerous to list here but no less appreciated, assisted in the development of the online resources that accompany this guide.

At Manhattan GRE, we continually aspire to provide the best Instructors and resources possible. We hope that you'll find our dedication manifest in this book. If you have any comments or questions, please e-mail me at dan@manhattangre.com. I'll be sure that your comments reach our curriculum team—and I'll read them too.

Best of luck in preparing for the GRE!

Sincerely,

Dan Gonzalez
Managing Director
Manhattan GRE

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TEXT COMPLETION &
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INTRODUCTION &
THE REVISED GRE

In This Chapter . . .

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- Introduction, and How to Use Manhattan GRE's Strategy Guides
- The Revised GRE
- Question Formats in Detail

Introduction, and How to Use Manhattan GRE's Strategy Guides

We know that you're looking to succeed on the GRE so that you can go to graduate school and do the things you want to do in life.

We also know that you might not have done math since high school, and that you may never have learned words like "adumbrate" or "sangfroid." We know that it's going to take hard work on your part to get a top GRE score, and that's why we've put together the only set of books that will take you from the basics all the way up to the material you need to master for a near-perfect score, or whatever your score goal may be. You've taken the first step. Now it's time to get to work!

How to Use These Materials

Manhattan GRE's materials are comprehensive. But keep in mind that, depending on your score goal, it may not be necessary to "get" absolutely everything. Grad schools only see your overall Quantitative, Verbal, and Writing scores—they don't see exactly which strengths and weaknesses went into creating those scores.

You may be enrolled in one of our courses, in which case you already have a syllabus telling you in what order you should approach the books. But if you bought this book online or at a bookstore, feel free to approach the books—and even the chapters within the books—in whatever order works best for you. *For the most part, the books, and the chapters within them, are independent; you don't have to master one section before moving on to the next.* So if you're having a hard time with something in particular, you can make a note to come back to it later and move on to another section. Similarly, it may not be necessary to solve every single practice problem for every section. As you go through the material, continually assess whether you understand and can apply the principles in each individual section and chapter. The best way to do this is to solve the Check Your Skills and Practice Problems throughout. If you're confident you have a concept or method down, feel free to move on. If you struggle with something, make note of it for further review. Stay active in your learning and oriented toward the test—it's easy to read something and think you understand it, only to have trouble applying it in the 1–2 minutes you have to solve a problem.

Study Skills

As you're studying for the GRE, try to integrate your learning into your everyday life. For example, vocabulary is a big part of the GRE, as well as something you just can't "cram" for—you're going to want to do at least a little bit of vocab every day. So, try to learn and internalize a little bit at a time, switching up topics often to help keep things interesting.

Keep in mind that, while many of your study materials are on paper (including ETS's most recent source of official GRE questions, *The Official Guide to the GRE revised General Test*), your exam will be administered on a computer. Because this is a computer-based test, you will NOT be able to underline portions of reading passages, write on diagrams of geometry figures, or otherwise physically mark up problems. So get used to this now. Solve the problems in these books on scratch paper. (Each of our books talks specifically about what to write down for different problem types).

Again, as you study stay focused on the test-day experience. As you progress, work on timed drills and sets of questions. Eventually, you should be taking full practice tests (available at www.manhattangre.com) under actual timed conditions.

The Revised GRE

As of August 1, 2011, the Quantitative and Verbal sections of the GRE will undergo a number of changes. The actual body of knowledge being tested won't change, but the *way* it is tested will. Here's a brief summary of what to expect, followed by a more comprehensive assessment of the new exam.

Overall, the general format of the test will change. The length of the test will increase from about 3.5 hours to about 4 hours. There will be two scored math sections and two scored verbal sections rather than one of each, and a new score scale of 130–170 will be used in place of the old 200–800 scale. More on this later.

The Verbal section of the GRE will change dramatically. The Analogies and Antonym questions will disappear. The Sentence Completions and Reading Comprehension will remain, to be expanded and remixed in a few new ways. Vocabulary will still be important, but only in the context of complete sentences. That is, you'll no longer have to worry about vocabulary words standing alone. So for those who dislike learning vocabulary words, the changes will provide partial relief. For those who were looking forward to getting lots of points just for memorizing words, the Manhattan GRE verbal strategy guides will prepare you for the shift.

The Quant section of the GRE prior to August 1, 2011 is composed of multiple choice problems, Quantitative Comparisons, and Data Interpretation questions (which are really a subset of multiple choice problems). The revised test will contain two new problem formats in addition to the current problem formats. However, the type of math, and the difficulty of the math, will remain unchanged.

Additionally, a small four-function calculator with a square root button will appear on-screen. Many test takers will rejoice at the advent of this calculator! It is true that the GRE calculator will reduce emphasis on computation—but look out for problems, such as percents questions with tricky wording, that are likely to foil those who rely on the calculator too much. *In short, the calculator may make your life a bit easier from time to time, but you will never need the calculator to solve a problem.*

Finally, don't worry about whether these new problem types are “harder” or “easier.” You are being judged against other test takers, all of whom are in the same boat. So if the new formats are harder, they are harder for other test takers as well.

Exam Structure

The revised test has six sections. You will get a ten-minute break between the third and fourth sections and a one-minute break between the others. The Analytical Writing section is always first. The other five sections can be seen in any order and will include:

- Two Verbal Reasoning sections (approximately 20 questions each in exactly 30 minutes per section)
- Two Quantitative Reasoning sections (approximately 20 questions each in exactly 35 minutes per section)
- Either an “unscored” section or a “research” section

An unscored section will look just like a third Verbal or Quantitative Reasoning section, and you will not be told which of them doesn't count. If you get a research section, it will be identified as such.

	Section Type	# Questions	Time	Scored?
	Analytical Writing	2 essays	30 minutes each	Yes
	Verbal #1	Approx. 20	30 minutes	Yes
	Quantitative #1	Approx. 20	35 minutes	Yes
10 min break →	Verbal #2	Approx. 20	30 minutes	Yes
	Quantitative #2	Approx. 20	35 minutes	Yes
one or the other, but not both {	Unscored Section (verbal or quant)	Approx. 20	30 or 35 min	No
	Research Section	Varies	Varies	No

Later in the chapter, we'll look at all the question formats in detail.

Using the Calculator

The addition of a small, four-function calculator with a square root button means that those taking the revised test can forget re-memorizing their times tables or square roots. However, the calculator is not a cure-all; in many problems, the difficulty is in figuring out what numbers to put into the calculator in the first place. In some cases, using a calculator will actually be less helpful than doing the problem some other way. Let's look at an example:

If x is the remainder when $(11)(7)$ is divided by 4 and y is the remainder when $(14)(6)$ is divided by 13, what is the value of $x + y$?

Solution: This problem is designed so that the calculator won't tell the whole story. Certainly the calculator will tell us that $11 \times 7 = 77$. When you divide 77 by 4, however, the calculator yields an answer of 19.25. The remainder is *not* 0.25 (a remainder is always a whole number).

You might just go back to your pencil and paper, and find the largest multiple of 4 that is less than 77. Since 4 DOES go into 76, we can conclude that 4 would leave a remainder of 1 when dividing into 77. (Notice that we don't even need to know how many times 4 goes into 76, just that it goes in. One way to mentally "jump" to 76 is to say, *4 goes into 40, so it goes into 80 ... that's a bit too big, so take away 4 to get 76.*) You could also multiply the leftover 0.25 times 4 (the divisor) to find the remainder of 1.

However, it is also possible to use the calculator to find a remainder. Divide 77 by 4 to get 19.25. Thus, 4 goes into 77 nineteen times, with a remainder left over. Now use your calculator to multiply 19 (JUST 19, not 19.25) by 4. You will get 76. The remainder is $77 - 76 = 1$. Therefore, $x = 1$.

Use the same technique to find y . Multiply 14×6 to get 84. Divide 84 by 13 to get 6.46... Ignore everything after the decimal, and just multiply 6 by 13 to get 78. The remainder is therefore $84 - 78 = 6$. Therefore, $y = 6$.

Since we are looking for $x + y$ and $1 + 6 = 7$, the answer is 7.

You can see that blind faith in the calculator can be dangerous. Use it responsibly! And this leads us to...

Practice Using the Calculator!

On the new GRE, the on-screen calculator will slow you down or lead to incorrect answers if you're not careful! If you plan to use the thing on test day (which you should), you'll want to practice first.

We have created an online practice calculator for your use. To access this calculator, go to www.manhattangre.com and sign in to the student center using the instructions on the "How to Access Your Online Student Center" page found at the front of this book.

In addition to the calculator, you will see instructions for how to use the calculator. Be sure to read these instructions and work through the associated exercises. Throughout our math books, you will see the  symbol. This symbol means "use the calculator here!" As much as possible, have the online practice calculator up and running during your review of our math books. You'll have the chance to use the on-screen calculator when you take our practice exams as well.

Navigating the Questions in a Section

Another change for test takers on the new GRE is the ability to move freely around the questions in a section... you can go forward and backward one-by-one and can even jump directly to any question from the "review list." The review list provides a snapshot of which questions you have answered, which ones you have tagged for "mark and review," and which are incomplete, either because you didn't select enough answers or because you selected too many (that is, if a number of choices is specified by the question). You should double-check the review list for completion if you finish the section early. Using the review list feature will take some practice as well, which is why we've built it into our online practice exams. Here's some introductory advice.

The majority of test takers will be pressed for time. Thus, for most of you, it won't be feasible to "go back to" multiple problems at the end of the section. Generally, if you can't get a question the first time, you won't be able to get it the second time around either. With this in mind, here's how we recommend using the new review list feature.

1. Do the questions in order as they appear.
2. When you encounter a difficult question, do your best to eliminate answer choices you know are wrong.
3. If you're not sure of an answer, take an educated guess from the choices remaining. Do NOT skip it and hope to return to it later.

4. Using the “mark” button at the top of the screen, mark up to three questions per section that you think you might be able to solve with more time. Mark a question only after you have taken an educated guess.
5. If you have time at the end of the section, click on the review list, identify any questions you’ve marked and return to them. If you do not have any time remaining, you will have already taken good guesses at the tough ones.

What you want to avoid is “surfing”—clicking forward and backward through the questions searching for the easy ones. This will eat up valuable time. Of course, you’ll want to move through the tough ones quickly if you can’t get them, but try to avoid skipping stuff.

Again, all of this will take practice. Use our practice exams to fine-tune your approach.

Scoring

Two things have changed about the scoring of the Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections: (1) how individual questions influence the score and (2) the score scale itself.

For both the Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections, you will receive a raw score, which is simply how many questions you answered correctly. Your raw score is converted to a scaled score, accounting for the difficulties of the specific questions you actually saw.

The old GRE was question-adaptive, meaning that your answer to each question (right or wrong) determined, at least somewhat, the questions that followed (harder or easier). Because you had to commit to an answer to let the algorithm do its thing, you weren’t allowed to skip questions or go back to change answers. On the revised GRE, the adapting will occur from section to section (e.g., if you do well on the first verbal section, you will get a harder second verbal section) rather than from question to question. The only change test takers will notice is one most will welcome: you can now move freely about the questions in a section, coming back to tough questions later, changing answers after “ah-ha!” moments, and generally managing your time more flexibly.

The scores for the revised GRE Quantitative Reasoning and Verbal Reasoning will be reported on a 130 to 170 scale in 1-point increments, whereas the old score reporting was on a 200 to 800 scale in 10-point increments. You will receive one 130–170 score for verbal and a separate 130–170 score for quant. If you are already putting your GRE math skills to work, you may notice that there are now 41 scores possible ($170 - 130$, then add one before you’re done), whereas before there were 61 scores possible ($[800 - 200]/10$, then add one before you’re done). In other words, a 10 point difference on the old score scale actually indicated a smaller performance differential than a 1 point difference on the new scale. However, the GRE folks argue that perception is reality: the difference between 520 and 530 on the old scale could simply seem greater than the difference between 151 and 152 on the new scale. If that’s true, then this change will benefit test-takers, who won’t be unfairly compared by schools for minor differences in performance. If not true, then the change will be moot.

Important Dates

Registration for the GRE revised General Test opens on March 15, 2011, and the first day of testing with the new format is August 1, 2011.

Perhaps to encourage people to take the revised exam, rather than rushing to take the old exam before the change or waiting “to see what happens” with the new exam long after August 1, 2011, ETS is offering a 50% discount on the test fee for anyone who takes the revised test from August 1 through September 30, 2011. Scores for people who take

the revised exam in this discount period will be sent starting in mid- to late-November. This implies that you may have to wait up to 3.5 months to get your score during this rollout period!

By December 2011, ETS expects to resume normal score reporting schedules: score reports will be sent a mere 10-15 days after the test date.

IMPORTANT: If you need GRE scores before mid-November 2011 to meet a school deadline, take the “old” GRE no later than July 31, 2011! Waiting to take the revised test not only would require you to study for a different test, but also would delay your score reporting.

Question Formats in Detail

Essay Questions

The Analytical Writing section consists of two separately timed 30-minute tasks: Analyze an Issue and Analyze an Argument. As you can imagine, the 30-minute time limit implies that you aren't aiming to write an essay that would garner a Pulitzer Prize nomination, but rather to complete the tasks adequately and according to the directions. Each essay is scored separately, but your reported essay score is the average of the two rounded up to the next half-point increment on a 0 to 6 scale.

Issue Task—This essay prompt will present a claim, generally one that is vague enough to be interpreted in various ways and discussed from numerous perspectives. Your job as a test taker is to write a response discussing the extent to which you agree or disagree and support your position. Don't sit on the fence—pick a side!

For some examples of Issue Task prompts, visit the GRE website here:

http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/issue/pool

Argument Task—This essay prompt will be an argument comprised of both a claim(s) and evidence. Your job is to dispassionately discuss the argument's structural flaws and merits (well, mostly the flaws). Don't agree or disagree with the argument—evaluate its logic.

For some examples of Argument Task prompts, visit the GRE website here:

http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/pool

6. Verbal: Reading Comprehension Questions

Standard 5-choice multiple choice reading comprehension questions will continue to appear on the new exam. You are likely familiar with how these work. Let's take a look at two *new* reading comprehension formats that will appear on the new test.

7. *Select One or More Answer Choices and Select-in-Passage*

For the question type, “Select One or More Answer Choices,” you are given three statements about a passage and asked to “select all that apply.” Either one, two, or all three can be correct (there is no “none of the above” option). There is no partial credit; you must select all the correct choices and none of the incorrect choices.

Strategy Tip: On “Select One or More Answer Choices,” don’t let your brain be tricked into telling you “Well, if two of them have been right so far, the other one must be wrong,” or any other arbitrary idea about how many of the choices “should” be correct. Make sure to consider each choice independently! You cannot use “Process of Elimination” the same way as you do on “normal” multiple-choice questions.

For the question type “Select-in-Passage,” you are given an assignment such as “Select the sentence in the passage that explains why the experiment’s results were discovered to be invalid.” Clicking anywhere on the sentence in the passage will highlight it. (As with any GRE question, you will have to click “Confirm” to submit your answer, so don’t worry about accidentally selecting the wrong sentence due to a slip of the mouse.)

Strategy Tip: On “Select-in-Passage,” if the passage is short, consider numbering each sentence (that is, writing 1 2 3 4 on your paper) and crossing off each choice as you determine that it isn’t the answer. If the passage is long, you might write a number for each paragraph (I, II, III), and tick off each number as you determine that the correct sentence is not located in that paragraph.

Now let’s give these new question types a try!

The sample questions below are based on this passage:

Physicist Robert Oppenheimer, director of the fateful Manhattan Project, said “It is a profound and necessary truth that the deep things in science are not found because they are useful; they are found because it was possible to find them.” In a later address at MIT, Oppenheimer presented the thesis that scientists could be held only very nominally responsible for the consequences of their research and discovery. Oppenheimer asserted that ethics, philosophy, and politics have very little to do with the day-to-day work of the scientist, and that scientists could not rationally be expected to predict all the effects of their work. Yet, in a talk in 1945 to the Association of Los Alamos Scientists, Oppenheimer offered some reasons why the Manhattan project scientists built the atomic bomb; the justifications included “fear that Nazi Germany would build it first” and “hope that it would shorten the war.”

For question #1, consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply.

1. The passage implies that Robert Oppenheimer would most likely have agreed with which of the following views:

- A Some scientists take military goals into account in their work
- B Deep things in science are not useful
- C The everyday work of a scientist is only minimally involved with ethics

2. Select the sentence in which the writer implies that Oppenheimer has not been consistent in his view that scientists have little consideration for the effects of their work.

[Here, you would highlight the appropriate sentence with your mouse. Note that there are only four options.]

Solutions:

1. {A, C} Oppenheimer says in the last sentence that one of the reasons the bomb was built was scientists' "hope that it would shorten the war." Thus, Oppenheimer would likely agree with the view that "Some scientists take military goals into account in their work." B is a trap answer using familiar language from the passage. Oppenheimer says that scientific discoveries' possible usefulness is not why scientists make discoveries; he does not say that the discoveries aren't useful. Oppenheimer specifically says that ethics has "very little to do with the day-to-day work of the scientist," which is a good match for "only minimally involved with ethics."

Strategy Tip: On "Select One or More Answer Choices," write ABC on your paper and mark each choice with a check, an X, or a symbol such as - if you're not sure. This should keep you from crossing out all three choices and having to go back (at least one of the choices must be correct). For example, let's say that on a different question you had marked

- A. X
B. X
C. -

The one you weren't sure about, (C), is likely to be correct, since there must be at least one correct answer.

2. The correct sentence is: **Yet, in a talk in 1945 to the Association of Los Alamos Scientists, Oppenheimer offered some reasons why the Manhattan project scientists built the atomic bomb; the justifications included "fear that Nazi Germany would build it first" and "hope that it would shorten the war."** The word "yet" is a good clue that this sentence is about to express a view contrary to the views expressed in the rest of the passage.

Verbal: Text Completion Questions

Text Completions are the new, souped-up Sentence Completions. They can consist of 1–5 sentences with 1–3 blanks. When Text Completions have two or three blanks, you will select words for those blanks independently. There is no partial credit; you must make every selection correctly.

Because this makes things a bit harder, the GRE has kindly reduced the number of possible choices per blank from five to three. Here is an old two-blank Sentence Completion, as it would appear on the old GRE:

Old Format:

Leaders are not always expected to _____ the same rules as are those they lead; leaders are often looked up to for a surety and presumption that would be viewed as _____ in most others.

- A. obey ... avarice
B. proscribe ... insalubriousness
C. decree ... anachronism
D. conform to ... hubris
E. follow ... eminence

And here's how this same sentence would appear on the new exam.

New Format:

Leaders are not always expected to (i) _____ the same rules as are those they lead; leaders are often looked up to for a surety and presumption that would be viewed as (ii) _____ in most others.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
decree	hubris
proscribe	avarice
conform to	anachronism

On the new GRE, you will select your two choices by actually clicking and highlighting the words you want.

Solution:

In the first blank, we need a word similar to “follow.” In the second blank, we need a word similar to “arrogant.” Only choice D works in the old format; in the new format, the answer is still “conform to” and “hubris,” but you’ll make the two choices separately.

Note that in the “Old Format” question, if you knew that you needed a word in the second blank that meant something like “arrogant,” and you knew that “hubris” was the only word in the second column with the correct meaning, you could pick correct answer choice D without even considering the first word in each pair. In the new format, this strategy is no longer available to us.

Also note that, in the “Old Format” question, “obey,” “conform to,” and “follow” mean basically the same thing. On the new GRE, this can't happen: since you select each word independently, no two choices can be synonyms (otherwise, there would be two correct answers).

Strategy Tip: As on the old GRE, do NOT look at the answer choices until you've decided for yourself, based on textual clues actually written in the sentence, what kind of word needs to go in each blank. Only then should you look at the choices and eliminate those that are not matches.

Let's try an example with three blanks.

For Kant, the fact of having a right and having the (i) _____ to enforce it via coercion cannot be separated, and he asserts that this marriage of rights and coercion is compatible with the freedom of everyone. This is not at all peculiar from the standpoint of modern political thought—what good is a right if its violation triggers no enforcement (be it punishment or (ii) _____)? The necessity of coercion is not at all in conflict with the freedom of everyone, because this coercion only comes into play when someone has (iii) _____ someone else.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
technique	amortization	questioned the hypothesis of
license	reward	violated the rights of
prohibition	restitution	granted civil liberties to

Solution:

In the first sentence, use the clue “he asserts that this marriage of rights and coercion is compatible with the freedom of everyone” to help fill in the first blank. Kant believes that “coercion” is “married to” rights and is compatible with freedom for all. So we want something in the first blank like “right” or “power.” Kant believes that rights are meaningless without enforcement. Only the choice “license” can work (while a “license” can be physical, like a driver’s license, “license” can also mean “right”).

The second blank is part of the phrase “punishment or _____,” which we are told is the “enforcement” resulting from the violation of a right. So the blank should be something, other than punishment, that constitutes enforcement against someone who violates a right. (More simply, it should be something bad!) Only “restitution” works. Restitution is compensating the victim in some way (perhaps monetarily or by returning stolen goods).

In the final sentence, “coercion only comes into play when someone has _____ someone else.” Throughout the text, “coercion” means enforcement against someone who has violated the rights of someone else. The meaning is the same here. The answer is “violated the rights of.”

The complete and correct answer is this combination:

Blank (i)
license

Blank (ii)
restitution

Blank (iii)
violated the rights of

In theory, there are $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$ possible ways to answer a 3-blank Text Completion—and only one of those 27 ways is correct. The guessing odds will go down, but don’t be intimidated. Just follow the basic process: come up with your own filler for each blank, and match to the answer choices. If you’re confused by this example, don’t worry! We’ll start from the beginning in our *Text Completion & Sentence Equivalence* strategy guide.

Strategy Tip: As on the old GRE, do NOT “write your own story.” The GRE cannot give you a blank without also giving you a clue, physically written down in the passage, telling you what kind of word or phrase MUST go in that blank. Find that clue. You should be able to give textual evidence for each answer choice you select.

Verbal: Sentence Equivalence Questions

In this question type, you are given one sentence with a single blank. There are six answer choices, and you are asked to pick TWO choices that fit the blank and are alike in meaning.

Of the new question types, this one depends the most on vocabulary and also yields the most to strategy.

No partial credit is given on Sentence Equivalence; both correct answers must be selected. When you pick two of six choices, there are 15 possible combinations of choices, and only one is correct. However, this is not nearly as daunting as it sounds.

Think of it this way—if you have six choices, but the two correct ones must be “similar in meaning,” then you have, at most, three possible PAIRS of choices. Maybe fewer, since not all choices are guaranteed to have a “partner.” If you can match up the “pairs,” you can seriously narrow down your options.

Here is a sample set of answer choices:

- A tractable
- B taciturn
- C arbitrary
- D tantamount
- E reticent
- F amenable

We haven't even given you the question here, because we want to point out how much you can do with the choices alone, if you have studied vocabulary sufficiently.

TRACTABLE and AMENABLE are synonyms (tractable, amenable people will do whatever you want them to do). TACITURN and RETICENT are synonyms (both mean "not talkative"). ARBITRARY (based on one's own will) and TANTAMOUT (equivalent) are not similar in meaning and therefore cannot be a pair. Therefore, the ONLY possible answers are {A, F} and {B, E}. We have improved our chances from 1 in 15 to a 50/50 shot without even reading the question!

Of course, in approaching a Sentence Equivalence, we do want to analyze the sentence the same way we would with a Text Completion—read for a textual clue that tells you what type of word MUST go in the blank. Then look for a matching pair.

Strategy Tip: If you're sure that a word in the choices does NOT have a partner, cross it out! For instance, if A and C are partners, and E and F are partners, and you're sure B and D are not each other's partners, cross out B and D completely. They cannot be the answer together, nor can either one be part of the answer.

The sentence for the answer choice above could read,

Though the dinner guests were quite _____, the hostess did her best to keep the conversation active and engaging.

Thus, B and E are the best choices. Let's try an example.

While athletes usually expect to achieve their greatest feats in their teens or twenties, opera singers don't reach the _____ of their vocal powers until middle age.

- A harmony
- B zenith
- C acme
- D terminus
- E nadir
- F cessation

Solution:

Those with strong vocabularies might go straight to the choices to make pairs. ZENITH and ACME are synonyms, meaning “high point, peak.” TERMINUS and CESSATION are synonyms, meaning “end.” NADIR is a low point and HARMONY is present here as a trap answer reminding us of opera singers. *Cross off A and E, since they do not have partners.* Then, go back to the sentence, knowing that your only options are a pair meaning “peak” and a pair meaning “end.”

The answer is {B, C}.

Math: Quantitative Comparison

This format is a holdover from the old exam. Here’s a quick example:

Quantity A x **Quantity B** x^2

- (A) Quantity A is greater.
- (B) Quantity B is greater.
- (C) The two quantities are equal.
- (D) The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

Solution: If $x = 0$, the quantities are equal. If $x = 2$, quantity B is greater. Thus, we don’t have enough information.

The answer is D.

Let’s look at the new math question formats.

Math: Select One or More Answer Choices

According to the *Official Guide to the GRE Revised General Test*, the official directions for “Select One or More Answer Choices” read as follows:

Directions: Select one or more answer choices according to the specific question directions.

If the question does not specify how many answer choices to select, select all that apply.

The correct answer may be just one of the choices or as many as all of the choices, depending on the question.

No credit is given unless you select all of the correct choices and no others.

If the question specifies how many answer choices to select, select exactly that number of choices.

Note that there is no “partial credit.” If three of six choices are correct and you select two of the three, no credit is given. It will also be important to read the directions carefully.

That said, many of these questions look *very* similar to those on the “old” GRE. For instance, here is a question that could have appeared on the GRE in the past:

If $ab = |a| \times |b|$, which of the following *must* be true?

- I. $a = b$
 - II. $a > 0$ and $b > 0$
 - III. $ab > 0$
- A. II only
 - B. III only
 - C. I and III only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III

Solution: If $ab = |a| \times |b|$, then we know ab is positive, since the right side of the equation must be positive. If ab is positive, however, that doesn't necessarily mean that a and b are each positive; it simply means that they have the same sign.

- I. It is not true that a must equal b . For instance, a could be 2 and b could be 3.
- II. It is not true that a and b must each be positive. For instance, a could be -3 and b could be -4 .
- III. True. Since $|a| \times |b|$ must be positive, ab must be positive as well.

The answer is B (III only).

Note that, if you determined that statement I was false, you could eliminate choices C and E before considering the remaining statements. Then, if you were confident that II was also false, you could safely pick answer choice B, III only, without even trying statement III, since “None of the above” isn't an option. That is, because of the multiple choice answers, it is sometimes not necessary to consider each statement individually. This is the aspect of such problems that will change on the new exam.

Here is the same problem, in the new format.

If $ab = |a| \times |b|$, which of the following *must* be true?

Indicate all such statements.

- A $a = b$
- B $a > 0$ and $b > 0$
- C $ab > 0$

Strategy Tip: Make sure to fully “process” the statement in the question (simplify it or list the possible scenarios) before considering the answer choices. This will save you time in the long run!

Here, we would simply select choice C. The only thing that has changed is that we can't do process of elimination; we must always consider each statement individually. On the upside, the problem has become much more straightforward and compact (not every real-life problem has exactly five possible solutions; why should those on the GRE?).

4. Math: Numeric Entry

This question type requires the test taker to key a numeric answer into a box on the screen. You are not able to “work backwards” from answer choices, and in many cases it will be difficult to make a guess. However, the principles being tested are the same as on the old GRE.

Here is a sample question:

If $x*y = 2xy - (x - y)$, what is the value of $3*4$?

Solution:

We are given a function involving two variables, x and y , and asked to substitute 3 for x and 4 for y :

$$\begin{aligned}x*y &= 2xy - (x - y) \\3*4 &= 2(3)(4) - (3 - 4) \\3*4 &= 24 - (-1) \\3*4 &= 25\end{aligned}$$

The answer is 25.

Thus, you would type 25 into the box.

Okay. You've now got a good start on understanding the structure and question formats of the new GRE. Now it's time to begin fine-tuning your skills.

g

Chapter 2
of

TEXT COMPLETION &
SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

TEXT
COMPLETIONS

In This Chapter . . .

g

- Three-Step Process for Text Completions
- Bad News and Good News About Text Completions
- How to Write Good Fill-ins
- Pivot Words
- Double-Blank and Triple-Blank Text Completions
- Tricky Aspects of Text Completion Sentences
- Traps to Avoid During Elimination
- Text Completion Recap

TEXT COMPLETIONS

Text Completion questions on the GRE are sentences or paragraphs with 1, 2, or 3 blanks for which you must select the appropriate word or words.

Let's see an example of the simplest variety of Text Completion, one with a single blank.

Despite his intense _____, he failed to secure the prestigious university's coveted diploma.

imbibition
lugubriosity
lucubration
magnanimity
mettle

All single-blank Text Completions have exactly five answer choices, of which exactly one is correct. All the words fitting into a blank have the same part of speech.

These questions are very much like some of the questions you probably saw on the SAT.

Your task is to find the choice that **best fits the meaning** of the sentence as a whole.

The best approach will be to **anticipate an answer** before looking at the choices. Many people don't do this. Rather, they just plug the choices in one by one, rereading the sentence and stopping when it "sounds good."

Here's how you can tell: based on empirical data about the GRE, we know that problems of this type with right answer A are, on average, significantly easier than problems with right answer E. 27% of test takers got "A-problems" wrong, whereas 46% of test takers got "E-problems" wrong—almost twice as many!

Do you think that the GRE deliberately wrote problems with correct answer E to be that much harder than problems with correct answer A? That's very unlikely. What's probably happening is that people are lazy. If you don't predict the answer and just plug the choices instead—and the correct answer is A—then you get lucky. The sentence probably makes sense, and you pick A. On the other hand, if the right answer is E, then your lack of good process punishes you. You waste a lot of time plugging and re-reading, you get confused, and you go off the rails.

By the way, the new GRE doesn't actually label the choices A, B, C, D, and E anymore (as in the example problem above—the choices appear in boxes). To answer a question, you simply click on your choice, and the entire box is highlighted. You get a chance to confirm before submitting that answer. (Also, you're allowed to go back and change answers anytime before the clock runs out.)

Although the real problems don't label the answers with letters, we'll still use that nomenclature in this book, because everyone understands what we mean by "answer choice D," and because saying "the choice second from the bottom" sounds pretty silly. We'll also recommend in the following pages that you write "A B C D E" on your paper for each question in order to use Process of Elimination.

That said, single-blank questions are pretty straightforward. Follow the three-step process described in the next few pages to give yourself the best chance of getting any question right!

(By the way, we'll work through the above example in just a few minutes.)

Three-Step Process for Text Completions

Let's look at a straightforward example.

If the student had been less _____, he would not have been expelled from his grade school.

indefatigable
perseverant
refractory
playful
indigent

1. Read only the sentence.

The answer choices will distract you if you read them before you've made sense of the sentence.

2. Find the target, clue and the pivot, and write down your own fill-in.

The clue and the pivot are the two most important parts of the sentence. **The target is the thing in the sentence that the blank is describing.** Stating the target explicitly can help to locate the clue. Here, the target is simply *the student*.

Note: If the blank represents a missing noun, the idea of a "target" may not apply. That's okay. Targets are very helpful when the blank represents a missing adjective, and can also be useful when the blank represents a missing verb.

The clue is what forces the contents of the blank to be perfectly predictable. In other words, the clue solves the mystery of the blank. Look for dramatic action or emotion. The clue should tell us more about the target (*the student*).

In this case, the clue is *expelled*.

The pivot is what determines the relationship between the blank and the clue. Will the blank agree with the clue? Or will the blank actually disagree with the clue? It depends on the pivot.

The sentence reads *less _____ ...not expelled*. So the pivot is *less...not*.

Think about what this means. If the student were *less such-and-such*, then he would *not* have been expelled.

So *such-and-such* got him expelled. In other words, the blank agrees with *expelled*. *Less* and *not* cancel each other out as negatives.

Finally, **the fill-in is what you predict the answer to be.** At this point, how would you describe this student using the blank? Write down this adjective or phrase, as well as your A through E.

badly behaved

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E

3. Compare to each answer choice.

Here are the choices again. One at a time, insert the word into the blank, match to your fill-in, and mark down Good (✓), Bad (✗), Sort Of (~), or Unknown (?).

indefatigable = tireless

perseverant = determined, unstoppable

refractory = ??

playful

indigent = poor

So now your paper might look like this.

badly behaved

- A ✗
- B ✗
- C ?
- D ~
- E ~

The correct answer is in fact C, since *refractory* means “rebellious.” Even if you didn’t know what *refractory* means, you would have a good shot at getting this problem right through process of elimination. Also notice that you can imagine an interesting story around some of the wrong answer choices. If the student had been less *playful*, he wouldn’t have been expelled? What went wrong in some game? Or if the student had been less *indigent*, he wouldn’t have been expelled? How horrible—what an indictment of the administration of the school.

We should put our natural desire for good stories out of our head when we do Text Completions. What we want for our fill-in is **complete predictability and redundancy**. There should be no surprises in the blank—after all, this is a standardized test, and there is only one right answer. **Avoid interesting stories!**

Let's try it again with the example from earlier in the chapter:

Despite his intense _____, he failed to secure the prestigious university's coveted diploma.

imbibition
lugubriosity
lucubration
magnanimity
mettle

First, read **ONLY** the sentence. Find the clue (failed to secure the prestigious university's coveted diploma) and the pivot (despite). Write your own fill-in—here, *studying* would be a good choice. Now compare *studying* with every answer choice.

studying

- A ×
- B ×
- C ✓
- D ×
- E ~

The answer is C. *Lucubration* means intense study.

Of course, you may have some question marks due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge, in which case you should make your best guess *without delay*—you have limited time to complete the section, and staring at the words for longer will not suddenly make up for a lack of vocabulary.

Don't worry—there's a (prodigious!) section on vocabulary coming up later in this book.

Bad News and Good News About Text Completions

Bad News: **The problems are full of tough vocabulary—not just in the choices, but sometimes even in the sentences themselves.**

Your mastery of a large number of GRE appropriate words is the biggest single factor that will determine your success on the problem.

However...

Good News: **You get a lot of context for the vocabulary.**

The context does have its drawbacks, though...

Bad News: **The sentences require time to read.**

Some of these sentences are pretty long. You might guess that longer sentences are harder.

That proves not to be entirely true. In fact, what seems to be the case is that the extra reading burden is offset by the fact that long sentences give you more clues to the right answer. We'll discuss longer sentences more when we move on to double-blank and triple-blank Text Completions.

Pivot Words

Fill in your own word in this sentence:

Despite his reputation for _____, the politician decided that in a time of crisis it was important to speak honestly and forthrightly.

Did you say something like “not being direct”? The target is *the politician*. The pivot word *despite* indicates an *opposite direction*. *Honestly and forthrightly* was the clue describing the politician. Since the pivot was negative, we pivoted away from *honestly and forthrightly*.

For all her studying, her performance on the test was _____.

This one relies on an idiom. Did you say something like “mediocre” or “bad”? The expression *for all X, Y* is in play here. *For all* here means “despite.” Thus, despite her studying, her performance was *not good*.

Although he has a reputation for volubility, others at the party didn’t find him to be especially _____.

Did you say something like “talkative”? Or did you go for “not talkative”? Notice we have a clue (*volubility*, which means “talkativeness”) and a pivot word, *although*. But we also have another pivot—the *not* in *didn’t*. Pivoting twice (much like turning 180 degrees, twice) is like not pivoting at all. In our blank, we just want another word for *talkative*.

Here are some common pivot words, phrases, and structures.

SAME DIRECTION	OPPOSITE DIRECTION	CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP
; (semicolon)	Although	As a result
: (colon)	Belied	Because
Also	But	Consequently
And	Despite	Hence
Besides	In spite of	So
Furthermore	Nevertheless	Therefore
In addition	On the contrary	Thus
In fact	On the other hand	
Just as ... as	Rather than	
Moreover	Still	
Not only ... but also	Though	
So ... as to be	Whether X or Y	
X, Y, and Z (items in a list)	Yet	

Drill: Sentence Analysis (Clues, Pivots, and Fill-Ins)

Analyze each sentence for Target, Clue, and Pivot, then fill in the blank in your own words.

1. The camp established by the aid workers provided a _____ for the refugees, many of whom had traveled for weeks to get there.
2. While others had given only accolades, the iconoclastic critic greeted the book's publication with a lengthy _____.
3. Though many have impugned her conclusions, the studies on which she based her analysis are beyond _____.
4. The ancient poem's value was more _____ than literary; the highly literal work made no attempt at lyricism, and ended by warning the reader never to lie.
5. French food could be said to be the most _____ of all cuisines, considering the high saturated fat content of the otherwise delectable *bechamels* and *remoulades*.
6. It is unfair and incorrect to _____ about an entire minority group based on the actions of a few people, whether those people are reprobates or model citizens.
7. For all the clamor about bipartisanship, in the end, voting _____ to factional loyalties.
8. While digital media should theoretically last forever, in actuality, there are warehouses full of abandoned computer tape drives and other media that have since been _____ by newer technologies.
9. Chad was the most mercurial of young people, but as an adult was able to _____ his wild fluctuations in personality.
10. The _____ position he adopted on the issue belied his reputation for equivocation.

Answers: Sentence Analysis

1. This sentence is pretty straightforward—we have the clues that *aid workers* are providing something for *refugees*, who have traveled for a long time to get there. A good fill-in would be *haven* or *sanctuary*.
2. This sentence has an opposite-direction pivot: *While*. We also have the clue that the critic is *iconoclastic*. Since most critics gave the book *accolades*—and an *iconoclastic* critic would do the opposite—a good fill-in would be something like *condemnation*.
3. The target is the *studies*. This sentence also has an opposite-direction pivot: *Though*. It seems that this person's conclusions aren't so great. The studies she used, though, *are* pretty great. We want to say something good about the studies, but we have *another* opposite-direction pivot, *beyond*. We want to say that the studies are so good that they are *beyond* something bad. This sentence would almost certainly be completed with the expression *beyond reproach*.
4. The target is the poem. We know that it is *more* _____ *than literary*—so it's not very literary. We then find out that it's *highly literal* and not even trying to be lyrical—sounds like a really bad poem! It ended by *warning the reader never to lie*. Whoa—that sounds like a *terrible* poem! Maybe the kind that would appear in a children's book. A good fill-in would be *moralistic* or *didactic*.
5. The target is *French food*. We might be tempted to fill in *delicious* in the blank, but that would be incorrectly inserting our own opinion. The clue clearly says that the French food is full of fat. A good fill-in would be *unhealthy*.
6. The target is the *entire minority group*. What should we *not* _____ about them? The clue is “based on the actions of a few people.” A good fill-in might be *make stereotypes* or *infer*.
7. The target is *voting*. This sentence depends on an idiom. *For all* here means *despite*. The clue is *clamor about bipartisanship* and the pivot is *for all* (meaning *despite*). Thus, the second part of the sentence should indicate that the voting was the opposite of *bipartisan*—that is, *partisan*. Since *factional loyalties* describe a partisan environment, a good fill-in would be *conformed* or *adhered*.
8. The target is *abandoned computer tape drives and other media*. We have the clue *digital media should theoretically last forever* and the pivot *while*. Thus, the meaning is that digital media does NOT last forever. This tracks with the idea of the computer tape drives being *abandoned*. A good fill-in would be *replaced*. GRE-type words that might appear here would be *supplanted* or *superseded*.
9. The target is *Chad*, or whatever Chad was able to do to his personality fluctuations. We have a clue about Chad—he was *mercurial*, which matches the idea of *wild fluctuations in personality*. We have a pivot, *but*, indicating that we need to go in the opposite direction. Thus, Chad was able to *hold back* or *moderate* his wild fluctuations. GRE-type words that might appear here would be *temper* or *damp*.
10. The target is the *position*. We know that the person in question has a *reputation for equivocation*. Our pivot is *belied*. Thus, a good fill-in would relate to the opposite of equivocation—something like *firm* or *resolute*.

Double-Blank and Triple-Blank Text Completions

Most Text Completion questions have more than one blank. Consider the following example:

Twentieth century America witnessed a nearly (i) _____ ascent to ever greater wealth, leaving its leaders (ii) _____ of publicly acknowledging budgetary limitations.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
portentous	chary
pertinacious	opprobrious
unremitting	implicate

In the sentence, the blanks are labeled with lowercase Roman numerals.

Below the sentence, the first column contains the choices—*portentous*, *pertinacious*, and *unremitting*—for the first blank. The second column contains the choices—*chary*, *opprobrious*, and *implicate*—for the second blank.

If you took the SAT, or remember the “old” GRE, you’ll notice something very different here—*our choice for the first blank is independent of our choice for the second blank*. That is, if we choose *unremitting* for the first blank, that does NOT mean that we have therefore chosen *implicate* for the second blank—we must instead make a separate decision for the second blank.

This means that we cannot “cheat” off one column to make our decision for the other. More importantly: *there is no partial credit*. You must get *both* words right or you receive no credit for your response. Thus, our chance of randomly guessing the correct answer is quite low (1 in 9).

It is very difficult to get these questions right based on incomplete information—we must understand the sentences, and we must know all or most of the words. This is why such a large portion of this book is dedicated to vocabulary acquisition.

Fortunately, the fact that we must choose each word independently is somewhat compensated for by the fact that, for each blank, there are only three options, not five (as in single-blank Text Completions),

One more pleasant feature of double-blank and triple blank problems is that, while they may *seem* harder because they are generally longer, there are also more clues for us to find. Also, having multiple clues means that there are generally two paths: a harder path and an easier path.

Which path would you rather take?

Start with the easier (or easiest) blank

Don’t just try to fill in the first blank automatically. Look at all of the blanks and figure out which one has the easiest clue. Then create a fill-in and use that fill-in as an extra clue for the harder blank(s).

Let’s go through an example.

Even seasoned opera singers, who otherwise affect an unflappable air, can be (i) _____ performing in Rome, where audiences traditionally view (ii) _____ performers as a birthright, passed down from heckler to heckler over generations.

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Blank #2 is easier. Why? Compare the clues and pivots:

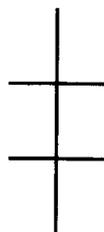
	Clues	Pivots	
Blank #1:	<i>seasoned</i> <i>unflappable</i>	<i>even...otherwise...</i>	The pivots express opposition. What is the opposite of <i>unflappable</i> ?
Blank #2:	<i>heckler</i>	none	No pivot = agreement

Our fill-in for #2 should probably be *heckling*. Remember to reuse the given language in the fill-in when you can.

Now we can use that fill-in as another clue. There is no pivot between the two blanks, meaning that the two fill-ins agree in some way. The relationship seems to be causal: the opera performers are going to react to that heckling. A likely fill-in would be *upset by* or *afraid of*.

Our paper might now look like this: afraid of...heckling

Also on your paper, draw a grid so that you can do process of elimination:



Or, if you prefer, write:

A	A
B	B
C	C

Now compare to the answer choices and mark your paper.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
intrepid about	extolling
daunted by	lionizing
tempered by	badgering

Here is an example of what a student might have written down for this question. This student wasn't sure about *tempered by*, and didn't know exactly about *lionizing* but felt that it wasn't quite right.

afraid of...heckling

x	x
✓	~
?	✓

Nevertheless, this student picked *daunted by* and *badgering*, which are the correct responses.

Remember, the only way to get credit for the question is to pick BOTH *daunted by* and *badgering*.

Now, let's see an example with three blanks.

Perceptions of the (i) _____ role of intellectual practices within modern life underlie the familiar stereotypes of the educated as eggheads, ideologues, or worse. These negative characterizations may be rooted in a (ii) _____ of the aims of academia, but they are unlikely to be (iii) _____ unless teachers take efforts to address them directly.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
incongruous	dissemination	espoused
refractory	confounding	dispelled
salubrious	corroboration	promulgated

While this sentence has three blanks instead of two, and is made up of more than one sentence, our method is the same—start with the easiest blank. The easiest blank is often the one surrounded by the most text—that is, the one that is furthest from the other two blanks and thus has the most potential clues located near it. Here, the first blank seems promising:

Perceptions of the (i) _____ role of intellectual practices within modern life underlie the familiar stereotypes of the educated as eggheads, ideologues, or worse.

The target is the *role*, and the role *underlies stereotypes* about eggheads “or worse.” So the word describing the role should be related to the idea of intellectual = egghead (a mild slang term roughly equivalent to “nerd”). Don't ignore the phrase *within modern life*. A good fill-in would be *irrelevant*. The sentence seems to be saying that people think intellectuals are eggheads because intellectual practices are not a helpful or important part of modern life.

The second sentence mirrors that idea (*These negative characterizations...*). It seems clear that the speaker is trying to defend academia. A good fill-in for the second blank would be *misunderstanding* or *twisting* (we're not really sure if the people who think intellectuals are “eggheads” are getting it wrong deliberately or not).

Finally, we have a negative pivot: *unlikely* (and another one, *unless*). Let's work backwards on this sentence:

If teachers DON'T address negative stereotypes directly...

the stereotypes will continue

so, the stereotypes are *unlikely to be eliminated or corrected*

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On our paper, we might have:

irrelevant misunderstanding eliminated

Or, if you prefer:

irrelevant	misunderstanding	eliminated
A	A	A
B	B	B
C	C	C

Let's consider our choices and mark our paper appropriately:

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
incongruous	dissemination	espoused
refractory	confounding	dispelled
salubrious	corroboration	promulgated

Here is one student's attempt:

✓	x	~
?	✓	✓
x	x	x

The correct answer is **incongruous**, **confounding**, and **dispelled**.

Finally, double-blank and triple-blank questions can sometimes have choices that are phrases rather than single words. Usually in these questions, vocabulary is less of an issue, and the hard part is simply decoding the sentence.

Try this question:

(i) _____ subject of the sermon, his words possessed a (ii) _____ quality few could fail to find utterly enchanting. It was only when his conclusion devolved into a (iii) _____ that the congregation began to fantasize about returning to the comfort of home.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
In spite of the execrable	euphuistic	thoroughly fallacious slew of prevarications
Notwithstanding the salubrious	euphemistic	seemingly unending string of divagations
Because of the inauspicious	eulogistic	dubiously sanctified series of assignations

Let's attack the easiest blank first. That might be the last one, since we have the clues that the sermon's conclusion *devolved* into whatever goes in the blank, and that *the congregation began to fantasize about returning to the comfort of home*. Both clues tell us that we want a fill-in that means something like *bunch of stupid or boring stuff*.

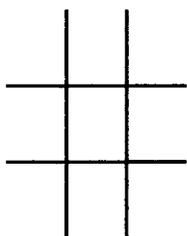
Now that we have mentally completed the last sentence, it might help to paraphrase it before using the information to work backwards and analyze the rest of the sentence. Paraphrase: *It was only when the conclusion become stupid or boring that the people got bored*. The phrase *It was only when* serves as a pivot—before things got stupid or boring, they must have been pretty good, as we can verify from the clue *utterly enchanting*.

The second blank is pretty easy: *His words possessed a _____ quality few could fail to find utterly enchanting*. That means that nearly everyone finds his words enchanting. In fact, we could recycle that word and put it in the blank—a good fill-in here would be *enchanting*.

Finally, the first blank. It's pretty hard to fill this one in without glancing at the answer choices, but let's at least try to figure out a general category of what we'll be looking for. There is a blank about the *subject* of the sermon, and then something nice about the words used in the sermon. Either these two things will go in the same direction or in an opposite direction.

We might have something like this on our paper:

something comparing *subject w/ words* enchanting stupid/boring stuff



Now let's try the choices (in any order you prefer).

In the first blank, *in spite of the execrable* makes sense—the meaning is *In spite of the bad quality of the topic, the words of the sermon were enchanting*. In the second option, *notwithstanding* is similar to *in spite of*, so we would expect something bad to come after, but *salubrious* means *healthy*. Since the third choice begins with *because*, we would expect something positive to come after it (*Because of some good quality of the sermon, the words were enchanting*). But *inauspicious* means *likely to be unsuccessful*. Only *in spite of the execrable* works.

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In the second blank, only *euphuistic* works. The root *eu* means *good*, but that's not too helpful here, since all three words use that root. However, *euphemistic* (substituting inoffensive words in for more explicit or hurtful ones) doesn't make sense, and *eulogistic* (full of praise, especially for a deceased person) also doesn't match the idea of *enchanted*.

Finally, the only phrase that means anything like *stupid/boring stuff* is *seemingly unending string of divagations* (*divagations* are tangents, or instances of going off-topic). *Prevarications* are falsehoods, and *assignations* are romantic meetups.

The answer is *In spite of the execrable, euphuistic, and seemingly unending string of divagations*.

Tricky Aspects of Text Completion Sentences

Take a look at this example.

Although Paula claimed not to be _____ that she was not selected for the scholarship, we nevertheless worried that our typically sanguine friend was not entirely _____ by the decision.

This sentence is just chock-full of switchbacks. Count the oppositional pivots: *Although...not...nevertheless...typically...not entirely...*

It's easy to lose your way in a thicket of **Double-Negative Pivots**, especially under exam pressure. How many wrongs make a right?

When you face a situation such as this...

Break it down

Chop up the sentence and process it in small chunks. You can't rewrite the sentence, but focus on bits at a time. Start with the earliest or the most concrete part of the story. Then add one chunk at a time. Change complicated pivots to simple words, such as *but* and *so*.

As you go, emotionally punctuate each part of the story. Exaggerate the switchbacks in your mental voice, as if you were telling a story you really cared about. Reword as you go, if you must. Finally, as you think about the whole, discard unnecessary elements, so you don't have to hold everything in your head at once.

For the sentence above, the breakdown might go like this.

Our friend Paula is *typically* sanguine = optimistic ☺

She was not selected for a scholarship ☹

She claimed NOT to be _____

BUT

We still worried ☹

that she was NOT entirely _____ by the decision.

The fill-ins should be pretty easy to generate now: *upset/saddened* ☹ for the first blank, and *unaffected* for the second.

It looks like a lot of work, but your brain can generate this train of thought in seconds. Give it a try.

Other tricky aspects of the sentence yield to the same basic medicine: **Break it Down**.

Let's break down a few more challenging sentence types.

Unfamiliar Style or Content

“That such a _____ of precedent would be countenanced was itself unprecedented in the court, a bastion of traditionalism.”

The sentence starts with a *That* clause, a hallmark of a very academic written style. Moreover, the content is about a legal matter. These two factors combine with difficult vocabulary (*precedent, countenanced, bastion*) to make the sentence forbidding.

The meaning of the sentence is something like, “That such a _____ of previously established examples would be tolerated was a surprising instance of a very traditional court going against tradition.”

A good fill-in here would be something like *rejection*.

Red Herring Clues

“By rigorously observing social behavior, anthropologists _____ strict, though implicit, codes of conduct.”

A few “clues” might not really be clues. (“Red herring” is an expression for something that seems like it’s going to be important, but turns out to be just a distraction. The expression arose when criminals started rubbing herring—a type of fish—on trails to distract the hunting dogs chasing after the criminals.)

Here, the word *strict* turns out to be less important to the answer than *implicit*. Decoy answers might be *undermine* or *challenge* (somehow dealing with the *strict* element, but introducing too much new information in the fill-in). The real meaning of the sentence is based on the idea that, because the behavior is implicit (hinted at or unspoken), anthropologists have to be rigorous in their observations in order to detect or decode it. A good fill-in would be something like *reveal* or *make explicit*.

Blanks in Tough Spots

“If these managers (i) _____ the advantages of the new deep-sea recovery methodology to be (ii) _____ then it will rapidly be judged less useful than current alternatives by the broader business community.”

Some blanks are positioned in such a way that it’s hard to hold the sentence in your head. The gaps occur early or in strategic places. For instance, in the sentence above, the verb of the first clause is missing. In contrast, some easier questions let you formulate the thought relatively easily without the words in the blank or blanks.

A completed version of this sentence would read something like, “If these managers find the advantages... to be lack-
ing, then...”

Throughout all these examples, the main thing to remember is that we have to make sense of the sentence, and the best way to do that is to **break it down into pieces and make sense of the parts**. Reword or simplify if you have to. Start at the easiest-to-understand chunk and work outwards from there.

Drill: Sentence Analysis with Multiple Blanks

Analyze each sentence for Target, Clue, and Pivot, then fill in the blanks in your own words. Here, you're just practicing the first two steps of the strategy. We'll practice complete problems soon.

1. The radio host claimed to have preternatural powers that allowed her to (i) _____ future events, from cataclysms and illnesses to global booms and personal (ii) _____.
2. The company president was not just (i) _____ but positively (ii) _____; his subordinates lived in perpetual fear of his reproof.
3. Marissa's date was neither (i) _____ nor (ii) _____; he was surly to the waiter and expatiated at great length about mechanical engineering, a topic Marissa finds quite tedious.
4. We ought not (i) _____ our leaders; it is our (ii) _____ and foibles that make us human, and only by humanizing the greatest among us can we fully understand those whose achievements we admire.
5. In her later years, the artist (i) _____ the wild, chaotic imagery of her early work and instead embraced a prim, highly (ii) _____ formalism.
6. After Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, he was greeted not with (i) _____ but with a barrage of ridicule. The London Times called the invention the latest American "humbug," disbelieving electricians declared the machine a (ii) _____, and prominent capitalists—always with an eye out to make a profit—all (iii) _____ to buy Graham's patent.
7. Louis Armstrong rose to (i) _____ in the 1920s as an innovative cornet and trumpet player. A (ii) _____ influence in jazz, he is largely credited for shifting focus from a style based on group improvisation to one based on solo performance—such as his own distinctive, even (iii) _____ solos.
8. While many people think of migraines simply as bad headaches, they are actually neurological events that can include numbness, slurred speech, and ringing in the ears, with or without headache. Even doctors are (i) _____ to this mischaracterization, thus leading to frequent (ii) _____; thus "stroke" or "fibromyalgia" patients are getting treatment that does not work and may even be (iii) _____.
9. For years, the idea that blind people can hear better than sighted people was considered something of an old (i) _____. However, functional brain imaging has recently uncovered the fact that a brain region called V1, (ii) _____ at the back of the skull and which normally only responds to light has actually been rewired in the brains of blind people and now processes auditory information in what could be termed a stunning example of the brain's (iii) _____.
10. Throughout the history of human thought, virtually every thinker has (i) _____ of the mind as a unitary entity. (ii) _____, in the 1960s Roger Sperry conducted his famous studies working with epileptics who had been treated via the cutting of the *corpus callosum*, or division between the two hemispheres, during which he was able to observe that each half of the brain could gain new information independently, and that one hemisphere could be entirely unaware of what the other had learned or experienced. Truly, our brains are not unitary, but (iii) _____.

Answers: Sentence Analysis with Multiple Blanks

1. The clue for the first blank is *preternatural powers*. A good fill-in is *predict*. The clue for the second blank is *from cataclysms and illnesses to global booms...* A *from... to...* structure will have to set up opposites. Furthermore, we can expect a comparison of *two* things with *two* other things to make some sort of logical pattern (otherwise, how could the GRE expect us to know what to put in the blanks?). A *cataclysm* is a big, bad thing and *illnesses* are a smaller, bad thing. *Global booms* are a big, good thing, so we're looking for a smaller, good thing. A good fill-in might be *windfalls* or *strokes of luck*.
2. The clue is that the subordinates lived in fear. We also have an important sentence pattern: *not just _____ but positively _____*. This pattern indicates that the second thing should be a more extreme version of the first. Good fill-ins might be *bossy* and *domineering* or even *bossy* and *terrifying*.
3. Marissa's date was neither *nice* nor *interesting*; he was surly to the waiter and expatiated at great length about mechanical engineering, a topic Marissa finds quite tedious. Notice once again the structure of comparing two things with two other things; there must be a logical pattern. In this case, the first blank (we filled in *nice*) is the opposite of *surly*, and the second blank (we filled in *interesting*) is the opposite of the part about talking in a boring way. The first thing goes with the first thing and the second thing goes with the second thing.
4. *Only by humanizing the greatest among us can we fully understand those whose achievements we admire* is a pretty big clue—that's a pretty strong statement that gives us a very good idea of the point of the sentence. We have an opposite-direction pivot (*not*)—a good fill-in for the first blank would be *idealize*. The second blank is matched up with *foibles*, so it will probably mean something very similar, perhaps *flaws*.
5. Since the later years are being contrasted with the early years, the first blank should contain something like *cast off* or *eschewed*. In the second blank, we can simply recycle *prim* or *formal*—she cast off her old, wild style to pursue a *prim, highly formal formalism*.
6. For the first blank, we have an opposite-direction pivot (*not with _____ but with ridicule*). Thus, *praise* would be a good fill-in for the first blank. The clue about the electricians is *disbelieving*, so a good fill-in for the second blank would be *hoax*. The third sentence is perhaps the trickiest. If read in isolation, the sentence would seem to indicate that capitalists "always with an eye out to make a profit" would want to *buy* the patent. However, this item is part of a list of ways in which Graham was *ridiculed*. Thus, a correct fill-in for the third blank would indicate that the capitalists did NOT want to buy the patent—a word like *declined* would fit nicely.
7. If Armstrong *rose*, then we're looking for a word describing a high-up position—something like *prominence* would be a good fill-in for the first blank. For the second blank, simply recycle *influence* and fill in something like *influential* (a nice GRE word might be *foundational*). For the third blank, we want something even more distinctive than *distinctive*—something like *showy, flashy, or ostentatious*.
8. Most people make mistakes in how they think of migraines—even *doctors*. From that clue, a good fill-in for the first blank would be *prone* (or something else indicating that the doctors also make this mistake). Following this idea, the second blank should say something like *misdiagnoses* (this idea is also supported by the use of "stroke" and "fibromyalgia" in quotation marks, indicating that the patients do not really have those conditions). Finally, there is an important sentence pattern in the final sentence: *does not work and may even be _____*. The *even* indicates that we want something even worse than *does not work*. A good fill-in would be *harmful*.
9. The opposite-direction pivot in the second sentence (*However*), followed by news of a recent discovery, indicates that whatever was thought *for years* has turned out to be incorrect. Thus, a good fill-in for the first blank would

be *folk tale* or *urban legend*. A more GRE-type word would be *canard*. The second blank should simply say something like *located*. The third blank needs to sum up the idea that part of the brain that normally only responds to light has actually been repurposed to do something else. Thus, a good fill-in would be something like *versatility* or *plasticity*.

10. The first blank should simply be a verb like *thought* or *conceived* (both words that can be followed by *of*). We learn from the first sentence that the traditional way to think of the mind is *as a unitary entity*. The next sentence describes the mind acting in a very non-unitary way (a binary way, actually). So, the word in the second blank should be something like *however*. Finally, the third blank simply needs to be the opposite of *unitary*—perhaps *modular* or *decentralized*.

Traps to Avoid During Elimination

We've just discussed traps involved in the sentences themselves, and practiced filling in our own words in the blanks. When we are doing complete GRE problems, though, as we are about to do, there are a few more traps you should watch out for as you go through the three-step process and select an answer.

Theme Trap

Give the following problem a try.

The event horizon, or boundary, of a black hole represents both (i) _____ and intangibility; space travelers would pass through this literal "point of no return" so (ii) _____ that the precise moment at which their fate was sealed would almost certainly not be registered.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
hazard	indiscernibly
irrevocability	dangerously
infallibility	heroically

Which is the easier blank?

Most would agree that the second blank is easier. The clue is *the moment... would not be registered*, and the lack of a pivot tells us that the fill-in agrees with the clue. So we might fill in something like *without registering* (again, recycling language from the sentence itself).

Turning to the first blank, we can see that the *without registering* fill-in lines up with *intangibility*, while the first blank lines up with "point of no return." So we might fill in *no return* for the first blank.

Now we match to the answer choices. Only *indiscernibly* fits *without registering*. Only *irrevocability* fits *no return*. *Irrevocability* and *Indiscernibly* are the correct responses.

A *theme trap* in a wrong answer choice shares a theme or field (such as medicine, sports, etc.) with the sentence. As a result, the choice sounds okay on its own and somehow "together" with the sentence, even though it doesn't really fit the blanks.

Notice the trap language in the choices: *hazard*, *dangerously*, *heroically*. It's possible that you might construct a narrative around the question that would make some of these trap answers appealing. Don't "write your own story," and don't just pick words that "seem familiar" or "feel right." Have the mental discipline to *follow the strategy every time*.

Easy But Not Close Enough Trap

Now try this problem.

Marie was nettled by her sister’s constant jocularly and preferred a _____ approach to life.

pessimistic
grim
waggish
staid
sycophantic

It was probably pretty easy for you to identify the clues (*nettled, jocularly, preferred*) and to see that Marie is against *jocularly* or joking behavior. A fill-in might be *serious*.

Now, imagine that you go through the answer choices. *Pessimistic* and *grim* both “sort of” match, but they both seem to go too far. Just because Marie doesn’t like her sister’s constant joking, must she be *pessimistic* or *grim* in her outlook on life? Not necessarily. Perhaps you don’t remember what *waggish* or *staid* mean, and you don’t totally remember *sycophantic* either, but you’re sure it doesn’t mean *serious*.

So your paper might look like this:

serious

- A ~
- B ~
- C ?
- D ?
- E x

We can now identify another trap. You don’t like *pessimistic* or *grim*, but you don’t know the other words, so you find yourself reluctant to choose (C) or (D). Unfortunately, you’re falling into a trap...

The *Easy But Not Close Enough Trap* occurs when a wrong answer choice is “in the ballpark” but something is off in the meaning—however, the word is familiar, so it’s attractive.

You might be afraid to pick a word you don’t know. **Overcome this fear.** As it turns out, the correct answer is *staid*, which does mean “serious, sedate by temperament or habits.”

You will also see **Reversal traps** (you miss a pivot or mix up a negative). This is a matter of attention to detail in the moment.

Finally, there are **vocab traps**. *Conversant* doesn’t mean *talkative* (it means *knowledgeable*), *factitious* does not mean *factual* (it means the opposite!), and *ingenuous* can look a lot like *ingenious* if you’re not reading carefully. We’re going to have to do some serious vocab work! Fortunately, much of this book talks about exactly that.

Text Completion Recap

Three-Step Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read only the sentence.2. Find the clue and pivot, and write down your own fill-in.3. Compare to each answer choice.
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Principle for Writing Fill-ins

Fill-in = Clue + Pivot. The Clue describes the Target. Reuse material from the sentence when writing a Fill-in.

Principle for Two or Three Blanks

Start with the easier/easiest blank. Work outwards from the part of the sentence that is easiest to understand.

Methods	Traps
Break down tricky sentences.	Double Negative Pivots Unfamiliar Style/Content Red Herring Clues Blanks in Tough Spots
Stick to the basic process as you eliminate.	Theme: Wrong answer is thematically related to the stem. Easy But Not Close Enough: familiar, attractive word that's clearly off in some way. Reversal (pivots)

Drill: Easy Questions

Here is the first of three 20-question Text Completion drills. Remember to follow the strategy! Look for clues and pivots, write down your own fill-in on separate paper, write ABCDE or make a grid, and do process of elimination.

You won't get any more reminders after this, so it's important that you make a vow to yourself to maintain the mental discipline to use this strategy and not simply revert back to what most people do (look at the question and pick the choices that "seem best.")

You will also want to make a list of vocabulary words to look up later (if you haven't been making such a list already!). Even once you've done these drills once, you could still spend quite a long time just learning the words in these sixty problems (and then going over the problems again—another reason to work on separate paper and not in the book).

1. Although it appeared to be _____ after its stagnation and eventual cancellation in 1989, *Doctor Who* returned to BBC in 2005 to become the longest-running science-fiction show in history.

moribund
ascendant
unflagging
defunct
sated

2. _____ against China's record on environmental protection has become a ubiquitous pastime at energy summits.

Inveigling
Opining
Needling
Fulminating
Lauding

3. Queen Blanche's brothers, Louis and Robert, were appointed _____ to her spouse only in 1345, more than a decade after her coronation.

protégés
vassals
serfs
precursors
minions

4. Social critic Neil Postman identified what he saw as a sort of intellectual _____ when he wrote, "What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one."

pondering
malingering
entropy
cerebration
banishment

5. The doctor's presentation at the conference gave numerous suggestions for incurring the _____ of the treatment while obviating damage to auxiliary structures.

diagnosis
mien
prognosis
costs
benefits

6. Richardson's (i) _____ handling of the (ii) _____ scandal successfully prevented what seemed poised to become the spectacular dissipation of his coalition.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
penitent	fretful
adroit	looming
heterogeneous	ecumenical

7. The (i) _____ forces were just barely held at bay by a loyalist battalion (ii) _____ by its allies' reinforcements.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
revolting	obviated
outclassed	bolstered
fascistic	sapped

8. While it would be lovely if what he said were true, I'm afraid he is _____ liar.

a libelous
an avowed
a nullifying
an unverified
a forfeited

9. In determining the defendant's sentencing, the jury will take into account whether he acted on _____ motives or truly did act primarily to shield the neighborhood from the kingpin's reprisal.

ulterior
criminal
recidivist
lucrative
violent

10. Under the mismanagement of the Socialist Party, Burma drifted into economic _____ and isolation.

monotony
opulence
nonchalance
decrepitude
recriminations

11. As the effects of foreign competition and a sense of threatened _____ reached each canton, talk of independence grew more common.

immunity
apotheosis
belligerence
recidivism
autonomy

12. He is the most hubristic individual I've ever met, and never declines an opportunity for _____.

hedonism
augmentation
profit
aggrandizing
bluster

13. (i) _____ by circumstance, the entrepreneur once known for his overweening (ii) _____ was now seen by others as the possessor of a broken spirit and timid demeanor.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
unaffected	pretension
humbled	swagger
exalted	wealth

14. Though she had made attempts toward adopting a more (i) _____ lifestyle, she was not above indulging her proclivities towards (ii) _____ dishes.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
truculent	odious
salutary	edible
frugal	delectable

15. The discovery that exposure to allergens through the mother's diet during the last trimester could lead to complications during the first year after birth (i) _____ the UK Department of Health to (ii) _____ dietary recommendations for expecting mothers.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
prompted	intuit
instigated	codify
lulled	officiate

16. Fearful of being seen as (i) _____, the Bieber Appreciation Society struggled to include (ii) _____ voices in its monthly newsletter.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
enthusiasts	propitiatory
detractors	deprecatory
a clique	tantamount

17. The fact that bringing together criminals and their victims for a moderated conversation has been shown to vastly reduce rates of (i) _____ can be explained by the fact that those who commit crimes can only do so by convincing themselves their actions have no (ii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
violence	inconsistencies
recidivism	resonance
malfesance	ramifications

18. The (i) _____ of monks and abbots in Eastern Christianity were typically of black cloth, indicating their spiritual indifference to matters of this world and their commitment to a (ii) _____ reality. In this regard, the contrast with the (iii) _____ garments of Buddhist monks is striking.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
vestiges	mundane	iridescent
habiliments	dogmatic	drab
paragons	transcendent	flowing

19. On one account—criticized by many—Polanski was something of a victim, haunted by the (i) _____ images of his wife's murder. On another, he is a thoroughly culpable (ii) _____, following his desires for pleasure at all costs. It is perhaps the (iii) _____ inherent in this combination of images, even more so than the director's talent, that is responsible for the lenience granted him by public opinion.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
macabre	libertine	solecism
incredible	rogue	ambiguity
mellifluous	wanton	disparity

20. The university president argued that top universities should not (i) _____ education as an academic (ii) _____; discouraging our brightest students from pursuing teaching careers does a disservice to the next generation of students by (iii) _____ them of the opportunity to learn from the cream of the crop.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
disdain	recommendation	denigrating
proscribe	topic	degenerating
circumvent	discipline	divesting

Drill: Medium Questions

1. O'Neill's Irish _____ so disconcerted the Royal visitors that they found themselves struggling in vain to continue negotiations in their normally eloquent Queen's English.

fortitude
patois
equanimity
diffidence
consternation

2. Traditional upper class _____ such as fox hunting and cricket have largely given way to more egalitarian amusements over the course of the last century.

stereotypes
disportments
vocations
canards
professions

3. Professor Honeycutt was known as a probing questioner of her students; she always wanted to get to the _____ of any intellectual matter.

emotions
academics
pith
periphery
examination

4. Seeing their only alternative to be a (i) _____ diplomacy unbecoming of political visionaries—as members of the National Liberation Organization saw themselves in those days—the militant branch veered toward a policy of (ii) _____ aggression against their perceived ethnic rivals.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
wheedling	voluble
freewheeling	unremitting
verdant	superfluous

5. A (i) _____ passed through the crowd of protesters prostrating themselves in prayer when Mubarak made the sudden announcement—only a fortnight after vowing not to give in to the popular demands for his departure—that he would resign his post as President of Egypt, (ii) _____ a period of disorder and confusion.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
frisson	marring
murmur	precipitating
panegyric	diluting

6. Known and feared for their (i) _____, the Prussians became a force inspiring terror after overcoming internal fighting through Bismarck's cunning leadership.

artillery
extravagance
opulence
covetousness
truculence

7. A perfectionist in all things, Joseph expected to immediately become (i) _____ and was downtrodden indeed when he remained a (ii) _____ despite his best efforts.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
a maven	practitioner
a musician	pundit
a virtuoso	tyro

8. (i) _____ is unlikely to serve someone surrounded by liars and (ii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
credulity	fabulists
credibility	thieves
sincerity	quibblers

9. The idea, espoused by such heavyweights as Peter Singer, that each sentient being deserves fair treatment on a par with human beings clashes with the ecological insight that _____ some members of a species is occasionally necessary to prevent the devastating effects of overpopulation.

protecting
culling
killing
reintroducing
depleting

10. While she was known to all her friends as quite the (i) _____, her private behavior belied this (ii) _____ image.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
sage	belligerent
fabulist	pedantic
raconteur	genial

11. The common opinion at the court had it that her utterances as often as not (i) _____ attitudes unbecoming of a lady. This reputation cost her the attentions of some gentlemen, above all thanks to their fear of being bested by her (ii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
eluded	subtlety
derided	doggerel
evinced	repartee

12. While courage is an important virtue to teach and his character is indeed (i) _____, a cartoon mouse with a (ii) _____ for excessive violence is hardly an appropriate mascot for a Christian children's charity.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
doughty	penchant
impetuous	kinship
heady	largess

13. The double-dealing ambassador fell under suspicion as much due to his mix of (i) _____ and backpedaling in accomplishing his ends as to a distinctly unflattering comparison with the (ii) _____ straightforwardness of his Australian counterpart.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
rapaciousness	occlusive
odium	ostensible
legerdemain	portentous

14. The most (i) _____ puzzle lay in determining how to deliver the antisense strand to the right place at the right moment, after the virus had penetrated the cell, but before it had replicated and escaped to infect other cells. To accomplish this, the synthetic strand must be sufficiently potent to be effective and strong enough to resist rapid (ii) _____ inside the body.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
recalcitrant	desiccation
abstemious	degradation
monolithic	pleonasm

15. It takes only a (i) _____ of dry shrub for an errant spark to turn into a destructive (ii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
surfeit	conflagration
scintilla	incendiary
vestige	havoc

16. The Russo-Turkish war (i) _____ Albanians, placing before them the (ii) _____ prospect of a division of their lands among competing powers. This, above all, served to bring Albanian nationalism surging out of its former (iii) _____, culminating in a successful bid for independence only a few decades later.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
rankled	volatile	latency
enervated	minatory	insularity
debased	feasible	lucidity

17. Though she acknowledges that modern farming practices are more (i) _____ than traditional agriculture, she nonetheless argues that this difference represents no real (ii) _____. Perhaps more worrying, however, is her insistence that similar claims can be advanced regarding the treatment of farmers by an often (iii) _____ social hierarchy.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
expensive	progress	iniquitous
efficient	disincentive	halcyon
polluting	countermand	stratified

18. The (i) _____ of the word *assassin* is (ii) _____ in philological circles, as the word comes from a sect of brutal killers believed to have smoked the drug hashish before going on a mission. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of scholars willing to delve into the topic, as the (iii) _____ of the sect's origins prior to the First Crusade presents a mystery worthy of any number of dissertations.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
introduction	notorious	suspicion
derivation	unheralded	opacity
connotation	enigmatic	certainty

19. Statistics often need to be (i) _____ for their real meaning: while both the population and the amount of meat eaten annually in the nation remained (ii) _____, the growing gap between rich and poor meant that the wealthy few were eating more meat than ever, while the masses suffered from a (iii) _____ of foodstuffs of all kinds.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
plumbed	plastic	deceleration
calculated	static	dearth
designed	demographic	surfeit

20. Although Cage supported the expanded reliance on electronically produced _____, most of his early music is surprisingly _____. His "Music for Marcel Duchamp," a prepared-piano work from 1947, never rises above mezzo-piano, offering instead _____ melody that maintains its softness throughout.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
harmony	deleterious	a noisome
murmur	auspicious	an undulating
clangor	subdued	an erstwhile

Drill: Hard Questions

CAUTION: These problems are *very difficult*—more difficult than many of the problems you will likely see on the GRE. Consider these “Challenge Problems.” Have fun!

1. After renouncing the significant advantages of his noble birth, he wandered from village to village as a lowly _____; this, he maintained along with other members of his order, was the life best suited to one who wished to see both the miserliness and the generosity of humanity.

vagrant
mendicant
myrmidon
proselyte
malefactor

2. One particular _____ of many grammarians is the serial comma: whether to use one or not is an issue about which they will quibble at great length and not without some pedantic pleasure.

crotchet
awl
apogee
nadir
opus

3. In contrast to American social conventions with regard to neighborly relations, in which families or individuals residing in close proximity often interact on a familiar basis, residential _____ counts for surprisingly little among the English.

commodiousness
amiability
reciprocity
propinquity
cordiality

4. It is quite dangerous to _____ through the city these days, when explosions shake the buildings to their foundations without letup.

lumber
sidle
circumambulate
traipse
trudge

5. The aristocrats' gifts, while (i) _____, served as a reminder that the power of the Crown continued to be held in some esteem even in such (ii) _____ political times.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
extravagant	mercurial
nugatory	downtrodden
sumptuous	precarious

6. Having built up to a (i) _____, the shelling stopped as suddenly as it had begun; gazing at the drooping barrels, one might be forgiven for thinking they were rendered (ii) _____ by the pathetic sight of their (iii) _____ targets.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
clangor	obsolete	ethereal
crescendo	woebegone	effulgent
euphony	erroneous	haggard

7. Despite having engineered and overseen the return of several stray dioceses that had broken away under his predecessor's (i) _____, the Bishop had a modest and open quality that (ii) _____ the (iii) _____ of his position.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
diligence	construed	tenuousness
epaulet	belied	audacity
laxity	derided	austerity

8. The (i) _____ of "surds"—irrational roots—with the Pythagoreans' faith that all phenomena in the universe could be expressed through harmonious ratios of whole numbers led the cult to (ii) _____ any mention of their existence to the uninitiated.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
absurdity	condone
incongruity	proscribe
imperilment	palliate

9. Architectural (i) _____ like Koolhaas recognized Hadid's talents early and encouraged their development. By 1977, only a few years after their initial encounter, she had perfected her (ii) _____ style, inspired equally by Malevich's sparse constructivism and the calligraphic training of her Arabic education.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
cognoscenti	fungible
illuminati	malleable
neophytes	heteromorphic

10. Aleister Crowley, despite being given to wildly fantastic claims—he insisted, for instance, that the founding book of his religion was dictated to him by a divine being who visited his hotel room wearing sunglasses and a trench coat—had his share of (i) _____ followers. These were likely spurred on more than dissuaded by the (ii) _____ cast on him by the popular press, whose dubbing him “the wickedest man in the world” was, to be fair, hardly (iii) _____ given the relative harmlessness of his eccentricities.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
sycophantic	disadvantages	glib
sordid	gauntlets	peevis
skeptical	animadversions	condign

11. The Biblical portrayal of (i) _____ times preceding the great deluge stands in stark contrast to the ancient Greek representation of the (ii) _____ past as a Golden Age from which humanity has slowly descended into godless chaos. Such observations can easily give rise to the notion that stories about the past are less faithful attempts at reconstruction than (iii) _____, expressing both our cultural fears and hopes.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
flagitious	proximate	simulacra
dubious	antediluvian	equivocations
rustic	obscure	platitudes

12. Seeing a (i) _____ disposition as perhaps the most significant source of preventable illness, 12th century physicians like Moses Maimonides aimed the bulk of their (ii) _____ pamphlets at dietary regimens, offering advice that often appears (iii) _____ to modern sensibilities.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
phlegmatic	didactic	disingenuous
costive	maleficent	risible
bathetic	tenable	burgeoning

13. Uncertain whether his (i) _____ attire could impress the suave executive—despite her frequent affirmations of fondness for rural life—Francis reduced himself to near (ii) _____ through new wardrobe acquisitions. If only he had known that her (iii) _____ concealed equally humble circumstances.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
georgic	penury	geniality
natty	malaise	sophistry
drab	lethargy	grandstanding

14. (i) _____ is unlikely to gain a reputation for reliability; Garth's poorly disguised excuses, however, were improbably interpreted by his (ii) _____, hypochondriac employer as a sign of great foresight and (iii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
an embezzler	petulant	insipidity
a malingerer	imposing	sagacity
a pilferer	gingerly	convalescence

15. History has (i) _____ Mahatma Gandhi to the extent that his quite considerable moral shortcomings—his (ii) _____ misogyny, for example—are rarely discussed and, if mentioned at all, are seen as no more than (iii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
lionized	risqué	malefactions
narrativized	incorrigible	peccadilloes
impugned	waggish	trespasses

16. The new film, though a chronicle of exploitation and iniquity, nevertheless is deeply concerned with notions of (i) _____, eventually showcasing the elimination of all the protagonist's abusers, granting the audience the (ii) _____ they've been awaiting for two hours. Despite the satisfying upheaval, however, the plodding plot en route to this (iii) _____ leaves much to be desired.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
fairness	catharsis	extravagance
slavery	relief	denouement
injustice	inconclusiveness	platitude

17. Although (i) _____ is frequently used to give otherwise insubstantial work (ii) _____ of profundity, even Wallgot's most charitable readers were known to sneer at the breadth of his references.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
stringency	an iota
insularity	a veneer
eclecticism	a medley

18. He rarely bothered to (i) _____ his lengthy tomes, but their surprising popularity with the public empowered him to avoid editorial complaints through (ii) _____ threats to sign a contract with a different publisher.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
emend	impuissant
allay	peremptory
edify	toothsome

19. In future discounting, subjects place a lower value—whether positive or negative—on events in the distant future than on (i) _____ ones, explaining the common tendency to (ii) _____ present pleasures even at the expense of a likely (iii) _____ of future detriments.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
proleptic	overestimate	malady
remote	rescind	proliferation
proximate	protract	buttressing

20. She claims it is possible to deduce matters of fact from logic and, with just as little (i) _____, aims to derive ethical and economic truths as well. The laws of logic, on her grasp, (ii) _____ her in proclaiming that “existence exists,” which is very much like saying that the law of thermodynamics is hot.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
impartiality	license
warrant	occlude
fallacy	galvanize

Answers: 20 Easy Questions

- Defunct.** The show stagnated and was canceled, so it's unlikely that it appeared in a positive light as on the rise or unflagging. *Moribund* and *defunct* both seem to fit, but *after* the show has been canceled, it is not about to die or on the verge of death, so *moribund* doesn't work.
- Fulminating.** "Inveigh" would fit, but *inveigle* is a trap. Of the others, only opining and fulminating are things one does *against* someone, but *fulminate* is negative, while *opine* is neutral.
- Vassals.** The Queen's brothers are unlikely to become *minions* or *serfs*, which are negative spins on "servant." We are looking for a more positive (and royal) spin; only *vassal* fits.
- Entropy.** Postman's quote talks about a society in which no one wants to read books anymore. This suggests an intellectual *weakening* or *going downhill* (these are good suggestions for filling in the blank). Entropy is a good match—the word literally refers to the heat death of the universe, but can be used to refer to any situation of growing chaos and disorder.
- Benefits.** The pivot here is "while obviating damage." It tells us that we are looking to do something that avoids damage. So we need a word for something positive having to do with the treatment. Only *benefits* fits.
- Adroit, looming.** His handling of the scandal was successful or skillful, so *adroit* fits best. The scandal seemed poised to ruin things—that is, it hadn't done that already. What makes the most sense here is that the scandal itself hadn't quite broken yet—it was only looming.
- Revolting, bolstered.** One good clue to the first blank is the word "loyalist." Those fighting the loyalists would likely be the *rebels*. We don't have any indication that the forces were *fascistic*. *Outclassed* is irrelevant here. So *revolting* fits best. The loyalist battalion was *helped* or *strengthened* by "its allies' reinforcements," so only *bolstered* makes sense. Don't be thrown off by the dual meaning of *revolting*—certainly *revolting* can mean *disgusting*, but it can also mean *engaging in a revolt*, such as against a government.
- Avowed.** The first part of the sentence indicates that what he said *wasn't* true, so we want something that indicates that he *is* a liar, so get rid of anything that goes in the negative direction (*nullifying*, *unverified*). A good fill-in-your-own-word might be "an established" liar. *Libelous* is a trap answer—*libel* is lying in print for the purpose of damaging someone's reputation. *Libelous liar* would actually be redundant—and, of course, we have no indication that the lying was done in print. The answer is *avowed*, which means "declared or established."
- Ulterior.** The pivot here is *whether...or*—we are looking for a characterization of "motives" that would make them bad (not *primarily to shield the neighborhood*). *Criminal*, *recidivist*, and *violent* are theme traps. The jury here is deciding sentencing—the defendant is already guilty, but the jury wants to know a little more in order to determine the most appropriate punishment. If he *truly* was shielding the neighborhood, he would likely get a lighter sentence than if he had *ulterior*, or hidden (generally selfish) motives.
- Decrepitude.** We know that Burma was being *mismanaged*, so we want something bad (and appropriate to describe an economy). Only *decrepitude* makes sense.
- Autonomy.** What would feel *threatened* if foreign competition grew? We might say something like *pride*, although the second clue, *talk of independence*, tells us that the clue might be more specific. *Autonomy* is very similar to *independence*.

12. **Bluster.** *Hubristic* means arrogant—a *hubristic* person would never decline an opportunity for bragging, or *bluster*.
13. **Humbled, pretension.** The clue is that the entrepreneur is now “the possessor of a broken spirit and timid demeanor”—thus, he must have been the opposite of that before the change. A good fill-in for the second blank might be “arrogance.” *Pretension* fits best; *swagger* is associated with arrogance but a very indirect match, and *wealth* adds an idea that is not indicated in the sentence. Moving on to the first blank—a good fill-in might be “brought down” by circumstance. The only answer that is a match is *humbled*.
14. **Salutary, delectable.** The first blank contrasts with “indulgence;” so it might be either “healthy” or “less extravagant;” so it seems like either *salutary* or *frugal* will work. Start with the second blank. Nobody indulges proclivities toward dishes that are *odious*; and while most dishes are *edible*, only *delectable* ones are especially tempting. Delectable dishes are particularly a threat to health; *salutary* fits best.
15. **Prompted, codify.** A discovery that pregnancy complications are being caused and can be avoided would *prompt* action—specifically, *codifying* or systematizing the recommendations.
16. **A clique, deprecatory.** The Bieber Appreciation Society clearly exists to appreciate all things Bieber, but it seems that the society has become *fearful* of being seen in a certain way. What way? Keep reading—they *struggled* to include a certain kind of voice. *Tantamount* doesn’t make sense (it means *equivalent*), and *propitiatory* would be positive towards Bieber (so why would the Bieber Appreciation Society have trouble finding such voices?). Only *deprecatory* works. If the Society is struggling to include *deprecatory* voices, it seems that they fear being seen as not having balanced views—that is, they fear being seen as *a clique*, a group of professional applauders hired to make a performance look good (or any group of uncritical admirers).
17. **Recidivism, ramifications.** The people in question are already criminals with victims, so the issue isn’t one of bringing down crime or violence in general, but of repeat offenses, i.e., *recidivism*. What meeting victims must convince the criminals of is that their actions have effects—or *ramifications*.
18. **Habiliments, transcendent, iridescent.** The first blank is referring to something made of cloth, which is contrasted with the garments of Buddhist monks. We are looking for something that means garments or clothes; *habiliments* is the only choice that fits. The second blank is looking for a description of a spiritual reality beyond this one; only *transcendent* fits (*mundane* is an antonym). The third blank is looking for a contrast with the “black” outfits of the first sentence segment; *iridescent* is the only option dealing with color and in contrast with black.
19. **Macabre, libertine, ambiguity.** The first blank could call for something like “gory” or “bloody”—something that can haunt Polanski. *Macabre* is the right answer. The second blank is a bit trickier: both *rogue* (immoral scoundrel) and *wanton* (someone unprincipled, acting on desire) fit, but *libertine*—someone who specifically is concerned with pleasure—is the best match. For the third blank, the images are *disparate*, but the disparity only leads to lenience because of the uncertainty, or *ambiguity* that it gives rise to.
20. **Disdain, discipline, divesting.** The semicolon in this sentence is a clue that the two parts of the sentence “go in the same direction”—the first part should mirror the meaning that “the brightest students pursuing teaching” would be a good thing. A good fill-in for the first word might be “put down” and a good fill-in for the second word might be “area;” the third needs something like “depriving.” Don’t fall for trap answers—“proscribe” and “circumvent” add extra meaning to the idea of “put down” (universities would not literally *ban* education, or *avoid via circuitous means*). Only *disdain* fits the first blank. *Discipline* is the closest match for the second. The third is *divesting*; don’t fall for the traps of *denigrating* and *degenerating*; both work with the theme, but don’t fit into the blank; only *divesting* is a close match for *taking away*.

Answers: 20 Medium Questions

- 1. Patois.** Since the negotiators' language skills are thrown into limbo, it seems like there's something about O'Neill's *speech*, not the tone or content of that speech, that is confusing them. *Patois* is a regional dialect, in contrast to the official language spoken by the negotiators (Queen's English).
- 2. Disportments.** Fox hunting and cricket are not professional activities for the upper class; they are hobbies, amusements, or diversions, i.e., disportments. ("Stereotypes" is a trap, since stereotypes of the upper class might have them constantly engaging in such disportments.)
- 3. Pith.** A probing questioner is looking for the central point of an intellectual matter. *Periphery* is the opposite. *Examination* doesn't help at all: the *point* of an examination is to get to the core. *Academics* is a theme trap. The only answer that means core or central point is *pith*.
- 4. Wheedling, unremitting.** What would seem to be unbecoming of political visionaries is to attempt to convince someone (rather than, say, commanding or dictating terms), especially in a flattering way. That's exactly what *wheedling* means. We have no indication that the aggression undertaken was *superfluous* (if so, why would they undertake it?), and it certainly wasn't *voluble*, since that only pertains to speech. Rather, it was persistent or relentless (*unremitting*).
- 5. Frisson, precipitating.** The protesters are getting what they want: Mubarak is unexpectedly resigning. "Thrill" or "excitement" may work well for the first blank, and *frisson* fits. *Murmur*, while possible, doesn't capture the sense of excitement one would expect. For the second blank, one might expect a period of disorder to begin following a political upheaval; *precipitating* is the only possibility.
- 6. Truculence.** The blank is referring to something that makes the Prussians feared, and something that has led to internal fighting. *Truculence*—aggression or belligerence—is the best fit here. *Artillery* could make them feared, but that would be irrelevant to the Prussians' overcoming internal fighting through leadership. *Opulence* and *extravagance* aren't especially threatening.
- 7. A virtuoso, tyro.** Since Joseph is a perfectionist, he expected to become an *expert* (or *virtuoso*) and was disappointed to remain a *beginner* (or *tyro*).
- 8. Credulity, fabulists.** We are looking for a trait that is particularly unhelpful in dealing with liars. *Credibility* and *sincerity*—being a reliable truth-teller—are probably not helpful in dealing with liars, but it's *credulity*—a tendency to believe people too easily—that would be especially problematic. The second blank is looking for a rough synonym for "liars:" *fabulists*. (Note that although you might be tempted to think of "liars and thieves" as belonging together, being credulous doesn't particularly interfere with one's ability to deal with thieves—unless, of course, they are also liars or fabulists.)
- 9. Culling.** The discussion has to do with removing or getting rid of individual members of a species. *Protecting* and *reintroducing* don't make sense; they are theme traps. *Depleting* can apply to a resource, but not to individuals. *Killing* and *culling* both fit, but *culling* is the better option since it is a technical term for killing individual members to avoid overpopulation. (Bonus: if you understand this sentence, you've got a handle on one of the key debates among environmentalists.)

10. **Raconteur, genial.** As the initial “while” tells us, there is a contrast between the first and second half of the sentence. The “belied” in the second half, moreover, tells us that the two blanks will have the same spin. So we can run through some combinations. A *fabulist* is someone who tells false stories, and isn’t necessarily *genial*, *belligerent*, or *pedantic*. A *sage* might be any of these, but the connection is pretty loose. A *raconteur*, on the other hand, is someone who tells amusing stories, and is thus especially likely to be *genial*.
11. **Evinced, repartee.** The opinion about her is clearly negative, so her utterances don’t *deride* negative utterances or *evade* (*elude*) them, but rather demonstrate (*evince*) them. One isn’t likely to fear being bested by *doggerel* (triviality) or—usually—*subtlety* (if you’re bested by subtlety, you’re likely not the sort of person who notices), but clever, quick, and witty replies (*repartee*) are threatening indeed!
12. **Doughty, penchant.** We are looking for another word for courage, but one that doesn’t carry negative connotations (the “indeed” in front of the blank indicates that the spin will be the same as the spin of “virtue”). *Doughty* means bravery or courage. But the cartoon mouse seemingly engages in excessive violence, and not just on rare occasions (who would care about that?); so it has a tendency toward or a *penchant* for violence.
13. **Legerdemain, ostensible.** The ambassador is doing something shady—which is what casts suspicion on him—and a show of deceit or sleight of hand (*legerdemain*) fits best. By comparison, the Australian ambassador must appear straightforward (*occlusion* would interfere with that) and being foreboding or pompous (*portentous*) wouldn’t make him look good; *ostensible* (seeming) fits best.
14. **Recalcitrant, degradation.** The puzzle sounds quite complicated—delivering an antisense strand to the right place at just the right moment. Only *recalcitrant* (stubborn) could be even remotely appropriate to describe a puzzle. Next, we read that the strand must be strong enough to resist something bad—*desiccation* is drying out (unlikely inside the body, and we’ve received no clue about this) and *pleonasm* is the use of redundancy in language. Only *degradation* works.
15. **Scintilla, conflagration.** We are looking for something that means “small amount.” “Surfeit” is an antonym; *vestige* sounds right, but a vestige is left over after *everything* is gone. The right answer is *scintilla*. A *havoc* is destructive, but has nothing to do with fire (which is what “spark” would lead us to expect). An *incendiary* does, but it is not quite appropriate in this spot—an *incendiary* is more of a fire-starter, like dynamite. A *conflagration* is specifically a destructive fire.
16. **Rankled, minatory, latency.** The war clearly doesn’t weaken (*enervate*) Albanians, since it encourages them to strive for independence. And while some features of the war might *debase* them, the prospect of division of their lands doesn’t do this. But it might anger, vex, or cause bitterness for them, i.e., *rankle* them. They don’t cherish the prospect—on the contrary, they find it threatening, or *minatory*. (If it were merely *feasible*, or even *volatile*, that wouldn’t necessarily lead to negative feelings.) Their nationalism surges out—it wasn’t already clear (*lucid*), and whether it was *insular* before or after doesn’t seem to make much of a difference; but if it emerged out of *latency*, that would explain why it suddenly became a force that could lead in short time to independence.
17. **Efficient, progress, iniquitous.** Only *progress* really makes sense for the second blank. As the “though” indicates, *progress* should be an apt description for the transition from traditional to modern farming, which is why she has to *argue* for the opposite conclusion. No one is likely to think that increases in expense or pollution demonstrate progress; *efficient* is the best fit. The last blank is referring to something *bad* about the social hierarchy and how it treats farmers. *Stratified* describes the hierarchy, but doesn’t say anything negative about it (aside from the fact that it is a hierarchy!). Since *halcyon* is positive, *iniquitous* or unjust is the only fit.

18. **Derivation, notorious, opacity.** The first sentence links the word *assassin* with *hashish*, so the first blank is addressing the *derivation* of the term. It says nothing about its *introduction*, since we are only told where the word originates, not how it was introduced. Since the derivation is *known*, it follows that it isn't *enigmatic*; but it is *notorious* given the shadiness involved in the derivation. The sect's origins present a mystery, so there is no *certainty* surrounding them, and *suspicion* isn't as good a match for the last blank as *opacity*, since it's lack of clarity rather than suspicion that makes for a good mystery.
19. **Plumbed, static, dearth.** The "growing gap between the rich and poor" is mentioned as a way of indicating that the meat eaten is not distributed equally; this coincides with the initial clue indicating that statistics "need to be _____ for their real meaning." (Only *plumbed*, or *examined closely* works in that blank.) Thus, the masses suffered a *lack* of foodstuffs. Only *dearth* matches. The second blank is a bit trickier: the truth is that the rich are eating more meat and the poor less, but it seems as though the statistics, on their face, don't make that clear. Thus, the statistics indicate that the amount of meat eaten *remained the same*, or was *static*.
20. **Clangor, subdued, an undulating.** We learn at the end of the sentence that Music for Marcel Duchamp *maintains its softness* and *never rises above* what presumably describes some level of volume. Only *undulating* works. Working backwards in the sentence, we discover that Music for Marcel Duchamp is an example of Cage's early music. Thus, that music must be something similar to *soft*—only *subdued* works. Finally, we have an opposite-side pivot (*although*) as well as the word *surprisingly*—Cage's later music must be noisy! Only *clangor* works.

Answers: 20 Hard Questions

- Mendicant.** *Malefactor* clearly doesn't work—there is no indication that he is an evildoer. The rest are trickier. *Proselyte* is close, but it isn't clear that he is a recent convert. *Vagrant* doesn't convey the sense of purpose involved. *Myrmidon* is a “suck-up” or servile person. *Mendicant* is sometimes just a synonym for *beggar*, but it also has a specifically religious connotation, which the reference to “members of his order” calls for. *Mendicant* is the best fit.
- Crotchet.** These answer choices are killer nouns! The fill-in shouldn't be too hard: something like *peeve* or *concern*, although the concern is not a huge one, since the grammarians argue about it “not without some pedantic pleasure.” A *crotchet* is a whimsical or stubborn notion. The others are all nonsensical: an *awl* is a hole-punching tool, an *apogee* is a climax or high point, a *nadir* is a low point, and an *opus* is musical or literary composition.
- Propinquity.** We are told that for Americans, familiarity follows from close proximity. The blank should be a synonym for this. Only “propinquity” fits; answer choices dealing with comfort or friendliness are traps drawing on associations with “residential” or “neighbor.”
- Traipse.** The answer choices are difficult: all of them mean *walk*, so nuance is key here. Walking through the city is dangerous, but it is especially dangerous to walk in a roundabout, directionless way: *traipse*.
- Nugatory, mercurial.** The “while” in front of the blank suggests that the gifts are valuable *only* as reminders: that is, they have no real value in themselves. *Nugatory* means “having no real value” or “having only symbolic value,” while both of the other options imply real value. The power of the Crown *continued* to be held in esteem—we are looking not just for political conditions that are bad or dangerous, but conditions that are *changeable*, so that continuity something through them is important. *Mercurial* means frequently changeable or changing.
- Crescendo, weebegone, haggard.** The shelling is *building up* to something—so it's not just a loud noise, or *clangor*, but the peak of the noise—a *crescendo*. The pieces of artillery seem like they are *sad*, since that would be an apt response to a pathetic sight. Only *weebegone*—extremely sad or full of woe—fits. The sight of their targets isn't likely to be *effulgent* or *ethereal*, since neither of these is *pathetic*. They are most likely *haggard*—worn out.
- Laxity, belied, austere.** *Epaulet* would make sense—if at all—only in an extremely metaphorical sense. *Diligence*, on the other hand, doesn't normally lead to conflict; *laxity* does. The third blank is talking about his position, which is neither daring (audacious) nor uncertain (tenuous) as far as we know—it seems quite the opposite. More likely it is strict or severe (austere). We can now turn to the second blank: we don't expect someone with an *austere* position to be modest and open, so his openness seems to misrepresent (*belie*) that austerity.
- Incongruity, proscribe.** For the first blank, “with” is important: although surds might be seen as *absurd* or *imperiling*, they are not absurd or imperiling *with* the Pythagorean faith. For the second blank, the seriousness of the problem would seem to suggest that the Pythagoreans wouldn't want to *condone* spreading this information; they might want to *palliate* its impact, but forbidding or *proscribing* any mention of it outright fits better.
- Cognoscenti, heteromorphic.** We are looking for people “in the know”: *cognoscenti*. A *neophyte* is a beginner. *Illuminati* fits a little better, but has religious overtones and doesn't necessarily refer to people who are in the know. Hadid's style mixes at least two diverse inspirations, so we would expect it to be not replaceable by something else (*fungible*) or easily changeable (*malleable*), but simply to exhibit a plurality of forms: *heteromorphic*.

10. **Sycophantic, animadversions, condign.** Followers are rarely *skeptical* and we have no reason to think they were particularly *sordid*, since we don't know what sorts of activities Crowley engaged in (short of making fantastic claims); but followers—especially followers of clearly eccentric figures—do tend to be *sycophantic*. The press is saying something bad about him, not challenging or trying to disadvantage him, so *animadversions* (“strong criticisms”) fits best. The criticism seems excessive or undeserved, i.e., not *condign*.
11. **Flagitious, antediluvian, simulacra.** The first blank gives us a contrast with a Golden Age, so it should be something bad. *Dubious* doesn't necessarily mean bad, and *rustic* isn't anywhere near negative as *flagitious*, marked by vice (and it should be *really* negative in order to give us a *stark* contrast). The Greek myths are about the *distant* or *remote* past. *Antediluvian* is the correct fit (don't be misled into thinking of *antediluvian* as a trap—it does literally mean “before the flood,” and thus doesn't apply to the Greek myths, but it also means extremely ancient, which is what we're looking for). The stories about the past—in the third blank—would be *equivocations* if *each* of them contained a mixed message; but instead it looks like the mix comes only if we are comparing Biblical with Greek stories. *Simulacra*, or (mere) images, are the right contrast for “faithful reconstruction.”
12. **Costive, didactic, risible.** *Phlegmatic* looks reasonable, especially since the topic is medieval medicine, but the emphasis on diet should turn our attention to the bowels—*costive* means having to do with constipation. The pamphlets are seemingly designed to tell people how to diet; they are educational, or *didactic*. But since today our dietary and health views are quite different from those held by medieval doctors, we are likely to find their advice funny, or *risible*.
13. **Georgic, penury, grandstanding.** His attire has something to do with rural life; *georgic* means “having to do with agriculture or rural life.” (*Natty* means *sharp, stylish* and is the opposite of what we want). It sounds like Francis spends a lot of money on clothes—spending a lot of money could reduce someone—especially someone with *georgic* means—to poverty (penury). The lady to whom he devotes his attentions, on the other hand, is *concealing* something humble; that's done not through friendliness or use of unsound arguments (*sophistry*), but by giving a showy performance (*grandstanding*).
14. **A malingerer, gingerly, sagacity.** The first blank options all involve some sort of unreliability, but the clues is that Garth's behavior is well-received by his boss who is a *hypochondriac*. Since stealing (embezzling or pilfering) has nothing to do with health, *maligner* (someone who fakes illness) fits best. The second blank asks for something similar to “hypochondriac.” The boss may be *imposing* or *petulant*, but it's only his *gingerly*, or extremely cautious, character that ties well with hypochondria. The last blank is a word similar to “foresight”; only *sagacity* fits.
15. **Lionized, incorrigible, peccadilloes.** Ghandi's moral shortcomings are overlooked or ignored. This isn't a result of *impugning*, but quite the opposite: he's been *lionized*. His misogyny, if it *is* a considerable moral shortcoming, can't be *waggish* or *risqué*. Only *incorrigible* fits. Finally, his moral failures are seen not just as trespasses or sins, but as small or insignificant sins, or *peccadilloes*.
16. **Fairness, catharsis, denouement.** There is a contrast between iniquity and what the film is *actually* deeply concerned with: that must be the opposite of exploitation or iniquity, i.e., *fairness*. The audience hasn't been waiting for *inconclusiveness*. Maybe it has been waiting for *relief*, but *catharsis* is a better fit, since it refers specifically to purging of built-up emotions. Finally, the plot is building up to the outcome, or *denouement*.
17. **Eclecticism, a veneer.** We are looking for something that could make a work look less insubstantial and that has to do with breadth; insularity and stringency imply the opposite of breadth; eclecticism (drawing on a wide variety of sources) fits. Eclecticism doesn't give a work a little bit (iota) or a mixture (medley) of profundity; it gives it a surface appearance (veneer) of profundity.

18. **Emend, peremptory.** For the first blank, we are looking for something the writer could do to his lengthy tomes that would appease editors; something like editing, redacting, or changing them seems to fit, and *emend* fills that spot. He avoids editorial complaints through threats, which are certainly not delicious (*toothsome*) and don't seem to be powerless—rather, they prevent complaints from publishers in advance; *peremptory* fits this role.
19. **Proximate, protract, proliferation.** The first blank asking for a contrast with “distant future”; “remote” is a synonym trap, and “proximate” fits. Since future discounting involves placing more of a premium on present than future events and pleasures are desirable while detriments are not, it follows that subjects will tend to want to promote or prolong (protract) present pleasures even if this means somehow extending, increasing, or multiplying (proliferating) future detriments.
20. **Warrant, license.** It is clear from *claims* and the general derisive tone of the sentence that the speaker does not think it is possible to deduce matters of fact from logic (that would be pretty silly, come to think about it). Thus, she has little *warrant* for doing this, and *just as little warrant* for using logic to inappropriately derive other “truths.” *License* is similar to *warrant* and serves the same function in the second sentence.

g

Chapter 3
of

TEXT COMPLETION &
SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

SENTENCE
EQUIVALENCE

In This Chapter . . .

g

- Sentence Analysis
- Answer Choice Analysis
- Finding Near-Synonym Pairs
- When to Use Answer Choice Analysis
- What If I Don't Know the Words?
- Why It Is Important to Learn Words in Context

SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

Sentence Equivalence questions on the GRE are very similar to single-blank Text Completion questions, with one twist—there are six answer choices, and TWO of them are correct. For example:

The judge dismissed Steffen's lawsuit, ruling that since Steffen had been first to _____ the contract, the company he was suing was no longer obligated to uphold the provisions of the original agreement.

- forswear
- transmute
- breach
- abrogate
- vituperate
- slake

Note that the answer choices are marked not with letters (as in, choices A–F), but with checkboxes. Throughout the exam (in math, too), the GRE uses circular radio buttons for questions with one correct answer and square checkboxes to indicate questions with more than one correct answer.

To get a Sentence Equivalence question correct, you must select BOTH correct answers—there is no partial credit. In the question above, the correct answer is **breach** and **abrogate**, which both mean “violate.”

Let's see what ETS has to say about the approach for this question type, and then we'll revisit this question.

According to ETS:

Like Text Completion questions, Sentence Equivalence questions test the ability to reach a conclusion about how a passage should be completed on the basis of partial information, but to a greater extent they focus on the meaning of the completed whole. Sentence Equivalence questions consist of a single sentence with just one blank, and they ask you to find two choices that both lead to a complete, coherent sentence and that produce sentences that mean the same thing.

Success on a Sentence Equivalence question sometimes depends on hard vocabulary words in the answer choices, sometimes depends on hard vocabulary words or complex sentence construction in the sentence itself, and sometimes hinges on all of these things at once.

Although the idea of “two correct answers” is an interesting test-making twist, it doesn't actually make the questions any harder for you. In fact, it opens up the strategic tool of Answer Choice Analysis, which will be explained in this chapter.

Many of the skills you have already learned for Text Completion still apply here: for instance, looking for clues and pivots, and filling in your own word in the blank.

There are two main methods of attack for a Sentence Equivalence question:

- Sentence analysis
- Answer choice analysis

Let's discuss each in turn.

Sentence Analysis

Like Text Completion questions, Sentence Analysis questions ask us to fill in a blank based on the information contained in the text around it.

As with Text Completions, it is very important to remember that the sentences are NOT anything like sentences pulled from a newspaper, with a few words blanked out. In such a “real life” case, we actually might not be able to fill in the missing word—what if the missing word were the crucial turning point of the sentence?

On the GRE, things have to be much more concrete. In order to construct a Sentence Equivalence question that has two objectively correct answers and four objectively incorrect answers, *the test makers have to specifically construct sentences that have clues planted in them for you to find.*

The clue is always there.

It is your job to ask:

1. What is the blank “about?” We’ll call this the “target.” To find the target, ask which of the nouns in the sentence the blank is describing, or who is doing the action in the blank, and to what.

Note: If the blank represents a verb, you might have two targets. In “The ornery critic _____ the play,” the *critic* is performing the action and the *play* is receiving the action. In such a case, think of the target as the relationship between the subject and object. Ask “What did the critic do,” “What happened to the play,” or “What did the critic do to the play?”

2. What does the sentence tell us about the target? This is the “clue.” DO NOT GUESS, ASSUME, OR USE OUTSIDE INFORMATION. The clue will be physically present in the sentence.
3. Does the sentence have a “pivot?” Pivots indicate whether the blank is on the same side as or the opposite side from the clue.
4. What word would I use to fill in the blank in my own words (a “fill-in”), based on the clue?

Remember the four parts: *Target, Clue, Pivot, Fill-In.*

Let’s see an example.

The village’s water supply had been _____ by toxic industrial byproducts that had seeped into groundwater.

- adumbrated
- vitiated
- abashed
- adulterated
- truncated
- abridged

The blank is about the water supply. Thus, “water supply” is the target. What do we know about it? That “toxic” substances seeped into it. There is no pivot (like “but” or “however”) that sends us in the opposite direction. So we are looking for a pair that means something like “contaminated.”

The answer is **adulterated** and **vitiated**. **Adulterated** means “contaminated” and **vitiated** means “spoiled, made defective, corrupted.” (Of the incorrect answers, **truncated** and **abridged** are similar in meaning, and **adumbrated** and **abashed** are unrelated.)

Let’s try one more.

Unlike the more genial researchers, who often went out together after work, the _____ Dr. Spicer believed that only intelligence should matter, and thus made few friends at the lab.

- sedulous
- baneful
- standoffish
- partisan
- glacial
- assiduous

The blank is about Dr. Spicer. He or she is the target. The clues are that Dr. Spicer believes that “only intelligence should matter,” has “made few friends,” and is NOT “genial” (we know this because of the pivot “unlike”). Thus, we are looking for a word in the blank that means “unfriendly.”

The answer is **standoffish** and **glacial**. Both words can mean “emotionally cold and distant.” (**Glacial** can also mean slow, physically cold, or pertaining to glaciers.) **Sedulous** and **assiduous** mean hardworking or persistent. **Baneful** means harmful and **partisan** means biased, in favor of only one’s own side or party.

Note that this example had an opposite-side pivot. Here is a reminder of some of the common pivots that appear in GRE sentences:

SAME DIRECTION	OPPOSITE DIRECTION	CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP
And	But	Because
Also	Despite	Therefore
Furthermore	Although	Thus
Moreover	In spite of	Hence
Besides	Rather than	So
In addition	Nevertheless	Consequently
Not only ... but also	Still	As a result
Just as ... as	Though	
So ... as to be	Yet	
In fact	On the other hand	
: (colon)	On the contrary	
; (semicolon)	Whether X or Y	
X, Y, and Z (items in a list)		

Let’s try a drill.

Drill: Sentence Analysis

Analyze each sentence for Target, Clue, and Pivot, then fill in the blank in your own words. (This drill is kept succinct, as a similar practice set appears in the Text Completion chapter; the skill is the same for both question types.)

1. The biography was neither encomium nor condemnation, but rather a _____ look at a life, its facts verifiable and delivered without commentary.
2. Now a virtual recluse, she stewed in solitude at the realization that her _____ friends had betrayed her.
3. While several months of progress had been made on the new highway plan in the early part of the year, it was now questionable whether the plan would ever re-emerge from its current state of _____, its funding held up while politicians bickered about the changing state of the economy.
4. Josh's generally lackadaisical attitude towards his work caused his boss to suspect that his "moral objection" to the task was really just a way to _____ his duties.
5. In isolation, the data is but _____ scatterplot; it took an insightful professor to explain its significance to the student researchers.*

* In situations where "a" or "an" comes before the blank, the "a" or "an" will often be included with each answer choice rather than in the sentence itself so that some of the answer choices can begin with vowels and some with consonants.

Answers: Sentence Analysis

1. The target is the “biography.” What we know about it is that it is neither “encomium nor condemnation”—even without knowing the word “encomium,” we could probably figure out from the “nor” that the phrase means “neither praise nor criticism.” Thus, the biography must be neutral or in the middle. “Its facts verifiable and delivered without commentary” corroborates this—a good word to fill in the blank would be something like **objective**, **disinterested**, or **unbiased**.
2. The target is the “friends.” Since she is now a “virtual recluse” and these friends “betrayed” her, a good word to fill in the blank would be something like **former** or **erstwhile**.
3. The target is the “highway plan.” “While” is an opposite direction pivot, indicating that the fill-in should be on the opposite side of making progress. Indeed, we are given the clue that the project’s funding is held up (tied up or delayed). A good fill-in would be something like **gridlock**, **deadlock**, or simply **not moving**.
4. The target is both “Josh” and his “duties”—or, the relationship between Josh and the duties. The clues are that the boss “suspects” (which has a negative connotation) that Josh’s “moral objections” (the quotes in the original sentence also indicate suspicion) are motivated by something else. One more clue fills in the blank for us—the fact that Josh is “lackadaisical” (casual or lazy). A good fill-in would be **avoid** or **shirk**.
5. The target is the “data” or “scatterplot,” words referring to the same thing. We know that “in isolation” (which sounds bad), it is “but” some quality. “But” in this context means “merely” or “only.” The clue is that the insightful professor was able to make the data meaningful; therefore, before the professor’s involvement, the data did not appear meaningful to the students. A good word might be something like **an inscrutable** or **an unfathomable**.

Answer Choice Analysis

When ETS introduced the Sentence Equivalence format, most people's natural response was, "So we pick a pair of synonyms, right?" ETS officials insist that the two correct answers don't have to be synonyms:

Do not simply look among the answer choices for two words that mean the same thing. This can be misleading for two reasons. First, the answer choices may contain pairs of words that mean the same thing but do not fit coherently into the sentence, and thus do not constitute a correct answer. Second, the pair of words that do constitute the correct answer may not mean exactly the same thing, since all that matters is that the resultant sentences mean the same thing.

Hmmn. When the two correct answers are inserted into the sentence, the resulting sentences mean the same thing? Sounds like those words would have to be pretty close, right?

Theoretically, the GRE could give a question like this one:

Miriam broke up with John because he was _____.

- boring
- handsome
- limber
- unintelligent
- kind
- fun

Since Miriam "broke up" (our clue) with John (our target), we are looking for something bad. There are only two matches: **boring** and **unintelligent**. These two words certainly are not synonyms, although each makes sense in the sentence.

However, we have seen little evidence for this type of "loose construction" on the GRE. A question like the one above, in which the correct choices really aren't synonyms, would have to have answers that fall into pretty easily distinguishable categories (e.g., "something bad"). We think most of those questions would fall on the easy side.

On the actual GRE, it is almost always the case that the two correct answers are pretty close to being synonyms. Here's an example:

Many people at the dinner party were inordinately interested in questioning the _____ new guest, who refused to reveal his profession or even the origin of his exotic accent.

- acerbic
- mysterious
- insightful
- trenchant
- intrepid
- inscrutable

Let's look for clues. The blank describes the new guest. We know that this guest is very cagey about himself. We're looking for a word like *secretive* or *mysterious*.

As it turns out, **mysterious** and **inscrutable** are the correct answers. **Inscrutable** means “not able to be scrutinized” and often indicates hiding emotions. It’s not exactly the same thing as **mysterious**, but there’s a substantial overlap in their meanings.

We’ve discovered that most correct answer pairs are at least as closely related as these two. For the purposes of this book, we’ll call them “near-synonyms.”

Finding Near-Synonym Pairs

Most Sentence Equivalence questions have a built-in “backdoor strategy:” answer choice analysis. This is because most sets of answer choices are “two by two”—that is, among the six choices there are two pairs of synonyms and two “loose,” unrelated words.

Typical “two by two”:

horrible
nice
pleasant
impoverished
terrible
dying

Horrible and **terrible** are a pair. **Pleasant** and **nice** are a pair. **Impoverished** and **dying** are unrelated.

Here is a weaker variant of a “two by two”:

wicked
healthful
evil
qualified
gifted
well-practiced

Wicked and **evil** are a pair. **Gifted** and **well-practiced** are “sort of” a pair—that is, **gifted** implies an ability that comes from within, whereas **well-practiced** implies an ability that comes from, obviously, practice. However, both are different paths to the same goal (being talented or skilled). They’re a weak pair.

In any sentence, it should be pretty easy to tell whether **wicked/evil** or **gifted/well-practiced** is the more appropriate match. However:

In the case that a set of choices provides a closely related pair and a less closely related pair, the more closely related pair is more likely to be the answer.

Occasionally, three words will seem to match up (a “triplet”). Usually, in this case, two are really synonyms and the other is off in terms of spin or strength. For instance, in the case of *excoriate*, *admonish*, and *castigate*, the real pair is *excoriate* and *castigate*—both mean to criticize or scold very harshly, and *admonish* means to scold mildly. (Note that if all three “triplets” really were synonyms, they would necessarily all be wrong as a result, since there can only be two correct answers. However, this is unlikely.)

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False triplet:

determined
talkative
hapless
unsuccessful
unlucky
resolute

Determined and **resolute** are a pair. **Hapless**, **unsuccessful**, and **unlucky** seem to be a “triplet.” (**Talkative** is not related to the others.)

However, **hapless** really does mean **unlucky** (“hap” is actually a rarely-used Old English word for “luck” or “lot”). A person can be unsuccessful without being unlucky. **Hapless** and **unlucky** are the true pair.

It is also possible to have just one pair, or three:

Only 1 pair:

pale
flexible
hidden
celebrated
equitable
fair

Equitable and **fair** are a pair. The other four words are unrelated.

3 pairs:

candid
latent
ingenuous
inimical
dormant
hostile

Candid and **ingenuous** are a pair. **Latent** and **dormant** are a pair. **Inimical** and **hostile** are a pair.

While all of these answer choice patterns are possible, the most common by far is the “two by two.”

When to Use Answer Choice Analysis

To use Answer Choice Analysis as your main tool for Sentence Equivalence questions, you can actually proceed to the choices first, before even reading the sentence. For instance:

*Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah
_____, blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah.*

- myrmidons
- aesthetes
- tyros
- lackeys
- anchorites
- novices

Go straight to the words and attempt to make pairs: **myrmidons** and **lackeys** are people who use flattery of superiors to try to gain advantage (i.e., “apple-polishers,” “bootlickers”). **Tyros** and **novices** are both beginners. An **aesthete** loves or studies beauty, and an **anchorite** is a recluse, especially a religious hermit, and thus those two words are not related.

Therefore, the answer must be **myrmidons/lackeys** or **tyros/novices**. The only question we need to ask is, “Does the sentence call for a “suck-up” or a beginner? Here is the complete problem:

It may be true that everyone likes flattery, but a good manager is not unduly persuaded by it, and thus not taken in by _____, who use wheedling and fawning to get ahead.

- myrmidons
- aesthetes
- tyros
- lackeys
- anchorites
- novices

Of course, the question is calling for **myrmidons** and **lackeys**.

This approach can be very effective in cases where you know all of the words in the choices. However, since most test-takers don't have strong enough vocabularies to be able to complete the Answer Choice Analysis consistently, Sentence Analysis will probably be a first line of attack for many people, and Answer Choice Analysis a back-up plan.

Drill: Answer Choice Analysis

For each set of choices, match up the "pairs." Most, but not all, sets of choices consist of two pairs of near-synonyms and two other, unrelated words. A few will have one or three sets of near-synonyms.

1. verbose
turbid
diffident
prolix
self-effacing
pious
2. amicable
pithy
scholarly
arcane
succinct
esoteric
3. distend
traduce
alienate
flatter
slander
complement
4. auxiliary
cardinal
principal
ordinal
collateral
prefatory
5. hawkish
cogent
turgid
eloquent
bombastic
intelligible
6. pellucid
transparent
rustic
sedulous
assiduous
earthy
7. eclecticism
aberrance
deviation
idiosyncrasy
adulation
eccentricity
8. bevy
modicum
paucity
excess
surfeit
bunch
9. machicolation
epitome
scruple
apothegm
contumely
maxim
10. pique
slake
quench
succor
fructify
stimulate

Answers: Answer Choice Analysis

- 2 pairs: **Verbose** and **prolix** are a pair, each meaning “talkative.” **Diffident** (lacking confidence) and **self-effacing** (putting oneself down) are a pair—they are not perfect synonyms, but they are close enough for SE questions on the GRE. **Pious** and **turbid** have no relationship.
- 2 pairs: **Pithy** and **succinct** both mean “short and to the point.” **Arcane** and **esoteric** both mean “obscure or specialized, known to only a few” (of information). **Amicable** and **scholarly** are not related.
- 1 pair: **Traduce** and **slander** are a pair, meaning “tell malicious lies about.” **Complement** and **flatter** are a TRAP—**complement** (to complete, to make up a whole with) is NOT the same word as “compliment” (to say something nice about). **Distend** and **alienate** are also unrelated.
- 2 pairs: **Auxiliary** and **collateral** mean “secondary, off to the side.” **Cardinal** and **principal** (first, main) are actually synonyms with each other *and* antonyms with auxiliary and collateral. **Ordinal** and **prefatory** are not related.
- 2 pairs: **Turgid** and **bombastic** are a pair. **Bombastic** means “pompous, overinflated” and is used to describe speech. While **turgid** can simply mean “swollen,” when it is applied to speech, it has the same meaning of “overinflated, showing off.” **Eloquent** and **cogent** are a weak pair—**eloquent** means beautiful and articulate (of speech), and **cogent** means compellingly persuasive. **Intelligible** and **hawkish** are not related.
- 3 pairs: **Pellucid** and **transparent** are a pair (see-through), as are **rustic** and **earthy** (primitive, of the earth, undeveloped), and **assiduous** and **sedulous** (hardworking).
- 2 pairs: **Aberrance** and **deviation** are a pair (being different from the normal). **Eclecticism**, **idiosyncrasy** and **eccentricity** may all seem similar. However, **idiosyncrasy** and **eccentricity** (harmless personal oddness) are a true pair. **Eclecticism** (having mixed, wide-ranging tastes) is somewhat different, and is also unrelated to **adulation**.
- 2 or 3 pairs: **Bevy** and **bunch** are a pair, as are **surfeit** and **excess**. **Modicum** and **paucity** are questionable as a pair because they differ in spin—**modicum** means a little, and **paucity** means not enough.
- 1 pair: **Apothegm** and **maxim** are a pair (proverb, pithy statement). **Machicolation**, **epitome**, **scruple**, and **contumely** are unrelated.
- 2 pairs: **Pique** and **stimulate** are a pair. **Slake** and **quench** (satisfy, especially of thirst) are a pair. **Succor** (provide comfort or relief) might seem temptingly related the second pair, but one **succors** a person, and one **slakes** or **quenches** a desire. **Fructify** is unrelated.

What If I Don't Know the Words?

It almost seems as though this new question type on the GRE was designed to prevent lucky guesses. On a typical standardized test multiple-choice question with choices A-E, a test taker has a 1/5 chance of randomly guessing the correct answer. On a Sentence Equivalence, a random guess of 2 out of the 6 answers has only a 1/15 chance of being correct.

If you know *one* of the correct choices and randomly guess on the other, your chance of getting the question correct is 1/5.

Thus, it is very important that you assiduously augment your vocabulary, which is why so much of this book is dedicated to learning words.

That said, a little answer choice analysis can be helpful in making a good guess.

Most SE questions match the “two by two” format—that is, the answer choices contain two pairs of near-synonyms and two other “loose” words. Thus, if you can find a single pair of synonyms in the choices, there is about a 1/2 chance that that pair is correct (we say “about” one half, since not all sets of choices follow a “two by two” format). Here is an example:

- agog
- akimbo
- obeisant
- dyspeptic
- kowtowing
- crotchety

If you were able to pick out that **dyspeptic** and **crotchety** were a pair—or that **obeisant** and **kowtowing** were—then you should test that pair in the sentence and pick it if it seems to be a good match. (As will be the case in most questions, the two remaining words, **agog** and **akimbo**, have no relationship.)

If the pair that you are able to find is not a fit for the sentence, cross off both words. You now have a 1/6 chance of guessing correctly.

If you cannot find a synonym pair, you are unlikely to get the question correct. Accept that fact and don't waste time. Your strategy here is simply to make a guess and move on, conserving time for questions you will be able to answer later.

Although the new GRE allows you to move around within a section and come back to questions you previously left blank or wish to reconsider, keep in mind that, **if you don't know the words, you won't do any better by attempting the question twice**—you'll only waste time and lower your overall score.

If you don't know the words, **do not leave the question blank**. Make your best guess and move on. Don't waste time coming back—spend that extra time on Reading Comp or other vocabulary questions you are able to answer more effectively.

In sum: learn the words!

Why It Is Important to Learn Words in Context

ETS tells us not only to check that the two answers we select for a question create sentences that mean the same thing, but also to make sure that each one “produces a sentence that is logically, grammatically, and stylistically coherent.”

Hmmn. Asking test takers to check that the completed sentences are “grammatically coherent” implies that some of the choices will create sentences that are not. Here’s an example:

Education advocates argued that the free school lunch program was vital to creating a school environment _____ to learning.

- conducive
- inimical
- substantial
- appropriate
- beneficial
- hostile

“Education advocates” are certainly in favor of learning; our fill-in might be something like *helpful*.

Looking at the choices, **conducive**, **appropriate**, and **beneficial** all seem to be matches.

However, if you replace each word into the sentence, one choice creates an incorrect idiom. “Conducive *to*” works, and “beneficial *to*,” but “appropriate to learning” is not a correct idiom—instead, we would say “appropriate *for* learning.”

Thus, it is important not only to memorize dictionary definitions of words, but also to be able to use those words in context, in a grammatically correct way.

Here’s another example:

He’s a _____ fellow, always grandstanding and deploying his formidable lexicon for oratorical effect.

- declamatory
- grandiloquent
- didactic
- florid
- titanic
- cabalistic

The target is “he” and the clue is “grandstanding and deploying his formidable lexicon for oratorical effect”—that is, he speaks in a pompous way, as though showing off his vocabulary for an audience.

The word **florid** seems appropriate—it means “flowery” and often applies to speech, as in “florid poetry.” But wait! **Florid** applies to writing, speech, decor, etc.—not the people who produce those things! (Actually, you can apply **florid** to people, but in that context it means “flushed, ruddy,” as in having rosy cheeks, which is not appropriate here.)

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The answer is **declamatory** and **grandiloquent**, both of which describe pompous orators (that is, people who make speeches) or the speech of such people.

Memorizing that *florid* means “flowery” is better than nothing, but doesn’t really tell you what kinds of things to describe with that word, or how to use it metaphorically. Once again, it is important to learn words in context.

There are several ways to do this. Manhattan GRE’s vocabulary flashcards provide example sentences for all 1,000 words. Many online dictionaries provide quotes from literature in which the word being defined is used in context. In some cases, it is fruitful to simply Google a word to see how different writers are using it. (Try the phrase “tired old canard” and see what beliefs other people think are false but just won’t go away.)

Whatever your process, you want to learn words as organically and surely as you know words like “enthusiastic” or “darkness”—for instance, you would have no trouble at all if “darkness” were used metaphorically (“While she at first resisted going on antidepressants, she ultimately decided that she would do anything that might lift the darkness”), or if “enthusiastic” were used sarcastically (“As enthusiastic as I am about unnecessary surgery, I will have to decline your offer to appear on an extreme makeover reality show”).

To perform excellently on the GRE, that’s how well you want to know your new words: inside and out. You want to be *flexible* in how you use and interpret those words. The “Learning Vocabulary” chapter of this book provides more guidance for formidably aggrandizing your lexicon.

Drill: 20 Easy Questions

1. The children's story—seemingly a simple tale of animals gathering for a picnic in the forest—took a _____ turn at the end, admonishing readers to always be honest.
- magnanimous
 - beneficent
 - didactic
 - garrulous
 - moralistic
 - futile
2. Floodwaters had already breached the library's walls, but hopeful volunteers in hip boots worked tirelessly to _____ the damage.
- mitigate
 - exacerbate
 - abase
 - bolster
 - forestall
 - amalgamate
3. The candidate campaigned on a platform of across-the-aisle cooperation, but many commentators were surprised that he indeed turned out to be less _____ than his predecessor.
- irate
 - divisive
 - impulsive
 - political
 - infuriated
 - combative
4. When Steven got angry about politics, whether it was during an argument with his family or with just a coworker, it proved almost impossible to _____ him.
- condemn
 - pacify
 - judge
 - incense
 - mollify
 - influence
5. The graduate student's experiment yielded results as surprising as they were promising; her next step was to pursue additional data that would _____ her findings.
- undergird
 - buttress
 - gainsay
 - undermine
 - eschew
 - expatiate

6. There is no fundamental difference between a person who quietly _____ a bigoted viewpoint to a friend and one who spews chauvinist vitriol on television.
- eschews
 - espouses
 - professes
 - denies
 - abnegates
 - arrogates
7. The _____ behind Rachel Carson's famous environmentalist manifesto *Silent Spring* was a 1957 lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding aerial pesticide spraying.
- stimulus
 - conspiracy
 - atrocity
 - impetus
 - catastrophe
 - climate
8. A commentator with a more _____ worldview would not find it so easy to divide up the nation into good guys and bad guys.
- belligerent
 - subtle
 - philosophical
 - aberrant
 - peaceful
 - nuanced
9. Joyce's "Finnegan's Wake," written in a stream of consciousness style full of convoluted puns and obscure allusions, has a deserved reputation for linguistic _____.
- elaborateness
 - opacity
 - meaninglessness
 - informality
 - uniqueness
 - density
10. The financial situation in many European nations is _____ enough that even a small incident could lead to catastrophe.
- calamitous
 - unstable
 - illegitimate
 - unsafe
 - precarious
 - cataclysmic

11. While the argument for global warning may not be _____ by the record low temperatures reported this year, this data does not undermine the overall trend of steadily higher global temperatures.
- buttressed
 - fortified
 - subverted
 - defined
 - supplanted
 - subordinated
12. Steve's debate teacher argued that pithy quips and gibes, while sometimes effective, had no place in a _____ argument.
- polite
 - shallow
 - competitive
 - serious
 - cantankerous
 - substantive
13. Last year it was discovered that South Park _____ part of its *Inception* spoof from a similar College Humor sketch.
- amalgamated
 - filched
 - indulged
 - combined
 - poached
 - assumed
14. Some critics view Abstract Expressionism, which is characterized by geometric shapes and swathes of color, as a _____ of realist painting.
- rejection
 - manifestation
 - refutation
 - interpretation
 - commemoration
 - elucidation
15. America's first spy, Nathan Hale, was captured by the British when he attempted to _____ British-controlled New York City to track enemy troop movements.
- thwart
 - penetrate
 - infiltrate
 - permeate
 - research
 - conquer

16. Romantic comedies of the 1950s were characterized more by sexual _____ than the straightforward vulgarity that characterizes dialogue in today's "rom-coms."
- conversation
 - blatancy
 - insinuation
 - illusion
 - innuendo
 - banter
17. Inflation isn't dead, only _____; as the economy turns around, the purchasing power of the dollar is likely to fall again.
- paralyzed
 - dormant
 - indigent
 - itinerant
 - problematic
 - latent
18. Some boxers talk about trying to access their more _____ selves in order to counter the fact that civilized people generally don't punch each other in the face.
- seething
 - barbaric
 - irate
 - insidious
 - dynamic
 - primitive
19. Many people assume that creative work is less _____ than manual labor, but they underestimate the difficulty of being entirely self-motivated (as well as writing one's own paychecks).
- inventive
 - collaborative
 - serious
 - arduous
 - taxing
 - grave
20. The education debate is only getting more _____ as politicians demonize teachers unions, and every special interest group jumps into the fray.
- vehement
 - overt
 - heated
 - problematic
 - tired
 - unavoidable

Drill: 20 Medium Questions

1. While many individual religions insist on the primacy of their particular deity, syncretism advocates the _____ of multiple religious beliefs.
- exclusion
 - marriage
 - commingling
 - division
 - commutation
 - partitioning
2. The ambassador was invested with _____ power by his government and hence was able to finalize the agreement personally.
- tertiary
 - plenary
 - enigmatic
 - tyrannical
 - complete
 - dictatorial
3. Sometimes it seems that today's politicians will exploit any opportunity to _____ their views, no matter how sordid or partisan.
- declaim
 - invoke
 - exclaim
 - parrot
 - adduce
 - trumpet
4. The many chapters of the organization decided that a mandatory national _____ would be necessary to reconcile what had become a haphazard and often chaotic set of bylaws and regulations.
- introduction
 - conferment
 - intervention
 - colloquium
 - symposium
 - mediation

5. Though it seems implausible that one could be a great writer without some experience of life, many famous authors have led a _____ and solitary existence.
- idiosyncratic
 - cloistered
 - harbored
 - enigmatic
 - sheltered
 - cryptic
6. Though he wasn't particularly well-known as a humanitarian, his deep sense of responsibility for the suffering was real, and was only belied by an outward appearance of _____.
- concern
 - ambivalence
 - mirth
 - jouissance
 - insouciance
 - indifference
7. Excessive patriotism is by definition _____, as the apotheosizing of one country necessarily requires some amount of demonization of other people.
- minatory
 - xenophobic
 - unethical
 - bigoted
 - nationalistic
 - truculent
8. One possible explanation for the mandatory debauchery of most bachelor parties is that if the husband-to-be is able to practice _____ in those circumstances, he must be ready for marriage.
- continence
 - sobriety
 - fiat
 - tenacity
 - abstemiousness
 - autonomy
9. Jon Stewart's "Rally to Restore Sanity" was purportedly organized to prove that it was possible to discuss politics humorously but civilly, without _____ those on the other side of the fence.
- bespeaking
 - eulogizing
 - lampooning
 - calumniating
 - caricaturing
 - maligning

10. Though practiced, very few forms of corporal punishment have been _____ by the military, due less to the Geneva Conventions than to the overwhelmingly negative popular response to reports of abuse.
- recognized
 - sanctioned
 - endorsed
 - considered
 - rejected
 - polarized
11. The budget debate progressed well for the first few months (in spite of all the ardent and sometimes bitter squabbling), but slowly descended into a _____ of competing interests and claims.
- quagmire
 - tragedy
 - feud
 - morass
 - quarrel
 - conspiracy
12. The difference between similes and metaphors is subtle but, for the poet who takes his or work seriously, absolutely _____.
- synoptic
 - null
 - optional
 - crucial
 - nominal
 - climacteric
13. It is _____ reasoning to read Keynesian economics as recommending a perpetual raising of the debt ceiling, when Keynes states clearly that deficit spending must be done responsibly.
- indigenous
 - corrupt
 - fraudulent
 - fallacious
 - specious
 - deceitful
14. In many ways, teenage rebellion can be seen as the effect of a communication gap between an older generation's calcified language, and the protean _____ of the new generation.
- patois
 - defiance
 - volatility
 - insubordination
 - despondence
 - jargon

15. His cantankerous reputation was cemented by years of _____ at every conceivable opportunity.
- imputing
 - grousing
 - assaulting
 - protesting
 - convulsing
 - imbibing
16. Last St. Patrick's Day, the police were called when they heard of a small _____ in progress outside of a bar.
- fracas
 - discourse
 - altercation
 - battle
 - colloquy
 - mutiny
17. Given her sheltered upbringing and the limited breadth of experience foisted on her by economic circumstance, her work reflected a surprisingly _____ sensibility.
- shallow
 - eclectic
 - profound
 - catholic
 - callow
 - facile
18. Many people expect documentary filmmakers to be dispassionate and objective, but Michael Moore is famous for the fact that he never misses a chance to _____ against those he disagrees with.
- rail
 - advertise
 - fulminate
 - inveigle
 - strain
 - aspirate
19. The movie critic was best remembered for the way he used the language of food to describe films, like the way he praised Iñárritu's action sequences by comparing them to a _____ gazpacho.
- insipid
 - spectacular
 - brilliant
 - piquant
 - zesty
 - stupefying

20. Every few years, someone manages to survive a skydive with a parachute that doesn't open, often with only a few broken bones, some _____, and a gash or two.

- lacerations
- trauma
- bruises
- scratches
- lesions
- contusions

Drill: 20 Hard Questions

1. As _____ from Japan, he was called upon to answer questions about the Japanese government's position on various issues.
- a plenipotentiary
 - a tyro
 - a legate
 - an anchorite
 - an ascetic
 - a sybarite
2. While the group's street protests assumed an assertory, uncompromising tenor, once admitted to the halls of power to begin formal lobbying, the group's leadership wisely chose to _____ the stridency of their rhetoric.
- metamorphose
 - gild
 - wane
 - palliate
 - succor
 - damp
3. The women's rights movement has been mostly _____ in the Middle East, but it is likely that activists will be newly galvanized by the political upheavals currently sweeping the region.
- subverted
 - quiescent
 - interminable
 - bootless
 - abeyant
 - feckless
4. Debate rages on between proponents of corporal punishment and the death penalty and their detractors, though even the most rabid supporter agrees that punishments must be _____ and the justice system evenhanded and thorough.
- meet
 - clement
 - delimited
 - condign
 - tantamount
 - merciful

5. Peer-reviewed journals are a sacred cow of most scientific rationalists, but studies have shown that the premise of impartiality is _____, as results tend to be colored by the personal proclivities and suppositions of the experimenters.
- imbecilic
 - prejudicial
 - fatuous
 - chimerical
 - notional
 - vexing
6. The description of the restaurant as a garden of _____ delights is fair enough, as Chef Marcel conjures up a menu of texture and taste that interrogates one's very notion of what constitutes a meal.
- salubrious
 - edacious
 - carnal
 - voluptuous
 - terrestrial
 - gustatory
7. Most of his books drone on and on for chapter after chapter, each one providing yet another example of his thesis, the _____ of which can be found in précis form in the tome's first few pages, and which is recapitulated from that point on.
- gist
 - pip
 - pith
 - stub
 - nimbus
 - nut
8. In order to ascertain the efficacy of the new GRE vis-à-vis the old one, it will be necessary not only to collect, but also to _____ detailed score reports from test takers from both groups, as only by studying the differences and similarities in results can proper inferences be drawn.
- aggregate
 - ratiocinate
 - collate
 - juxtapose
 - agglomerate
 - interpose

9. In World War I, trenches were dug so that the soldiers could avoid the near constant _____ from the other side of the line of battle, but not even a trench could protect a battalion from grenades or aerial bombardment.
- enfilades
 - provocations
 - fervency
 - imprecations
 - goadings
 - salvos
10. Cary Grant's reputation as a suave and _____ ladies man extended beyond the silver screen to his real life, where he was known to never let a woman pull out her own chair (this, of course, was well before the feminist revolution caused a difference in opinion about such behaviors).
- consummate
 - genteel
 - debonair
 - waggish
 - couth
 - cosmopolitan
11. Non-violent communication states that the attempt to find parity in a relationship is a fallacious principle, as any notion of fairness is entirely _____.
- subjective
 - introverted
 - pragmatic
 - utilitarian
 - illicit
 - personal
12. Education has become a kind of albatross in American politics, in that a speech with any hint of _____ is actually more pernicious to a politician's reputation than one with numerous signs of ignorance, or even outright stupidity.
- gnosticism
 - erudition
 - patrimony
 - condescension
 - cerebrality
 - bloviation

13. Laurent Cantet's *Time Out* tells the true story of a man so obsessed with retaining the _____ of plenitude even after he is discharged from his company that he doesn't even tell his wife and his kids about it.
- corollaries
 - paradigms
 - trappings
 - prepossessions
 - appurtenances
 - consequences
14. What people fail to remember about Don Juan is that his astronomical number of amatory adventures were due more to his _____ approach to seduction than any surfeit of charisma or skillfulness.
- sumptuous
 - pollarded
 - covert
 - indiscriminate
 - aleatory
 - sybaritic
15. Even the most far-reaching campaign finance reform proposals will fail to attenuate the influence of _____, which doesn't just buy speedboats and golf weekends in the Bahamas, but directly relates to a politician's capacity to run for office.
- lobbying
 - venality
 - tit-for-tat
 - graft
 - lucre
 - payola
16. In their landmark study of Victorian literature's relationship to feminism, Gilbert and Gubar _____ the many ways in which 19th century women writers created characters that fit into archetypes of "angel" and "monster."
- interrogate
 - interpolate
 - debunk
 - limn
 - explode
 - castigate

17. While it's inarguably racist to imply that there is some kind of inbuilt _____ in certain countries, it's more reasonable to say that certain cultures are more willing to prioritize relaxation and a sense of moderation between work and play.
- obtundity
 - enfeeblement
 - enervation
 - languor
 - effeteness
 - lethargy
18. Autodidacts may argue that the enforced lucubration of a standard education is _____, but while some people are able to learn without outside guidance and strictures, most people learn better when accountable to others.
- slack
 - prudent
 - lax
 - extraneous
 - unnecessary
 - sagacious
19. The best of Sigur Ros' music evokes _____ landscape, as if the music had transported one to some twilit avenue in a long since abandoned city.
- a caliginous
 - an urban
 - a crepuscular
 - a precipitous
 - an avuncular
 - a civic
20. Some historians argue that at least in so far as the broad strokes are concerned, cataclysmic events such as the Great Depression are _____, due to what some have termed "the inertia of history."
- ineluctable
 - incontrovertible
 - interminable
 - infallible
 - inexorable
 - unspeakable

Answers: 20 Easy Questions

1. **Didactic, Moralistic.** The children's story was "seemingly" simple—which means it was not actually simple. Instead, the story took some kind of "turn"—meaning that it changed in some way—and "admonished readers to be honest." That is, it took a turn of *talking about morals* or *prescribing correct behavior*.

Magnanimous and *beneficent* are an incorrect pair. *Garrulous* and *futile* have no relationship.

2. **Mitigate, Forestall.** Floodwaters breaching a library's walls sound very bad—the water is already inside. The pivot "but" tells us that the sentence is going to change direction, and indeed, the volunteers are "hopeful," so we're looking for something good in the blank—although it doesn't seem like they're going to cure the problem entirely. A good fill-in would be something like *limit* or *hold back*.

Exacerbate, *abase*, *bolster*, and *amalgamate* do not contain any pairs.

3. **Divisive, Combative.** The most important word here is the pivot "indeed," which tells us that the candidate actually stayed true to his campaign promise. That means he acted cooperatively, which is contrasted with the actions of his predecessor. A good fill-in would be *uncooperative*.

Irate and *infuriate* are an incorrect pair. *Impulsive* and *political* have no relationship.

4. **Pacify, Mollify.** This short sentence has no pivots, so we're looking for a word that describes something you'd do to an angry person. Assuming you don't want to make them angrier (and why would you?), we're looking for something like *calm*.

Condemn, *judge*, *incense*, and *influence* do not contain any pairs, though *condemn* and *judge* are close.

5. **Undergird, Buttress.** The target is both the data and the findings—the blank contains what the data will do to the findings. We have the clue that the results were promising (but surprising, indicating some uncertainty about the apparent conclusion), and we have a same-direction pivot ("so"). Thus, her next step would likely be to *verify* or *corroborate* the findings.

Gainsay and *undermine* are a pair. *Eschew* and *expatiate* are unrelated.

6. **Espouses, Professes.** This sentence originally posits that there is "no fundamental difference" between two things, but the overall point is that the two things *do* look different on the surface. That means we want someone who does the opposite of "spewing chauvinist vitriol on television," such as someone who quietly *expresses* it. A good fill-in would be *communicates*.

Denies and *abnegates* are an incorrect pair. *Eschews* is also pretty close to that pair. *Arrogates* has no relationship to the others.

7. **Stimulus, Impetus.** To solve this, we need to consider what effect a lawsuit regarding aerial pesticide spraying would have on an environmentalist. Likely it would either inspire or outrage them. The former, however, makes more sense when we learn that the person in question wrote a book. A good fill-in would be *inspiration*.

Atrocity and *catastrophe* have similar spins, but they are not really a pair. *Climate* and *conspiracy* have no relationship.

8. **Subtle, Nuanced.** In this sentence, the commentator is described as finding it easy to split people into “good and bad.” This is a very simplistic way of looking at the world. Someone with a more *complex* worldview would be unlikely to break things down so simplistically.

Belligerent, philosophical, aberrant, and peaceful have no relationship.

9. **Opacity, Density.** Joyce’s book is described as “stream of consciousness,” with “convoluted puns and obscure allusions.” The adjectives “convoluted” and “obscure” are the most important part of this sentence. They tell us that the novel is likely hard to understand. A good fill-in would be “difficulty.”

Elaborateness could potentially work, but it has no pair. *Informality, meaninglessness, and uniqueness* have no relationship. While *meaninglessness* might seem tempting, it’s too extreme to be correct.

10. **Unstable, Precarious.** The situation in Europe is described as bad enough that even a small incident might lead to a total catastrophe. This means that everything is very close to disaster. We could fill in the blank with something like *shaky*.

Calamitous and *cataclysmic* are an incorrect pair. They describe how things might become, but not how they are now. *Illegitimate* and *unsafe* have no relationship.

11. **Buttressed, Fortified.** The second half of this sentence is not relevant to the blank. All we need to notice is the description “record low temperatures” and pivot “while.” Clearly, record low temperatures would not help an argument about global warming. A good fill-in would be *helped*.

Subvert and *subordinate* are an incorrect pair. *Defined* and *supplanted* have no relationship.

12. **Serious, Substantive.** The types of things Steve’s teacher doesn’t like are the key to this sentence. He’s arguing that “quips” (witty remarks) and “gibes” (taunts) don’t belong in a certain kind of argument. *Serious* and *substantive* is the only set that works.

Polite could work, but it has no pair. *Shallow, cantankerous, and competitive* have no relationship.

13. **Filched, Poached.** The most important word here is the adjective “similar.” If both South Park and College Humor created a similar spoof, then one of them must have *stolen* the sketch from the other.

Amalgamated and *combined* are an incorrect pair. *Indulged* and *assumed* have no relationship.

14. **Rejection, Refutation.** Abstract Expressionism is described as “characterized by geometric shapes and swathes of color.” Clearly this is very different from “realist painting.” A good fill-in would thus be something like *repudiation*.

Interpretation and *elucidation* are an incorrect pair. *Manifestation* and *commemoration* have no relationship.

15. **Penetrate, Infiltrate.** We are told that Nathan Hale was American, and that he was captured by the British. That means he must have been involved in some kind of espionage in “British-controlled” New York. A good fill-in would be *break into*.

Thwart and *conquer* are a near-pair, but not quite the same. *Permeate* and *research* have no relationship.

16. **Insinuation, Innuendo.** The pivot “more by X than Y” implies some kind of contrast between the two elements. The second element here is “straightforward vulgarity.” We want to contrast that with something. The adjective “sexual” may seem to confuse things; we need a word that will undercut it, such as *allusion*.

Conversation and *banter* are an incorrect pair. *Blatancy* and *illusion* have no relationship.

17. **Dormant, Latent.** Our blank is there to describe “inflation” (in a way that contrasts with being entirely “dead”). We’re told that in the future, the purchasing power of the dollar may fall, which means there will be inflation. So inflation may come back at any time. A good fill-in would be something like *dormant* (there aren’t a lot of simple words that get across this meaning).

Paralyzed, indigent, itinerant, and problematic have no relationship.

18. **Barbaric, Primitive.** Boxers are described as having to punch each other in the face, which isn’t “civilized.” In order to do this, they would need to access a part of themselves that was *not-so-civilized* (which will work well-enough as a fill-in here).

Seething and *irate* are an incorrect pair. *Insidious* and *dynamic* have no relationship.

19. **Arduous, Taxing.** This sentence describes creative work as having a particular difficulty, namely that one must be “self-motivated.” Some might contrast this with manual labor, but the author of the sentence wants to render them equivalent. Thus a good fill-in would be *difficult*.

Serious and *grave* are an incorrect pair. Never in the sentence is it discussed whether or not creative work is more serious than blue-collar work. *Inventive* and *collaborative* have no relationship.

20. **Vehement, Heated.** If politicians “demonize” teachers unions and other jump into the “fray,” the debate will get more and more *passionately angry*.

Overt and *unavoidable* are not quite a pair (*overt* means “done openly,” and *unavoidable* means “impossible to ignore”). *Problematic* and *tired* have no relationship.

Answers: 20 Medium Questions

1. **Marriage, Commingling.** This sentence begins with the pivot “while,” before describing religions that insist on “the primacy of their particular deity.” “Syncretism” is then introduced as relating in some way to “multiple religious beliefs.” Because of the opening pivot, we know syncretism should be in favor of multiple religious beliefs. We could fill in something like *inclusion* or *mixture*.

Division and *partitioning* are an incorrect pair. *Commutation* and *exclusion* have no relationship.

2. **Plenary, Complete.** The target is the ambassador’s power. We have a same-direction pivot (“hence”), and the clue is that, due to this power, he “was able to finalize the agreement personally” (seems like a lot of power for a diplomat). A good fill-in would be something like *a lot of* or *total*.

Tyrannical and *dictatorial* are a pair. *Tertiary* and *enigmatic* are unrelated.

3. **Declaim, Trumpet.** The portion of this sentence after the comma is not actually relevant to the blank. All we need to determine is what most politicians do in regards to “their views.” Clearly, they like to *proclaim* or *announce* those views.

Invoke and *adduce* are an incorrect pair. *Parrot* and *exclaim* have no relationship.

4. **Colloquium, Symposium.** The sentence tells us that the organization has somehow acquired a “chaotic set of bylaws and regulations.” Thus it is likely that they will want to get everyone together in order to reconcile all these rules. A good fill-in would be *meeting*.

Intervention and *mediation* are an incorrect pair. *Introduction* and *conferment* have no relationship.

5. **Cloistered, Sheltered.** Our pivot word “though” tells us that we are going to contradict the first portion of this sentence, which says that writers ought to have “some experience of life.” Our blank should go against that notion, and because we already have “solitary,” a good fill-in word would be *protected*.

Enigmatic and *cryptic* are an incorrect pair. *Idiosyncratic* and *harbored* have no relationship.

6. **Insouciance, Indifference.** In this sentence, the key is the word “belie,” which functions as a kind of pivot. “Belie” means “to disguise or contradict,” suggesting a contrast to “his deep sense of responsibility.” A good fill in for our blank would be *not caring*.

Mirth and *jouissance* are an incorrect pair. *Concern* and *ambivalence* have no relationship. *Ambivalence* is wrong here because it means feeling equally strongly on both sides of an issue, as opposed to not caring either way.

7. **Xenophobic, Bigoted.** Our blank here is defined by the second half of the sentence. Patriotism represents the “apotheosizing (“the elevation of something to divine status”) of one country. So our blank should be something that involves the “demonization of other people.” A good fill-in would be *prejudiced*.

Minatory and *truculent* are not quite a pair (the former means “threatening,” while the latter means “aggressively defiant”), and *unethical* and *nationalistic* have no relationship to each other. It is certainly true that excessive patriotism is *nationalistic*, but this word does not match the clue in the sentence.

8. **Contenance, Abstemiousness.** It's important to know the word "debauchery" (meaning "excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures") to solve this question. The sentence describes a husband who will *not* be engaging in debauchery at the bachelor party, so we need a word that describes someone who exhibits *self-control*.

Fiat and *autonomy* are an incorrect pair. *Sobriety* and *tenacity* have no relationship.

9. **Calumniating, Maligning.** The rally here is described as discussing politics "humorously but civilly," which is then contrasted with the next portion of the sentence. A good fill-in for the blank would be *abusing* or *badmouthing*.

Lamproving and *caricaturing* make an incorrect pair. Though they are close to the correct meaning for our blank, the sentence mentions that the rally was "humorous." This means that *lamproving* and *caricaturing*, both of which imply a kind of humorous teasing, would be plausible. *Bespeaking* and *eulogizing* have no relationship (and the latter is the opposite of what we want here).

10. **Sanctioned, Endorsed.** The second half of this sentence tells us that reports of corporal punishment receive an "overwhelmingly negative popular response." This means that the military would be unlikely to *authorize* these forms of abuse.

Recognized, *considered*, *rejected*, and *polarized* have no relationship.

11. **Quagmire, Morass.** The first part of the sentence, which describes how the budget debate "progressed well," is very important. If we didn't see that, we might be tempted to choose the wrong words here. However, because of the pivot "but," we want something that contrasts with something that progresses well. A good fill-in would be *mess* or *muddle*.

Feud and *quarrel* are an incorrect pair. While they correctly get across the negative spin we want for our blank, they don't address the idea of progressing badly, and we already learned that the debate was always prone to "squabbling." *Tragedy* and *conspiracy* have no relationship.

12. **Crucial, Climacteric.** This is a tough question, because the sentence gives us only "subtle" as a clue. Our blank should oppose it, but we don't want the opposite of "subtle" (which would be something like "obvious," which clearly doesn't make any sense here). Instead, we need to think about the exact meaning of the sentence. Most likely, the point is that the difference between similes and metaphors is *important*.

Null and *nominal* are an incorrect pair. *Synoptic* and *optional* have no relationship.

13. **Fallacious, Specious.** This sentence is thick with content, and it's important that you understand all of it. We are given two statements about economics. First, that Keynesian economics may or may not recommend a "perpetual raising of the debt ceiling." Then we are told definitively that Keynes says "deficit spending must be done responsibly." If the latter is true, then it is likely that he would *not* have recommended the former statement. So our blank should say something like *incorrect*.

Fraudulent and *deceitful* are a pair (or a near-pair), but the sentence does not imply that the argument about Keynesian economics is purposely misleading, only wrong. *Indigenous* and *corrupt* have no relationship.

14. **Patois, Jargon.** This sentence is describing rebellion as the effect of a communication gap, which we will need to make concrete with the blank. Something “protean” (meaning “tending to change frequently or easily”) is being compared to the “older generation’s calcified language.” Actually, the best fill-in for our blank is simply *language*.

Defiance and *insubordination* are an incorrect pair. *Despondence* and *volatility* have no relationship.

15. **Grousing, Protesting.** “Cantankerous” means “bad-tempered and argumentative.” Because there is no pivot here, we simply need a word that means those things. A good fill-in for the blank would be *arguing* or *complaining*.

Imputing, *assaulting*, *convulsing*, and *imbibing* have no relationship.

16. **Fracas, Altercation.** In this sentence, we need to figure out what kind of thing would result in the police being called—likely, some kind of *fight*.

Discourse and *colloquy* are an incorrect pair. *Battle* may be close to what we want, but relates to a larger event than a bar fight. *Mutiny* is not related to the others.

17. **Eclectic, Catholic.** In this sentence, the word “surprisingly” is functioning as a pivot, disagreeing with the portion before the comma. There, we learn that the woman in question had a “sheltered upbringing” and a “limited breadth of experience.” Our blank should be the opposite of that. A good fill-in would be *wide-ranging*.

Shallow and *facile* are an incorrect pair. *Profound* has the right spin, but it isn’t the opposite of “limited” or “sheltered.” It has no relationship with *callow*.

18. **Rail, Fulminate.** The word “but” acts as a pivot here, taking us in the opposite direction of the adjectives initially used to define documentary filmmakers: “dispassionate” and “objective.” A good fill-in would be *speak out*.

Advertise, *inveigle*, *strain*, and *aspirate* have no relationship. Note that *inveigle* is NOT the same as *inveigh* (which does not appear as a choice but would have been a suitable correct answer—the GRE sometimes plays on commonly confused words).

19. **Piquant, Zesty.** There are two important portions of this sentence to focus on. First, the word “praised,” implying that the critic’s review will be positive. The second part is the way he’s described as using “the language of food to describe films.” So we want two words that are positive and that could also be used to describe food.

Spectacular and *stupefying* are an incorrect pair. They are both positive, but they aren’t generally used to describe food. *Inspid* and *brilliant* have no relationship.

20. **Bruises, Contusions.** In this sentence, a short list of possible injuries after a skydiving accident is described. Two of the items are “broken bones” and “a gash,” which means our blank should be an injury different than those two. A good fill-in would be *bruises*.

Lacerations and *scratches* are an incorrect pair. They’re wrong because both are synonyms of *gash*, which was already mentioned in our list. *Trauma* and *lesions* have no relationship (other than both being types of injuries).

Answers: 20 Hard Questions

1. **Plenipotentiary, Legate.** The target is “he.” We know that he is “from Japan” and “called upon to answer questions about the Japanese government’s position.” A good fill-in would be something like *representative* or *ambassador*.

Tyro, anchorite, sybarite, and *ascetic* do not contain any pairs (*sybarite* and *ascetic* are actually antonyms).

2. **Palliate, Damp.** The target is both the leadership and the “stridency of their rhetoric”—we need the relationship between those two things. “While” is an opposite-side pivot. In the first part of the sentence, the protests are “uncompromising.” Thus, in the second part, they should be softer, more on the side of compromising. Since “stridency” means harshness and is on the same side as “uncompromising,” the group thus chose to *reduce* or *tone down* the stridency.

Metamorphose, gild, wane, and *succor* do not contain any pairs. *Wane* means “decrease” and is an attractive trap answer. However, *wane* is an intransitive verb—that is, something (such as the moon) *wanes* on its own; you can’t *wane* an object. Therefore, the word does not fit in this sentence.

3. **Quiescent, Abeyant.** The clue here is that activists will “be newly galvanized.” Because of the pivot “but,” this means we need a blank that means the opposite of “galvanized.” A good fill-in word would be *dormant* (implying that the movement is quiet but could rise again).

Bootless and *feckless* are an incorrect pair, both meaning “ineffective.” Though this has the correct kind of spin for our blank, it doesn’t correctly contrast with the idea of something being “galvanized.” *Subverted* and *interminable* have no relationship.

4. **Meet, Condign.** The first half of this sentence sets up the topic, but the important information is in the second half. There, we’re told about the “most rabid supporter [of corporal punishment]”. Typically, we would expect this to be a pro-corporal punishment argument. However, the pivot “though” sets up that we’re describing the more compromising aspects of that particular philosophy. A good fill-in for our blank would be *deserved* or *fair*.

Clement and *merciful* are an incorrect pair. They both go against the feel of what we want in the blank. *Delimited* and *tantamount* are not related.

5. **Chimerical, Notional.** The portion of this sentence after the blank tells us that “results tend to be colored by personal proclivities and suppositions.” This provides an explanation of the blank, which in turn is trying to tell us something about “impartiality.” That last portion describes something the exact opposite of “impartial,” so a good fill-in for our blank would be *wrong* or *nonexistent*.

Imbecilic and *fatuous* are an incorrect pair, both meaning “stupid.” While the “premise of impartiality” may not in fact exist, that doesn’t make it stupid. *Prejudicial* and *vexing* have no relationship.

6. **Edacious, Gustatory.** Everything in this sentence relates to food, whether it’s the “texture and taste” or the “notion of what constitutes a meal.” This means we need a word that relates to food. A good fill-in would be *culinary*.

Carnal and *voluptuous* are an incorrect pair, relating to sensual delights rather than those merely relating to food. *Salubrious* and *terrestrial* have no relationship.

7. **Gist, Pith.** The verb “drone” has a very specific meaning, implying that someone is going on at length in a dull or boring way. The implication is that the point could be made more efficiently. This sentence then tells us that a *précis* (summary) can be found in the tome’s first few pages. This *précis* is really the book’s *essence* or *thrust*, which is the kind of word we want for the blank.

Pip, stub, nimbus, and *nut* have no relationship.

8. **Collate, Juxtapose.** The final portion of this sentence describes “studying the differences and similarities” between two different things. This implies we’ll be doing some sort of comparison, so a good fill-in word would be *compare*.

Aggregate and *agglomerate* are an incorrect pair. While putting all the data together is required in order to make a comparison, the sentence already said “not only to collect...” Both words in this pair are just fancy versions of “collect,” which we don’t need to repeat. *Ratiocinate* and *interpose* have no relationship.

9. **Enfilades, Salvos.** The second half of this sentence doesn’t tell us anything interesting. In fact, everything we need to know comes from the few words before the blank: “trenches were dug so that soldiers could avoid...” What would you avoid in a trench? *Bullets*, more or less (or *barrages*, if you wanted to get a little fancier).

Provocations and *goadings* are an incorrect pair. *Fervency* and *imprecations* have no relationship.

10. **Genteel, Couth.** Near the beginning of the sentence, Cary Grant is described as *suave*, meaning “confident and elegant.” Our blank should not mean the exact same thing, or it would be redundant. Instead, we want a word that is best exemplified by someone who always pulls out a woman’s chair, such as *well-mannered*.

Cosmopolitan and *debonair* are an incorrect pair. These words mean “stylish” and “confident,” but they don’t necessarily imply good manners. *Consummate* and *waggish* have no relationship.

11. **Subjective, Personal.** The sentence states that the attempt to find *parity*, or fairness, is *fallacious*, or logically incorrect. How could fairness be illogical? Only if it isn’t real or objectively determinable. A good fill-in would be *prejudiced* or *based on feelings*.

Pragmatic and *utilitarian* are a near-pair. *Introverted* and *illicit* are not related.

12. **Erudition, Cerebrality.** This sentence compares the blank with speeches that feature “ignorance” and “stupidity.” We also want something that relates to “education.” A good fill-in would be *knowledge*, which is the result of education.

Condescension and *bloviation* are an incorrect pair. While they’re close to the correct meaning, they carry too much negativity. *Gnosticism* and *patrimony* have no relationship.

13. **Trappings, Appurtenances.** In this sentence, we’re told about a man who has been fired and doesn’t tell his wife and kids. This somehow relates to “plenitude,” which is “the condition of being full or complete.” Clearly, if you get fired and don’t tell your family, it’s because you want to pretend that you’re still okay. A good fill-in word would be *appearance*.

Corollaries and *consequences* are an incorrect pair. *Paradigms* and *prepossessions* have no relationship.

14. **Indiscriminate, Aleatory.** The sentence tells us that Don Juan had “an astronomical number of amatory adventures,” but that it was not because he had a “surfeit of charisma or skillfulness.” What might explain this discrepancy? Perhaps if Don Juan weren’t particularly choosy. A good fill-in for the blank would be *not choosy*.

Sumptuous and *sybaritic* are an incorrect pair. While they both describe someone like Don Juan, they don’t explain how he had so many lovers. *Pollarded* and *covert* have no relationship.

15. **Graft, Payola.** This sentence describes something that buys “speedboats and golf weekends” and “relates to a politician’s capacity to run for office.” It sounds like we’re looking for a word like *money*, but with the implication that the money is not earned or deserved.

Lobbying, *venality*, *tit-for-tat*, and *lucre* have no relationship. While *lucre* also means money, it has no negative connotations, unlike our correct choices here.

16. **Interrogate, Limn.** There are no pivots in this sentence, so we simply need a word that fits the description of a book that explores the “many ways in which 19th century women writers...” In other words, we can just fill in the blank with *explore*. Note that *interrogate* is being used in an unusual manner here (to explore deeply, just as an *interrogation* of a suspect is an attempt to pry deeply into the truth of a crime).

Debunk and *explode* are an incorrect pair. *Interpolate* and *castigate* have no relationship. *Castigate* almost fits into a triple with the incorrect pair, but it’s more of a criticism than an attempt to disprove something.

17. **Languor, Lethargy.** This sentence creates a contrast with the pivot “while” between a positive and negative view of the same fact. The positive view is that certain cultures prioritize “relaxation” and “moderation between work and play.” The negative view of this would be something akin to *laziness*.

Enfeeblement and *enervation* are an incorrect pair. Though they are close to what we want, they imply a forceful taking away of energy, which is not the same as simply being lazy or tired. *Obtundity* and *effeteness* have no relationship.

18. **Extraneous, Unnecessary.** Autodidacts (“those who teach themselves”) would argue against “enforced” lucubration (study) and “standard” education. A good fill-in might simply be *unnecessary*.

Slack and *lax* are an incorrect pair. *Prudent* and *sagacious* are an incorrect pair.

19. **Caliginous, Crepuscular.** The only clue in this sentence comes in the second half, a “twilit avenue in a long since abandoned city.” So we want a word that implies “twilit” and “abandoned,” such as *dark*.

Urban and *municipal* are something of a pair here. Though they both reflect the sentence’s reference to a “city,” they fail to correctly reference either “twilit” or “abandoned,” which are really the most descriptive terms in the original sentence. *Precipitous* and *avuncular* have no relationship.

20. **Ineluctable, Inexorable.** The key phrase here is “the inertia of history.” *Inertia* is “resistance to change,” so this phrase must mean that history is on track and can’t deviate from that track. So our blank here should be something like *unchangeable*.

Incontrovertible, *interminable*, *infallible*, and *unspeakable* have no relationship.

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Chapter 4
of

TEXT COMPLETION &
SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

LEARNING
VOCABULARY

In This Chapter . . .

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- Practical Strategies & Games for Learning Vocabulary
- Flashcard Games and Activities
- Use Roots Ahead of Time
- Using Social Media to Buttress Your Vocabulary Studies

LEARNING VOCABULARY

A common question that many students ask is, “How many words do I have to learn?” That question misses the point a bit.

Imagine this: You tell me you know everyone in your university graduating class! All 2,000 people! Well, how can I test this astounding assertion? One good way would be to start by picking ten reasonably well-known students, and see if you know them. If you do, then I’ll pick ten very shy students, rarely seen around campus, and see if you know them, too. If you know all 20 students that I randomly select, then I would tend to believe your assertion that you know all 2,000 people, or some number very close.

That’s what the GRE is doing. They’re not testing you on a couple hundred words because they want you to know those couple hundred words. They’re testing you on 100+ easier words in the first verbal section, and then if you do well, they’re testing you on 100+ harder words in the second verbal section. If you do well at all the words they hit you with, the GRE is assuming (and rewarding you for) presumably having a much larger vocabulary than was actually tested.

It would be a truly pointless process if you could simply memorize the dictionary definitions of 1,000 vocabulary words, then the GRE tested you on those words using the definitions you memorized, and then you could get a good GRE score and forget about those words. That’s not going to happen. Students who try it end up disappointed. (We suspect that these are the same students who spent all of school asking, “Is this going to be on the test?”)

Quite frankly, when you learn words for the GRE, you are trying to trick the test into thinking that, for the past 10+ years of your life, you have been the model English student who looked up all the words you didn’t know in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Great Gatsby*, and then spent four years in university reading university-level material, going back to look things up or ask questions every time you got stumped. And then, if you’ve been out of school, that you’ve continued reading college-level material ever since.

Simulating that level of verbal knowledge (when we haven’t actually been doing the things listed above) takes some work. It can be done! But it’s very important to *learn*—not just memorize—vocabulary words.

Many students make the mistake of memorizing dictionary definitions of words without really understanding those definitions or being able to comfortably use those words in sentences. Memorizing by itself is not learning. It is not flexible. If you’ve learned *torpid*, you need to not be thrown off by *torpor*. If you’ve learned *anthropology* and *engender*, you should be able to make some reasonable assumptions about “anthropogenesis.”

You want to learn words like *traduce* and *bonhomie* the same way you know words like *study* and *mistake*—that is, you can barely even remember a time when you didn’t know those words.

Don’t misunderstand—you will indeed need to memorize the definitions about 500-1,500 words, depending on your goal score and the current state of your vocabulary. But while vocabulary lists, flash cards, and the like are important, some of the best vocabulary accrual occurs when you are reading difficult material and you go look up a word you just read in context. For sources of difficult material, try *The Economist*, any of the articles posted on aldaily.com (that’s “Arts and Letters Daily”) or any book by Christopher Hitchens.

If you’ve ever learned a foreign language, think about the words that were easiest to learn. When you’re in class, most of the words you learn (stove, tire, classroom, grandmother) seem equally important. But when you are actually in a foreign country, trying to speak that language, it is *very, very easy* to learn and remember words and phrases like “bathroom” and “How much?” and “No pigs’ feet, please.” That is, the easiest things to learn are things that you

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really wanted to know at the time that you looked them up. It's easier to retain a new word when there's a "hole" in your knowledge that you just cannot wait to fill.

Similarly, if you are reading something interesting and come across a word you don't know, then you look up the word and consider its usage in the sentence you were just puzzling over—well, that's almost as good as learning the word "bathroom" when you really needed to use one.

Finally, don't hesitate to look up or ask someone about words you *thought* you knew, but seem to be used in novel ways. (Did you notice what I did just there? As a noun, a "novel" is a book-length work of fiction, but as an adjective, "novel" means "new, original.") How about the use of "informed by" in the sentence, "Her historical analysis of family dynamics in the antebellum South is informed by an academic background in feminist theory"? (Clearly, the "academic background in feminist theory" isn't talking—"informed by" means "influenced by" in this context.) Or the use of "qualified" in "Dr. Wong could give only qualified approval to the theory, as the available data was limited in scope." ("Qualified" here means "limited, conditional, holding back.")

If you read a definition of a word—on a flash card, in a test prep book, or anywhere else—and it doesn't make sense to you, look the word up in several online dictionaries (Dictionary.com, TheFreeDictionary.com, and m-w.com), ask someone, and/or simply Google the word to see how other people are using it.

Once you've studied the definition, read the word in context, and worked the word into conversation three times (this can cause your friends to look at you funny, but it'll be worth it!), that word is probably yours for life.

Finally, in embarking on your vocabulary-learning journey, it is crucial to cultivate a productive attitude.

Learning 500-1,500 new words certainly seems daunting (although an assiduous approach will indubitably redound to your success!) Some students say "I'm already a college graduate. Why do I have to spend months studying for this exam? That's just too much time" or "No one uses these words. This is stupid."

Here's a way to look at it—if you exercise for one hour a week, you've almost thrown that time away, because that's not enough time to get results. But if you exercise for five hours a week, you'll end up in much better shape! That is, it's exercising *insufficiently* that is a waste of time. Learning words *shallowly* is also a waste of time.

Similarly, if you spend three weeks cramming for the GRE—memorizing words just for the GRE score, without really becoming a more verbally educated person—you probably won't improve your score that much, and it really will seem like you wasted your time, because what you're doing is really about the GRE and nothing else. But if you spend months developing a more erudite vocabulary, improving your comprehension of graduate-level articles, and becoming greatly more articulate, then you have remodeled your brain for the better. That time is not lost! Those skills will benefit you forever (and in graduate school!).

Here's something to think about—the GRE test writers aren't evil. They don't want to hold you back. They want to test real skills. Sure, you might be able to game the test a little bit with tricks and quick fixes. But probably not enough to achieve your goal score.

A serious, academic approach to GRE study isn't about tricks and quick fixes. It's about the actual material and skills that the GRE is designed to test. And no amount of time is too much to spend on becoming a more knowledgeable person, equipped with hundreds of new words that can be assembled in infinite combinations to express your ideas for decades to come.

Practical Strategies and Games for Learning Vocabulary

How to Make and Use Flash Cards

Flash cards are a time-tested way to learn vocabulary, and we like them a lot. You can make your own, or you can use Manhattan GRE's *500 Essential Words* and *500 Advanced Words* Flash Card sets. The strategies below are equally valuable for either choice.

If you decide to make your own flash cards, try to write sentences for each word, and add synonyms or extra information where appropriate. Here is a sample of one of our flash cards that you might wish to use as a model for making your own:

torpid

(adj)

Also *torpor* (noun)

Definition: Slow, sluggish, lazy

Usage: After a massive Thanksgiving dinner, Jane felt too **torpid** to even get up off the couch. "My **torpor** is overwhelming," she said.

Related Words: *Lassitude* (laziness), *Phlegmatic* (slow, sluggish), *Slothful* (lazy, slow), *Indolent* (opposed to working)

More Info: Don't confuse with *tepid* (lukewarm), *turpitude* (moral depravity), *turbid* (turbulent and muddy, as a waterway; confused), or *turgid* or *tumid* (both of which mean swollen or distended).

Of course, if you are making cards yourself, most of the cards will be much more basic, at least at first—a word on one side and a definition on the other might be enough. But when you still have trouble remembering a word, *adding* to the flash card (such as by using the word in your own sentence or looking up a sentence on the Internet) is a great way to bolster your retention.

You can find a word's synonyms by using the "Thesaurus" tab on Dictionary.com, although make sure you click on a synonym and verify that it really is similar in meaning—many thesauruses will give more than twenty synonyms for a single word, but most of them won't be that closely related (and some will be quite obscure). You can look up etymologies (word origins) on etymonline.com (although some etymological information usually appears in the dictionary entries of words in any of the online dictionaries).

So, flash cards are pretty important, but here's what a lot of people actually *do* with flash cards.

Okay, here's my enormous stack of flash cards. How many is this? 500? Okay, let's start. *Synoptic*. Hmmn, I don't know. Okay, I guess I'll just look at the answer, then. Oh, okay. Next. *Turpitide*. Hmmn, I don't know. Okay, I guess I'll just look at the answer, then. Oh, okay. Next. *Platitude*. Hmmn, I don't know. Okay, I guess I'll just look at the answer, then. Oh, okay. Next....

You see how this is getting us nowhere.

One problem with this approach is that your brain has no motivation to actually remember much, because, deep down, your brain knows that the information is already written on the flash card, and you'll be seeing that flash card again next time it comes up in the rotation. (Your brain's job is actually to forget way more than it is to remember—imagine if you remembered everything you saw, did, ate, etc. in just a single day! Your brain dumps well over 99% of the information it is presented with. You need to give your brain a very good reason to do otherwise!)

The other problem with this approach is that you have no idea when you're "done," and it rarely feels like you're making any progress.

So, here's what to do instead. We call it *winnowing* (a great vocabulary word for weeding down a big list or collection to a smaller one).

1. Pull out a small stack of cards, perhaps 20.
2. Go through the stack one at a time, quizzing yourself on each word—but when you get one right, TAKE IT OUT OF THE STACK and lay it aside.
3. As you continue, the stack will get smaller and smaller. Once you're down to five words or so, it should be pretty easy to remember a word you saw just a few cards ago.
4. When you get down to just 2–3 words, you may feel that, strangely, there are words that you can't remember even though you saw them just a few seconds ago! Take those cards over to the Internet. Google those words, and look up their definitions in more than one online dictionary (dictionary.com, thefreedictionary.com, m-w.com, or just Google the word and "definition"). If one definition doesn't really "stick," maybe another one will. Attack the word from all sides.

Now you're done! You did a set! Move on to another set if you like.

Because this exercise is time-limited (it actually has an end, unlike the way most people use flash cards), you get to feel a sense of accomplishment when you're finished.

Depending on your timeline and goal score, you might decide to do this once or twice per day. In fact, if you are working a full-time job and have a hard time studying on weeknights, make a vow that you can do this one thing *every day*, no matter what (if you're really tired, you can make it a 12–15 card set rather than 20, but you should do at least a little vocab every single day!).

Flash Card Games and Activities

One benefit of physical flash cards (as opposed to various electronic study tools) is that you can physically spread out and group your flash cards in a way that is not possible when you can only see one card at a time on a screen. Here are some strategies that take advantage of the old-school properties of flash cards:

Grouping: Spread out a huge pile of flash cards, perhaps an entire kitchen table full (or use a bed, or the floor). Pick a category that you can remember having seen several words for (for instance, words for “talkative” or “not talkative”). Pick out all the words you can find that match the topic. This could take awhile—you’ll probably have to turn over a bunch of the cards to see if your “hunch” was correct. Once you’re satisfied you’ve got them all, glance at the backs of the other cards as you stack them back up and see if you missed anything. Here are some topics that work well for “grouping” GRE vocabulary words:

- words for arguing for or against something
- words about complaining or being stubborn
- words for “kissing up,” giving in, and otherwise being wimpy
- words that mean “changeable” or “not changeable”
- words about money (a lot of these are about stealing and cheating!)
- words about praise
- words for working hard (and hardly working!)

You can also just keep it simple and try to pull out all the words that have “good” or “bad” connotations.

Whack-a-Word: Whack-a-Mole is an arcade game in which you have to hit a bunch of mechanical creatures with a mallet before the time runs out. Play Whack-a-Word by, again, spreading out a huge pile of flash cards on a table, bed, or floor, and then trying to remove words from the pile by defining them without looking at the card. If you get a word wrong, put it aside in a “to review” pile. If you end up with words you don’t know anything about, make a stack and try the *Winnowing* technique from above. Once you’ve learned those words better, spread them all back out and play Whack-a-Word one more time. Whack-a-Word is also fun with a friend. Take turns defining words and removing them from the spread, working together to clear the space as quickly as possible.

Storytelling: Take a stack of about 20 cards. Shuffle, and don’t look at the first card. Think of a topic for your story—something funny and interesting. (For instance: Robots! Monkeys! Ninjas! A war between robots and monkeys in which the monkeys train as ninjas!) Then look at the first card and compose the first line of a story, forcing yourself to use that word (this is “open book”—feel free to look at the backs of the cards throughout this activity). For instance, say we decide to write a story about a war between robots and monkeys. We turn to our first card and find *itinerary* (and then we keep going)....

The Robot/Monkey war began when a monkey went on vacation and misread an item on his *itinerary*, causing him to accidentally invade Robot Headquarters when he really just meant to visit the Monkey Art Museum. The robots were known as *jingoists*, so they declared war right away. They considered trying to *bilk* the monkeys, but decided that advanced warfare was more direct. *Providentially*, the monkeys discovered oil in Monkeyland and were able to sell it to buy weapons to defend themselves. One *taciturn* monkey finally got the courage to speak up and suggest that the monkeys engage in ninja training. A meal of sushi helped *whet* their appetites for the training.

You can see where this is going, and it’s ridiculous—but a fun way to learn! The brain retains information much better when it *does something* with that information (such as using words in sentences) rather than merely *looks at* information.

More on Storytelling and Using Words in Sentences

You can also use storytelling as a vocabulary learning technique without involving flash cards. Use any GRE vocabulary list or source and write a story using 20 or more words—either one per sentence, or as many as you can incorporate.

If you're not so big on telling stories, try writing a daily journal entry using some number of words per day.

You could even vow to work a certain number of words per day into your regular emails to unsuspecting colleagues and family members. (Use caution when dropping bombastic language on your boss, but why not try out your new lexicon on your parents? They'll probably be glad to hear from you no matter how grandiloquent you become!)

Chat with a Study Buddy

Another fun technique is to find a study partner and agree to email or text each other every day using a certain number of GRE words in your emails (three seems about right—if you make the task too daunting, it might be too hard to stick with the plan).

Hey there, are you wearing anything *ostentatious* today?

No, I am feeling very *nondescript*, probably because I am so *timorous*.

Whatever! You are actually very bombastic—you use big words all the time, just to show off.

Um, isn't that the point? That is why our knowledge of vocabulary is no longer *inchoate*!

So *veracious*!

Vocab at Home Technique

Approximately 85% of people are primarily visual or kinesthetic (rather than auditory) learners. One fun way to take advantage of this is through the Vocab at Home Technique.

Take the list of words you're trying to learn—or flip through the list in this book—and find words that describe the rooms of your house and the objects in them. 2-4 words per room is about right (if you have something weird or interesting in your house, feel free to attach words to that, too—my cat was once *feral* but now is *docile*, and also is so *hirsute* that sometimes her shedding makes my house look *slovenly*). For instance, a kitchen might be a *gustatory nexus* and a shower, a place for *diurnal ablutions*. A trash can might be *rancid* or *putrescent*. Someone who often sits on the sofa and chats on the phone might consider the sofa to be a place to be *garrulous* (or *verbose*, *prolix*, or *loquacious*). You can even put sticky notes on all the books and DVDs! Surely some of them are *jocular*, *lachrymose*, or *banal*. (That Will Ferrell—he's so *waggish*!)

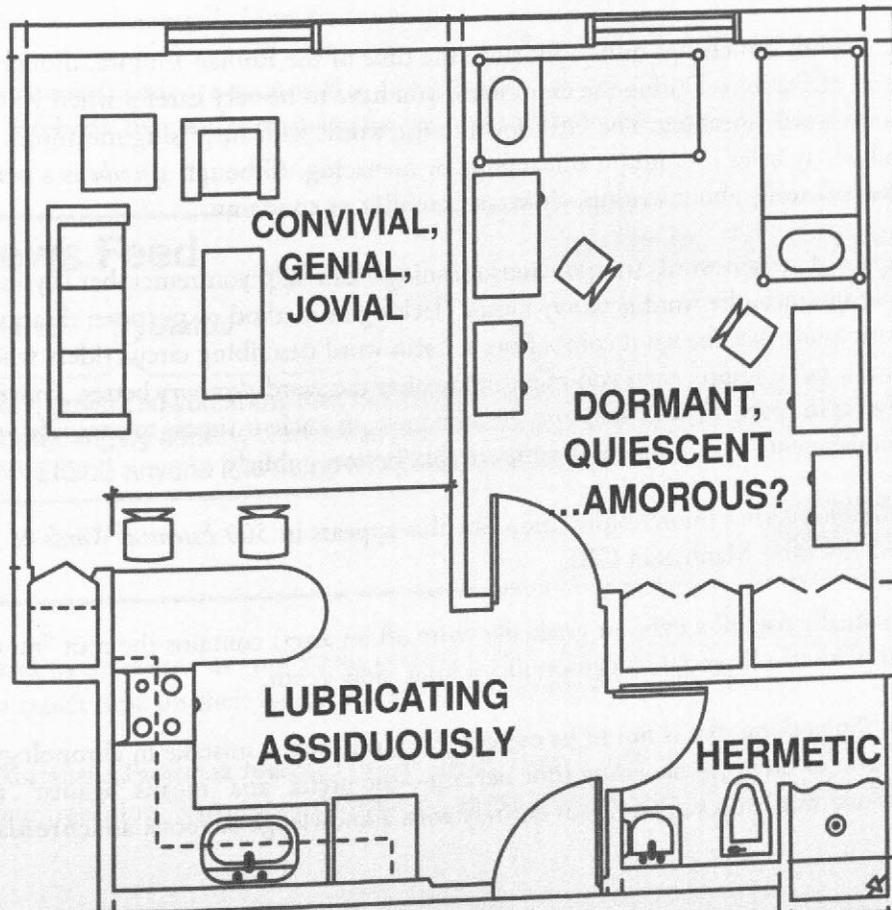
Then, try one of the following:

Visualizing: Look at the list for a particular room. Then, close your eyes and visualize the room and imagine the words either describing particular qualities, or even physically located in the room (like written on the wall). Imagine yourself *lucubrating* (studying) at your desk. Maybe your bedroom is *somnolent* (putting you to sleep)—that would look nice printed on your pillow, wouldn't it? Visualizing words is a powerful way to remember them.

Sketching: Draw a diagram or blueprint of your house, labeling rooms and objects with appropriate vocabulary words.

Sticky Notes: Actually write vocabulary words on sticky notes and place them in appropriate rooms and on appropriate objects. This one might be hard if you live with other people—but it also might be a great conversation starter! Having your roommates, parents, or significant other ask you “Um, why does our fridge say *fetid*?” is a great way to practice your new lexicon (and/or start a serious *rift* in your personal life).

**SHOWER:
WHERE MY
ABLUTIONS
OCCUR
DIURNALLY**



Chapter 4 LEARNING VOCABULARY STRATEGY

Here are some words that are especially well suited to this technique (although it really depends on what's in your house—for instance, houseplants are *verdant* and celebrity magazines are *lurid*):

epicurean	lurid	hermetic	fetid
repose	esoteric	verdant	assiduous
rococo	incendiary	genial	tepid
byzantine	sonic	unseemly	putrescent
slovenly	languid	gauche	lucubrate
squalid	somnolent	rustic	unctuous
twee	soporific	prosaic	emollient
droll	buttress	gustatory	artifact
banal	aseptic	salubrious	apex
sublime	pristine	pathogenic	pellucid

Use Roots Ahead of Time

In the Appendix of this book, we have included a targeted Root List. Take a good look through it.

Take judicious advantage of roots. There is no doubt that you need to know a good number of Latin and Greek roots to understand modern English academic vocabulary. Many words are easily decomposed into roots and can be understood clearly in terms of those roots.

Because the meaning of words can change quite a bit since the time of the Roman Empire, though, some words now have misleading roots or derivations. During the exam itself, you have to be very careful when you resort to root analysis to guess an unknown word's meaning. The GRE loves to use words with surprising meanings. For instance, *baleful* does not mean “full of hay bales”—it means threatening or menacing. Although a *scribe* is a person whose job is to copy by hand, *proscribe* isn't really about writing—it means prohibit or condemn.

However, that very aspect of certain words (non-obvious meanings) can help you remember if you learn a word's story ahead of time. For instance, the word *desultory* means “lacking in method or purpose; disappointing.” That's not so interesting, but if you know that the word comes from a Latin word describing circus riders who *jumped from horse to horse* (*de* = from, *sult* = jump), then you might remember the word *desultory* better. *Proscribe*, as it turns out, contains the root *scribe* (as in *script*, *scribble*, *scripture*, etc.) because, in ancient times, to *proscribe* was to publish a record of someone's punishment—to condemn or sentence that person publicly.

Here are a few more of our favorites (more information like this appears in *500 Essential Words & 500 Advanced Words* GRE Flash Card sets from Manhattan GRE).

Amortize (Gradually pay off a debt, or gradually write off an asset) contains the root “mort,” meaning death. **Amortization** is when a financial obligation dies a long, slow death.

Anachronism (Something that is not in its correct historical time; a mistake in chronology, such as by assigning a person or event to the wrong time period)—the prefix “ana” means “against”, and “chron” means “time.” This is one word you can work out entirely with a knowledge of roots: **anachronistic** means “against time.”

Legerdemain (slight-of-hand, trickery, deception) comes from Middle French, meaning *light of hand*. The modern French word for hand is *main*, which is related to the root in the English *manual* (relating to hands, as in *manual labor*) and *manumit* (free from slavery, untie the hands).

Malediction (a curse)—*Mal* means “bad,” of course. The root “dict” comes from “dicere” (to say) and also appears in *dictator*, *dictionary*, and *indict* (connect to a crime), as well as in **malediction**’s antonym, *benediction* (blessing).

Not all words have a cool story or a helpful derivation. For instance, *pulchritude* means beauty. The reason that seems so weird (*You’re so pulchritudinous* really doesn’t sound like a compliment) is that the Latin root “pulchritudo,” meaning “beauty,” just doesn’t seem to occur in any other English words.

So, recognize that roots are just one of many helpful tools. One good way to proceed is to go through the Root List in the Appendix and just focus on roots that actually look familiar to you (and like something you’d be able to spot in the future)—for instance, *circum* (meaning “around”) appears in *circumference*, and it’s pretty hard to miss the root in *circumnavigate*, *circumcise*, *circumambulate*, and *circumlocution*. So, you might make a flash card for this and other roots that seem most useful to you.

Using Social Media to Buttress Your Vocabulary Studies

Do you spend all day on Facebook or Twitter anyway? Developing a social network around your word network is an incredible way to make vocabulary fun, and to get other people’s perspective on words that are new to you, but that your friends may have interesting things to say about. In fact, scientific studies show that a having a social group related to your studies can substantially improve learning!

Supposedly, your Facebook friends are your, well ... friends, right? So they should be supportive of your GRE efforts. Try announcing on Facebook that you’re studying for the GRE and will be posting vocabulary words for the next few months.

News Feed
Top News · Most Recent

Share:

≡ Status

Hey, guys! Did you know that INVEIGLE means to entice or lure, or get something by flattery, cleverness, or offering incentives? Now you do! Can I INVEIGLE anyone into using INVEIGLE in a sentence?

Share

If you post a word and its definition as your status update, it only takes one hilarious comment from a friend (some people have way too much time on their hands) to help you remember the word forever.

Manhattan GRE maintains a Facebook presence (we’re “Word Beast”), and we were pleased to see that someone posted the word *deleterious* (meaning “harmful or damaging”) as her status update (“Does anyone actually use that word?”)

Chapter 4 LEARNING VOCABULARY STRATEGY

A friend wrote back:

“Deleterious” is used quite a bit in genetics. For example, “Epigenetic silencing of transposable elements may reduce ‘deleterious’ effects on neighboring gene expression in the genome.”

The original poster replied, “I looked for examples of this word’s use in a sentence. It seems that ‘deleterious effects’ is indeed the way it is most often used.”

Now that’s how to learn *deleterious*!

You can also use Twitter as a tool for learning vocabulary. You can follow Manhattan GRE (and the Word Beast) at:

<http://twitter.com/manhattangre>

http://twitter.com/word_beast

But don’t just be a follower—start up a Twitter account (if you haven’t already) and Tweet each word you study. You can simply post words and definitions, or try using the words in sentences (or both!)

What’s happening?

MODISH= “stylish or contemporary.” In the US, “a la mode” means w/ice cream (“pie a la mode”), but it’s really French for “in fashion”! #gre

📍 Add your location

0 **Tweet**

Try tagging your Tweets with #gre or #grevocab, and you’ll find a lot of new friends who are also studying for the GRE. It’s a word party!

g

Chapter 5
of

TEXT COMPLETION &
SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

IDIOMS &
METAPHORICAL
LANGUAGE

In This Chapter . . .

g

- Idioms & Metaphorical Language

IDIOMS & METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE

The following section contains expressions that are appropriate for use in the type of writing excerpted on the GRE, and which often appear in writing about culture, literature, business, science, and history.

It also contains words used metaphorically—for instance, an *albatross* is large web-footed bird, but it is also a burden or obstacle, as in the expression *an albatross around one's neck* (from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, in which an old man had to wear an albatross around his neck as punishment for his sins),

This section will be extremely helpful for many non-native speakers of English. Others may simply want to look over it and see if there are any “surprises.”

Idioms are not the same as vocabulary words and are not likely to appear in GRE answer choices—rather, they are likely to appear in complex Text Completion sentences and especially in Reading Comprehension passages. This content is important for both areas of the GRE.

To increase retention of this material, try to use these expressions in your own sentences. Soon, you will be talking like an erudite old professor!

The idioms are followed by a twenty-question drill allowing you to test your understanding of these expressions when used in complex sentences.

“...” – Quote marks can indicate 1) that the word or phrase is not to be taken literally, 2) the introduction of a new, made-up word or phrase. So, some context is needed to understand the meaning.

The factory employs several people who add defects and rough edges to its popular line of “**antique**” furniture. (The furniture is not really antique).

The company has sent its top people to ethics training and courses on Aristotle in an attempt to build a “**philosophically correct**” business. (The idea of a “philosophically correct” business is really weird, perhaps something that the company itself came up with).

Account for – 1) take into consideration or make adjustments based on, 2) cause. This is not the same as *give an account of*, which just means *explain*.

I **accounted for** the fact that Joe is always late by telling him to meet us at 1:30 when the event is really at 2. (Here, *accounted for* means *made adjustments to compensate for*).

I did get us the meeting, but Ellen’s hard work **accounted for** the rest of our success. (Here, *accounted for* means *caused*).

“**A given**” – The use of *a given* as a noun is different from the use of *given* alone. For instance, a person’s *given name* is the one *given* by his or her parents (a “first name” in the U.S.), and we might also say, “The truth differs from the *given* explanation.” Here, *given explanation* just means *the explanation that someone gave*. Simple. However, *a given* means something taken for granted, something assumed or that does not require proof. For instance:

When planning my wedding, it was **a given** that my parents would invite anyone they wanted, since they were paying for everything.

It’s **a given** that everyone here is against human trafficking—what we disagree about is the best way to fight it.

Albatross – a constant burden or worry; an obstacle. Literally, an albatross is a bird. The expression *an albatross around one's neck* creates the silly image of a person wearing a (dead?) bird—but that certainly sounds like a constant burden or worry!

The city has done an admirable job rebuilding its infrastructure and marketing itself, but the crime rate continues to be an **albatross** around the city's neck in trying to attract tourists.

All but – almost definitely. *The bill's passage is all but assured* means that the bill will almost certainly pass.

Your objections have arrived too late; the matter is **all but** decided.

And yet – A stronger way of saying *yet*. The expression *and yet* seems ungrammatical (two conjunctions right next to each other is very strange—we don't say *and but*), but it is an idiom used for emphasis. It indicates a surprising twist, an ironic realization, etc. It is often used at the beginning of a sentence for emphasis, and can even be used on its own, although this usage is casual.

The company was lauded for its commitment to the environment. **And yet** its employees regularly fly in private jets, creating carbon footprints that would embarrass any true environmentalist.

He was surprised to see her standing on his doorstep in the rain. "I said I was leaving you and never wanted to see your face again!" she said. "**And yet**," he replied.

Arms race – competition between two countries to build up the best and largest supply of weapons. This term is often associated with the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Metaphorically, an arms race is a competition that implies a sort of "more, more, more!" mentality and may not be entirely rational.

Analysts carefully watched stock prices as the two Internet giants competed in an **arms race**, expanding rapidly by buying up smaller companies with little due diligence.

Aside from – in addition to

Aside from the obvious financial benefits of investing in a socially responsible fund, you can rest assured that your money is used to maximize social good.

(Adjective) as it is, ... – This pattern is used to contrast the part after the comma with the part before. For instance, *Charming as she is, I just don't want to be friends with her anymore.*

As pleased as we are to see more minorities on the board than ever before, discrimination in hiring and promotion is still a serious problem.

As well as – Sometimes, *as well as* just means *and*, as in *I had ramen for lunch, as well as a hot dog*. But *as well as* can also be used to mention one thing as a way to contrast with or emphasize another. For instance:

You know what I discovered? My French teacher speaks Chinese, **as well as** French! (Here, the point of the sentence is that it is amazing that the French teacher also speaks Chinese. Of course, everyone already knows that the French teacher speaks French—that part is only mentioned to highlight how amazing it is that the teacher knows *another*, unrelated language).

At best – at the most, interpreted in the most favorable way. *The seminar drew 20 people at best* means that 20 or fewer people attended.

My college algebra teacher can barely factor a polynomial! He is qualified to teach elementary school math, **at best**.

At fault – guilty

The insurance company is investigating who is **at fault** for the collision.

At loggerheads – in conflict, at a standstill

The strike is not likely to end soon—the transit authority and the union representatives have been **at loggerheads** for weeks.

At odds – in conflict.

The teachers' union and the state government are always at odds.

At once – 1) immediately, 2) at the same time.

Once the hurricane veered near the coast, the governor ordered that we evacuate **at once**. (Here, *at once* means *now*).

We've received three proposals that are all excellent, but we can do them at **at once**. (Here, *at once* means *at the same time*).

The better part – the largest or longest part. *The better part* does NOT have to be good! The word *better* is a bit confusing here.

For **the better part** of human history, slavery has been a reality. (The speaker is NOT saying that slavery is good. The speaker is saying that, for most of human history, slavery has existed).

When the oil magnate died, he left **the better part** of his fortune to his third wife, and only a small sliver to his children.

Beside the point – irrelevant, off-topic

Bite the hand the feeds you – This expression means exactly what it sounds like (think of a mean and not-very-smart dog). Although informal sounding, this expression has appeared in business writing.

The music industry **bites the hand that feeds it** when it penalizes consumers who share (and therefore publicize) their favorite songs with friends.

Brook – tolerate, allow. Often used with the word *no*. You could say *The dictator will not brook dissent*, but a more common usage would be *The dictator will brook no dissent*.

Chapter 5 IDIOMS & METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE STRATEGY

(Adjective) but (adjective) – This pattern is used for two adjectives that provide a contrast. They can be opposites, or one good and one bad, etc. For instance, *a boring but lucrative job*.

The food available in such neighborhoods is inexpensive but insalubrious. (Here, you could use the structure to infer that, since *inexpensive* is good, *insalubrious* must be bad. What might be bad about inexpensive food? As it turns out, *insalubrious* means *unhealthy*).

(Verb) by so (verb)ing – The second verb is equivalent to or causes the first verb. He *defaults by so refusing* means *when he refuses, he is defaulting* (that is, neglecting to fulfill the duties of a contract). *By so agreeing* also occurs on its own, meaning *by agreeing to do the thing that was just mentioned*.

He agreed to run as the Green Party candidate though he already holds a Democratic Party chairmanship, which he effectively **abandoned by so agreeing**.

The case at issue – the matter at hand, the thing we are discussing

Usually, raising prices results in a drop in demand, but in **the case at issue**, the price jump convinced consumers that the product was a luxury good, thus spurring demand from aspirational consumers.

Caught red-handed – Caught in the act of doing something wrong, so that the person cannot deny guilt. The expression refers to having blood on one's hands.

The scientists on the company payroll could no longer claim that the fish in the river were all dying from natural causes once the company was **caught red-handed** dumping waste at the river's mouth.

Colored by – Influenced or prejudiced by.

Her opinion about the prison system was **colored by** having grown up effectively an orphan while both her parents served sentences in separate prisons.

Couldn't have come at a better time – The same as *could hardly have come at a better time*, this expression means that something happened at the best possible time, such as at a very convenient moment or just in time to prevent disaster.

Curry favor – to try to gain favor (such as preferential treatment from a boss) through flattery or servile behavior. The expression is derived from French and is not related to *curry*, the food.

Cut bait – give up, abandon an activity. Often part of the expression *fish or cut bait*, to *cut bait* is to stop fishing.

As much as he wanted to be an entrepreneur, after a year of struggling, he **cut bait** and asked his former boss for his old job back.

Due diligence – research or analysis done before taking action (such as investing); care that a reasonable person would take to prevent harm to others

En masse – all together, in a group. This expression is from French and is related to the word *mass*. Like many foreign expressions, *en masse* is often written in italics.

The protesters marched *en masse* to the palace.

Entree – admittance, permission to enter. Most people in the U.S. think of an entree as the main dish of a meal, but it originally was an appetizer—a dish that leads into the main course (the word is related to “enter”). A person who wants to rise in society might seek an *entree* into a certain social group.

For disadvantaged young people, good public schools can provide an **entree** into the middle class.

Fishy – suspicious, unlikely, questionable, as in *a fishy story*. This expression probably arose because fish smell very bad when they start to spoil.

For all X, Y – This sentence pattern means, “Despite X, actually Y—that is, X and Y will be opposites, or one will be good at one will be bad. The word “actually” (or a similar word) often appears in this pattern, but doesn’t have to.

For all of its well-publicized “green” innovations, the company is one of the worst polluters in the state.

For all of the criticism she has received for her actions during the merger, she’s actually a really nice person if you get to know her.

Former and latter – When two things are mentioned, the first one is the *former* and the second one is the *latter*.

Your grades are slipping and you’ve been very secretive about your behavior—it’s **the latter** of these things that worries your father and me the most.

I intend to choose a business school based on reputation and cost, the **former** more so than the **latter**.

For show – for appearances only

The company was voted the best in the country for working mothers, but the actual women employees report that it’s all **for show**—for instance, the much-publicized free on-site daycare is tiny and has a three-year waiting list.

For years to come – until much later. *The consequences won’t affect us for years to come* means that they **WILL** affect us, but not for the next several years.

My parents are only in their sixties and are healthy and active, so I am hopeful that my children will get to enjoy their grandparents **for years to come**.

Full throttle – with much speed and energy. On a related note, sometimes *juice* is used to mean *energy*.

The plan was a good idea with little **juice** behind it; because it was never implemented with much gusto, it’s hard to say whether it could have succeeded. We’ll have to wait until another company goes **full throttle** with a similar idea to observe the outcome.

Garden-variety – ordinary, common

Gloss over, paper over, whitewash – These are all expressions for covering up a problem, insult, etc. rather than addressing it or fixing it. Think of a dirty floor that you just put a pretty rug on top of instead of cleaning. Because *gloss* is slippery (think of lip gloss), *gloss over* often has the sense of trying to smoothly and quickly move on to something else.

He made a snide remark about short people and then tried to **gloss over it** when he realized his 5'2" boss had overheard.

The government has been accused of trying to **whitewash** the scandal, implying that the officials covered up the incident out of concern for national security rather than to protect themselves.

Go down the tubes – become much worse, fail. One theory is that this expression is about the plumbing attached to toilets.

Go sour – Think of milk going bad—that's the idea behind the expression *go sour*. A relationship *goes sour* before the couple breaks up. An economy *gone sour* can't be good. This is not the same as the expression *sour grapes*, which refers to pretending something you can't have wasn't any good anyway, as in, *Her hatred of the rich is just sour grapes—if she could afford luxury, she'd take all she could get.*

Hardly – *Hardly* can mean *almost* or *probably not*, or *not at all*. Of course, *I can hardly see you* means *I can see you only a little bit*. In the sentence *The news could hardly have come at a worse time*, *hardly* means *not*—thus, the overall meaning is *The news came at the worst possible time.*

Hand-wringing – an excessive expression of concern, guilt, or distress

There has been much **hand-wringing** (or **wringing of hands**) over falling test scores, with so-called “experts” acting as if the world will end if students do 1% worse in math and science.

Hold the line vs. toe the line – *Hold the line* means *keep something the same*. It is a reference to (American) football, in which you don't want the opponent to get the ball past the line of scrimmage in the middle of the field. To *toe the line* is to conform to a policy or way of thinking, or follow the rules. One theory about the origin of the expression is that, on ships, barefoot sailors were made to line up for inspection—that is, to put their toes on an actual line on the deck of the ship.

My boss doesn't want to hear original ideas at all—he just wants me to **toe the line**.

If colleges cannot **hold the line** on rising tuition costs, students will have to take on even more crippling loan burdens.

However much, as much as – even though, no matter how much

However much people may agree that saving money is a virtue, the majority of Americans don't have sufficient funds for any kind of emergency.

As much as I'd like to attend your wedding, I just can't afford a trip to Taiwan.

In contrast to – This phrase is important in inference questions on Reading Comp. If a writer says *In contrast to X, Y is A*, we can draw the conclusion that *X is not A*. For instance:

In contrast to our competitor's product, our product is made with organic materials. (This means that our competitor's product is NOT made with organic materials, which very well could be the answer to a question about what we can infer from the passage).

Just cause – *Just* as an adjective means *justified, legal, fair*. *Just cause* means a legally sufficient reason. In some legal codes, an employer must show *just cause* for firing an employee.

Legions or is legion – *Legions* are large military units, generally consisting of a few thousand soldiers. Saying that a group is *legion* is saying that it is large.

Surely, the developers could have foreseen that **legions** of Mac users would protest when news emerged that the new version of the software would not be Mac compatible.

The former governor has been called a demagogue by many commentators who nevertheless must grudgingly admit that her supporters **are legion**, populating rallies in every state.

“No X OR Y” vs. “no X AND Y” – When you are talking about having two things, saying “salt AND pepper” is very different from saying “salt OR pepper.” However, when you are talking about a lack of two things, *and* and *or* can often be used to express the same idea. The following two sentences have the same meaning:

Pioneer towns were characterized by little access to the outside world **and** few public institutions.

Pioneer towns had almost no access to the outside world **or** public institutions.

Not (adjective) – Of course, putting *not* before an adjective indicates the opposite. However, sometimes it indicates a softer or more polite way to say something. If someone asks if you like the meal he cooked or the outfit he is wearing and you know him well enough to be honest, you might say *It's not my favorite*. Sometimes we say something like *not irrelevant* instead of simply *relevant* in order to indicate that we are correcting someone else's misconception:

Concern about foreign debt is **not misplaced**. (Here, we mean that we should be concerned! We also may be implying that others incorrectly think we should *not* be concerned).

Not only X but also Y – This is a two-part expression, introducing the first part before adding on the second, more extreme or surprising part. For instance:

The executive was **not only** fired, **but also** indicted for fraud.

He **not only** bought his girlfriend an iPhone for her birthday, **but also** took her entire family on a vacation to the Catskills.

Not X, let alone Y – The meaning is *Not X and definitely not this even more extreme thing, Y*. For instance:

Our remaining funds are **not** enough to get us through the week, **let alone** pay next month's payroll. (Here, getting through the week is less expensive than next month's payroll, so if we can't afford the cheaper thing, we *definitely* can't afford the more expensive thing).

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No worse than – equal to or better than

Although exotic, this illness is really **no worse than** the common flu.

On face – at first appearance, superficially. If someone says *on face*, you can expect that later on, the person will give the “real story.” In a Reading Comprehension passage, seeing *on face* is a good clue that the author’s main idea will probably be the opposite of what *seems* true at first glance.

On its face, the donation seems like a selfless act of philanthropy. However, the wealthy donor mainly made the donation for the tax benefits.

On face, the theory seems sound. However, new research has uncovered serious flaws.

Only looks (adjective) – appears (some certain way) but isn’t really

She **only looks** homeless—she is actually a famous and wealthy artist who lives eccentrically.

On par with – Sometimes *on a par with*, this expression comes from golf and means *about equal to* or *equivalent to*.

Opening salvo – A *salvo* is a simultaneous discharge of gunfire or release of bombs. Metaphorically, an *opening salvo* is something that starts a fight.

The introduction of Bill H.R. 2, given the inflammatory name “Repealing the Job-Killing Health Care Law Act,” was seen by some as an **opening salvo** by the Republicans.

Outside of the home – Working *outside of the home* means having a regular job, such as in an office. However, working *out of your home* is actually working at home. If that’s hard to understand, think of the expression *living out of your car*, which actually means living *in* your car—the idea is that you leave the car to go “out” but return back to the car as your base, just as someone who works *out of their home* leaves the home to go to meetings, for example, but uses the home as a central point.

The study compared incomes of women who had worked **outside of the home** to incomes of women who worked **out of their homes** as freelancers or owners of small businesses.

Per se – in itself, by itself, intrinsically. From Latin, often written in italics. *Per se* is often used to indicate that while something isn’t *naturally* or *the same as* something else, it still has the same effect.

The policy isn’t sexist, *per se*, but it has had a disproportionate impact on women that deserves further study.

Press for – argue in favor of. Think of *pushing people* towards what you want them to do.

The advocates **pressed for** greater regulation of child-care providers.

Rabid – Rabies is a disease that some animals (dogs, raccoons, etc.) contract and that causes the animal to become insane and violent. Thus, we use *rabid* (having rabies) metaphorically to mean *zealous* or *excessively* or *angrily passionate*. One symptom of rabies is *foaming at the mouth*, which is also an expression for being extremely (and violently or irrationally) angry.

One debater called himself a “peace activist” and his opponent a “**rabid** right-wing gun nut.” His opponent called himself a “champion of the American way” and his opponent a “**rabid** anti-American zealot.”

Ranks of – the people in a group other than the leaders. Many people know the word *rank* as “a level or grade,” as in *A general has a higher rank than a sergeant*. The other use of *ranks* is also originally related to the military: the *ranks* or sometimes the *rank and file* means all the regular soldiers (not the officers).

Among the **ranks** of our alumni are two Senators and many famous authors.

Reap and sow – These are metaphors related to farming, and specifically the idea that the seeds that you plant (or *reap*) determine what you will later harvest (or *sow*). *Sow* is pronounced the same as *so*, and the past tense is *sown*, as in *Having sown the love of knowledge in the minds of children, the teacher’s influence extended well past her own lifetime*. A common expression is *You reap what you sow*.

He worked night and day in the strange new country, never stopping to rest, for he knew he would **reap** his reward when his family greeted him as a hero for all the money he had sent back home.

Red flag – warning sign or something alarming

Bernie Madoff’s sustained, ultrahigh returns should have been a **red flag** for the banks with which he did business.

Red herring – something irrelevant that distracts from the real issue. A herring is a fish, of course. One theory for the origin of the expression is that criminals trying to escape the police would sometimes rub a smelly fish across their trail as they ran away, in order to mislead the dogs used to track them down.

Johnson’s new Maserati turned out to be a **red herring** in investigating where the stolen funds had gone—it turns out, Johnson’s wife bought the car with her inheritance, and the real culprit behind the theft was the mild-mannered junior accountant no one had suspected.

Reign vs. reins – These two words are pronounced the same as *rain* and *rains*, but the meanings are different. *Reign* means rule, as in *Conditions have improved under the king’s reign*. Using this word metaphorically, such as for a CEO, implies that the leader is a bit like a king. *Reins* are leather straps used by a rider to control a horse. Metaphorically, we might say *Since the new CEO took the reins of this organization....*

In an era of near-total transparency, some would say that the media now **hold the reins** in our society in a manner formerly reserved for the government.

(Adjective)-ridden – dominated, burdened, or afflicted by (adjective). In a *disease-ridden slum*, it’s pretty obvious that the meaning is bad, but actually, adding *-ridden* to anything makes the meaning bad. If someone said *an equality-ridden society*, that person is actually against equality! *Ridden* can also be used alone, as in *The neighborhood was ridden with crime*.

Scarcely or Scarce – Sometimes *scarce* is used where it sounds like the adverb *scarcely* is needed. This is an idiomatic usage:

She lived a lavish lifestyle she could **scarce** afford. (She could not afford the lifestyle).

Chapter 5 IDIOMS & METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE STRATEGY

Save – but or except. As a verb, of course, *save* means *keep safe, store up, set aside*. But as a preposition or conjunction, *save* can be used as follows:

All of the divisions of the company are profitable save the movie-rental division.
(This means that the movie-rental division was not profitable.)

He would have been elected President, save for the scandal that derailed his campaign at the last minute.
(Here, *save* means *except*.)

School of thought – a group of people with similar beliefs or perspective on things, or the beliefs themselves. If a GMAT writer says *One school of thought argues X*, it is probably the case that the author is about to say the opposite (calling something a *school of thought* can emphasize that it's not the only way to think about the issue).

One **school of thought** says that companies don't need to "give back" to communities, since the companies make profits from voluntarily trading with others; a **competing school of thought** says that companies benefit from a nation's infrastructure, the school systems that educate their employees, etc., and thus have responsibilities similar to those of citizens.

Sight vs. Site vs. Cite – To **sight** is to see, or discover by looking. A **site** is a location. To **cite** is to reference or give credit to.

The sailors had nearly given up hope when they finally **sighted** land. When they reached the shore, they planted a flag on the **site** of their landing.

A good research report **cites** relevant studies.

So much as – This phrase is used an adverb to intensify. In *My teacher is so awful, she won't so much as answer a question*, the meaning is that, whatever the teacher will do, it is not "as much as" answering a question—it is something less than that.

After her husband decided to take up day trading and lost \$100,000 in one day, she wouldn't **so much as** look at him.

Sound the depths – explore, investigate, or look into something really deeply. This expression is a metaphor based on the idea of a "sounding line," which is a rope with a weight on the bottom that you drop to the ocean floor to see how deep the ocean is.

Other books have dealt with the topic in a superficial way, but this is the first book to really **sound the depths** of the response of the British lower class to the American Revolution.

Steeped in – immersed in, saturated with. A teabag **steeps** in hot water. A person **steeped in** classic literature probably thinks about almost everything in terms of old, famous books.

The Met's new campaign seeks to answer affirmatively the question of whether music lovers **steeped in** hip-hop and pop can learn to love opera.

Stem from – grow out of, be caused by. This is related to the idea of a plant's *stem*.

The psychologist believed that his neurosis **stemmed from** events in his childhood.

Sway or **hold sway over** – persuade, influence.

The lawyer attempted to **sway** the jury with an emotional account of the defendant's tough childhood.

Repressive governments are suspicious of those who **hold sway** over the people, and often imprison or execute such people.

Table – In American English, to *table* something means to postpone discussion of it until later. (In British English, to *table* a bill is the opposite—to submit it for consideration).

Take umbrage – become offended

With fifteen years of experience on all kinds of campaigns, she **took umbrage** to her sexist coworker's suggestion that she was only qualified to develop advertising for "women's products."

The very idea (or *the very notion*, etc.) – This expression is used to express a strong contrast.

The author conjures up a drifting yet haunting word picture that challenges **one's very notion** of what constitutes a story. (This means that the author's strange "word picture" story goes against the most basic things that we think must be true about stories).

Trappings – Accessories, the characteristic items, products, etc. that come with or are associated with something. Think of the side dishes or condiments that come with a meal. The *trappings* of fame include invites to fancy parties and free items from companies.

Mr. and Mrs. Seguro moved to the U.S. because they wanted a better education for their children. The children, however, were soon decked out in the *trappings* of American teenage life – cell phones, iPods, and fashionable clothes – with little care for studying.

Vanguard and **avant-garde** – The *avant-garde* (French for *in front of the guard*) were the leading soldiers at the front of an army. *Vanguard* is derived from *avant-garde* and means the same thing. Metaphorically, the *avant-garde* (noun or adjective) or vanguard (noun) are innovators, those at the forefront of any movement or those "ahead of their time." Sometimes, the *avant-garde* seems a little crazy or scary at first.

While Google has won the search engine wars, in 1994, Yahoo was on the **vanguard** of search technology.

She arrived at the mixer in a dress that was a little **avant-garde** for the otherwise conservative Yale Club—she would have looked more appropriate at an art gallery or Lady Gaga concert.

Wanting – *wanting* means *lacking*, *insufficient*, or *not good enough* (as in, *I read the book and found it wanting*). This makes sense when you think about a person who is *left wanting*—that is, the person is *left wanting* something good. Conversely, a person who *wants for nothing* is someone who already has everything.

With a grain of salt – To take something (a statement, claim, etc.) *with a grain of salt* is to maintain a small amount of skepticism. The origin of this expression is related to an old belief that a small amount of salt could help protect against poison.

Take the consultant's advice **with a grain of salt**—the software he's recommending is produced by a company that is also a client of his.

Chapter 5 **IDIOMS & METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE STRATEGY**

With respect to, in some respects – These expressions are not really about giving respect. *With respect to* (or *in respect to*) just means *about*. The expression *in some respects* just means *in some ways*.

With respect to your request for a raise, I'm afraid no one is getting one this year.

Wreak havoc – Cause destruction. The past tense of *wreak* is *wrought*.

Unsurprisingly, a combination of heroin abuse and living on the streets can really **wreak havoc** on a person's health.

Drill: Decoding Idioms

Each sentence below is written in American English that is idiomatic, but still appropriate for business writing. Pick the multiple choice answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence.

Complete this quiz “open book”—feel free to go back and look up anything you want in this book, and to use any online dictionary (such as dictionary.com). You will gain much more from the process of looking things up and decoding the statements than you would by merely testing yourself in the usual manner.

1. In contrast to the Swedish social welfare system, Ireland’s does not provide paid paternity leave.
 - A. Ireland’s social welfare system does not provide paid paternity leave and Sweden’s does.
 - B. The Swedish and Irish social welfare systems are different in many ways, and Ireland’s does not provide paid paternity leave.
 - C. Both the Swedish and Irish social welfare systems provide paid paternity leave.
2. He can hardly be called a liberal, for his voting record belies the beliefs he professes to hold.
 - A. He is not really a liberal because he votes in a way that goes against liberalism.
 - B. He is a very strong liberal and always supports liberal beliefs with his vote.
 - C. He is slightly liberal, and his voting record goes along with his beliefs.
3. However much the committee may be deadlocked now, the progress made to this point has been non-trivial.
 - A. The committee is now committed to one course of action and is making progress.
 - B. The committee members are fighting with one another, but have made progress on one point they were discussing.
 - C. Although it is true that the committee is stuck and not moving forward, it has already made significant progress.
4. Although the book has addressed the issue of educational equity head on, it has sidestepped the thorny question of school vouchers.
 - A. The book talked about owning stock in education, but it has talked in an indirect way about the painful issue of school vouchers.
 - B. The book talked directly about equality in education, but it avoided talking about the controversial issue of school vouchers.
 - C. The book talked in a smart way about fairness in education, but it only gave an overview of the controversial issue of school vouchers.
5. Her appointment to the office is all but assured.
 - A. She has a meeting at the office, but the time is not set.
 - B. She will almost certainly be given a new job or leadership role.
 - C. She may be promoted, but it is not likely.

6. You discount the consultant's prescription at your peril.
- A. You put yourself in danger by dismissing the consultant's recommendations.
 - B. Paying less for the consultant's advice is not a wise idea.
 - C. You have gotten a good deal on a dangerous medicine.
7. Davis seemingly spearheaded the project and has taken credit for its success. Nonetheless, those in the know are aware of his patent appropriation of the ideas of others.
- A. Davis seems to have led the project, and he took credit for it. However, those who know the real situation know that he openly stole other people's ideas.
 - B. Davis was the leader of the project and got the credit, and those who know about what happened know that he used the intellectual property of other people in an appropriate way.
 - C. Davis seems to have damaged the project, but took credit for its success. However, those who know the real situation know that he used other people's ideas.
8. The experiment only looks like a success.
- A. It is not possible to see the experiment as anything but a success.
 - B. The experiment seems successful, but we don't know for sure.
 - C. The experiment has the appearance of a success, but really is a failure.
9. On its face, the dispute is about the study's integrity. But in actuality, the lead scientist will brook no opposition to his own theories.
- A. The dispute is directly about the honesty of the study. But really, the lead scientist will not "go with the flow" of opposition to his own theories.
 - B. The dispute at first seems to be about the study's honesty. But really, the lead scientist will not tolerate opposition to his own theories.
 - C. The dispute is directly about the honesty of the study. But really, the lead scientist will not encourage opposition to his own theories.
10. We will not likely reconcile the apparent discrepancy for years to come.
- A. It will probably take us many years to show that what looks like a contradiction really isn't.
 - B. We do not want to work out a difference of opinion in the coming years.
 - C. Over the next several years, we will probably not attempt to work out what seems like an error.
11. The dictator had long sown discontent, and as dissident thinkers began to hold sway over the populace, no one could be surprised when the regime was subverted.
- A. The dictator was dissatisfied, and as rebellious thinkers began to have political power over the people, it was not surprising when the government became corrupt.
 - B. The dictator had been planting seeds of unhappiness that were destined to grow, and as thinkers who disagreed with the government began to influence regular people, it was not surprising when the dictator was overthrown.
 - C. The dictator had been more and more dissatisfied over time, and as thinkers whose ideas went against the government began to influence the people, it was not surprising when the dictator lost his power.

12. A variable-rate mortgage is no worse in this respect than a fixed-rate one.
- A. There is something bad about a fixed-rate mortgage, and that same quality is better or equally bad in a variable-rate mortgage.
 - B. A variable-rate mortgage does not indicate less respect than a fixed-rate mortgage.
 - C. If you look at it a certain way, a variable-rate mortgage is the same or better than a fixed-rate one.
13. As to whether Dr. Stuttgart is a token academic on a board of otherwise mercenary executives, you need look only at the board's response to the latest crisis, when Dr. Stuttgart was at once turned to for counsel and granted discretionary power over the board's funds.
- A. If there is a question about whether the main reason Dr. Stuttgart is on the board is so the executives who only care about money can look good, then the only way to answer that question is to look at the board's response to the latest crisis, when Dr. Stuttgart was put in charge and given power over the board's money.
 - B. If you want to know whether Dr. Stuttgart is really an academic even though he is on a board of executives who will do anything to win, then the best place to look for an answer is at the board's response to the latest crisis, when Dr. Stuttgart was asked for his advice and allowed to secretly control the board's money.
 - C. If you are questioning whether the main reason Dr. Stuttgart is on the board is so the executives who only care about money can look good, then you can easily answer that question by looking at the board's response to the latest crisis, when the board asked for Dr. Stuttgart's advice while at the same time giving him power to spend the board's money on whatever he thought was best.
14. The author is seemingly a garden-variety Marxist.
- A. The author seems to be a Marxist who has a lot of diversity in his or her opinions.
 - B. The author is a Marxist who is concerned with many different Marxist issues.
 - C. It seems as though the author is a typical Marxist, but that may not really be true.
15. The windfall could hardly have come at a better time: by agreeing to a company restructuring he didn't really understand, he had just inadvertently reduced his holdings in the family business.
- A. The disaster happened at a very bad time, because he had also just agreed to a company reorganization that he didn't understand and which improperly reduced his control over the family business.
 - B. He suddenly received some money at a very convenient time, because he had just agreed to a company reorganization that he didn't understand and thus had accidentally reduced how much of the family business he owned.
 - C. The good fortune could have happened at a better time, because he had also just agreed to a company reorganization that he didn't understand and which reduced his portion of the family business.

16. Which of the following, if true, best reconciles the apparent discrepancy?
- A. Which of the following is true and shows that a contradiction does not really exist?
 - B. Which of the following, if it happened to be true, would show that what looks like a contradiction really isn't?
 - C. Which of the following, if it happened to be true, would help us accept a contradiction?
17. The evidence has been taken as supporting Fujimura's conclusion.
- A. Other people have interpreted the evidence in a way that makes it seem to support Fujimura's conclusion.
 - B. The evidence definitely supports Fujimura's conclusion.
 - C. The evidence has been deeply understood by others in a way that allows them to effectively support Fujimura's conclusion.
18. Hardly a debased example, this shifty, hedging, practically unreadable document is paradigmatic of corporate memos.
- A. This memo switches positions often, holds back information, and is very hard to read. It is a very poor example of corporate memos.
 - B. Although this memo refuses to take a stand, tries to reduce the writer's risk, and is very hard to read, it is a poor example of corporate memos and should not be judged to be representative.
 - C. This memo is evasive or tricky, avoids taking a stand so as not to risk being wrong or offending anyone, and is almost unreadable. However, this is not an especially bad example of a corporate memo—they are all this bad.
19. Which of the following best underscores the argument that a failure to enforce the regulation is on par with publicly condoning illegal dumping?
- A. Which of the following most weakens the argument that a failure to enforce the regulation is just as bad as publicly tolerating illegal dumping?
 - B. Which of the following most strengthens the argument that a failure to enforce the regulation is just as bad as publicly tolerating illegal dumping?
 - C. Which of the following most emphasizes the argument that a failure to enforce the regulation is worse than publicly tolerating illegal dumping?
20. The central idea is juxtaposed with the results of a study that seemingly corroborates a long-derided school of thought.
- A. The central idea is placed next to and contrasted with evidence that seems to support the ideas of a group of people whose ideas have been looked down on or made fun of for a long time.
 - B. The central idea is judged to be better than evidence that seems to support the ideas of a group of people whose ideas have been looked down on or made fun of for a long time.
 - C. The central idea is placed next to and contrasted with evidence that supports the ideas of a group of people whose ideas used to be looked down on or made fun of.

Drill Solutions: Decoding Idioms

1. A
2. A
3. C
4. B
5. B
6. A
7. A
8. C
9. B
10. A
11. B
12. A
13. C
14. C
15. B
16. B
17. A
18. C
19. B
20. A

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Appendix A

of

TEXT COMPLETION &
SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE

ROOTS LIST

In This Chapter . . .

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- Part I: Roots
- Part II: Prefixes
- Part III: Suffixes

ROOTS LIST

Many words in English, especially those that come from Latin or Greek, have more than one part. Here is the basic pattern:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Word} &= \text{Prefix} + \text{Root} + \text{Suffix} \\ \text{EXCISION} &= \text{EX} + \text{CIS} + \text{ION} \end{aligned}$$

The root contains the original core meaning of the word, although this meaning may have changed over time. Here, the root *cis* means “cut.”

The prefix alters that meaning in some way. Here, the prefix *ex-* means “out” or “away.”

Together, the prefix and the root handle most of the meaning. *Ex + cis = excise*, or “cut away.”

Finally, the suffix determines the part of speech. The suffix *-ion* means “the action of doing X,” so *excision* means “the act of cutting away.”

Be careful! Many words do NOT so neatly decompose into parts. The original meaning of the whole word may have only been related metaphorically to the meaning of its components. Moreover, over time, many words have changed tremendously in meaning.

Study roots, prefixes, and suffixes primarily to solidify your vocabulary. On the test, you can and should use your root knowledge to guess at the meaning of unknown words. Realize, however, that roots are most helpful *now*, while you’re studying—not the day of the test. Be sure to learn the full dictionary meanings of vocabulary words.

1. Part I: Roots

This list includes a broad selection of roots and illustrative examples that often appear on the GRE. The examples have been chosen specifically to illustrate the root and thus to avoid meaning drift. Nearly all the roots are Latin or Greek. This list is not exhaustive; it is meant to provide a useful reference.

The definitions given for the harder words are brief. Remember to consult your dictionary for nuances.

Root	Meaning	Examples
ac acer acri acro	sharp <i>or</i> point <i>or</i> high	acid acid = sharp, bitter (of smell or taste) acerbity = bitterness acrimony = sharpness of words, behavior, or feeling acme = highest point, best level acrophobia = “high + fear” = fear of heights acumen = sharpness of intellect
ag act	drive <i>or</i> lead <i>or</i> do	agent, act demagogue = “people + lead” = leader who appeals (falsely) to the people react = do in response

Root	Meaning	Examples
alt	high	altitude , altimeter exalted = "out + high" = raised high
ambul	walk	circum ambulate = "around + walk" = walk around in a circle per ambulate = "through + walk" = walk through, inspect
anim	spirit <i>or</i> breath	animate un animous = "one + spirit" = in complete agreement equan imity = "even + spirit" = calmness, balance under stress magnan imity = "great + spirit" = nobility of spirit pusillan imous = "tiny + spirit" = cowardly, without courage
arch	rule	an archy = "not + ruler" = chaos, lack of government
aud	hear	audience , audible auditory = related to hearing
bell belli	war	rebellion bellicose = ready to fight, warlike belligerent = "war + do"—hostile, provocative, or actually at war
cad cid	fall	decadent = "away + fall" = in a state of decline, often self-indulgent recidivism = "back + fall" = tendency to relapse to earlier behavior or crime
ced cess ceed	go <i>or</i> yield	proceed , succeed , exceed , recede cede = yield ant ecedent = "before + go" = earlier event or cause pre cedent = "before + go" = earlier example cessation = end of an action
chron	time	chronological , chronic an achronism = "not + time" = something out of place in time di achronic = "through + time" = relating to change over time
cis cide	cut <i>or</i> kill	incisive = "into + cut" = cutting to the heart of a matter, direct excision = "out + cut" = act of cutting out, removing regicide = "king + kill" = murder of a king
clud clus claus	close	include , exclude , inclusion , claustrophobia pre clude = "before + close" = prevent, rule out beforehand oc clude = "against + close" = block off or conceal
crat crac	rule	democracy autoc rat ic = "self + ruler" = relating to an absolute ruler or tyrant

Root	Meaning	Examples
cred creed	believe	incredible , creed credence = acceptance, trust credulity = readiness to believe incredulous = skeptical, unwilling to believe
dei	god	deify = “god + make” = make into a god, glorify
demo dem	people	democracy demographic = related to a population, or a segment of a population pandemic = “all + people” = something affecting everyone, usually a disease endemic = “in + people” = native to a population demagogue = “people + lead” = leader who appeals (falsely) to the people
dict	say	predict , contradict , jurisdiction benediction = “good + say” = blessing valedictory = “farewell + say” = expressing a farewell (often by a speech)
duc	lead <i>or</i> pull	produce , abduct , conduct deduce = “away + lead” = determine from general principles ductile = able to be led easily (people) or to be drawn out into wire (metals) induct = “in + lead” = admit as a member
dur, dure	hard <i>or</i> lasting	durable , endure , endurance , duration , during duress = compulsion, restraint by force obdurate = “against + hard” = hard of heart, stubborn
equi equa	equal <i>or</i> even	equation , equator equitable = dealing fairly on all sides equanimity = “even + spirit” = calmness under stress, balance equivocate = “equal + voice” = say something open to more than one interpretation in order to mislead or to avoid commitment equable = uniform, steady, unchanging
fac fec fic fy	do <i>or</i> make	terrify , purify , pacify , affect , effect , fact , artificial rarefy = “rare + make” = make “rare,” thin, pure, less dense verify = “true + make” = confirm as true sanctify = “holy + make” = make holy deify = “god + make” = make into a god, glorify beneficent = “good + do” = doing good for others maleficent = “bad + do” = doing harm or evil facile = easily done or understood; lacking depth or authenticity facilitate = to make easy, help to happen factitious = artificial, made-up, fake

Appendix **ROOTS LIST**

Root	Meaning	Examples
fer	carry <i>or</i> bring	transfer, offer, fertile , ferry proliferate = “offspring + carry” = multiply in number vociferous = “voice + carry” = shouting loudly and angrily
ferv	boil	fervent = zealous, intense in feeling effervescent = “away + boil” = being bubbly, showing exhilaration per fervid = “through + boil” = over-excited, overwrought
fid	trust <i>or</i> faith	fid elity, confid ence diffidence = “not + faith” = hesitant, lacking in self-confidence per fid ious = “detrimental + faith” = disloyal, treacherous
flect flex	bend	flexible , reflect , deflect
flu flux fluct	flow <i>or</i> wave	fluid , fluctuate , influx con flu ence = “together + flow” = a flowing together super flu ous = “over + flow” = unnecessary, wasteful melli flu ous = “honey + flow” = having a thick, smooth flow like honey eff lu vium = “out + flow” = by-product, (bad) exhalation
gen	kin <i>or</i> kind <i>or</i> birth	gen try = upper class gen tility = high social status, or conduct becoming of that status hetero gen eous = “different + kind” = consisting of diverse parts homo gen eous = “same + kind” = consisting of one substance
gno	know	agn ostic = “not + know” = someone who isn’t sure (often about God’s existence) diag nosis = “through + know” = identification of (medical) causes & issues pro gn osticate = “before + know” = predict, foretell cog no scite (pl. cognoscenti) = “with + know” = expert in a subject
graph gram	write	auto graph , diagram , grammar , graphic , telegram mono graph = “one + write” = a written report or paper on a narrow subject
grade gress	step <i>or</i> go	pro gress , re gress , ag gress ive, con gress retro grade = “backward + go” = moving backward trans gress ion = “across + step” = violation of a law or rule dig ress = “away + go” = deviate from a subject
greg	flock <i>or</i> herd	ag greg ate = “toward + flock” = collect or add up con greg ate = “together + flock” = gather together eg reg ious = “outside + flock” = conspicuously bad, flagrant g reg arious = sociable, companionable

Root	Meaning	Examples
her hes	stick	ad here = "to + stick" = stick to co hesive = "together + stick" = sticking or fitting together
jac ject	throw	e ject , tra jectory , inter ject , ob jection , re ject ab ject = "away + thrown" = in a low, hopeless, depressed condition
jur	law <i>or</i> swear	jury , jurisdiction ab jure = "away + swear" = renounce or reject ad jure = "toward + swear" = command, urge
leg lex lect log	word <i>or</i> speak <i>or</i> read <i>or</i> study	lecture , mon ologue , chron ological , lexicon ne ologism = "new + word" = new word or expression eu logize = "good + speak" = praise highly (often after death) eu logy = speech of praise
locu loqu	speak	circum locution = "around + speak" = wordiness or evasion in speech e locution = "out + speak" = art of speaking well in public lo quacious = very talkative
luc lus	light <i>or</i> shine <i>or</i> clear	lucid = clear; sane; full of light e lucidate = "out + shine" = make clear, explain trans lucent = "through + shine" = permitting (some) passage of light pell ucid = "through + clear" = absolutely clear lack luster = dull, lacking brilliance
meter metr	measure	metric , altimeter, perimeter
mit miss	send	dis miss , e mit , trans mit missive = letter, written message re miss = "back + sent" = negligent, careless, lax
morph	shape	am orphous = "without + shape" = shapeless meta morphose = "change + shape" = transform
nom	law	aut onomous = "self + law" = independent, self-contained
path	feeling	anti pathy = "against + feeling" = strong dislike
pel puls	drive <i>or</i> push	ex pel , prop el dis pel = "away + drive" = scatter, make vanish comp elling = "together + drive" = convincing, forceful, attention-grabbing
phob	fear	acroph obia = "high + fear" = fear of heights

Root	Meaning	Examples
phon	sound	megaphone, telephone, phonics homophone = "same + sound" = a word pronounced like another word cacophonous = "bad + sound" = unpleasant-sounding euphony = "good + sound" = pleasing sound (usually of words)
port	carry	porter , transportation, import , export , deport
pos pon	put	impose, expose, oppose, opponent, proponent depose = "down + put" = remove a leader, or take testimony superimpose = "over + on + put" = place over
prob prov	prove <i>or</i> test	probe , prove , improve, approve probity = honesty, integrity reprove = "back + prove" = scold, admonish, express disapproval
rog	ask <i>or</i> propose a law	interrogation, interrogatory prerogative = "before + ask" = special right arrogate = "toward + ask" = claim or take (without the right) abrogate = "away + propose law" = abolish, nullify (a law or rule)
sanct	holy	sanctuary = holy place sanctify = "holy + make" = make holy sacrosanct = holy, untouchable sanctimonious = hypocritically or falsely holy
sci	know	science prescient = "before + know" = knowing ahead of time, able to predict events omniscience = "all + know" = state of knowing everything
scrib script	write	scribble , scribe , script , prescribe
sec sect	cut	section , sector , intersect bisect = "two + cut" = cut in half sect = a subdivision or segment of a group, often of a religion
sed	sit	supersede = "above + sit" = replace, transcend by being better
sequ secu sic	follow	sequence , consequence, consecutive extrinsic = "outside + follow" = external to something's nature intrinsic = "inside + follow" = internal to something's nature obsequious = "toward + follow" = overly obedient, submissive, flattering

Root	Meaning	Examples
simil simul	similar	assimilate = "toward + similar" = make or become a similar part of something similitude = likeness, correspondence between two things simulacrum = image, semblance
son	sound	sonar , sonic sonorous = full of rich sound dissonance = "away + sound" = discord, clash of sounds
spec spect spic	look	spectacle , inspect , retrospect circumspect = "around + look" = cautious, prudent perspicacious = "through + look" = able to perceive hidden truth
ten tain tend	hold <i>or</i> have <i>or</i> stretch <i>or</i> thin	retain , contain , obtain , extend tenable = able to be held or maintained tenacity = courage, persistence, ability to hold fast abstain = "away + hold" = refrain from distend = "away + stretch" = bloat, swell, expand tenuous = thin, weak attenuate = "toward + thin" = make or become thinner or weaker
theo the	god	atheist = "not + god" = someone who doesn't believe in God polytheist = "many + god" = someone who believes in many gods apotheosis = "away + god" = elevation to godlike status, or something that has that status
tract	drag <i>or</i> draw <i>or</i> pull	tractor , attract , contract , detract , extract , retract tractable = able to be led; obedient; easily managed abstracted = "away + drawn" = withdrawn into one's mind
trud trus	push <i>or</i> thrust	intrude , extrude unobtrusive = "not + against + push" = not noticeable or attention-drawing abstruse = "away + push" = hard to comprehend
veh vect	carry	vehicle , convection , vector invective = "in + carry" = bitter criticism, denunciation vehement = "carried (away) + mind" = passionate, nearly violent
ven vent	come	intervene , prevent , invent , event , adventure , venture provenance = "forward + come" = source, or history of ownership contravene = "against + come" = oppose, violate, or contradict

Root	Meaning	Examples
ver	true	verify = “true + make” = confirm as true veracity = truthfulness or truth aver = “toward + true” = assert, declare
vert vers	turn	revert , extravert , introvert , adverse , inadvertent , aversion , avert , invert versatile = able to adapt easily, ready for many uses divert = “away + turn” = turn aside or distract controvert = “against + turn” = dispute in argument, engage in controversy
voc	voice <i>or</i> call	vocal , invocation equivocate = “equal + voice” = say something open to more than one interpretation in order to mislead or to avoid commitment vociferous = “voice + carry” = shouting loudly and angrily
vol	will	benevolence = “good + will” = kindness, readiness to do good for others malevolent = “bad + will” = wishing harm, ready to do evil

2. Part II: Prefixes

We must be even more careful with prefixes. Certain prefixes have relatively stable meanings (e.g., *bene-* pretty much always means “good”), but other prefixes, especially short ones that correspond to prepositions, can take on a variety of different meanings. The sense of the whole word is often unpredictable. Take a simple word: *describe* = “from + write.” It is not obvious how the particular meaning of *describe* originates from the combination of the prefix *de-* and the root *scrib*.

Even if the meanings of the prefix and the root remain stable, the word itself may still take an unpredictable turn. For instance, *polygraph* = “many + write” = a machine that takes many medical readings at once. However, there’s no reasonable way to get from that point to “lie detector,” the particular “many-write” machine that provides the currently accepted sense of *polygraph*. Do not simply rely on knowing the prefix and the root separately—always learn the modern English meaning of the word itself.

Most of the examples below are repeated from the list above, so that you can see both the root and the prefix in action and reinforce the word in your memory.

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
a- an- ana-	not <i>or</i> without	atheist = “not + god” = someone who doesn’t believe in God agnostic = “not + know” = someone who isn’t sure (often about God’s existence) anarchy = “not + ruler” = chaos, lack of government anachronism = “not + time” = something out of place in time amorphous = “without + shape” = shapeless
ab- abs-	away from	abnormal , absent , abduct abstain = “away + hold” = refrain from abstracted = “away + drawn” = withdrawn into one’s mind abjure = “away + swear” = renounce or reject abject = “away + thrown” = in a low, hopeless, depressed condition abrogate = “away + propose law” = abolish, nullify (a law or rule) abstruse = “away + push” = hard to comprehend abstemious = “away + liquor” = moderate in appetite or drinking
ad- can drop d and double next letter ac-, ag-, as- at- etc.	to <i>or</i> toward	adhere = “to + stick” = stick to adjure = “toward + swear” = command, urge accrete = “toward + grow” = grow or pile up bit by bit aggregate = “toward + flock” = collect together assimilate = “toward + similar” = make or become a similar part of something arrogate = “toward + ask” = claim or take (without the right) attenuate = “toward + thin” = make or become thinner or weaker
ante-	before	antecedent = “before + go” = earlier event or cause antediluvian = “before + flood” = ancient, primitive

Appendix **ROOTS LIST**

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
anti- ant-	against <i>or</i> opposite	antibiotic = “against + life” = chemical that kills bacteria antipathy = “against + feeling” = strong dislike antagonism = “against + struggle” = opposition, active hostility
auto	self	autograph autocratic = “self + ruler” = like an absolute ruler or tyrant autonomous = “self + law” = independent, self-contained
be-	all the way through <i>(not Latin or Greek; as a native English prefix, be- often bonds to Anglo-Saxon roots)</i>	begrudge = “all the way + complain” = give unwillingly beguile = “all the way + trick” = deceive, divert in an attractive way benighted = “all the way + night” = unenlightened, in figurative darkness beseech = “all the way + seek” = beg, implore besiege = “all the way + blockade” = surround, press upon besmire = “all the way + dirt” = make dirty beleaguered = “all the way + army camp” = pressed, troubled
bene- ben-	good	benediction = “good + say” = blessing beneficent = “good + do” = doing good for others benevolence = “good + will” = kindness, readiness to do good for others benign = “good + birth” = favorable, gentle, harmless
bi-	two	bisect = “two + cut” = cut in half bifurcate = “two + fork” = split into two branches
caco-	bad	cacophonous = “bad + sound” = unpleasant-sounding
circum-	around	circumambulate = “around + walk” = walk around in a circle circumlocution = “around + speak” = wordiness or evasion in speech circumspect = “around + look” = cautious, prudent
con- com- co-	with <i>or</i> together	contract, contain, conduct congregate = “together + flock” = gather together cohesive = “together + stick” = sticking or fitting together compelling = “together + drive” = convincing, forceful, attention-grabbing confluence = “together + flow” = a flowing together cognoscente (pl. cognoscenti) = “with + know” = expert in a subject
contra- contro- counter-	against	contradict contraband = “against + command” = illegal goods countervail = “against + worth” = compensate for, counteract, oppose contravene = “against + come” = oppose, violate, or contradict controvert = “against + turn” = dispute in argument, engage in controversy

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
de-	from <i>or</i> away <i>or</i> down	defame , deodorize , deflect , detract deduce = “away + lead” = determine from general principles decadent = “away + fall” = in a state of decline, often self-indulgent derivative = “away + stream” = originating from something else; lacking originality depose = “down + put” = remove a leader, or take testimony
di- dia-	two through <i>or</i> across <i>or</i> between	diameter , diagonal dichotomy = division into two opposing parts diagnosis = “through + know” = identification of (medical) causes & issues diachronic = “through + time” = relating to change over time
dis- dys- di-	away <i>or</i> not <i>or</i> bad	disallow , disrespect , dismiss , disillusion , divide dispel = “away + drive” = scatter, make vanish divert = “away + turn” = turn aside or distract dissonance = “away + sound” = discord, clash of sounds distend = “away + stretch” = bloat, swell, expand diffidence = “not + faith” = hesitant, lacking in self-confidence digress = “away + go” = deviate from subject dystopia = “bad” + utopia (future/imaginary world)
duo-	two	duopoly = “two + sell” = condition in which there are only two sellers
en-	in	endemic = “in + people” = native to a population
eu-	good	eulogize = “good + speak” = praise highly (often after death) eulogy = speech of praise euphony = “good + sound” = pleasing sound (usually of words)
ex- e- ef-	out <i>or</i> away <i>or</i> from	emit , expel , exceed , exit , eject , export exalted = “out + high” = raised high excision = “out + cut” = act of cutting out, removing elocution = “out + speak” = art of speaking well in public egregious = “outside + flock” = conspicuously bad, flagrant elucidate = “out + shine” = make clear, explain effluvium = “out + flow” = by-product, exhalation (often bad)
extra- extr-	outside of	extracurricular , exterior , extreme extrapolate = “outside + polish” = extend (data) to new situations, conjecture extrinsic = “outside + follow” = external to something’s nature
hetero-	other <i>or</i> different	heterogeneous = “different + kind” = consisting of diverse parts heterodox

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
homo-	same	homophone = "same + sound" = a word pronounced like another word homogeneous = "same + kind" = consisting of one substance
hyper-	above <i>or</i> over	hypersensitive , hyperactive hyperbole = "above + throw" = exaggeration
hypo-	below <i>or</i> under	hypoallergenic , hypodermic hypothesis = "under" + thesis = tentative assumption to explore
in- im-	in <i>or</i> into <i>or</i> on	inspect , import , inject incisive = "into + cut" = cutting to the heart of a matter, direct induct = "in + lead" = admit as a member
in- im-	not	incredible , impossible , impenetrable , inevitable
infra-	below	infrared , infrastructure
inter- intro-	between	international , intervene , interject interpolate = "inside + polish" = fill in missing pieces, words, or data
intra- intr-	within <i>or</i> into	intramuscular , intramural intrinsic = "inside + follow" = internal to something's nature
magn-	big <i>or</i> great	magnificent magnanimity = "great + spirit" = nobility of spirit
mal- male-	bad	maladjusted malevolent = "bad + will" = wishing harm, ready to do evil maleficent = "bad + do" = doing harm or evil maladroit = "bad" + adroit = lacking skill
mega- megalo-	big <i>or</i> great <i>or</i> million	megaphone megalomania = "great + mad" = insane belief that one is all-powerful
meta-	beyond <i>or</i> change	metamorphose = "change + shape" = transform
micro-	small	microscope , microprocessor
mis-	bad <i>or</i> hate	misapply , mistake , misinterpret misanthropy = "hate + human" = hatred of humankind misogyny = "hate + women" = hatred of women

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
mono-	one	monoculture monograph = "one + write" = a written report or paper on a narrow subject monopoly = "one + sell" = condition in which there is only one seller
multi-	many	multiple, multinational multifarious = "many + places" = diverse, varied
neo-	new	neologism = "new + word" = new word or expression neophyte = "new + planted" = beginner, novice
non-	not	nonsensical, nonprofit nondescript = "not + described" = lacking distinctive qualities nonpareil = "not + equal" = without equal nonplus = "not + more" = perplex, baffle
ob- can drop b and double next letter oc-, etc.	in front of <i>or</i> against <i>or</i> toward	objection obdurate = "against + hard" = hard of heart, stubborn unobtrusive = "not + against + push" = not noticeable or attention-drawing occlude = "against + close" = block off or conceal obsequious = "toward + follow" = overly obedient, submissive, flattering
omni-	all	omnipresent, omnipotent omniscience = "all + know" = state of knowing everything
pan-	all	pandemic = "all + people" = something affecting everyone, usually a disease
para-	beside	parallel, paraphrase
per-	through all the way <i>or</i> detrimental to	permit perspicacious = "through + look" = able to perceive hidden truth perambulate = "through + walk" = walk through, inspect pellucid = "through + clear" = absolutely clear perfervid = "through + boil" = over-excited, overwrought perfidious = "detrimental + faith" = disloyal, treacherous
peri-	around	perimeter peripheral = "around + carry" = on the outskirts, not central peripatetic = "around + walk" = moving or walking from place to place
poly-	many	polytechnical, polygon polytheist = "many + god" = someone who believes in many gods polyglot = "many + tongue" = someone who speaks many languages

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
pre-	before	precede precedent = “before + go” = earlier example prerogative = “before + ask” = special right preclude = “before + close” = prevent, rule out beforehand prescient = “before + know” = knowing ahead of time, able to predict events
pro-	forward <i>or</i> before <i>or</i> for	proponent prognosticate = “before + know” = predict, foretell provenance = “forward + come” = source, or history of ownership
re-	back <i>or</i> again	redo , restate , reflect , retract , reject , recede remiss = “back + sent” = negligent, careless, lax recidivism = “back + fall” = tendency to relapse to earlier behavior or crime
retro-	backward	retroactive , retrospect retrograde = “backward + go” = moving backward
sub-	below <i>or</i> under	substandard , submarine subordinate = “below + order” = in a lower rank, controlled by higher ranks subliminal = “below + threshold” = below the level of consciousness
super-	above <i>or</i> over	supernatural , superior superfluous = “over + flow” = unnecessary, wasteful superficial = on the surface superimpose = “over + on + put” = place over supersede = “above + sit” = replace, transcend by being better
syn-	together <i>or</i> with	synthesis = “together” + thesis = combination of ideas syncretism = “together + Cretan cities” = fusion of ideas and practices synoptic = “together + eye” = taking a comprehensive view
trans- tra-	across <i>or</i> beyond <i>or</i> through	transfer , trajectory , transmit , transportation transgression = “across + step” = violation of a law or rule translucent = “through + shine” = permitting (some) passage of light
un-	not	unhappy unobtrusive = “not + against + push” = not noticeable or attention-drawing
uni- un-	one	uniform , unicycle unanimous = “one + spirit” = in complete agreement

3. Part III: Suffixes

Fortunately, suffixes are much more stable in meaning than roots or prefixes. They are also limited in number, and best of all, you already know the whole set. However it is still worth looking over this list, in particular to examine how suffixes often change one part of speech into another.

Suffix	Description	Part of Speech	Made from	Examples
-able -ible	able to be X-ed	adjective	verb	thinkable, desirable, inconceivable, frangible, feasible
-al -ial -ile	relating to X	adjective	noun <i>or</i> verb	trivial, critical, labile, ductile, versatile
-ance -ancy -ence -ency	state <i>or</i> process of doing X <i>or</i> being X	noun (abstract)	verb <i>or</i> adjective	intelligence, flippancy, decadence, exorbitance, despondency
-ant -ent	doing X	adjective <i>or</i> noun	verb	accordant, accountant, cognizant, different, intransigent, fervent
-ar -ary	related to X	adjective	noun	solar, stellar, polar
-ate (usually pronounced like ate) -ite	do X	verb	root	interrogate, prevaricate, mutate, ignite, expedite
-ate (usually pronounced like it) -ite	formed by doing X <i>or</i> related to doing X	noun <i>or</i> adjective	verb	aggregate, insubordinate, prerequisite, requisite
-dom	state of being X <i>or</i> condition related to X	noun (abstract)	noun <i>or</i> adjective	freedom, fiefdom, wisdom
-er -or	doer of X	noun (person)	verb	speaker, runner, wanderer

Suffix	Description	Part of Speech	Made from	Examples
-fic	making into X <i>or</i> causing X	adjective	noun <i>or</i> adjective	horrific, beatific, prolific, soporific
-fy -ify	make into X cause X	verb	noun <i>or</i> adjective	magnify, deify, indemnify, ossify, reify
-ful	filled with X	adjective	noun	bountiful, beautiful, plentiful, fretful, artful
-ic -iac	relating to X	adjective <i>or</i> noun	noun <i>or</i> verb	manic, maniac, aseptic, bombastic
-ification	process of making into X	noun (action)	noun <i>or</i> adjective	desertification, ramification, beautification, edification
-ine	relating to X	adjective	noun <i>or</i> verb	saturnine, marine, saline, clandestine
-ish	similar to X	adjective	noun <i>or</i> adjective	reddish, mulish, fiendish, loutish
-ism	system <i>or</i> characteristic of X	noun (abstract)	noun <i>or</i> adjective <i>or</i> verb	capitalism, socialism, communism, stoicism, anachronism, euphemism
-ist -istic	characteristic of X, or a person who espouses X	adjective <i>or</i> noun	noun <i>or</i> adjective	capitalist, socialist, communist, anachronistic, euphemistic
-ite	native or adherent of X	noun	noun <i>or</i> adjective	anchorite, Luddite, sybarite
-ity -ty	state or quality of being X or doing X	noun (abstract)	adjective <i>or</i> verb	polarity, certainty, convexity, perplexity
-ive -ative	tending toward the action of X	adjective	verb <i>or</i> noun	exclusive, active, cohesive, authoritative, evasive
-ize -ise	make into X	verb	adjective <i>or</i> noun	eulogize, polarize, scrutinize, lionize, advertise, improvise
-ization -isation	process of making into X	noun (action)	adjective	characterization, polarization, lionization, improvisation

Suffix	Description	Part of Speech	Made from	Examples
-less	without X	adjective	noun	harmless, guileless, feckless
-ment	state or result of doing X	noun	verb	development, judgment, punishment
-ory	characteristic of doing X <i>or</i> a place for doing X	adjective <i>or</i> noun	verb	refractory, savory, depository, compulsory, mandatory
-ous -ious -ose	characteristic of being X or doing X	adjective	verb <i>or</i> noun	carnivorous, devious, numerous, mellifluous, mendacious, verbose
-tion -ation -ion	process <i>or</i> result of doing X	noun (action)	verb	pollution, creation, destruction
-tude	state or quality of being X	noun (abstract)	adjective	solitude, vicissitude, pulchritude, desuetude