

*VERBAL ADVANTAGE*  
*SUCCESS EDITION*  
*ADVANCED*

*Level VI*

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## Verbal Advantage Level Six

*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."*

The introduction to this level explores how vocabulary is acquired, average vocabulary growth at different ages and stages of life, and the difference between your *active* and *passive* vocabularies.

### 1. LEGERDEMAIN (LEJ-ur-duh-MAYN)

Sleight of hand; a cleverly executed trick or deception.

**Synonyms:** *magic, prestidigitation, thaumaturgy.*

**Etymology and usage:** *Legerdemain* comes from a Middle French phrase "light of hand." Today the word may refer specifically to adroitness with the hands, as in performing magic tricks; to any display of clever skill and adroitness; or a cleverly executed trick or deception. Spelling tip: There is no *e* at the end of *legerdemain*.

### 2. PUERILE (PYOOR-ul or PYOO-ur-ul)

Childish, immature; hence, foolish, silly. Etymology: Latin *puerilis*, youthful, from *puer*, a child.

**Synonyms:** ("childish or immature") *infantile, juvenile*; ("foolish or silly") *inane, frivolous, asinine, fatuous, sophomoric, callow* (Level 4, Word 30).

**Corresponding nouns:** *puerilism*, a psychiatric term for the abnormal appearance of childish behavior in an adult; *puerility*, childishness, immaturity, or in civil law, the status of a child between infancy and puberty.

### 3. COMPLICITY (kuhm-PLIS-i-tee)

Conspiracy, partnership in wrongdoing, criminal participation, direct association in guilt, the state of being an accomplice.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *conspiracy, confederacy, collusion*, and *complicity*, all of which refer to partnership or participation in disreputable or illegal activities. It also explores a usage problem concerning the words *connivance*, feigning ignorance of wrong doing, and *connive*, to feign ignorance of wrong doing.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *complicare*, to fold up or fold together, the source also of the words *complicate* and *accomplice*.

### 4. TRANSMUTE (tranz-MYOOT)

To transform; specifically, to change from one nature, form, or substance into another, especially to a higher, better, or more refined one. Etymology: Prefix *trans-*, "across" or "beyond," and Latin *mutare*, to change. Literally, *transmute* means "to change across the board" or "to change something beyond what it is."

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### 5. ABSTRUSE [ab-STROOS]

Difficult to understand, hard to grasp mentally, deep, profound, incomprehensible, unfathomable.

**Synonyms:** *inscrutable* (Level 3, Word 48), *esoteric* (Level 5, Word 29), *occult*, *cryptic*, *enigmatic*, *arcane*, *recondite*, *acroamatic*.

**Antonyms:** *manifest*, *discernible* (Level 3, Word 32), *lucid* (Level 3, Word 45), *perspicuous*.

### 6. EDIFY (ED-i-fy)

To instruct, improve, teach, enlighten; especially, to instruct or improve intellectually, morally, or spiritually.

**Corresponding noun:** *edification*, enlightenment; intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement.

**Usage tip:** Except when used humorously, the phrase "for your *edification*" should probably be avoided; it has become cliché and often has a condescending overtone.

### 7. SUPERCILIOUS (SOO-pur-SIL-ee-us)

Haughty, proud, scornful, contemptuous, disdainful.

**Etymology:** Latin *super-*, over, above, and *cilium*, eyebrow; by derivation it means with raised eyebrows.

### 8. DISSEMBLE (di-SEM-buul)

To disguise; conceal under a false appearance; speak or behave hypocritically; cover up the facts or one's true feelings or motives; mask under a pretense or deceptive manner.

**Synonyms:** *feign*, *affect*, *simulate*, *camouflage*, *equivocate*, *prevaricate*.

### 9. VACUOUS (VAK-yoo-us)

Empty, vacant; devoid of substance, interest, intelligence, expression, or meaning.

**Synonyms:** *blank*, *unintelligent*, *shallow*, *stupid*, *senseless*, *inane*, *fatuous*.

**Corresponding noun:** *vacuity*, emptiness, an absence of matter or intellectual content.

**Etymology:** Latin *vacuus*, empty.

**Usage tip:** *Vacuous* is not used where the words *empty* or *vacant* would be appropriate: an empty box or a vacant apartment cannot be described as *vacuous*. *Vacuous* usually applies to a figurative lack of content, meaning, or interest: *vacuous* eyes, a *vacuous* discussion, a *vacuous* mind, a *vacuous* remark, a *vacuous* proposal.

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### 10. CAPACIOUS (kuh-PAY-shus)

Roomy, spacious, ample, able to contain or hold a great deal.

**Synonyms:** When used literally, *capacious* is a synonym of *spacious* and *roomy*: a *capacious* house; their *capacious* office. When used figuratively, *capacious* is a synonym of *broad* and *comprehensive*: a *capacious* intellect; a *capacious* view; a *capacious* treatment of a subject.

### 11. MNEMONIC (ne-MAHN-ik)

Helping or pertaining to the memory, assisting or improving the ability to recall.

**Etymology and related words:** *Mnemonic* comes from a Greek verb to remember, and by derivation means "mindful." In Greek mythology, *Mnemosyne* was the goddess of memory and the mother of the nine Muses who preside over literature, the arts, and the sciences. A *mnemonic device* is a memory-aid, something that helps one to remember. *Mnemonics* refers to any technique or system for improving the memory.

### 12. SONOROUS (suh-NOR-us or SAHN-uh-rus)

Resonant; deep, full, and rich in sound; having, or capable of producing, a powerful, impressive sound.

### 13. ADMONISH (ad-MANN-ish)

To warn or notify of a fault or error, especially in conduct or attitude; to criticize or reprove gently but earnestly.

**Synonyms:** *advise, counsel, caution, apprise, exhort, expostulate.*

**Corresponding noun:** *admonishment*, a gentle warning or mild criticism.

**Etymology:** Latin *admonere*, to warn, remind.

### 14. PARADIGM (PAR-uh-dim or PAR-uh-dym)

An example, model, or pattern.

**Corresponding Adjective:** *paradigmatic*, exemplary, typical, serving as a model or pattern.

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### 15. CIRCUITOUS (sur-KYOO-i-tūs)

Roundabout, indirect, not straightforward, following a roundabout and often extended course.

**Synonyms:** *devious, meandering, sinuous, tortuous, serpentine, labyrinthine* (like a labyrinth or maze).

**Etymology:** The adjective *circuitous* is formed by adding the suffix *-ous* to the noun *circuit*, a line or route that goes around and returns to where it started.

### 16. VINDICATE (VIN-dī-kayt)

To clear from blame, free from suspicion of wrongdoing or dishonor; uphold or maintain the truth or innocence of something or someone in the face of criticism or imputations of guilt.

**Corresponding noun:** *vindication*.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs *vindicate*, *exonerate*, and *acquit*, which mean to free from blame.

### 17. BUCOLIC (byoo-KAHL-ik)

Rural, rustic, of or pertaining to country life.

**Synonyms:** *pastoral, provincial, agrarian, idyllic, Arcadian*.

**Antonyms:** *urban, municipal, civic, metropolitan, cosmopolitan*.

**Etymology:** Latin and Greek words meaning a herdsman, shepherd, ultimately from the Greek *bous*, an ox.

### 18. OSTRACIZE (AHS-truh-syz)

To banish, send into exile, expel from a place; to bar, exclude, or reject from a group or from acceptance by society.

**Corresponding noun:** *ostracism*, banishment.

**Etymology and related word:** Greek *ostrakon*, a potsherd, piece of broken pottery. *Ostracism* and *petalism* were forms of banishment employed by the ancient Greeks. *Ostracism* was practiced by the ancient Athenians; citizens would vote by writing the name of the person to be expelled on a potsherd or earthenware tablet, and banishment was for ten years. *Petalism* was practiced in ancient Syracuse; citizens would write the name of the person to be banished on an olive leaf, and the length of exile was five years.

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### 19. PLETHORA (PLETH-uh-ruh)

An excess, surplus, overabundance, oversupply.

**Synonyms:** *superabundance, profusion, superfluity, surfeit* (Level 8, Word 49).

**Antonyms:** *scarcity, insufficiency, dearth* (Level 3, Word 12), *paucity* (Level 10, Word 2).

**Etymology:** Greek *plethein*, to be full.

**Corresponding adjective:** *plethoric*.

**Pronunciation tip:** *Plethora* is sometimes mispronounced ple-THOR-uh. Dictionaries do not recognize ple-THOR-uh. Be sure to stress the first syllable: PLETH-uh-ruh.

### 20. PROCLIVITY (pro-KLIV-i-tee)

An inclination, liking, leaning; a strong natural bent or tendency, often toward something disagreeable, objectionable, or wicked.

**Synonyms:** *partiality, penchant* (Level 3, Word 9), *predisposition, predilection* (Level 8, Word 42), *propensity*.

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At this point in the program there is a discussion of several interesting and useful words derived from Greek names and Greek place names. The discussion covers the origin and meaning of the following words:

- *Procrustean*: producing conformity by cruel or violent means. To place someone on a *Procrustean bed* means to use ruthless measures to make the person conform.
- *draconian*: ruthlessly severe.
- *epicure*: a person with fastidious tastes, especially in food or wine; also, someone devoted to sensual pleasure. The adjective *epicurean* means devoted to or appreciating the comforts of life, especially good food and drink. The doctrine of *epicureanism* is distinguished from *hedonism*, the pursuit of self-indulgent pleasure-colloquially, "living for the moment." Additional useful phrase: *summum bonum*, (Latin) "greatest good."
- *Pyrrhonism*: absolute skepticism, universal doubt.
- *Pyrrhonist*: a person who doubts everything.
- *Boeotian*: (noun) a dull, ignorant person; (adjective) stupid, boring, obtuse. *Boeotian ears*: ears unable to appreciate music or rhetoric.
- *Arcadian*: of or pertaining to the simplicity and innocence of rustic life.
- *solecism*: a gross grammatical error or a social impropriety.

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- *Laodicean*: (noun) an indifferent or complacent person; (adjective) indifferent or lukewarm, especially in matters of religion.

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### 21. COMMENSURATE (kuh-MEN-shur-it)

Proportionate, corresponding in amount, measure, or degree; also, equal, of the same size or extent.

### 22. INCESSANT (in-SES-int)

Constant, uninterrupted, continuous, unceasing.

**Etymology:** *Incessant* combines the privative prefix *in-*, not, and the Latin *cessare*, to stop, cease.

**Synonyms:** *interminable, relentless, unremitting, continuous.*

**Antonyms:** *occasional, irregular, intermittent, incidental, sporadic, fitful, erratic.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *continuous* and *continual*, which are often confused and misused. *Continual* means happening again and again at short intervals: *continual* reminders, *continual* attempts, *continual* laughter, the *continual* ringing of the telephone. *Continuous* means uninterrupted or unbroken: *continuous* noise, *continuous* rain, a *continuous* effort, the *continuous* rotation of the earth. This discussion also distinguishes *continuous* and *incessant*, which are close synonyms.

### 23. SYCOPHANT (SIK-uh-fint)

A flatterer, parasite, toady, fawning follower, hanger-on.

**N.B.** This discussion explores the curious (and still uncertain) history of the word *toady* and *sycophant*.

**Corresponding adjective:** *sycophantic* (SIK-uh-FAN-tik).

### 24. TANGENTIAL (tan-JEN-shul)

Not closely related, only slightly connected, digressive, divergent.

**Related word:** *tangent*, (geometry) a line that touches a curve but does not intersect it; the phrase *to go off on a tangent* means to make an abrupt change of course (usually in speech), diverge, digress.

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### 25. TENABLE (TEN-uh-buul)

Defensible, reasonable; able to be defended, maintained, or upheld (as, a *tenable* law, a *tenable* reason).

**Etymology:** Latin *tenere*, to hold, grasp.

**Related words:** *tenaculum*, a pointed, hooked instrument used in surgery for lifting and holding parts, such as blood vessels; *tenacious*, holding firmly (a *tenacious* grip, a *tenacious* memory).

**Antonym:** *untenable*, indefensible.

### 26. IMPALPABLE (im-PAL-puh-buul)

Incapable of being felt or understood, not able to be perceived either by the sense of touch or by the mind.

**Synonyms:** *untouchable*, *imperceptible*, *intangible*.

**Antonyms:** *palpable*, *perceptible*, *manifest*, *tangible*.

**Etymology:** *Palpable* and *impalpable* come from the Latin *palpare*, to touch or stroke gently.

**Related words:** *palpate*, (medicine) to examine or explore by touch; *palpation*, the act of examining by touch.

### 27. ODIIOUS (OH-dee-us)

Hateful, detestable, offensive, revolting, arousing strong dislike or aversion.

**Synonyms:** *disgusting*, *obnoxious*, *objectionable*, *disagreeable*, *contemptible*, *repellent*, *repugnant*, *loathsome*, *abominable*, *abhorrent*, *heinous*, *opprobrious*, *flagitious*, *execrable*.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *odiosus*, hateful, from *odium*, hatred, the direct source of the English noun *odium*, hatred (usually hatred experienced or incurred rather than felt).

**Corresponding noun:** *odiousness*, the state or quality of being odious.

**Usage tip:** Be careful to distinguish the words *odious* and *odorous* both in spelling and usage. *Odorous* means emitting an odor, having a distinct aroma or smell. *Odious* means hateful, detestable, revolting. *Odorous* armpits or *odorous* garbage may be *odious*, but there is nothing *odious* about *odorous* flowers.



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### 28. UBIQUITOUS (yoo-BIK-wuh-tus)

Existing or seeming to exist everywhere at the same time.

**Antonym:** *nonexistent*.

**Synonyms:** *ever-present, universal, pervading, omnipresent*.

**Corresponding noun:** *ubiquity*, the state of being or seeming to be everywhere at once, omnipresence.

**Etymology:** Latin *ubique*, everywhere.

**Usage tip:** Because few things other than the air we breathe can accurately be described as *ubiquitous*, existing everywhere at the same time, *ubiquitous* is often used to mean *seeming* to exist everywhere at once, extremely widespread. *Ubiquitous* is also often used to achieve an exaggerated effect.

### 29. RUMINATE (ROO-mi-nayt)

To turn over in the mind, think about again and again, consider carefully or at length.

**Synonyms:** *ponder, contemplate, meditate, deliberate, muse, cogitate, mull*.

**Etymology:** Latin *ruminare*, to chew the cud; by derivation, *ruminate* means to chew the cud mentally, regurgitate a thought and turn it over and over in the mind.

**Related words:** *ruminant*, (zoology) an animal that chews its cud; (adjective) chewing the cud; *rumen*, the first chamber of the multi-chambered stomachs of ruminant animals.

**Additional useful word:** *mastication*, the act of chewing.

**Usage tip:** Just as we often say that we chew *on* something, we often say that we ruminate *on* something.

### 30. REMUNERATION (ri-MYOO-nuh-**RAY**-shin)

Payment, compensation, or reward.

**Synonyms:** *reimbursement, recompense, consideration, indemnification, emolument* (Level 8, Word 3).

**Corresponding verb:** *remunerate*, to pay or compensate for services rendered, trouble taken, or goods provided.

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### 31. PECCADILLO (PEK-uh-DIL-oh)

A small sin, slight offense, minor fault or flaw.

**Etymology:** *Peccadillo* means literally "a small sin." It comes through Spanish and Italian ultimately from the Latin *peccare*, to make a mistake, blunder, sin.

**Related words:** *peccant*, guilty, sinful, culpable; *peccable*, liable to sin or do wrong; and *impeccable* (Level 4, Word 40), incapable of sin, unable to do wrong-hence, free from all faults or imperfections.

**Synonyms:** *failing, frailty, foible* (Level 3, Word 23).

**Spelling and usage tip:** The plural may be spelled either *peccadilloes* or *peccadillos*.

### 32. SUPINE (soo-PYN)

Lying down on the back, with the face turned upward.

**Etymology:** Latin *supinus*, lying on the back with the face up.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *supine*, *prone*, *prostrate*, *recumbent*, which denote lying down in various ways.

**Usage tip:** Be careful not to confuse the adjective *prostrate* with the noun *prostate*. *Prostrate* means lying flat, stretched out, either on the back (*supine*) or the belly (*prone*). *Prostate* denotes the gland in men that contributes to the production of semen and helps control urination.

### 33. BANAL (BAY-nul or buh-NAL)

Common, ordinary, unoriginal; flat, dull, and predictable; lacking freshness or zest.

**Synonyms:** *trite, commonplace, conventional, humdrum, hackneyed, shopworn, stereotyped, insipid, vapid, bromidic*.

**Antonyms:** *creative, imaginative, unconventional, unorthodox, ingenious, innovative, novel, pithy*.

**Corresponding noun:** *banality*, the quality or state of being common, ordinary, and unoriginal.

**Pronunciation tip:** Most educated speakers pronounce *banal* either BAY-nul (rhyming with *anal*) or buh-NAL (rhyming with *canal*). The variant buh-NAHL is less frequently heard; it is more common among British speakers. The variant BAN-al, preferred by several early 20<sup>th</sup>-century authorities, is nearly obsolete.

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### 34. HETERODOX (HET-ur-uh-dahks)

Having or expressing an opinion different from the accepted opinion; not in agreement with established doctrine or belief.

**Corresponding noun:** *heterodoxy*, an opinion or belief contrary to what is accepted and established.

**Antonym:** *orthodox*, agreeing with established opinion, adhering to accepted beliefs.

**Etymology:** The prefix *hetero-* means other, different, unlike; the *-dox* in *heterodox* comes from the Greek *doxa*, an opinion, which in turn comes from the verb *dokein*, to think.

**Related words:** *doxy*, an opinion or doctrine, especially a religious opinion; *doxastic*, pertaining to opinion or to the formation of an opinion *doxology*, (Christian worship) an expression of praise to God, usually in the form of a brief hymn or chant.

**Additional useful information:** The prefix *ortho-* means right, upright, proper, or correct. It appears in *orthodontics*, the dental specialty of correcting irregularities of the teeth; *orthoscopic*, having normal or correct vision; *orthography*, correct spelling; and *orthoepy*, the study of the proper pronunciation of words (pronounced OR-thoh-ep-ee or or-THOH-uh-pee).

**N.B.** This discussion concludes by distinguishing *heterodox* and *heretical*.

### 35. GRANDILOQUENT (gran-DIL-uh-kwint)

Characterized by lofty, high-flown language; full of grand or high-sounding words.

**Synonyms:** *bombastic, grandiose, florid, turgid.*

**Antonyms:** *plain-spoken, forthright, unaffected, candid.*

**Etymology and related words:** *Grandiloquent* combines the word *grand* with the suffix *-iloquent*, which comes from the Latin *loqui*, to speak. By derivation, *grandiloquent* means speaking in a grand manner. The Latin *loqui* is also the source of *loquacious*, talkative, and *colloquial* (Level 5, Word 43), pertaining to informal speech or conversation.

**Additional grandiloquent words:** English has more than twenty words that incorporate the suffix *-iloquent* and designate different ways of speaking. This discussion covers the following selection: *magniloquent*, speaking pompously, using grand or high-flown language (*magniloquent* and *grandiloquent* are virtually interchangeable); *multiloquent*, using many words, talking up a storm; *breviloquent*, speaking briefly; *suaviloquent*, speaking in an urbane, sophisticated manner; *doctiloquent*, speaking like a scholar or an expert on some subject; *sanctiloquent*, speaking solemnly or of sacred matters; *somniloquent*, talking in one's sleep.

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### 36. LUGUBRIOUS (luh-GOO-bree-us)

Mournful and gloomy; expressing sadness or sorrow, often in an exaggerated, affected, or ridiculous way.

**Synonyms:** *dismal, melancholy, dreary, funereal, doleful, dolorous, disconsolate, plaintive, woeful, lachrymose, saturnine.*

**Antonyms:** *cheerful, jubilant, joyous, gleeful, mirthful, jovial* (Level 5, Word 19), *sanguine.*

**Etymology:** Latin *lugere*, to mourn or lament.

**Corresponding noun:** *lugubriousness.*

**Corresponding adverb:** *lugubriously.*

### 37. INFINITESIMAL (IN-fin-i-TES-i-mul)

Too small to be measured or calculated.

**Synonyms:** *tiny, minute, microscopic, minuscule.*

**N.B.** This discussion explores in detail the pronunciation, spelling, and history of the word *minuscule*. The traditional pronunciation is mi-NUHS-kyool; now also acceptable is MIN-i-skyool. Take care not to misspell *minuscule* as *minuscul* (an erroneous reflection of the pronunciation MIN-i-skyool). There is no *mini-* in *minuscule*.

**Usage tip:** In precise usage, *infinitesimal* is not interchangeable with *tiny*, *minute*, and *minuscule*, which mean very small, and *microscopic*, which means too small to be seen without a microscope. Properly, *infinitesimal* means too small to be measured or calculated. *Loose usage:* Scientists detected an *infinitesimal* amount of mercury and lead in the city's tap water. *Precise usage:* In a test of the city's tap water, scientists determined that if mercury and lead were present, the amounts were *infinitesimal*.

### 38. GOAD (GOHD, rhymes with road)

To prod or urge to action, stimulate, arouse, stir up.

**Synonyms:** *egg on, spur, incite, impel, instigate.*

**Antonyms:** *soothe, pacify, appease, assuage* (Level 2, Word 37), *mollify.*

**Corresponding noun:** *goad*, a pointed stick used to prod animals and get them to move; figuratively, a stimulus, spur, incitement, anything that urges or drives something on.

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### 39. MALINGER (muh-LING-gur)

To pretend to be sick or incapacitated so as to avoid work or duty; to shirk or dodge responsibility by feigning illness or inability.

**Usage tip:** Don't be misled by the presence of the word *linger* in *malingering*, which does *not* mean to linger, loiter, or hang around in a shiftless or threatening way.

**Related word:** *malady*, an illness or affliction. Corresponding noun: *malingerer*, a person who malingers.

### 40. AVER (uh-VUR)

To state positively, declare with confidence.

**Synonyms:** *assert, affirm, avow, profess, contend, asseverate.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *state, declare, assert, asseverate, affirm,* and *aver.*

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Here the program departs from the key-word discussions to explore several problematic issues of usage and diction, as follows:

1. *Redundancy.* This section advises that you should avoid the (common but) redundant and verbose phrases *at the present time, at this point in time,* and *at this particular point in time.* The preferred forms are *at present, at this point, at this time,* or *now.*

2. *Commonly confused words.* This section covers the proper distinctions between *continual* and *continuous* (also discussed under *incessant*, Level 6, Word 22); *childish* and *childlike*; *immigrate* and *emigrate*; and *eminent* and *imminent.*

3. *Commonly misused or misunderstood words.* This section explains the traditional meanings and precise use of the words *transpire, condone,* and *promiscuous.*

Other useful words noted: *untoward,* improper or inappropriate; *erroneous,* wrong, mistaken, based on error.

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### 41. CACOPHONY (kuh-KAHF-uh-nee)

A harsh, jarring sound, especially a harsh and unpleasant blend of sounds.

**Synonyms:** *dissonance, discord, disharmony, stridency.*

**Antonyms:** *silence, tranquility, serenity, placidity, quiescence.*

**Corresponding adjective:** *cacophonous*, having a harsh, unpleasant, jarring sound.

Synonyms of *cacophonous* include *dissonant, discordant, raucous*, and *strident*

**Etymology:** Greek *kakos*, bad, and *phone*, sound.

**Additional useful information:** The Greek *phone*, sound, occurs in a number of English words, including *phonetic*, pertaining to or representing the sounds of speech; *symphony*, which means literally "sounding together"; and *telephone*, which by derivation means "a voice from afar."

The Greek *kakos*, bad, is the source of the English prefix *caco-*, which appears in front of a number of English words to mean "bad" or "wrong." Examples: *cacography*, bad writing; *cacology*, bad speaking or a bad choice of words; *cacoepy*, bad pronunciation (as opposed to *orthoepy*, good pronunciation); *caconym*, a bad or erroneous name; *cacodoxy*, a bad or unacceptable opinion (*cacodoxy* is a synonym of *heterodoxy*); *cacoeconomy*, bad economy or bad management; and *cacoëthes* (KAK-oh-EE-theez), a bad habit, incurable itch, or an insatiable urge or desire.

### 42. REFRACTORY (ri-FRAK-tur-ee)

Stubborn and disobedient, actively resisting authority or control, unruly, impossible to work with or manage.

**Synonyms:** *willful, headstrong, ungovernable, rebellious, obstinate* (Level 1, Word 34), *intractable* (Level 5, Word 12), *perverse, recalcitrant, intransigent, contumacious.*

**Antonyms:** *obedient, submissive, compliant, deferential, malleable* (Level 2, Word 29), *docile, tractable, acquiescent, obsequious.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *refractory, intractable, contumacious, intransigent*, and *recalcitrant*, all of which suggest stubborn resistance to control.

### 43. ICONOCLAST (eye-KAHN-uh-klast)

A person who attacks cherished or popular beliefs, traditions, or institutions; someone who destroys or denounces an established idea or practice.

**Etymology:** Greek *eikonoklastes*, an imagebreaker, a person who smashes icons or images.

**Synonyms:** *radical, extremist, insurgent, firebrand.*

**Corresponding adjective:** *iconoclastic*, attacking or opposing established or popular beliefs, customs, or institutions.

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### 44. **ENERVATE** (EN-ur-vayt)

To weaken, drain of energy, deprive of force or vigor.

**Synonyms:** *exhaust, deplete, devitalize, debilitate.*

**Antonyms:** *energize, invigorate, stimulate, revive, enliven, animate, vitalize, fortify.*

**N.B.** Because *enervate* sounds like *energize*, many people are tempted to think the words are synonymous when in fact they are antonyms. Take care to distinguish these words: to *energize* is to infuse with energy, invigorate; to *enervate* is to weaken, drain of energy.

**Corresponding adjective:** *enervated*, lacking energy, drained of vitality or strength.

### 45. **LEVITY** (LEV-i-tee)

Lightness or gaiety of manner or expression; specifically, a lightness or lack of seriousness that is inappropriate or unbecoming.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *levitas*, lightness, from *levis*, light, the source also of *levitate* and *levitation*.

**Synonyms:** *silliness, foolishness, frivolity, flippancy, tomfoolery, triviality, jocularly.*

**Antonyms:** *seriousness, earnestness, sobriety, solemnity, gravity.*

### 46. **EQUANIMITY** (EE-kwuh-NIM-i-tee)

Composure, calmness, evenness of mind and temper.

**Etymology:** French, through the Latin *aequanimitas*, calmness, ultimately from *aequus*, even or level, and *animus*, mind or spirit.

**Synonyms:** *poise, self-possession, serenity, tranquility, placidity, imperturbability, sangfroid* (saw(n)-FWAH).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *equanimity* and *composure*.



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### 47. STRICTURE (STRIK-chur)

A criticism, critical comment, especially an unfavorable or hostile observation or remark.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *strictus*, past participle of the verb *stringere*, to draw tight, bind, the source also of the English words *strict* and *stringent*, which means tight, constricted, or rigorous and severe.

**Synonyms:** *reproof, censure, condemnation, disapprobation, castigation, objugation, animadversion.*

**Antonyms:** *praise, compliment, commendation, acclamation, plaudit.*

**Additional useful information:** *Plaudit, applause, and applaud* all come from the Latin *plaudere*, to clap the hands, express approval. A *plaudit* is an enthusiastic expression of approval or praise.

**Usage tip:** *Stricture* is a noun, not a verb. You cannot *stricture* something, but if you have an unfavorable opinion of a person or a thing, you can express your *strictures*, sharp criticisms or hostile remarks.

### 48. OPULENT (AHP-yuh-lint)

Rich, wealthy, very well-to-do, having substantial means.

**Etymology:** Latin *opulentus*, rich, wealthy, and *opis*, power, might, ultimately from *Ops*, the ancient Roman goddess of the harvest and the wife of Saturn, the god of agriculture who presided over the sowing of the fields.

**Antonyms:** *indigent, destitute, impecunious.* These words are distinguished in the discussion of *indigent* (Level 3, Word 39).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the adjectives *opulent, affluent, and prosperous*, which connote wealth and success.

**Corresponding noun:** *opulence*, great wealth or a display of great wealth.



## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 49. **DISPARAGE** (di-SPAR-ij)

To belittle, depreciate, discredit, lower in estimation or value, speak of or treat as inferior.

**Synonyms:** *abuse, ridicule, scorn, slander, defame, censure* (Level 3, Word 28), *denigrate, malign, vilify, traduce, calumniate*.

**Etymology and related words:** *Disparage* comes from an Old French verb that meant to marry unequally, marry a person who was not a peer or on a par with your rank in society. *Disparage* is related to the noun *peer*, an equal, a person of equal status. *Peer* comes from the Latin *par*, equal, the source of the English *par*, which is perhaps most often heard in the phrase "on a *par* with," on an equal footing.

**Corresponding adjective:** *disparaging*.

**Corresponding noun:** *disparagement*.

### 50. **DISCURSIVE** (dis-KUR-siv)

Rambling, roving, covering a wide range of topics, wandering from one subject to another.

**N.B.** Don't be confused by the presence of the word *cursive* in *discursive*. *Discursive* has nothing to do either with cursing or with cursive script, in which the letters are joined or flow together.

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *discursus*, running about, the past participle of the verb *discurrere*, to run to and fro or in different directions. In modern usage, *discursive* applies to speech or writing that runs to and fro or in many different directions.

**Synonyms:** *desultory* (DES-ul-tor-ee), *digressive*. This discussion distinguishes these synonyms from the key word, *discursive*.

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Level Six concludes with a discussion of the ubiquitous vogue-word impact.

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