Vocabulary List 1

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Abhor Verb "To regard with horror or detestation; to detest to extremity; to loathe." Peace-loving people abhor violence. They also detest warfare.

Abrasive Adjective 2. "Being rough and coarse in manner or disposition; causing irritation." John's abrasive personality irritated a lot of his co-workers because he always was yelling at them.

Abstain Verb 2. "Refrain from (something); to forbear or keep from doing, especially an indulgence of the passions or appetites." I must abstain from chocolate if I want to lose weight. I love chocolate, and it makes me fat.

Accolade Noun "An expression of approval; praise." If you are great at your job, you likely will receive many accolades from your superiors.

Acquiesce Verb "To rest satisfied, or apparently satisfied, or to rest without opposition and discontent (usually implying previous opposition or discontent)." Although his parents wanted him to go to college, they acquiesced and let him go to technical school to be an auto body technician.

Acronym Noun "An abbreviation formed by letters taken from a word or series of words, that is itself pronounced as a word." The acronym for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration is NASA.

Acumen Noun "Quickness of perception or discernment." Jen's business acumen is apparent because she is a very successful businesswoman.

Allegory Noun "The representation of abstract principles by characters or figures." Fables and parables are both allegories. Parables use humans to teach principles while fables use non-human characters such as animals to tell stories.

Ambiguous Adjective 2. "Vague and unclear." Don’t be ambiguous when stating your opinion; state your opinion clearly.

Analogy Noun "A relationship of resemblance or equivalence between two situations, people, or objects, especially when used as a basis for explanation or extrapolation." An example of an analogy, a more elaborate form of a simile, is "My love for you is like the love of Romeo and Juliet.”

Antithesis Noun "A proposition that is the diametric opposite of some other proposition." The antithesis of being a good person is being a bad person.

Antonym Noun "A word which has the opposite meaning of another, although not necessarily in all its senses." The word good is an antonym for the word bad since they have the opposite meaning.

Articulate Adjective 1. "clear, effective" 2. "especially, speaking in a clear or effective manner" Her speech was very articulate; it was easy to understand.

Avocation Noun "A hobby or recreational or leisure pursuit." My favorite avocation is spending time at the beach.

Carte blanche Noun "Unlimited discretionary power to act; unrestricted authority." The owner should maintain some control over the company since giving the manager carte blanche can lead to dramatic changes.

Clandestine Adjective "Done or kept in secret, sometimes to conceal an illicit or improper purpose." The clandestine operation by the CIA went unnoticed by the enemy.

Cognition Noun "The process of knowing." Jill's cognition of the subject matter was obvious because she received a 100% grade on the test.

Collaborate Verb "To work together with others to achieve a common goal." I can finish the job in an hour, but if we collaborate, we can finish the project in half the time.

Connotation Noun "A meaning of a word or phrase that is suggested or implied, as opposed to a denotation, or literal meaning." The words "lucky" and "vacation" normally have a positive connotation.

Consummate Adjective 2. "Highly skilled and experienced; fully qualified." As an actress, Jill is a consummate professional; she is very highly skilled as an actress.

Contrived Adjective "Unnatural, forced" If you are not interested in the topic, the teacher can usually determine that your false interest is contrived.

Conundrum Noun 2. "A difficult choice or decision that must be made." What to do about Social Security underfunding is a real conundrum. Congress is not sure what to do.

Correlation Noun "A reciprocal, parallel or complementary relationship between two or more comparable objects" The correlation between education and income is very high; higher education usually results in higher income.

Criterion Noun "A standard or test by which individual things or people may be compared and judged." My daughter has several criteria for you to date her, but I only have one criterion, that you make her happy.

Cumulative Adjective "Incorporating all current and previous data up to the present or at the time of measuring or collating" The national debt is the cumulative result of all the previous annual deficits and surpluses.

Cynic Noun "A person who believes that all people are motivated by selfishness." I'm not a cynic. I believe a lot of people do good to help others, not just for selfish reasons.

Deference Noun "Great respect." If you are told to treat your elders with deference, you are being told to treat your elders with respect.

Demagogue Noun "A political orator or leader who gains favor by pandering to or exciting the passions and prejudices of the audience rather than by using rational argument." Hitler was a demagogue who gained popularity by blaming everyone else for the problems of Germany.

Didactic Adjective "Instructive or intended to teach or demonstrate, especially with regard to morality." Fables and parables are both examples of didactic stories; both attempt to teach a moral lesson.

Discernment Noun "The ability to distinguish; judgement." It takes great discernment to hire the best employees.

Divergent Adjective "Growing further apart; diverging." Pro-life and pro-choice advocates have wildly divergent opinions on abortion.

Egregious Adjective "Exceptional, conspicuous, outstanding, most usually in a negative fashion." 2. "Outrageously bad; shocking." If a business makes an egregious error, the business might be sued for negligence.

Eloquence Noun "The quality of artistry and persuasiveness in speech or writing." Speaking with eloquence, the candidate was very persuasive.

Emergent Adjective "Emerging; coming into view or into existence; nascent; new." Emergent technology is new technology.

Empathy Noun "Identification with or understanding of the thoughts, feelings, or emotional state of another person." John had a lot of empathy for his friend because he knew what it was like to lose a child, too.

Enigma Noun "Something or someone puzzling, mysterious or inexplicable." Sandy is an enigma because she has mostly Democratic views, but always votes Republican.

Epiphany Noun "An illuminating realization or discovery, often resulting in a personal feeling of elation, awe, or wonder." Isaac Newton saw an apple fall from a tree and had an epiphany; inspiring his formulation of the law of universal gravitation.

Epitome Noun 1. "The embodiment or encapsulation of a class of items." 2. "A representative example." Jen is the epitome of kindness because she is very kind.

Fastidious Adjective "Excessively particular, demanding, or fussy about details, especially about tidiness and cleanliness." Marion is quite fastidious because she cleans the house daily.

Fruition Noun "The fulfillment of something worked for." My dream of starting a charity finally came to fruition on the day that I received official paperwork from the state that my application had been approved.

Ideology Noun "Doctrine, philosophy, body of beliefs or principles belonging to an individual or group." Capitalism and communism are opposing socio-economic ideologies.

Infamous Adjective "Having a bad reputation, disreputable; of bad report; notoriously vile; detestable; widely known, especially for something bad" Benedict Arnold is an infamous traitor known for defecting to the British Army during the Revolutionary War.

Innate Adjective "Inborn; existing or having existed since birth" If you don't have an innate desire to raise a family, you probably shouldn’t have kids.

Invalid Adjective "Not valid; not true, correct, acceptable or appropriate." An invalid contract is not enforceable in court. Your invalid argument is obviously not true.

Irony Noun "A statement that, when taken in context, may actually mean something different from, or the opposite of, what is written literally; the use of words expressing something other than their literal intention, often in a humorous context." Naming your small dog "Giant" is an example of irony.

Lethargic Adjective "Sluggish, slow" Some medicines can make you feel lethargic; they might make you feel like taking a nap.

Lexicon Noun "The vocabulary of a language." Photobomb is a recent addition to the English lexicon.

Livid Adjective 3. "So angry that one turns pale, very angry, furious" Janice was livid because her boyfriend cheated on her; she was very angry.

Loquacious Adjective "Talkative or chatty, especially of persons given to excess conversation." Her nickname is "Chatty Cathy" for a reason; she is loquacious.

Magnanimous Adjective "Noble and generous in spirit." Being magnanimous in victory and praising your competitor is noble.

Meager Adjective 2. "Poor, deficient or inferior in amount, quality or extent" If your salary is meager you should consider looking for a new job that pays more.

Mentor Noun "A wise and trusted counselor or teacher." My accounting teacher Mr. Walsh was my mentor; all students should be so lucky to have a trusted counselor like Mr. Walsh.

Metaphor Noun "The use of a word or phrase to refer to something that it is not, invoking a direct similarity between the word or phrase used and the thing described (but in the case of English without the words like or as, which would imply a simile)" The metaphor "early bird" refers to people who either rise early or arrive early.

Meticulous Adjective 2. "Characterized by very precise, conscientious attention to details" The scientist took meticulous notes regarding the experiment; his notes were detailed.

Mitigate Verb "To reduce, lessen, or decrease. " If you have a bad headache, taking aspirin should mitigate the pain and may eliminate the pain.

Momentous Adjective "Outstanding in importance, of great consequence. " My wedding day was a momentous event in my life; it was quite an important day for me.

Moratorium Noun 2. "A suspension of an ongoing activity." To allow the bear population to expand, the state passed a moratorium on bear hunting.

Myriad Noun 2. "A countless number or multitude (of specified things)" A myriad of stars could be seen in the sky over the ocean; there were so many stars I couldn't count them all.

Nefarious Adjective "Sinful, villainous, criminal, or wicked, especially when noteworthy or notorious for such characteristics." The nefarious plan of the 9/11 hijackers made them notorious for being wicked.

Nemesis Noun 1. "An archenemy." 2. "A person or character who specifically brings about the downfall of another person or character." My nemesis at work seems to always beat me out for promotions.

Nominal Adjective 5. "Insignificantly small." Steve Jobs took a nominal salary of $1 per year for much of his tenure as the CEO of Apple.

Norm Noun "That which is regarded as normal or typical." If showing up to work late is your norm, you probably won't have a job for long.

Objective Adjective 2. "Not influenced by the emotions or prejudices." 3. "Based on observed facts." A news report should be objective, containing only verifiable facts with no personal opinions expressed by the reporter.

Optimist Noun "A person who expects a favorable outcome." An optimist expects the stock market to go up 10% a year for the next ten years; a pessimist expects the stock market to crash for the next decade.

Ostentatious Adjective 2. "Intended to attract notice." An ostentatious dresser is someone who dresses in a way to attract attention to themselves.

Oxymoron Noun "A figure of speech in which two words with opposing meanings are used together intentionally for effect." "Seriously funny" is an example of an oxymoron.

Paradox Noun 3. "A claim that two apparently contradictory ideas are true." The statement "less is more" is a paradox.

Paraphrase Noun "A restatement of a text in different words, often to clarify meaning." As a verb, "To restate something as, or to compose a paraphrase." To paraphrase John's long and rambling speech, "John is overwhelmed with emotion and appreciative."

Peccadillo Noun 1. "A small flaw or sin." 2. "A petty offense." A peccadillo of most people is telling a white lie now and again.

Pedantic Adjective 1. "Like a pedant, overly concerned with formal rules and trivial points of learning." 2. "Being showy of one's knowledge, often in a boring manner." A writer could be considered pedantic by many if he often uses obscure words that the average person doesn’t readily understand.

Perception Noun 2. "Conscious understanding of something." My perception of the budget is that we will lose money. Is that your understanding?

Perusal Noun "The act of perusing; studying something carefully." Before you sign a contract, a perusal by your lawyer is important.

Pessimist Noun "Someone who habitually expects the worst outcome; one who looks on the dark side of things." A pessimist believes the glass is half-empty, while and an optimist believes the glass is half-full.

Plethora Noun "(usually followed by of) An excessive amount or number; an abundance." New York City is a top tourist destination because a plethora of sites greet visitors.

Plight Noun "A dire or unfortunate situation." We hope to improve the plight of poor inner city kids by increasing their access to education. Their unfortunate situation must be addressed.

Pollyanna Noun "One who is persistently cheerful and optimistic, even when given cause not to be so." If someone calls you a Pollyanna, it means they think you are blindly optimistic.

Pragmatic Adjective "Practical, concerned with making decisions and actions that are useful in practice, not just theory." It would not be pragmatic to purchase a $100,000 car because I only make $10,000 per year.

Pretentious Adjective "Marked by an unwarranted claim to importance or distinction." Boasting about your celebrity friends is pretentious.

Propensity Noun "A tendency, preference, or attraction." I have a propensity to sweat when I get nervous.

Pseudonym Noun "A fictitious name, as those used by writers and movie stars." The great American author Samuel Langhorne Clemens is better known by his pseudonym, Mark Twain.

Reflection Noun 4. "Careful thought or consideration." After much reflection, Jan decided not to run for re-election.

Sarcasm Noun " Use of acerbic language to mock or convey contempt, often using irony and (in speech) often marked by overemphasis and a sneering tone of voice." I used sarcasm when I thanked my employee for arriving to work two hours late.

Sardonic Adjective "Scornfully mocking or cynical." John's sardonic smile made it quite clear that he didn’t trust the motives of the salesman.

Satire Noun "A literary device of writing or art which principally ridicules its subject often as an intended means of provoking or preventing change. Humor, irony, and exaggeration are often used to aid this." George Orwell's classic novel Animal Farm is full of political satire, ridiculing the Communist politicians in Stalinist Russia.

Secondary education Noun "Education of children that follows primary education and leads to either employment or college / university education" In the U.S., typically primary education is grades K-8, secondary education is grades 9-12, and post-secondary education is college.

Secular Adjective "Not specifically religious." The pastor's favorite secular interest is watching the Baltimore Ravens play football on television.

Serendipity Noun "An unsought, unintended, and/or unexpected, but fortunate, discovery and/or learning experience that happens by accident." Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin through serendipity. He was searching for a cure for the flu and discovered the life-saving antibiotic.

Simile Noun "A figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another, in the case of English generally using like or as." "As American as apple pie" and "as cold as ice" are examples of similes.

Subjective Adjective 2. "Formed, as in opinions, based upon a person's feelings or intuition, not upon observation or reasoning." The following statement is subjective, "I believe red is the best color." It’s my opinion.

Superfluous Adjective "In excess of what is required or sufficient." When only expecting a few drops of rain, a full rain suit might be considered superfluous.

Surreal Adjective "Resembling a dream: fantastic and incongruous" Meeting the famous actress was surreal; it felt like a dream.

Syntax Noun "A set of rules that govern how words are combined to form phrases and sentences." Proper syntax for word order in the English language is subject-verb-object, for example, "Chris ate apples."

Tactful Adjective "Possessing tact; able to deal with people in a sensitive manner." Jen tried to respond in a tactful way so as to not hurt Ben's feelings.

Tenet Noun "An opinion, belief, or principle that is held as absolute truth by someone or especially an organization." Freedom of speech is a key tenet of American Democracy. It is one of our most important principles.

Thesis Noun "A statement supported by arguments." My thesis is that "we can improve education by using the internet to spread free educational resources."

Valid Adjective 1. "Well grounded or justifiable, pertinent." 2. "Acceptable, proper or correct." A valid argument is a well-grounded argument. A valid contract is enforceable in court.

Vocation Noun 2. "An occupation for which a person is suited, trained or qualified." My vocation is accounting; I am an accountant by trade.

Voracious Adjective 1."Wanting or devouring great quantities of food." 2. "Having a great appetite for anything." I am a voracious eater and I am a voracious reader; I eat a lot and I read a lot.

Zealot Noun "One who is zealous, one who is full of zeal for his own specific beliefs or objectives, usually in the negative sense of being too passionate; a fanatic" Jane became a zealot, quitting her job so she could spend every waking hour working to ensure her candidate won the race; quite a fanatic was she.

Zenith Noun 3. "Highest point or state; peak." The zenith of my career thus far was when I won employee of the year for the entire company.