

# *VERBAL ADVANTAGE*

## *Level III*

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## Verbal Advantage Level Three

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

### 1. DEFRA<sup>Y</sup> (dī-FRAY)

To pay, provide money for, cover the cost or expenses of.

### 2. TACITURN (TAS-i-turn)

Silent, not talkative, holding one's tongue, habitually silent and withdrawn.

**Synonyms:** *reserved, uncommunicative, reticent.*

**Antonyms:** *garrulous* (Level 4, Word 8), *loquacious, effusive, voluble* (Level 5, Word 1).

**Related word:** *tacit* (Level 2, Word 9), unspoken, done or made in silence.

### 3. TERSE (rhymes with *curse*)

Brief and to the point, free of superfluous words, expressed in a pointed and polished way.

**Synonyms:** *concise, pithy, succinct, laconic* (Level 3, Word 18).

**Antonyms:** *long-winded, redundant, verbose* (Level 2, Word 30), *prolix* (Level 9, Word 1).

**Beastly mispronunciation:** suh-SINGKT for *succinct*. Take care to pronounce the double C like KS: suhk-SINGKT.

### 4. BOON (rhymes with *moon*)

A blessing, timely and welcome benefit, something beneficial bestowed upon one, something to be thankful for.

**Additional useful words:** *yore*, time long past; *suppliant*, a person who begs for something; *supplication*, the act of begging for something humbly and earnestly; *archaic*, old-fashioned, of a former time.

### 5. PROLETARIAT (PROH-Iuh-TAIR-ee-īt)

The working class, especially the industrial wageearning class, which earns its living by manual labor, the lowest and poorest class of people in society.

**Corresponding adjective:** *proletarian*, of or relating to the working class.

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### 6. HETEROGENEOUS (HET-uh-roh-JEE-nee-us)

Varied, composed of parts of different kinds, made up of unrelated or diverse elements, mixed, dissimilar, miscellaneous.

**Antonym:** *homogeneous* (HOH-moh-JEE-nee-us).

**Useful information:** The prefix *homo-* means same, similar, like; the prefix *hetero-* means other, different, unlike.

### 7. PITTANCE (PIT'ns, rhymes with *admittance*)

A small amount, portion, or share, especially a small or meager amount of money.

**Memory aid:** Think of the pit of a fruit, which is . small and hard, and you'll easily remember that a *pittance* is a small amount of money that is hard to live on.

### 8. GLIB (rhymes with *rib*)

Smooth-spoken, speaking in a ready, fluent manner, with natural or offhand ease, talkative in a nonchalant way.

**Synonyms:** *suave, facile, bland, voluble* (Level 5, Word 1), *flippant, unctuous*.

**Useful information:** The synonym *unctuous* means having a slimy, slippery, or smarmy manner; self-serving and insincere.

**Additional useful word:** *unguent*, a medicinal ointment, salve.

### 9. PENCHANT (PEN-chɪnt)

A liking, leaning, strong inclination, decided taste.

**Synonyms:** *propensity, proclivity*.

### 10. SOLICITOUS (suh-LIS-i-tus)

Concerned, showing care and attention, especially in a worried, anxious, or fearful way.

**Usage tip:** In the above sense, *solicitous* may be followed by the prepositions *of*, *for*, or *about*. When used to mean eager, full of desire, willing, *solicitous* is followed by the preposition *to*.

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### A Dictum on Diction

#### Useful words:

*dictum*: a formal pronouncement, official opinion or decree (plural, *dicta*).

*diction*: choice of words, manner of expression (also, vocal expression, enunciation).

*apposite* (AP-uh-zit): both relevant and appropriate.

#### Usage tips:

- *Irregardless* is not a legitimate word. Use *regardless* or *irrespective*.
- Use *peruse* to mean to read carefully and critically, examine closely, read through to the end (*not* skim, browse, dip into or glance through).
- Don't use *reticent* to mean *reluctant*. A *reluctant* person is hesitant, disinclined, unwilling to do something. A *reticent* person is reluctant to speak
- *Loathe* and *loath*: When you are *loath* to do or say something, you are reluctant almost to the point of aversion or disgust. The verb to *loathe* means to hate, despise. *Loath* rhymes with *both*; the TH in *loathe* is pronounced like the TH in *other*
- *Emulate* and *imitate*: To *imitate* is to follow the example of, take as a model. To *emulate* means to strive to equal or excel.

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### 11. CIRCUMSCRIBE (SUR-kum-SKRYB)

To limit, restrict, confine, hem in, fix the boundaries of (literally, to draw a line around).

**Related words:** *circum-* means around. You can see this combining form in the words *circumstance*; *circumcision*; *circumvent*, to go around, bypass, especially in a clever or resourceful way; *circumlocutory*, expressed in a roundabout way; and *circumnavigate*, to navigate or sail around.

### 12. DEARTH (rhymes with *earth*)

A lack, scarcity, insufficiency, inadequate supply of something needed.

**Synonym:** *paucity* (Level 10, Word 2).

**Antonyms:** *abundance*, *surplus*, *excess*, *superfluity*, *plethora*, *surfeit*.

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### 13. INGRATIATING (in-GRAY-shee-ay-ting)

Flattering, attempting to win approval or curry favor, trying to gain acceptance, done to charm or please another.

**Synonym:** *unctuous*.

**Usage tip:** Dictionaries and thesauruses often give *charming*, *pleasing*, and *agreeable* as synonyms of *ingratiating*, but today the word invariably has the negative suggestion of insincerely charming, pleasing or agreeable so as to gain approval or get into the good graces of another.

### 14. MERCENARY (MUR-suh-ner-ee)

Greedy, done for payment only, motivated by a selfish desire for money or other reward.

**Synonyms:** *covetous*, *avaricious* (both discussed in Level 2, Word 40).

**Additional related word:** *venal*, corruptible, capable of being bribed or bought off.

**Corresponding noun:** *mercenary*, a hired soldier, one who fights not for a cause or for love of country but for money.

### 15. EXTEMPORIZE (eks-TEM-puh-ryz)

To improvise, to speak or compose with little or no preparation or practice, perform something in an offhand or unpremeditated way.

**Corresponding adjective:** *extemporaneous* (eks-TEM-puh-**RAY**-nee-us), spoken or composed with little or no preparation or practice.

### 16. ERUDITE (preferably, ER-uu-dyt or AIR-uu-dyt; commonly, AIR-yoo-dyt)

Learned, scholarly, possessing extensive knowledge acquired chiefly from books.

**Corresponding noun:** *erudition* (preferably ER- or AIR-uu-**DISH**-un; commonly, AIR-yoo-**DISH**-un), extensive knowledge acquired from reading books.

**Usage tip:** *erudite* may be used either of people or things.

### 17. AUSTERE (aw-STEER)

Severe, serious, characterized by strict selfdiscipline or severe self-denial, stern in appearance, manner, or practice.

**Synonyms:** *somber*, *grim*, *grave*, *forbidding*, *dour* (rhymes with *poor*).

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### 18. LACONIC (luh-KAHN-ik)

Using few words, briefly and often bluntly expressed.

**Synonyms:** *succinct, concise, pithy, succinct, terse* (Level 3, Word 3).

**Etymology:** *Laconic* comes from the Greek *lakonikos*, a resident of the ancient city state of Sparta, which was renowned for its austere and warlike people. By derivation *laconic* refers to the Spartans' reputation for rigorous self-discipline and reticence. Like the ancient Spartans, the *laconic* speakers and writers of today are determined to use no more words than are necessary to get the point across, even at the risk of giving offense.

**Illustrative anecdote:** Julius Caesar's three-word pronouncement, *Veni, vidi, vici* ("I came, I saw, I conquered"), is one of the most famous laconic statements of all time.

### 19. AMELIORATE (uh-MEEL-yuh-rayt)

To make or become better or more tolerable, raise the condition or state of.

**Synonyms:** improve, amend, correct, reform, rectify.

**Usage tip:** Ameliorate is used chiefly of improving something that needs help because it is inferior, oppressive, or intolerable.

### 20. EXPUNGE (ek-SPUNJ)

To erase, delete, cancel; punch, strike, or wipe out something completely so it appears as though it had never existed.

**Synonyms:** eradicate, obliterate.

### 21. CIRCUMSPECT (SUR-kum-spekt)

Careful, cautious, wary, watchful, carefully considering all circumstances before acting or making a judgment.

**Synonyms:** discreet, vigilant, prudent (Level 1, Word 47).

**Etymology:** Circumspect comes from the Latin circum-, around, and specere, to look at carefully, observe. The Latin specere is also the source of the words spectator, spectacle, and spectacular, wonderful to behold.

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### 22. QUIESCENT (kwy-ES-int)

Still, quiet, tranquil, inactive, at rest or repose.

**Antonyms:** *vigorous, animated, sprightly, vivacious, ebullient.*

**Related words:** *latent*, which applies to something that has not yet been revealed; *dormant*, which applies to something inactive or that seems asleep.

**Connotation:** *Quiescent* suggests a temporary cessation of activity, a period of rest or repose.

### 23. FOIBLE (FOY-buul)

A weak point, slight fault or flaw, -minor failing, especially a (usually forgivable) weakness in a person's character.

**Etymology:** By derivation *foible* means the weak part of a sword, and it is related to the word *feeble*, weak, frail.

### 24. FERVENT (FUR-vint)

Passionate, having or showing great warmth or intensity of feeling, fiery, earnest, impassioned.

**Synonyms:** *vehement, ardent, fervid, zealous.*

**Antonyms:** *lukewarm, listless, apathetic, indifferent, impassive, phlegmatic* (fleg-MAT-ik).

**Etymology and usage tip:** *Fervent* and *fervid* both come from the Latin *fervere*, to boil, glow. *Fervent* suggests great warmth and earnestness. *Fervid* is stronger and suggests intense, even violent emotion.

### 25. PROTRACT (proh-TRAKT)

To draw out, drag out, extend in time, lengthen, prolong, especially to excess.

**Antonyms:** *abbreviate, condense, curtail, truncate* (Level 7, Word 5).

**Etymology and connotation:** *Protract* comes from the Latin *tractare*, to draw, drag around. It suggests drawing or dragging something out needlessly, often to the point of irritation or boredom.

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### 26. OSTENTATIOUS (AH-sten-TAY-shus)

Showy, extremely conspicuous, extravagant, flamboyant; specifically, displayed or done in a flashy, vain manner.

**Antonyms:** *simple, plain, modest, unassuming*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *pretentious, pompous, and ostentatious*, all of which refer to persons or things that are showy, extravagant, and self-important.

### 27. QUANDARY (KWAHN-duh-ree)

A state of uncertainty, perplexity, or doubt.

**Synonyms:** *predicament, dilemma.*

### 28. CENSURE (SEN-shur)

To blame, condemn, find fault with, criticize harshly, express stern disapproval of.

**Synonyms:** *denounce, reprimand, reprehend.*

**Antonyms:** *commend, extol, laud.*

**Connotation:** *Censure* usually implies condemnation of irresponsible behavior rather than condemnation of character.

**Usage tip:** Be careful not to confuse the words *censure*, to blame, condemn, find fault with, and *censor* (SEN-sur), to suppress or delete something objectionable.

### 29. CAVIL (KAV'l)

To criticize or complain unnecessarily, point out petty flaws, raise trivial or frivolous objections.

**Synonyms:** *nitpick, niggle, carp, quibble.* (All these words suggest making unnecessary criticisms or complaining about trivial things.)

### 30. ASSIMILATE (uh-SIM-i-layt)

To absorb, take in; also, to adapt to or become absorbed by a system or culture.

**Synonyms:** *comprehend, incorporate, appropriate.*

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**Fewer and Less:** *Less* modifies quantities, abstractions, things that are considered single or whole (*less food, less time, less money*). *Fewer* modifies things that can be itemized, enumerated, broken down into separate elements or parts (*fewer thoughts, fewer words, fewer mistakes*).

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### 31. RESCIND (ri-SIND)

To cancel, take back, take away, remove; also, to render void, annul, repeal.

### 32. DISCERNIBLE (di-SURN-i-buul)

Recognizable, detectable, perceptible, capable of being recognized by the senses or by the mind.

**Synonyms:** *apparent, evident, distinguishable, manifest.*

**Antonyms:** *obscure, invisible, indistinct, imperceptible.*

**Related words and etymology:** *Discernible* (adjective), *discern* (verb), *discernment* (noun), and *discerning* (adjective) come from a Latin word meaning to sift, separate, distinguish between, and all of these words pertain to sifting or separating things in order to distinguish them. Challenging synonyms of *discernment* include *astuteness, acumen* (uh-KYOO-min), and *perspicacity* (PUR-spi-KAS-i-tee).

### 33. CATAclysm (KAT-uh-kliz'm)

A disaster, great mishap, catastrophe, violent upheaval.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the synonyms *disaster, catastrophe, calamity, debacle* (di-BAHK'l), and *cataclysm*, all of which refer to accidents, misfortunes, and sudden or violent changes.

**Etymology tips:** The negative prefix *dis-* denotes the absence or reverse of what follows: *dislike* is an absence of affection, *discomfort* is the absence of comfort, *disadvantage* is the reverse of an advantage. *Catastrophe* and *cataclysm* begin with the Greek *kata-*, which means "down."

**Additional useful words:** *deluge* (DEL-yooj), a great flood or downpour; *inundate* (IN-un-dayt), to overflow or overwhelm.

### 34. NARCISSISM (NAR-si-SIZ'm)

Self-love, excessive admiration of oneself.

**Synonyms:** *vanity, conceit, egotism, amour-propre* (ah-MOOR PROH-pruh).

**Antonyms:** *humbleness, modesty, humility.*

**Etymology:** *Narcissism* comes from Narcissus, a character in Greek mythology who fell in love with his reflection in a pool of water.

**Related words:** *narcissist*, a person afflicted with narcissism, self-love; *narcissistic* (adjective) means full of admiration for one's own appearance, abilities, or achievements.

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### 35. INCRIMINATE (in-KRIM-i-nayt)

To charge with a crime, accuse of wrongdoing, implicate, present evidence or proof of involvement in a wrongful act.

### 36. STIGMA (STIG-muh)

A mark of shame or disgrace, a moral blemish, a stain on one's character or reputation.

**Etymology:** Stigma, from Greek, means literally a mark, brand, tattoo; in its original but no longer common sense, stigma refers to a brand or scar made with a red-hot iron in the flesh of slaves and criminals. Later it came to be used of anything that branded a person as unwholesome or disgraceful, a mark of shame, stain on one's character or reputation.

**Corresponding verb:** stigmatize, to brand as shameful, set a mark of disgrace upon.

**N.B.** The plural of stigma is either stigmas or stigmata (preferably STIG-muh-tuh, often stigMAH-tuh). Stigmata, the Latinate plural, may also refer to marks resembling the wounds on the crucified body of Jesus Christ that are believed to have been supernaturally impressed on the bodies of certain persons, such as St. Francis of Assisi.

**Additional useful word:** anglicize, to make English, conform to English modes of spelling, pronunciation, and usage.

### 37. BREVITY (BREV-i-tee)

(1) Shortness, briefness.

(2) Brief expression, shortness of speech.

**Synonyms:** (sense 2) *conciseness, succinctness, terseness, pithiness.*

**Etymology and related words:** *Brief* and *brevity* both come from the Latin *brevis*, short, the source also of the unusual word *breve* (rhymes with *leave*). A *breve* is one of the diacritical marks or symbols used to indicate pronunciation: It's a small curve, like a tiny smile, placed over a vowel to indicate a short sound, as in the *e* in *pet* or the *a* in *cat*.

### 38. PERQUISITE (PUR-kwi-zit)

A benefit, incidental gain or reward; specifically, an expected or promised benefit, privilege, or advantage received in addition to one's normal salary or wages.

### 39. INDIGENT (IN-di-jint)

Poor, needy, penniless, impoverished, down-and-out.

**Synonyms:** *destitute, impecunious* (IM-pi-KYOO-nee-us).

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### 40. CLAIRVOYANT (klair-VOY-int)

Having exceptional powers of perception, unusually clear-sighted or discerning; specifically, able to see objects or events that others cannot, having extra-sensory perception or the power of divination.

**Etymology:** the Latin *clarus*, clear, and *videre*, to see (literally, "to see clearly what others cannot").

**Related words:** *clairvoyance* (noun), exceptional insight or perception; *clairvoyant* (noun), a person who supposedly possesses the power to see into the future, a medium, soothsayer.

### 41. ADROIT (uh-DROYT)

Skillful, clever, dexterous; specifically, showing skill in using one's hands or in using one's brains.

**Synonyms:** *deft, resourceful, ingenious, artful, adept* (Level 1, Word 7).

**Antonyms:** *awkward, clumsy, inept, maladroit* (mal-uh-DROYT).

**Etymology tips and related words:** *Adroit* comes from Latin through the French *droit*, right, and means literally "to the right." The Latin *dexter* means on the right side; hence, skillful. From *dexter* we inherit the word *dexterous*, skilled with the hands or body. The Latin *sinister* means left, on the left side, and also wrong, evil, unfavorable, adverse, the meaning of the English word *sinister* today. People who are *ambidextrous* are equally skillful or dexterous with both hands. The unusual word *ambisinister* means literally having two left hands, equally awkward with both hands. In French *gauche* means left, but also crooked, awkward, clumsy; in English *gauche* refers to a person who is awkward, crude, or blundering, or to behavior that lacks culture or social grace.

**Usage tip:** *Adroit* may refer either to physical dexterity or mental ingenuity.

### 42. PLATITUDE (PLAT-i-t(y)ood)

A flat, dull, ordinary, remark, a trite statement or hackneyed saying, especially one uttered as if it were original or profound.

**Synonyms:** *cliche, truism, bromide* (BROH-myd).

**Etymology:** *Platitude* comes from the French word for flat, and means literally "a flat remark."

**Related words:** *platitudinous* (adjective) refers to speech or expression that is dull, ordinary, commonplace, insipid, banal. *Platitudinize* (verb) means to utter platitudes. A *platitudinarian* (noun) is a person who habitually utters platitudes-flat, dull, ordinary remarks.

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### 43. FASTIDIOUS (fa-STID-ee-us)

(1) Extremely delicate, sensitive, or particular, especially in matters of taste or behavior.

**Synonyms:** *dainty, fussy, finicky, overnice.*

(2) Hard to please, extremely picky or demanding, exacting, critical to a fault.

**Etymology and usage:** *Fastidious* descends from Latin words meaning squeamish, disgusted, disdainful, and conceited. The *fastidious* person is so excessively concerned with details that he may become squeamish or disgusted if things are not just right. The *fastidious* person may also be so hard to please, so critical and demanding, that she appears contemptuous of others.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *scrupulous, meticulous, punctilious*, and *fastidious*, all of which suggest demanding standards and careful attention to detail.

### 44. VENDETTA (ven-DET-uh)

A bitter, protracted feud or rivalry.

**Etymology:** *Vendetta* comes through Italian from the Latin *vindicta*, revenge, vengeance.

**Related word:** *vindictive*, vengeful, seeking a revenge.

**Usage:** *Vendetta* refers specifically to the violent tradition of revenging the murder of a relative by killing the murderer or a member of his family. *Vendetta* is now also used more generally to mean any long, bitter feud or rivalry, not necessarily between families and not necessarily attended by bloodshed.

### 45. LUCID (LOO-sid)

(1) Clear, easy to see or understand, plainly expressed.

(2) Clear of mind, mentally sound, rational, sane.

**Synonyms:** (sense 1) *intelligible, comprehensible, limpid, perspicuous* (pur-SPIK-yoo-us).

**Antonyms:** *murky, obscure, befuddled, nebulous* (Level 2, Word 5), *ambiguous* (Level 2, Word 25), *abstruse*.

**Related word:** *pellucid* (pe-LOO-sid), exceptionally clear, extremely easy to see or understand.

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### 46. **SALIENT** (SAY-lee-int)

Conspicuous, noticeable, prominent; sticking or jutting out.

**Synonyms:** *protruding, manifest, obtrusive, protuberant.*

**Antonyms:** *inconspicuous, unassuming, unobtrusive, indiscernible, unostentatious.*

**Etymology and usage:** *Salient* comes from the Latin verb *salire*, to leap, jump, spring. That which *is salient* seems to leap out at you, jump into view, or spring forward to command your attention. *Salient* may apply to things that are conspicuously attractive or unattractive.

### 47. **CATEGORICAL** (KAT-uh-GOR-i-kuul)

Absolute, unqualified, explicit; without exceptions, conditions, or qualifications.

**Antonyms:** *ambiguous* (Level 2, Word 25), *doubtful, dubious, indefinite, enigmatic, equivocal.*

**Usage:** *Categorical* refers to statements or assertions that are absolute, unqualified, direct and explicit. The word often suggests a statement or state of mind that is rigid, narrow, arrogant, or arbitrary.

### 48. **INSCRUTABLE** (in-SKROO-tuh-buul)

Incomprehensible, unfathomable, extremely difficult to understand, not open to investigation or analysis.

**Synonyms:** *mysterious, impenetrable, esoteric, arcane* (ar-KAYN).

**Antonyms:** *lucid* (Level 4, Word 45), *perspicuous.*

**Etymology:** *Inscrutable* combines the negative prefix *in-*, which means not, with the Latin *scrutari*, to examine, inspect, search thoroughly.

**Related words:** *scrutinize*, to investigate, examine closely; *scrutiny*, a close examination.

**Usage tips:** The phrase "an *inscrutable* smile" is a cliché, a hackneyed expression; unless you're trying to be humorous, it's best to avoid it altogether. Also, in the past *inscrutable* was often applied to Asians or to the Asian race. Today this use is considered not only cliché but also derogatory and offensive.

### 49. **CONSTRUE** (kun-STROO)

To interpret, explain the meaning or intention of.

**Related words:** *construct, construction.*

**Etymology:** By derivation, the verb to *construe* means to put a particular construction on something, to interpret it, explain its underlying meaning or intention.

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### 50. **ALLUDE** (uh-LOOD)

To refer to something indirectly, make a casual reference.

**Synonyms:** *suggest, hint, insinuate, intimate* (IN-ti-mayt).

**Antonyms:** *indicate, specify, detail, enumerate.*

**Corresponding noun:** *allusion*, an indirect, casual, or passing reference.