

*VERBAL ADVANTAGE*  
*SUCCESS EDITION*  
*ADVANCED*

*Level VIII*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

*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. **ALACRITY** (uh-LAK-rĭ-tee)

Cheerful readiness, eagerness, or promptness in action or movement: "The duty of the firefighter is to answer every alarm with *alacrity*."

**Synonyms:** *quickness, liveliness, briskness, enthusiasm, animation, zeal, celerity* (suh-LER-ĭ-tee).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *alacrity* and *celerity*.

### 2. **OBVIATE** (AHB-vee-ayt)

To prevent, make unnecessary, meet and dispose of, clear out of the way.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *obviare*, to prevent, from *obvius*, in the way, the source also of *obvious*, which means literally "lying in the way."

### 3. **EMOLUMENT** (i-MAHL-yuh-ment)

Wages, salary, payment received for work.

**Synonyms:** *compensation, recompense, remuneration* (Level 6, Word 30).

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *emolumentum*, the fee a miller received for grinding grain, from *emolere*, to grind out. By derivation, *emolument* means "that which is ground out by one's exertion." In the modern world, *emolument* has come to mean wages, pay, compensation for one's labor.

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### 4. INTRANSIGENT (in-TRAN-si-jint)

Uncompromising, refusing to come to an agreement, unwilling to modify one's position or give ground.

**Synonyms:** *unreconcilable, unyielding, diehard, hidebound, obstinate* (Level 1, Word 34), *resolute* (Level 1, Word 26), *tenacious, recalcitrant, intractable, refractory* (Level 6, Word 42), *obdurate*.

**Antonyms:** *compromising, flexible, obliging, submissive, compliant, malleable* (Level 2, Word 29), *docile* (Level 7, Word 28), *tractable, deferential, acquiescent, complaisant* (kumPLAY-zint).

**Etymology:** *Intransigent* combines the privative prefix *in-*, meaning "not," with the Latin verb *transigere*, to come to a settlement, and means literally refusing to settle, unwilling to come to an agreement, uncompromising.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *resolute, tenacious, obstinate, intractable, refractory, obdurate*, and *intransigent*, which suggest firmness or fixity in ascending intensity.

### 5. MORDANT (MOR-dint or MORD'nt)

Biting, cutting, keen, sarcastic, scathing.

**Additional synonyms:** *incisive, caustic, trenchant, virulent, acrimonious*.

**Mnemonic device, etymology, and usage:** When you think of *mordant*, think of gnashing teeth. *Mordant* comes from Old French and Latin words meaning to bite, cut into, nip, or sting. Today *mordant* is chiefly used of speech or writing that is biting or cutting in a bitterly sarcastic way (*mordant satire, mordant wit, mordant criticism*).

### 6. SAGACIOUS (suh-GAY-shus)

Wise, shrewd, perceptive; showing sound judgment and keen insight, especially in practical matters.

**Synonyms:** *insightful, discerning, astute* (Level 4, Word 3), *judicious* (Level 5, Word 16), *percipient, sage, sapient, perspicacious*.

**Antonyms:** *undiscriminating, undiscerning, simpleminded, witless, inane, gullible, credulous, obtuse, addleheaded*.

**Corresponding noun:** *sagacity*, wisdom, shrewdness, keen insight or discernment.

**Etymology:** Latin *sagax*, having keen senses, especially a keen sense of smell. *Sagacious* originally was used of hunting dogs to mean quick in picking up a scent.

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### 7. ACERBIC (uh-SUR-bik)

Sour, bitter, and harsh in flavor, tone, or character.

**Synonyms:** *tart, caustic, pungent, astringent, acrid, acidulous.*

**Direct antonym:** *sweet.*

**Usage:** *Acerbic* may be used literally to mean sour or bitter tasting (the lemon is an *acerbic* fruit). However, the word *acidic* probably is more often used in this literal sense, and *acerbic* usually is used figuratively to mean sour, bitter, and harsh in tone or character (an *acerbic* mood, *acerbic* words, are bitter words; an *acerbic* person).

### 8. VARIEGATED (VAR-ee-uh-gay-tid)

In a broad sense, varied, diverse, showing variety of character or form; in a strict sense, spotted, streaked, or dappled; having marks or patches of different colors (a *variegated* quilt, *variegated* cat, *variegated* design).

**N.B.** The corresponding verb to *variegate* is now often used figuratively to mean to give variety to, diversify. The adjective *variegated* is, also frequently used in this way to mean varied, diverse, or multifaceted (*variegated* interests, a *variegated* selection, *variegated* accomplishments).

### 9. SUCCOR (SUHK-ur, like *sucker*)

To aid, help, relieve, give assistance to in time of need or difficulty (to *succor* the wounded, *succor* the sick).

**Corresponding noun:** *succor*, help, aid, relief, assistance in time of need or distress (to give *succor* to the homeless).

**N.B.** *Succor* and *sucker* have the same pronunciation but are otherwise unrelated.

### 10. IMPORTUNE (IM-por-T(Y)OON)

To trouble or annoy with requests or demands, make urgent or persistent entreaties or solicitations.

**Corresponding adjective:** *importunate* (im-POR-chuu-nit), troublesomely demanding, persistent in a vexatious way.

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### Bad vs. Badly

At this point in the program there is a discussion of *feeling bad* as opposed to *feeling badly*. Educated speakers who don't feel well often make the mistake of saying they *feel badly*, which means they are having trouble feeling. You may do something *badly*, but you when you are sick, unhappy, or depressed, you feel *bad*.

The handbook of SPELL (Society for the Preservation of English Language and Literature) contains this advice: "It is incorrect to say 'I feel badly' unless you are referring to the *act* of feeling. If you want to describe your physical condition, *feel bad* is preferred."

**Mnemonic device:** "We feel *bad* when we perform badly" (from *Grammar for Smart People*, by Barry Tarshis).

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### 11. PALLIATE (PAL-ee-ayt)

To lessen the severity of, gloss over, make something seem less serious or severe.

**Synonyms:** *soften, diminish, mitigate, extenuate,*

**Antonyms:** *worsen, intensify, aggravate, exacerbate.* *Exacerbate* means to increase in bitterness or severity (to *exacerbate* a problem, *exacerbate* a conflict).

**Etymology:** Latin *palliare*, to cloak or conceal, from *pallium*, a cloak.

**Usage:** *Palliate* means to conceal or cloak the seriousness of something, make it appear less severe or offensive than it is (to *palliate* suffering, *palliate* a social indiscretion, *palliate* the enormity of a crime). *Palliate* often connotes glossing over or disguising the seriousness of something by making excuses or apologies.

### 12. WIZENED (WIZ-ind)

Dried up, shriveled, withered, shrunken and wrinkled.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *wither*, *shriveled*, and *wizen*, which imply drying up.

**Usage:** The verb to *wizen* now is somewhat rare, but its past participle, *wizened*, is still often used of persons or parts of the body to mean shrunken and wrinkled, dried up by age or disease (a *wizened* face, a *wizened* body, a *wizened* man).

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### 13. CAPTIOUS (KAP-shus)

Faultfinding, quick to point out faults or raise trivial objections.

**Synonyms:** *carping, quibbling, caviling, censorious, querulous*. This discussion distinguishes the adjectives *critical*, *carping*, and *captious*.

**N.B.** *Critical*, though often used in a negative sense, is in fact a neutral word: The *critical* person tries to judge something fairly and objectively by weighing its merits and faults; a *critical* assessment is a fair, impartial assessment, and a *critical* examination may result in a supportive conclusion.

### 14. EMENDATION (EE-men-**DAY**-shin)

A correction, alteration, change made to correct or improve, especially a change made in a piece of writing to correct an error or restore the text to its original state.

**Corresponding verb:** *emend*, to make scholarly corrections to a text.

**N.B.** *Emendation* may also mean the act of *emending*, correcting and improving a piece of writing.

### 15. TRUCULENT (TRUK-yuh-lint)

Fierce, ferocious, especially in a brutal, bullying, threatening, or aggressively defiant way.

**Corresponding noun:** *truculence*, fierceness, ferocity, brutal aggression.

**Synonyms:** *pugnacious, belligerent, malevolent, rapacious, feral* (FEER-ul).

**Antonyms:** *humane, merciful, compassionate, benevolent, clement*, which suggest mercy or mildness, and also *timid, demure, diffident, apprehensive*, and *timorous*, which suggest shyness or fear.

**Usage:** *Truculent* applies to fierce, savage, or ferocious people or to behavior that is brutal, threatening, bullying, or aggressively defiant. *Truculent* is now also used of speech or writing to mean scathing, vicious, or vitriolic.

### 16. EXPURGATE (EKS-pur-gayt)

To cleanse by removing offensive material, free from objectionable content.

**Synonyms:** *censor, purge, bowdlerize*.

**N.B.** *Bowdlerize* comes from Thomas Bowdler, an English editor who in the early 1800s published *expurgated*, or cleansed, editions of the Bible and Shakespeare's works.

**Etymology and related words:** *Expurgate* comes from the Latin *expurgare*, to cleanse, purify, and by derivation is related to the verb to *purge*, to free from impurities, and the adjective *pure*.

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### 17. REPROBATE (REP-ruh-bayt)

Thoroughly bad, wicked, corrupt, morally abandoned, lacking all sense of decency and duty.

**Synonyms:** *unprincipled, shameless, base, vile, degenerate, depraved, irredeemable, incorrigible.*

**Antonyms:** *virtuous, pure, righteous, honorable, chaste, unsullied, exemplary.*

**Etymology:** Latin *reprobate*, to reprove, disapprove of strongly.

**Usage:** In theology, the adjective *reprobate* means damned, predestined for damnation; the noun *reprobate* means a person rejected by God and excluded from salvation. In general usage, the noun **reprobate** means a corrupt, unprincipled person, a scoundrel; the adjective *reprobate* means morally abandoned, bad-to-the-core, lacking all sense of decency and duty.

### 18. SPURIOUS (SPYOOR-ee-us)

False, counterfeit, artificial; not true, authentic, or genuine.

**Synonyms:** *sham, bogus, phony, fictitious, fabricated, fraudulent, illusory, apocryphal* (Level 9, Word 2), *supposititious.*

**Antonyms:** *genuine, authentic, valid, bona fide.*

**Usage:** *Spurious* applies to that which is not what it claims or is claimed to be (a *spurious* document, *spurious* gems, *spurious* statements, *spurious* feelings, a *spurious* charge).

### 19. VOLITION (voh-LISH-in)

Will, choice, decision, determination.

**Etymology and usage:** In Latin, *velle* means to will or wish, and *volo* means "I will." From these words comes the English noun *volition*, which may refer either to the power of using the will or the act of exercising it in making a conscious choice or decision.

### 20. INTERPOLATE (in-TUR-puh-layt)

To insert, introduce; specifically, to insert words into a piece of writing or a conversation.

**Corresponding noun:** *interpolation*, an insertion of words into a piece of writing or a conversation.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs *interpolate*, *interject*, and *interpose*, which mean to insert or place between.

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### 21. ADDUCE (uh-D(Y)OOS)

To offer or cite as a reason, as evidence, or as authority for an opinion or course of action.

### 22. MISCREANT (MIS-kree-int)

An evil, unscrupulous, vicious person; someone without principles or conscience; a villain, criminal.

**Synonyms:** *scoundrel, rascal, rogue, hoodlum, hooligan, ne'er-do-well, varlet, rapsallion, blackguard, desperado, scapegrace, scofflaw, malefactor, reprobate* (Level 8, Word 17).

**Etymology and usage:** *Miscreant* combines the prefix *mis-*, meaning "bad" or "not," with the Latin *credere*, to believe. By derivation a *miscreant* is someone who does not believe. *Miscreant* was once used to mean a heretic, but since the time of Shakespeare it has been used to mean a morally bad person, vile wretch, detestable scoundrel.

**Corresponding adjective:** *miscreant*, villainous, evil, destitute of conscience.

### 23. QUIXOTIC (kwik-SAHT-ik)

Foolishly impractical or idealistic, especially in an extravagantly chivalrous or romantic way; inclined to pursue lofty, unreachable goals or far-fetched, unworkable schemes.

**Synonyms:** *fanciful, whimsical, visionary, utopian, impracticable, chimerical* (ki-MER-i-kuul).

**Antonyms:** *realistic, practical, pragmatic, utilitarian.*

**Etymology:** **Quixotic** comes from *Don Quixote*, the hero and title of a 17th-century satirical romance by Miguel de Cervantes.

**Usage:** *Quixotic* may refer to a person who is extravagantly idealistic or romantic, like Don Quixote, or to an idea or goal that is so impractical and far-fetched as to seem foolish.

### 24. SUPPURATE (SUHP-ur-ayt)

To fester, form or discharge pus.

**Corresponding noun:** *suppuration.*

**Usage:** *Suppurate* applies to wounds, boils, ulcers, etc., that become infected and discharge pus.

**Additional useful words:** *lesion* (LEE-zhun), a wound, injury, infection, or harmful change in some part of the body; *putrefy*, to rot or decay; putrid, rotten, foul-smelling, fetid: *putrefaction*, rotting, decomposition, foul-smelling decay.



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### 25. MARTINET (mahr-ti-NET)

A strict disciplinarian, taskmaster, rigid enforcer of rules and regulations.

**Etymology:** General Jean Martinet was a 17th century French drillmaster who became legendary for subjecting his troops to harsh discipline and for his rigid adherence to military rules and regulations.

**Usage:** A *martinet* may be a strict military disciplinarian, or any rigid, authoritarian enforcer of rules and regulations.

### 26. COMPUNCTION (kum-PUNGK-shin)

A twinge of regret caused by an uneasy conscience; a pang of guilt for a wrong done or for pain that one has caused another.

**Synonyms:** *remorse, misgiving, scruple, qualm*. A stronger synonym is *contrition* (Level 5, Word 9), repentance, deep and devastating sorrow for one's sins or for something one has done wrong.

**Etymology and related words:** Late Latin *compunctio*, a pricking of conscience, ultimately from the Latin *pungere*, to prick, sting, pierce, or stab. *Pungere* is also the source of *puncture*, to prick, pierce, or stab; *pungent*, piercing or stinging to the smell or taste; and *poignant*, piercing or penetrating to the senses, the emotions, or the intellect.

### 27. MERCURIAL (mur-KYOOR-ee-ul)

Quick to change moods or change one's mind, having an unpredictable temperament.

**Synonyms:** *flighty, impulsive, fickle, capricious* (Level 1, Word 11), *volatile* (Level 4, Word 47), *erratic, protean*.

**Antonyms:** *stable, fixed, steadfast, invariable, immutable*.

**Etymology:** *Mercurial* comes from the ancient Roman god Mercury, known to the Greeks as Hermes. Mercury was the messenger or courier of the gods, but he was also the deity who conducted the souls of the dead to the underworld, and the god of commerce, travel, eloquence, and thievery. The element mercury (named after this god) is used in thermometers, and also goes by the name *quicksilver*.

**Additional useful word:** *caduceus* (kuh-D(Y)OO-see-us), the winged staff with two serpents coiled around it, carried by Hermes. The *caduceus* is the symbol of the medical profession.

### 28. NOSTRUM (NAHS-trum)

A quack remedy or medicine; a panacea; hence, a dubious or dishonest plan or scheme for curing a social or political problem.

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *noster*, meaning "our." *Nostrum* means literally "our remedy."

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### 29. PROPITIATE (pruh-PISH-ee-ayt)

To appease, gain or regain the goodwill or favor of, cause to become favorably inclined.

**Synonyms:** *conciliate, pacify, mollify, placate, assuage* (Level 2, Word 37).

**Antonyms:** *alienate, offend, antagonize, estrange, disaffect*.

**Corresponding noun:** *propitiation*, appeasement, conciliation, the act of getting into the good graces of.

**Related word:** *propitious*, favorable, marked by favorable conditions.

### 30. EFFICACY (EF-i-kuh-see)

Effectiveness; the power to produce a desired effect or result.

**Usage:** *Efficacy* applies to things that have the power to produce an intended effect: the *efficacy* of a drug, a scientific method, or an advertising campaign.

**Corresponding adjective:** *efficacious*, effective, capable of producing a desired effect or result (an *efficacious* law, policy, or marketing plan).

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## The Wonderful World of Eponyms

An *eponym* (EP-uh-nim) is a word derived from a name, or a name that becomes a word. The corresponding adjective is *eponymous* (i-PAHN-uh-mus).

At this point in the program there is a discussion of various eponyms, which notes those eponyms covered earlier in the program and explores the history of the following eponymous words: *sandwich, silhouette, maverick, Comstockery, and chauvinism*.

**Usage tip:** In precise usage, *chauvinism* means overzealous patriotism, and a *chauvinist* is a superpatriot, a person unreasonably and militantly devoted to his country. If you mean to describe a supercilious attitude of men toward women, say *male chauvinism*, and if you are talking about a man who treats women as inferior, say *male chauvinist*.

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### 31. TANTAMOUNT (TAN-tuh-mownt)

Equivalent; having equal force, effect, or value.

**Etymology and usage:** Anglo-French, "to amount to as much, be equal to"; ultimately from the Latin *tantus*, so much, so great. In modern usage, when one thing is *tantamount* to another, it amounts to as much as the other, adds up to the same thing.

**N.B.** Take care not to confuse *tantamount* and *paramount*, supreme in rank, preeminent.

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### 32. **PARIAH** (puh-RY-uh)

An outcast; a person despised or rejected by society.

**Etymology:** *Pariah* entered English in the early 1600s from Tamil, one of the languages of India. In the traditional social system of India, people were divided into classes called *castes* (pronounced like *casts*), and the *pariah* caste was one of the lowest on the social ladder. Its members worked chiefly as agricultural and domestic laborers and as servants to the British when India was a British colony. From this sense of social inferiority, the word *pariah* came to be used in English of any person despised or rejected by society, an outcast.

### 33. **GERMANE** (jur-MAYN)

Relevant, fitting, appropriate, precisely to the point.

**Synonyms:** *pertinent, suitable, applicable, apposite, apropos.*

**Antonyms:** *inappropriate, unsuitable, irrelevant, inapplicable, alien, extraneous, incongruous, malapropos.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *germane, apposite, pertinent, and relevant.*

### 34. **LICENTIOUS** (ly-SEN-shus)

Sexually abandoned; lacking moral restraint, especially in sexual conduct.

**Synonyms:** *lewd, loose, lustful, lecherous, lascivious, libertine, lickerish, libidinous, lubricious, bawdy, wanton, ribald, prurient, debauched, dissolute, salacious, concupiscent.*

**Antonyms:** *pure, chaste, virtuous.*

**Etymology, related word, and usage:** Latin *licentia*, freedom, leave, liberty, the source also of the English word *license*. By derivation *licentious* means taking license, and the word implies doing something one is not supposed to do, especially something sexually immoral.

### 35. **SUPERANNUATED** (SOO-pur-AN-yoo-ay-tid)

Retired because of age, weakness, or ineffective-ness; old and worn out; outdated, outmoded, obsolete.

**Synonyms:** *timeworn, antiquated, decrepit, passé, effete.*

**Etymology:** *Superannuated* combines the prefix *super-*, beyond, with the Latin *annum*, a year, and by derivation means beyond the useful years.

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### 36. EGREGIOUS (i-GREE-jus)

Conspicuously bad, remarkable or outstanding for some undesirable or offensive quality.

**Synonyms:** *flagrant, outrageous, excessive, shocking, gross, monstrous, notorious, grievous, arrant.*

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *egregius*, not of the common herd, and therefore select or outstanding. *Egregious* was once used to mean outstanding or remarkable, but this sense is long obsolete, and for at least three hundred years the word has most often been used to mean outstanding or remarkable in a bad way, conspicuously bad, offensive, or undesirable.

### 37. VAPID (rhymes with *rapid*)

Lifeless, dull, boring, flat, stale; lacking spirit, interest, or flavor.

**Synonyms:** *unsavory, insipid, unpalatable, trite, prosaic* (Level 4, Word 16), *pedestrian*, and *jejune* (Level 10, Word 1).

**Antonyms:** *lively, vigorous, vivid, animated, robust, vivacious, emphatic.*

**Etymology:** Latin *vapidus*, spiritless, spoiled, flat.

### 38. CROTCHET (KRAHTCH-it)

An odd notion or whim that one clings to stubbornly.

**Corresponding adjective:** *crotchety.*

**Etymology, related word, and usage:** *Crochet* comes from a Middle English word meaning a staff with a hook at the end. It is related to *crochet*, the form of needlework in which thread is looped with a hooked needle. In modern usage, a *crochet* is an odd notion or whim that hooks you or that you cling to stubbornly, as if with a hook.

### 39. EPIGRAPH (EP-i-graf)

An inscription; especially, an inscription on a building or monument, or a brief quotation at the beginning of a literary composition that suggests or is germane to its theme.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes an *epigraph* from an *epigram*, a short, witty poem or a short, pointed saying that displays terse wit or a clever twist of thought; and an *epitaph*, an inscription on a gravestone or tomb in memory of the person buried.

**Etymology:** *Epigraph* is formed from the prefix *epi-*, meaning "on" or "above," and the Greek verb *graphein*, to write.

**N.B.** Whenever you see a word containing *graph*, you can reasonably assume that it has something to do with writing.

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### 40. EXPATIATE (ek-SPAY-shee-ayt)

To elaborate, speak or write at great length.

**Synonyms:** *discourse, expound, descant.*

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *expatiari*, to wander. *Expatriate* suggests wandering at will over a subject.

### 41. SINECURE (SY-nuh-kyoor, also SIN-uh-kyoor)

A position that provides a good income or salary but that requires little or no work; in colloquial terms, a cushy job.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *beneficium sine cura*, "a benefice without cure." A *benefice* (BEN-uh-fis) is an endowed church position or office that provides a member of the clergy with a fixed income or guaranteed living. A "benefice without cure" means a paid position for a member of the clergy that does not require pastoral work—in other words, the curing of souls.

### 42. PREDILECTION (PRED-i-LEK-shin)

A preference, partiality, preconceived liking; an inclination or disposition to favor something.

**Synonyms:** *fondness, leaning, bias, prejudice, predisposition, affinity* (Level 4, Word 46), *penchant* (Level 3, Word 9), *propensity, proclivity.*

**Etymology:** French, from Medieval Latin *praediligere*, to prefer.

**Usage:** Unlike the words *bias* and *prejudice*, which are often used negatively, *predilection* has either a neutral or positive connotation and is used as a stronger synonym of *preference* and *partiality*.

### 43. IMBROGLIO (im-BROHL-yoh)

A complicated or intricate situation; a difficult, perplexing state of affairs; also, a misunderstanding or disagreement of a complicated and confusing nature.

**Synonyms:** *entanglement, embroilment, predicament, quandary.*

**N.B.** The unraveling of an *imbroglio* is a common plot in many plays, novels, and operas, but there are plenty of *imbroglios* in real life as well political *imbroglios*, financial *imbroglios*, marital *imbroglios*, and criminal *imbroglios*.

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### 44. **INEFFABLE** (in-EF-uh-buul)

Inexpressible, unable to be expressed or described in words.

**Synonyms:** *unutterable, unspeakable, indescribable.*

**Etymology:** Latin *ineffabilis*, unutterable, not able to be spoken.

**Usage:** *Ineffable* usually applies to good or pleasant things (*ineffable* beauty, *ineffable* joy), but it may occasionally apply to something unpleasant that is inexpressible (*ineffable* disgust).

### 45. **STOLID** (STAHL-id)

Not easily moved, aroused, or excited; showing little or no feeling or sensitivity; mentally or emotionally dull, insensitive, or obtuse.

**Synonyms:** *unemotional, unresponsive, sluggish, apathetic, impassive, indifferent, phlegmatic* (Level 9, Word 33).

**Etymology:** Latin *stolidus*, stupid, dull, unmoving.

**Usage:** Unlike *stoic* people, who display firmness of mind and character in their thick-skinned, unflinching indifference to pain and suffering, people who are *stolid* are not easily moved because they are oafs, dolts, louts, or half-wits. *Stolid* is sometimes also applied figuratively to behavior or things that are unresponsive, insensitive, or not easily moved (a *stolid* countenance or expression, a *stolid* bureaucracy, *stolid* opposition).

### 46. **OFFAL** (like awful, also AHF-ul)

Waste, garbage, refuse, rubbish.

**Etymology and usage:** Middle English, a combination of the words *off* and *fall*. Originally, *offal* applied to anything that fell off or was thrown off in the process of doing something. Since the early 1400s, offal has also been used of the waste parts removed in the process of butchering an animal. From that unsavory sense, the meaning of *offal* broadened to denote waste or garbage in general, anything thrown away as worthless.

### 47. **LISSOME** (LIS-um)

Limber, flexible, moving with ease and grace.

**Synonyms:** *nimble, agile, supple, lithe.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *lissome*, *lithe*, and *limber*.

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### 48. MELLIFLUOUS (me-LIF-loo-us)

Flowing smoothly and sweetly, like honey.

**Usage:** *Mellifluous* often applies to sounds or words, as a *mellifluous* voice, *mellifluous* music, a *mellifluous* speaker, *mellifluous* writing.

### 49. SURFEIT (SUR-fit)

To supply, fill, or feed to excess, especially to the point of discomfort, sickness, or disgust.

**Synonyms:** *sate* and *satiate*, which may mean either to fill or supply to satisfaction or to fill or supply beyond what is necessary or desired; also, *stuff*, *cram*, *glut*, *gorge*, *choke*, *inundate*, *cloy*.

**Corresponding noun:** *surfeit*, an excess or oversupply.

### 50. BLANDISHMENT (BLAN-dish-mint)

Flattering or coaxing speech or action; an ingratiating remark or gesture.

**Etymology:** Latin *blandiri*, to flatter, caress, coax, from *blandus*, flattering, fondling, caressing. By derivation, *blandishment* means speech or action that flatters, fondles, coaxes, or caresses in an attempt to win over or persuade a person.

**Usage:** The word is usually employed in its plural form, *blandishments*. Unlike flattery, which is generally perceived as self-serving, blandishments are not necessarily insincere. They may be expressions of honest affection, kindness, or desire.

**Corresponding verb:** *blandish*, to coax with flattering or ingratiating statements or actions.



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Level Eight concludes with a discussion of the following commonly mispronounced words:

- *query*: KWEER-ee, not KWER-ee or KWAIR-ee.
- *consul* and *consulate*: KAHN-suul and KAHN-suh-lit, not KOWN-suul and KOWN-suh-lit.
- *library*: LY-brer-ee, not LY-ber-ee. There is no *berry* in *library*. Be sure to pronounce the r in the middle of the word.
- *irrelevant*: Be careful not to transpose the L and V and say *irrevalant*. The proper pronunciation is I-REL-uh-vĭnt.
- *jewelry*: Don't transpose the L and the E in the second syllable and say *joo-luh-ree*; there is no *joola* in *jewelry*. To get it right, just say the word *jewel* and then add *-ree*. (In linguistics this transposition of letters and sounds in a word is called *metathesis*.)
- *grievous*: Don't say GREE-vee-us, as if the word were spelled *grievious*. The proper pronunciation has two, not three, syllables: GREE-vus.
- *pronunciation, mispronunciation*: Don't say *pronounciation* or *mispronounciation*. There is no *noun* and no *pronoun* in *pronunciation* and *mispronunciation*. And there are also no such verbs as *pronounciate* and *mispronounciate*. Be sure to put a *nun* in your *pronunciation* (and even in your *mispronunciation*).
- *siege, refuge, refugee*: In these words, the G should sound like the G in *cage* and *regiment*, not like the G in *collage*. Don't say SEEZH, REF-yoozh, and ref-yoo-ZHEE; say SEEJ, REF-yooj, and ref-yoo-JEE (or REF-yoo-jee).
- *succinct, flaccid, accident, accept, eccentric, succeed, success, accessory*: The rule for pronouncing double C in a word says that the first C sounds like K, the second like S; together they create the sound of KS, as in the name *Jackson*.
- *juror, vendor, defendant*: Don't overpronounce these words JOOR-or, VEN-dor, and dee-FEN-dant. Use the natural, everyday pronunciations most educated people use: JOOR-ur, VEN-dur, dĭ-FEN-dĭnt.
- *forte*: When you use this word to mean a strong point, specialty, say FORT (one syllable, like *fort*), not FOR-tay, or worse, for-TAY. The musical direction meaning "loud" is pronounced FOR-tay.

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