

VERBAL ADVANTAGE

Level II

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Verbal Advantage Level Two

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. ADVOCATE (AD-vuh-kayt)

To support, plead for, be in favor of, defend by argument; especially, to speak or write in favor or in defense of a person or cause.

Synonyms: *champion, endorse, espouse.*

Corresponding noun: *advocate*, a supporter or defender of a cause, a champion, or a person who speaks for another.

Related words (from the Latin *vocare*, to call, summon): *vocation; avocation; vocational; vocal; convoke*, to call together; *convocation*, the act of calling together, or a group that has been summoned; *evoke*, to call out, call forth; and *evocative*, calling forth a response, especially an emotional one.

2. DELEGATE (DEL-uh-gayt)

To entrust with authority or power, deliver to another's care or management, hand over to an agent or representative.

3. UNPRECEDENTED (uhn-PRES-uh-den-tid)

Unheard-of, novel, new, having no precedent or parallel, having no prior example or justification.

4. POIGNANT (POYN-yint)

Piercing, sharp, penetrating; specifically, piercing or penetrating to the senses, to the emotions, or to the intellect.

Synonyms: *biting, cutting, keen, acute.*

Related words (from the Latin *pungere*, to pierce or prick): *puncture; pungent*, piercing to the smell or taste; *expunge*, to punch out, erase, delete.

5. NEBULOUS (NEB-yuu-lus)

Unclear, vague, obscure, hazy, indefinite, indistinct.

Related word: *nebula*, a cloudy mass of dust or gas visible between stars in space (plural, *nebulae*).

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6. CLANDESTINE (klan-DES-tin)

Kept secret, done in secrecy, especially for an evil, immoral, or illegal purpose.

Synonyms: *private, concealed, covert, underhand, sly, stealthy, furtive, surreptitious.*

Pronunciation tip: Avoid the recent variants klanDES-tyn, klan-DES-teen, KLAN-des-tyn, and KLAN-des-teen. The traditional and preferred pronunciation is klan-DES-tin.

7. TIRADE (TY-rayd or ty-RAYD)

A long-drawn-out speech, especially a vehement and abusive one.

Additional useful words: *protracted*, drawn out to great length (see Level 3, Word 25); *vituperative*, full of harsh, abusive language; *ensorious*, tending to *ensor*, to blame or condemn.

8. RECUR (ri-KUR or nee-KUR)

To happen again, occur again, especially at intervals or after some lapse of time.

N.B. This discussion explains the distinction between the verbs *recur* and *reoccur*.

9. TACIT (TAS-it)

Unspoken, silent, implied or understood without words, done or made in silence, not expressed or declared openly.

Related word: *taciturn* (Level 3, Word 2).

10. ALLEGATION (AL-uh-GAY-shin)

An assertion or declaration, especially one made without proof. In law, an *allegation* is an assertion of what one intends to prove.

11. GULLIBLE (GUHL-uh-buul)

Easily deceived, fooled, or cheated.

Synonym: *credulous*.

Related words: *gull* and *dupe*, which both mean to fool, cheat, deceive, take advantage of.

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12. **BENIGN** (buh-NYN, rhymes with a *sign*)

- (1) Kindly, good-natured, gracious, mild, having or showing a gentle disposition.
- (2) Favorable, positive, propitious.
- (3) Of the weather or climate, healthful, beneficial, wholesome, salubrious.
- (4) In medicine: mild, not deadly, or severe.

13. **PERIPHERAL** (puh-RIF-uh-rul)

External, outer, lying at or forming the outside or boundary of something; hence, not essential, irrelevant.

14. **REBUFF** (ri-BUF or ree-BUF)

To refuse bluntly, reject sharply, turn down abruptly, snub, spurn.

Corresponding noun: *rebuff*, an abrupt refusal or rejection.

15. **ANIMOSITY** (AN-i-MAH-si-tee)

Ill will, hostility, antagonism, strong dislike or hatred.

Synonyms: malice, *aversion*, *malevolence*, *antipathy*, rancor, *enmity*.

16. **TENUOUS** (TEN-yoo-us)

Thin, slender, slight, flimsy, weak, not dense or substantial, lacking a strong basis, having little substance or strength.

17. **COMPLACENT** (kum-PLAY-sint)

Self-satisfied, smug, overly pleased with oneself.

Usage tip: Take care to distinguish between *complacent* and *complaisant*, which is pronounced kum-PLAY-zint and means inclined to please, gracious, obliging, courteous, affable, and urbane (Level 1, Word 45).

18. **ACME** (AK-mee)

The peak, highest point, especially the point of culmination, the highest possible point in the development or progress of something.

Synonyms: *summit*, *zenith*.

Corresponding adjective: *acmatic*.

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19. **DEFUNCT** (dĭ-FUNGKT or dee-FUNGKT)

Dead, extinct, obsolete; no longer in existence, effect, operation, or use.

20. **ABET** (uh-BET)

To encourage, support, help, aid, promote, assist in achieving a purpose (either good or evil).

Usage tip: *Abet* is often used to mean assist in wrongdoing, as in the legal cliché "to aid and abet," but *abet* may also be used favorably to mean assist in achieving a good purpose.

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N.B. At this point in Level 2 there is a discussion of ending sentences with prepositions. Also noted is the **useful word** *debunk*, to expose as false, deceitful, or exaggerated.

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21. **HAGGARD** (HAG-urd)

Worn out, tired, drawn; wild-eyed and wasted, as from exhaustion, illness, or grief.

Synonyms: *gaunt, emaciated.*

22. **WAIVE** (like *wave*)

To relinquish voluntarily, give up, forgo; also, to postpone, defer, or dispense with.

23. **CARNAL** (KAHR-nŭl)

Bodily, pertaining to the flesh as opposed to the spirit.

Synonyms: *sensual, corporeal.*

Usage tip: *Carnal* is used of basic physical appetites.

24. **SANCTION** (SANGK-shin, be sure to pronounce the C)

To approve, allow, permit, authorize, certify, ratify.

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25. **AMBIGUOUS** (am-BIG-yoo-us)

Uncertain, unclear, doubtful, dubious, questionable, puzzling, having an obscure or indefinite meaning.

Synonyms: *enigmatic, cryptic, equivocal.*

Antonyms: *distinct, apparent, evident, conspicuous, manifest.*

26. **SPENDTHRIFT** (pronounced as spelled, stress *on spend*)

Wasteful, spending extravagantly or foolishly, squandering one's resources.

Synonyms: *improvident, prodigal, profligate*

27. **MOLLIFY** (MAH-li-fy)

To calm, soothe, soften in feeling or tone, make less harsh or severe.

Synonyms: *pacify, appease, assuage* (Level 2, Word 37).

Related word: *emollient* (adjective), softening, soothing, mollifying; (noun) a softening or soothing agent.

28. **UNEQUIVOCAL** (UHN-i-KWIV-uh-kul)

Clear and direct, definite, straightforward, certain; having a single, obvious meaning; capable of being interpreted in only one way.

Antonyms: *equivocal, ambiguous* (Level 2, Word 25).

Pronunciation tip: Many people mispronounce (and misspell) *unequivocal* as *unequivocable*. *Unequivocal* ends with *-vocal*, not *-vocale*. Take care to pronounce the word in five syllables: *un-e-qui-vo-cal*.

29. **MALLEABLE** (MAL-ee-uh-buul or MAL-yuhbuul)

Capable of being shaped, able to be molded or manipulated.

Synonyms: *adaptable, impressionable, tractable.*

Antonyms: *inflexible, unyielding, stubborn, adamant, obstinate, intransigent.*

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30. VERBOSE (vur-BOHS)

Wordy, having too many words, long-winded, full of verbiage.

Synonyms: *garrulous* (Level 4, Word 8), *loquacious*, *voluble* (Level 5, Word 1), *prolix* (Level 9, Word 1).

Corresponding noun: *verbosity*.

Related words (from the Latin *verbum*, word): *verbal*; *verbatim*, expressed in precisely the same words; *verbiage*, an excess or overabundance of words.

Additional useful word: *proffer*, to put forward for acceptance, present as a gift.

Pronunciation tip: *Carriage* and *marriage* have two syllables, but *verbiage* and *foliage* have three. Don't say VUR-bij and FOH-lij (or FOY-lij). Take care to pronounce these words in three syllables: VUR-bee-ij and FOH-lee-ij.

N.B. This discussion concludes with a "Word to the Wise" on the proper distinction between *oral* and *verbal*.

31. TRANSIENT (TRAN-shint)

Temporary, passing away with time, lasting or staying only a short while, momentary, fleeting, short-lived.

Synonyms: *transitory*, *evanescent*, *ephemeral* (Level 4, Word 12), *fugitive*, *fugacious*.

Antonyms: *permanent*, *timeless*, *eternal*, *everlasting*.

Pronunciation tip: Pronounce *transient* in two syllables, with the same *sh* sound as in *ancient*. Also, in the words *short-lived* and *long-lived*, the second half, *-lived*, does not come from the verb to *live* but from the noun *life* plus the suffix *-ed*. Therefore the preferred pronunciation for the *I* is long, as in the adjective *alive*.

32. NETTLE (NET'l)

To irritate, annoy, vex, harass, pester, provoke.

33. REPUDIATE (ri-PYOO-dee-ayt)

(1) To reject, cast off, disown, renounce, refuse to accept as one's own.

(2) To reject as false, deny the authority of, refuse to accept as true.

34. IMPETUOUS (im-PETCH-oo-us)

Hasty, rash, overeager; acting in a sudden, vigorous, emotional way, with little thought.

Synonyms: *impulsive*.

Antonyms: *prudent* (Level 1, Word 47), *discreet*, *circumspect* (Level 3, Word 21).

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35. FRUGAL (FROG-gul)

Spending carefully and wisely; also, involving little expense, not wasteful or lavish.

Synonyms: thrifty, economical, provident, parsimonious.

36. INCONGRUOUS (in-KAHNG-groo-us)

Out of place, inappropriate, inconsistent, unsuitable, lacking harmony of parts or agreement in character.

Related words: congruous and congruent, which both mean coming together harmoniously, fitting in consistently.

37. ASSUAGE (uh-SWAYJ)

To relieve, ease, make less severe or intense; also, to satisfy, appease, make content.

Synonyms: allay, mollify (Level 2, Word 27), mitigate.

Pronunciation tip: Don't pronounce the G in assuage like the G in garage or the Z in azure. In assuage, the A is long (as in day) and the G is pronounced like J: uh-SWAYJ.

38. CORROBORATE (kuh-RAHB-uh-rayt)

To confirm, support, make more certain or believable, strengthen by providing additional evidence or proof.

Synonyms: *authenticate, verify, substantiate.*

39. EMBELLISH (em-BEL-ish)

To decorate, dress up, adorn, enhance with ornamentation, make more beautiful, elegant, or interesting.

Corresponding noun: *embellishment*, an ornament, decoration.

40. AVARICIOUS (AV-uh-RISH-us)

Greedy, money-grubbing, miserly, consumed with a selfish desire to accumulate money or property.

Synonyms: *covetous, mercenary* (Level 3, Word 14).

Corresponding noun: *avarice*, greed, an inordinate desire for wealth.

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N.B. At this point in Level 2 there is a discussion of the distinction between *sensual* and *sensuous* and the proper use of the verb *comprise*.

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41. **CURSORY** (KUR-suh-ree or KUR-sur-ee)

Quick, hasty, not methodical, done rapidly with little attention to detail, passing quickly over or through something that deserves closer examination.

Synonyms: *hurried, haphazard, slapdash, superficial.*

Antonyms: *thorough, careful, scrupulous, exhaustive, prolonged, protracted.*

Related words (from the Latin *currere*, to run): *course, curriculum, courier.*

42. **VACILLATE** (VAS-i-layt)

To waver, fluctuate, be indecisive, show uncertainty, hesitate in making up one's mind.

43. **CLEMENT** (KLEM-int)

(1) Mild, calm, tranquil, moderate, temperate, not severe or extreme.

(2) Merciful, lenient, inclined to pardon or forgive.

Corresponding noun: *clemency.*

44. **LUCRATIVE** (LOO-kruh-tiv)

Profitable, producing wealth, money-making, financially productive, remunerative.

Related word: *lucre* (LOO-kur), money, profit, especially tainted money, ill-gotten gains (as in the cliché "filthy lucre").

45. **ALLOCATE** (AL-uh-kayt or AL-oh-kayt)

To assign, designate, earmark, set aside for a specific purpose.

46. **RECONCILE** (REK-un-syl or rek-un-SYL)

(1) To make friendly again, restore friendly relations between, settle, resolve, bring into harmony or agreement.

(2) To bring into agreement, make consistent.

(3) To resign oneself to accept something undesirable.

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47. **PARAGON** (PAR-uh-gahn)

A model of excellence, perfect example.

48. **ANALOGOUS** (uh-NAL-uh-gus)

Similar, alike in certain ways, corresponding partially, sharing some aspects of form, function, or content.

Synonyms: *akin, comparable.*

Related word: *analogy*, a partial similarity, likeness, or resemblance that allows for a comparison between things.

49. **DIURNAL** (dy-URN-'l)

(1) Daily, recurring each day, performed or happening in the course of a day.

(2) Active during the day, as opposed to *nocturnal*, active at night.

50. **PRETEXT** (PREE-tekst)

An excuse, ostensible reason or motive, professed purpose; specifically, an excuse or false reason given to hide the true reason or purpose.