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2ND EDITION

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FOR THE**

GRE®

SECOND EDITION
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**Your Vocabulary for Success
on the GRE General Test**



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Introduction: Mastering Advanced Vocabulary for the GRE

As a student preparing for the verbal section of the GRE, you have to practice the skills of analyzing information in a passage, understanding the relationships among parts of a sentence, and comprehending relationships between words and concepts in context. To do this, you should work through the skills section and practice tests in a reputable GRE General Test guidebook, such as *Barron's GRE*. You also need to read widely, thinking critically about what you read. You should read good periodicals, such as *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Time*, *The Economist*, and *Scientific American*. In addition to reading these types of periodicals, you should read books that develop more extended arguments, such as *Consilience*, *the Unity of Knowledge* by the eminent scientist Edward O. Wilson and *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* by the influential modern thinker B. F. Skinner. Reading such material will increase your knowledge in important areas. It will also improve your ability to understand complex sentence structure and follow a sophisticated line of reasoning. If, as you read, you look up unfamiliar words in a good dictionary, your vocabulary will also improve.

Speaking of vocabulary, is it important to have a good knowledge of advanced words to do well on the GRE? The answer is "Yes, definitely." The test places considerable emphasis on advanced vocabulary, especially in the sentence equivalence and text completion questions. Let's take a look at some of these types of questions to see how important vocabulary is on the GRE.

SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE AND TEXT COMPLETION QUESTIONS

In the sentence equivalence question below, you must choose *two* answers that could correctly complete the sentence.

It would be difficult to imagine two more different personalities: Liz is shy and taciturn, while Stan is outgoing and _____

- (A) salubrious
- (B) laconic
- (C) specious
- (D) loquacious
- (E) doctrinaire
- (F) talkative

Could you answer this question correctly without knowing the meaning of the advanced word in the sentence, *taciturn* (uncommunicative, not inclined to speak much), and the meanings of the five advanced words that appear in the answer choices? If you don't know the meanings of *salubrious*, *laconic*, *specious*, *loquacious*, and *doctrinaire*, you will be forced to guess one of the correct answers to this question, (D) *loquacious*, which means (F) *talkative*, the second correct answer. Not all sentence equivalence questions are so vocabulary-dependent, but you can expect quite a few to require a knowledge of very advanced words.

Let's take a look at another question that requires a knowledge of advanced words.

In most modern industrial countries, government intervenes in the economy by changing fiscal and monetary policy to _____ the negative effects of the business cycle, despite the fact that there exists no theory supported by conclusive evidence to explain the underlying cause of the business cycle.

remonstrate
exacerbate
disparage
juxtapose
mitigate

If you don't know the definition of *mitigate* (to cause to become less harsh, severe, or painful), you will not be able to answer this question correctly. Also, the more words you know in the other answer choices, the more confident you can be in answering the question.

Here's a question that requires you to choose words to fill in two blanks.

Some scholars deny that there is a direct correlation between the scientific theory of relativity and intellectual fashions in the arts, pointing out that many important modernist works such as Igor Stravinsky's (i) _____ symphony *The Rites of Spring* (ii) _____ the theory of relativity.

(i)	(ii)
seminal	presage
sylogistic	antecede
ephemeral	subsume

In this question, all of the answer choices are advanced words. It is not possible to answer this question correctly without knowing the meanings of these advanced words, especially the meanings of the correct answer choices (i) *seminal* (containing the seeds of later development) and (ii) *antecede* (precede).

The final question below also requires you to fill in three blanks.

The phrase "It's a matter of (i) _____" is often used to indicate that the real meaning of a statement is being lost in verbiage, often with the implication that there is (ii) _____ or (iii) _____.

(i)	(ii)	(iii)
definition	obfuscation	peculation
semantics	meritriciousness	vacillation
debate	exculpation	equivocation

Two key words in the sentence—*verbiage* and *implication*—are advanced words. It would be impossible to figure out the central meaning of the sentence without knowing the meaning of *verbiage* (an excess of words for the purpose)—and if you don't know the meaning of *implication* (that which is hinted or suggested) you will be hard-pressed to follow the logic of the sentence.

Advanced vocabulary also plays a central part in the answer choices given for this question. Once again, this question would be impossible to answer without knowledge of the meanings of these difficult words. If you know that *semantics* means the meaning and interpretation of words, *obfuscation* means the act of confusing or obscuring, and *equivocation* means the intentional use of vague language, the sentence makes good sense.

READING QUESTIONS

Next, let's consider a GRE-level reading passage and questions. It uses quite a lot of advanced vocabulary. Do you know the difficult words in the passage and in the questions that follow it?

- To chop a stick, to catch a fly, to pile a heap of sand, is a satisfying action; for the sand stays for a while in its novel arrangement, proclaiming to the surrounding level that we have made it our instrument, while the fly will never stir nor
- (5) the stick grow together again in all eternity. If the impulse that has thus left its indelible mark on things is constant in our own bosom, the world will have been permanently improved and humanized by our action. Nature cannot but be more favorable to those ideas which have once found an
- (10) efficacious champion.
- Plastic impulses find in this way an immediate sanction in the sense of victory and dominion which they carry with them; it is so evident a proof of power in ourselves to see things and animals bent out of their habitual form and obedient instead to our idea. But a far weightier sanction
- (15) immediately follows. Man depends on this for his experience, yet by automatic action he changes these very things so that it becomes possible that by his action he should promote his welfare. He may, of course, no less readily precipitate his ruin. The animal is more subject to vicissitudes
- (20) than the plant, which makes no effort to escape them or to give chase to what it feeds upon. The greater perils of action, however, are in animals covered partly by fertility, partly by adaptability, partly by success. The mere possibil-

- (25) ity of success, in a world governed by natural selection, is an earnest of progress. Sometimes, in impressing the environment, a man will improve it: which is merely to say that a change may sometimes fortify the impulse which brought it about. As soon as this retroaction is perceived and the act
- (30) is done with knowledge of its ensuing benefits, plastic impulse becomes art, and the world begins actually to change in obedience to reason.

—George Santayana (1906)

1. Based on the information in the passage, which of the following statements would the author be *least* likely to agree with?
 - (A) Art is an inherently irrational process.
 - (B) Even the most esoteric works of art have their origin in the human impulse to act on nature, changing it to conform to an idea in the mind.
 - (C) Any viable theory of aesthetics must take into account man's relationship to nature.
 - (D) The effects of human action on nature can be either beneficial or harmful to humans.
 - (E) All living things are subject to the process of natural selection.

2. The word *sanction* as it is used in line 11 most nearly means
 - (A) penalization
 - (B) autonomy
 - (C) opprobrium
 - (D) approval
 - (E) excuse

3. The phrase *plastic impulses* as it is used in line 11 most nearly means
 - (A) drives possessed by all living things to subjugate and exploit other living things
 - (B) irrational and futile human drives to dominate intractable nature
 - (C) human desires to shape malleable nature
 - (D) pathological urges to pervert the proper functioning of the natural order
 - (E) natural urges in human beings to depict their physical environment with verisimilitude

This passage uses a lot of quite advanced vocabulary (*indelible, dominion, retroaction, ensuing*) as well as some very advanced vocabulary (*effacious, plastic, sanction, precipitate, vicissitudes*). You should already be familiar with the first group of words, while you may not know the more advanced words. Not knowing any of these words would make it difficult to understand this passage. The word *plastic* is especially important, because it expresses one of the central concepts discussed by the author—the human ability to consciously shape nature.

Advanced vocabulary is also used in the questions. It is not possible to answer the first question without knowing the meaning of *inherently, esoteric, viable, and aesthetics*. (The correct answer is A.) You can arrive at the answer to the second question if you know the meaning of *sanction* in the passage. (The answer is D.) The third question contains a lot of advanced vocabulary (*futile, intractable, malleable, pathological, verisimilitude*), so once again it is not possible to answer this question with confidence without knowing the meanings of these difficult words. If you don't know that *malleable* means capable of being shaped, you will not be able to decide that choice (C) makes the best sense.

From our analysis, it is clear that vocabulary plays a critical part in answering GRE Verbal Reasoning questions. Many of the questions make extensive use of advanced vocabulary. Therefore, what it boils down to is that, to give yourself a good chance to correctly answer questions with a lot of advanced vocabulary, you should learn the words that are most likely to appear in such questions.

LEARN FREQUENTLY TESTED GRE WORDS

Let's look at the advanced words that appeared in a sample verbal section of the GRE published recently by the Educational Testing Service. As a college graduate (or soon to be college graduate), you should already be familiar with many of these words. However, there are some with which you are probably not familiar. Look through the list. How many of these advanced words do you know? You probably know some of them, while others look familiar but you are not sure what they mean. Soon, you will have a chance to take a test to tell you exactly what your vocabulary situation is for the GRE. Words that appear in **bold** are words that have appeared with the most frequency on the GRE over the past 25 years.

ahistorical	exculpate	nuances
ambiguity	exigent	obliquely
ambivalence	extraneous	oracular
anomaly	fastidious	orthodoxy

anticipates	garrulous	paradoxical
arcane	guilelessly	partisan
assuage	hubris	pedestrian
austere	hypothesis	pertinacious
belies	ideological	predisposition
causality	impaired	problematic
confounds	inalienable	proponents
contentious	inclusive	recapitulates
conventional	innovator	repudiate
credulity	irredeemable	resolutely
cynical	irresolute	skeptic
demarcation	judicious	solicitous
disingenuously	laconic	taciturn
dismiss	laudable	tensile
disparaged	meticulously	unorthodox
ebullient	multifaceted	
eclecticism	munificent	

Turn to *300 Absolutely Essential GRE Words* on page 22 and check to see if it contains the high frequency words in bold from the list above. Yes, these words, or one of their forms, are all on the list of the 300 words that appear repeatedly on the GRE and thus can be learned specifically for the test. These 300 words, as well as an additional 500 important, frequently occurring GRE words, will be taught to you in *Essential Words for the GRE*.

HOW ESSENTIAL WORDS WILL HELP YOU DO WELL ON THE GRE

Essential Words for the GRE teaches 800 advanced words that frequently appear on the GRE. Each word has been carefully selected through reference to published GRE lists and on the basis of my many years of experience in preparing students for the test. These 800 words also appear in Barron's GRE Master Word List and High-Frequency Word List.

The principle behind this book is that the best way to learn new words for the GRE is to see how these words are used in complex sentences and practice on exercise material that is similar in content, structure, and level of difficulty to that which appears on the actual test. Practicing on such material will improve your skills in understanding complex sentences and arguments, and increase your familiarity with important ideas that appear on the GRE.

This book teaches the important words you need to know in units of ten words each, along with their parts of speech, most commonly used definitions on the GRE, and illustrative sentences showing how words are used. The content, style, and tone of the illustrative and exercise material are consistent with that of material appearing on the actual GRE. Because sentences generally deal with subjects in the arts, sciences, and social sciences, and definitions of important terms are provided, you will build up your general knowledge while you learn important advanced words. Comprehensive exercises at the end of each unit ensure that you know the words and provide practice in their correct use. Many of the words taught in a given unit reappear in subsequent units, both in illustrative sentences and in exercises, providing systematic reinforcement of learning.

Keep a good college dictionary handy as you work through this book. This will allow you to explore additional meanings of words you learn and fine-tune your understanding of nuances in meaning between similar words. Two of the best college dictionaries are *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (4th Edition) and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th Edition). If you prefer to use an online dictionary, the excellent *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, (4th edition) is available online for free at Bartelby.com.

MASTERING HIGH FREQUENCY WORD ROOTS

Other than learning the difficult words likely to appear on the GRE, how else can you improve your chances of doing well on the GRE Verbal Reasoning test? The answer is simple: learning important word roots. *Essential Words for the GRE* features extensive information on word roots, prefixes, and suffixes in the *High Frequency Word Roots* section. This section contains a list of the 300 most important Latin and Greek roots and prefixes that commonly appear in English words. It also gives you hundreds of derivative words and includes exercises to improve your ability to make use of roots in remembering words you have learned in this book and in deciphering the meaning of words you don't know. In addition to being useful for students taking the GRE, a knowledge of word roots provides a great foundation for the student embarking on a career in fields such as law, science, and medicine that use many specialized terms based on Latin and Greek.

GETTING STARTED

So, what do you do now? First, take the *Pretest* on the following pages. This will tell you how many advanced words you already know. The *Pretest* contains sentence completion exercises and reading passages with vocabulary questions. If you don't do well on the *Pretest*, it would be a good idea to get hold of a good book that teaches a comprehensive list of college-level words, such as Barron's *Wordfest!*, and review these words before starting *Essential Words for the GRE*.

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Pretest

It's time to test your readiness for graduate-level reading. Don't worry. If you aren't familiar with the GRE words tested below, you can be sure you will learn them in Essential Words for the GRE.

In the questions below, choose the answer that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the capitalized word.

1. OBDURATE

- (A) stubborn
- (B) flexible
- (C) ambivalent
- (D) insouciant
- (E) implacable

2. CODA

- (A) preamble
- (B) addendum
- (C) denouement
- (D) encomium
- (E) panegyric

3. ESSAY

- (A) suggest
- (B) attempt
- (C) give up
- (D) leave
- (E) remember

4. ROCOCO

- (A) ornate
- (B) limpid
- (C) ostentatious
- (D) arabesque
- (E) austere

5. PREVARICATE

- (A) quibble
- (B) rationalize
- (C) stultify
- (D) tell the truth
- (E) forestall

In the questions below, choose the answer that gives the pair of words whose relationship is most like the relationship expressed in the pair of capitalized words.

6. METTLESOME : SOLDIER ::

- (A) wise : sage
- (B) erudite : professor
- (C) sardonic : lawyer
- (D) officious : governor
- (E) pedantic : teacher

7. ONOMATOPOEIA : SOUND ::

- (A) mnemonic : memory
- (B) simile : comparison
- (C) physiognomy : face
- (D) parrot : action
- (E) enunciation : pronunciation

8. TRYST : LOVER ::

- (A) assignation : paramour
- (B) meeting : company
- (C) rendezvous : friend
- (D) party : child
- (E) exam : student

9. SKEPTIC : DOUBT ::

- (A) plutocrat : invest
- (B) sycophant : fawn
- (C) raconteur : laugh
- (D) zealot : vituperate
- (E) egotist : brag

10. FILIBUSTER : TACTIC ::

- (A) ruse : subterfuge
- (B) riposte : strategy
- (C) litigation : law
- (D) gerrymandering : quibble
- (E) hieroglyphic : writing

Choose the best word or set of words to fill in the blanks in each of the sentences below.

11. The statement "India has recently made great progress in _____ poverty" should be seen in the context of India's vast population of one billion, of which 320 million remain in _____ poverty.

- (A) mitigating..discordant
- (B) palliating..ephemeral
- (C) parrying..doleful
- (D) ameliorating..equivocal
- (E) alleviating..abject

12. In his book *Knowledge and Wisdom*, the distinguished twentieth-century philosopher Bertrand Russell said, "Although our age far surpasses all previous ages in knowledge, there has been no _____ increase in wisdom."

- (A) correlative
- (B) articulate
- (C) analogous
- (D) prodigious
- (E) imminent

13. Increased tariffs in the 1930s _____ a collapse in world trade, _____ the Great Depression.

- (A) started..augmenting
- (B) incited..ridiculing
- (C) instigated..forgiving
- (D) caused..ameliorating
- (E) precipitated..exacerbating

14. The main impetus behind America's development of the hydrogen bomb was Edward Teller, a Hungarian refugee who had fled Nazism and who _____ the _____ system that was in place in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries.
- (A) disparaged..innocuous
 - (B) loathed..totalitarian
 - (C) nurtured..authoritarian
 - (D) castigated..benevolent
 - (E) maligned..meritorious
15. Physicists now believe that what had been considered the most basic constituents of the universe are in turn comprised of even more fundamental units, called quarks— _____ given that _____ by a physicist familiar with James Joyce's novel, *Finnegan's Wake*.
- (A) jocularly..epitome
 - (B) flamboyantly..alias
 - (C) flippantly..epigram
 - (D) whimsically..appellation
 - (E) pedantically..anomaly
16. The English expert regards concern about slight redundancies as _____ and senseless _____ .
- (A) pedantic..quibbling
 - (B) cryptic..aggrandizing
 - (C) sophisticated..elucidating
 - (D) sophomoric..tempering
 - (E) sordid..abrogation
17. According to the view of the nineteenth-century apologist for capitalism, _____ was an unfortunate but unavoidable _____ of both capitalism and of the natural order of the world.
- (A) abnegation..ramification
 - (B) subjugation..precept
 - (C) indigence..concomitant
 - (D) privation..grandiloquence
 - (E) penury..transgression