

Advanced IELTS Vocabulary: 400 Words and Phrases

Arguments, evidence and interpretation

1. Advocate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To publicly support a particular policy, idea or course of action.

Use it accurately: Use advocate + noun or -ing form; avoid advocate to do something.

Useful combinations: advocate reform; advocate investing in education.

Sample sentence: Rather than banning cars altogether, I would advocate improving public transport so that residents have a practical alternative.

2. Assumption

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Something accepted as true without being fully established.

Use it accurately: An assumption needs examination; it is not the same as a demonstrated fact.

Useful combinations: underlying assumption; challenge an assumption.

Sample sentence: The proposal rests on the assumption that every household has reliable internet access, which may exclude some residents.

3. Ambiguous

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Open to more than one reasonable interpretation.

Use it accurately: Use it for unclear wording or meaning, rather than simply for a difficult topic.

Useful combinations: ambiguous wording; an ambiguous statement.

Sample sentence: The survey question was ambiguous because it did not distinguish between working from home occasionally and doing so every day.

4. Biased

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Unfairly influenced by a preference for one side.

Use it accurately: Say biased towards or against someone; explain the source of the imbalance.

Useful combinations: biased reporting; a biased sample.

Sample sentence: A survey conducted only among university students may produce a biased picture of the population's transport needs.

5. Coherent

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Clear and logically connected so that the whole makes sense.

Use it accurately: It describes how ideas fit together, not merely whether every sentence is grammatical.

Useful combinations: a coherent argument; a coherent strategy.

Sample sentence: A coherent housing strategy should connect new construction with transport, schools and access to local services.

6. Consensus

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Broad agreement within a group.

Use it accurately: Use consensus on an issue or among people; agreement need not mean every person holds an identical view.

Useful combinations: reach a consensus; broad consensus.

Sample sentence: Although residents disagreed about the design, they reached a consensus on the need for a safer pedestrian crossing.

7. Debatable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Not settled and reasonably open to disagreement.

Use it accurately: Use it when a claim can be questioned, not merely because a subject attracts discussion.

Useful combinations: highly debatable; a debatable claim.

Sample sentence: Whether longer school days improve learning is debatable, particularly when the quality of teaching remains unchanged.

8. Deduce

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To reach a conclusion by reasoning from available information.

Use it accurately: The common pattern is deduce something from evidence; do not present an unsupported guess as a deduction.

Useful combinations: deduce from; deduce that.

Sample sentence: From the repeated references to travel costs, we can deduce that affordability was a major concern for the participants.

9. Discern

verb; formal

Meaning: To notice or recognise something that is not immediately obvious.

Use it accurately: Use discern a pattern or discern a difference; it suggests careful observation.

Useful combinations: discern a trend; discern a distinction.

Sample sentence: With only two months of figures, it is difficult to discern a reliable pattern in customer demand.

10. Interpret

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To explain or understand what information or behaviour means.

Use it accurately: Interpretation can vary; distinguish the observed information from your explanation of it.

Useful combinations: interpret findings; interpret as.

Sample sentence: The fall in attendance could be interpreted as dissatisfaction, but changes to the timetable may offer another explanation.

11. Nuance

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A small but meaningful difference in meaning, feeling or judgement.

Use it accurately: Often plural when discussing several subtle distinctions; nuanced is the related adjective.

Useful combinations: a subtle nuance; capture the nuances.

Sample sentence: A simple yes-or-no question may miss the nuances of people's attitudes towards working from home.

12. Postulate

verb; formal; research contexts

Meaning: To propose an idea as a starting point for reasoning.

Use it accurately: Postulate that introduces a proposed explanation; it does not show that the explanation has been proved.

Useful combinations: postulate a relationship; postulate that.

Sample sentence: The researchers postulate that greater control over working hours could influence employees' willingness to remain with a company.

13. Qualitative

adjective; formal; research contexts

Meaning: Concerned with descriptions, experiences or characteristics rather than numerical measurement.

Use it accurately: Qualitative does not mean high-quality; contrast it with quantitative when describing methods.

Useful combinations: qualitative research; qualitative interviews.

Sample sentence: Qualitative interviews can explore why residents avoid a service, while a survey can estimate how many do so.

14. Salient

adjective; formal

Meaning: Especially noticeable or relevant to the matter being discussed.

Use it accurately: Select genuinely important features; do not use it as a decorative replacement for every adjective.

Useful combinations: salient features; a salient point.

Sample sentence: The most salient difference between the proposals is how they address the needs of residents without cars.

15. Valid

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Reasonable or well supported in the context being discussed.

Use it accurately: Here it concerns an argument; valid can also mean legally acceptable or currently usable.

Useful combinations: a valid argument; a valid concern.

Sample sentence: Parents have a valid concern about travel time, even if they support the school's wider educational aims.

16. Empirical

adjective; formal; research contexts

Meaning: Based on observation or experience rather than theory alone.

Use it accurately: Use it for evidence collected through observation or investigation, not as a synonym for convincing.

Useful combinations: empirical evidence; empirical research.

Sample sentence: The policy needs empirical evidence from comparable communities before its likely benefits can be assessed with confidence.

17. Substantiate

verb; formal

Meaning: To support a claim with convincing evidence or detail.

Use it accurately: Substantiate a claim directly; avoid substantiate about a claim.

Useful combinations: substantiate an allegation; substantiate a claim.

Sample sentence: The company should substantiate its environmental claims with clear information about how the figures were calculated.

18. Corroborate

verb; formal

Meaning: To support an account with additional, independent information.

Use it accurately: Corroboration strengthens a claim but does not automatically remove every uncertainty.

Useful combinations: corroborate findings; corroborating evidence.

Sample sentence: Interviews with local shopkeepers could corroborate the council's findings about changes in visitor numbers.

19. Premise

noun; formal

Meaning: An idea on which an argument or proposal is based.

Use it accurately: Distinguish the starting premise from the conclusion reached through it.

Useful combinations: a central premise; a flawed premise.

Sample sentence: The central premise of the plan is that residents will use the new service if it is convenient and affordable.

20. Refute

verb; formal

Meaning: To show through evidence or reasoning that a claim is wrong.

Use it accurately: Refute is stronger than disagree with or deny; use it only when the claim has been answered convincingly.

Useful combinations: refute an argument; refute a claim.

Sample sentence: A single example cannot refute the entire argument unless the original claim allows no exceptions.



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Causes, consequences and solutions

21. Attribute

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To identify something as a cause or source of a result.

Use it accurately: Use attribute a result to a cause; the noun attribution refers to making this connection.

Useful combinations: attribute success to; be attributed to.

Sample sentence: It would be misleading to attribute the rise in sales entirely to advertising when prices also fell.

22. Ascribe

verb; formal

Meaning: To explain something by assigning it to a particular cause or source.

Use it accurately: Use ascribe something to something; attribute is often a more familiar alternative.

Useful combinations: ascribe importance to; ascribe a change to.

Sample sentence: Some commentators ascribe the decline in participation to cost, although the inconvenient location may also play a role.

23. Consequence

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A result of an action or situation.

Use it accurately: Consequences can be positive or negative; name the actual result instead of assuming it is harmful.

Useful combinations: unintended consequences; a consequence of.

Sample sentence: An unintended consequence of closing the local branch could be longer journeys for customers who cannot use online services.

24. Engender

verb; formal

Meaning: To cause a feeling, condition or situation to develop.

Use it accurately: Useful with trust, resentment or uncertainty; cause or create may sound more natural in casual speech.

Useful combinations: engender trust; engender resentment.

Sample sentence: A decision made without consultation can engender resentment even when its intended benefits are substantial.

25. Mechanism

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A process or arrangement through which something happens.

Use it accurately: Explain how the mechanism works; the word alone does not establish a causal relationship.

Useful combinations: a feedback mechanism; a coping mechanism.

Sample sentence: Regular staff meetings provide a mechanism through which small problems can be raised before they become more serious.

26. Reinforce

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To make an idea, behaviour or structure stronger.

Use it accurately: It can describe beneficial learning or harmful stereotypes; identify what is strengthened.

Useful combinations: reinforce learning; reinforce a stereotype.

Sample sentence: Examples drawn from several communities can reinforce the argument without suggesting that every group has the same experience.

27. Stimulate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To encourage activity, interest or growth.

Use it accurately: Use stimulate + object; it describes encouragement rather than a guaranteed outcome.

Useful combinations: stimulate demand; stimulate discussion.

Sample sentence: A carefully chosen question can stimulate discussion by encouraging students to examine assumptions they have previously accepted.

28. Negate

verb; formal

Meaning: To cancel an effect or make something ineffective.

Use it accurately: Stronger than reduce; reserve it for an effect that is cancelled or substantially invalidated.

Useful combinations: negate the benefits; negate an argument.

Sample sentence: Excessive administrative costs could negate the savings that the new system was intended to deliver.

29. Panacea

noun; formal; usually critical

Meaning: A supposed solution to every difficulty in a situation.

Use it accurately: Often used negatively: not a panacea for; it warns against treating one measure as a complete answer.

Useful combinations: a panacea for; no panacea.

Sample sentence: Online learning is not a panacea for educational inequality, especially when students have unequal access to devices and support.

30. Intractable

adjective; formal

Meaning: Very difficult to manage, solve or change.

Use it accurately: Stronger than difficult; explain why the problem resists ordinary solutions.

Useful combinations: an intractable problem; an intractable dispute.

Sample sentence: Housing shortages can become intractable when rising demand, limited land and weak infrastructure reinforce one another.

31. Exacerbate

verb; formal

Meaning: To make an existing problem or harmful condition worse.

Use it accurately: It normally describes a negative situation; do not use it for creating a benefit.

Useful combinations: exacerbate inequality; exacerbate a shortage.

Sample sentence: Removing evening bus services could exacerbate isolation among residents who do not have access to a car.

32. Mitigate

verb; formal

Meaning: To reduce the seriousness or harmful effects of something.

Use it accurately: Mitigate a risk or impact directly; it does not mean eliminate the problem completely.

Useful combinations: mitigate risks; mitigate the impact.

Sample sentence: Providing temporary accommodation may mitigate the disruption caused by renovation, although residents will still face inconvenience.

33. Alleviate

verb; formal

Meaning: To make suffering, pressure or a problem less severe.

Use it accurately: Common with hardship, congestion and pressure; it usually means partial relief rather than a permanent cure.

Useful combinations: alleviate hardship; alleviate pressure.

Sample sentence: Additional evening classes could alleviate pressure on the daytime timetable and give working adults more choice.

34. Undermine

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To weaken something, often gradually or indirectly.

Use it accurately: Common with trust, confidence and effectiveness; identify the mechanism if you are making an argument.

Useful combinations: undermine confidence; undermine credibility.

Sample sentence: Publishing claims without explaining their limitations can undermine public confidence when later evidence changes the picture.

35. Facilitate

verb; formal

Meaning: To make a process or action easier.

Use it accurately: Use facilitate discussion or facilitate learning, not facilitate someone to do something.

Useful combinations: facilitate access; facilitate cooperation.

Sample sentence: Clear information in several languages can facilitate access to services for residents who are unfamiliar with local procedures.

36. Conducive

adjective; formal

Meaning: Helping to create conditions in which something can happen.

Use it accurately: The pattern is conducive to + noun or -ing form, not conducive for.

Useful combinations: conducive to learning; conducive to cooperation.

Sample sentence: A quiet room may be conducive to concentrated study, but students also need opportunities to exchange ideas.

37. Implication

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A possible effect or meaning suggested by a situation.

Use it accurately: Distinguish a likely future implication from a consequence that has already occurred.

Useful combinations: long-term implications; implications for.

Sample sentence: Moving applications online has implications for older residents who may depend on face-to-face assistance.

38. Ramification

noun; formal; often plural

Meaning: An additional or less obvious consequence of a decision.

Use it accurately: Usually used as ramifications of or for, often for a complicated set of effects.

Useful combinations: wider ramifications; financial ramifications.

Sample sentence: The closure could have wider ramifications for nearby shops that depend on customers visiting the market.

39. Intervention

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: An action intended to influence or improve a situation.

Use it accurately: Name the action and its purpose; the word itself does not imply that it will succeed.

Useful combinations: early intervention; policy intervention.

Sample sentence: Any intervention designed to improve attendance should begin by identifying why students are missing classes.

40. Root cause

noun phrase; neutral to formal

Meaning: A fundamental reason that produces a problem.

Use it accurately: Distinguish root causes from visible symptoms; complex problems may have several underlying causes.

Useful combinations: address a root cause; identify the root cause.

Sample sentence: Reducing ticket prices may help, but unreliable services could remain the root cause of low passenger numbers.

Change, trends and degree

41. Accelerate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To increase speed or make a process happen faster.

Use it accurately: It can be transitive or intransitive: accelerate growth or growth accelerates.

Useful combinations: accelerate development; accelerate the transition.

Sample sentence: Investment in reliable charging facilities could accelerate the transition to electric vehicles in areas where access is limited.

42. Accumulate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To collect or build up over time.

Use it accurately: Use it for resources, experience, evidence or waste; it does not imply a sudden increase.

Useful combinations: accumulate evidence; accumulate debt.

Sample sentence: Small delays can accumulate across a long journey, making a seemingly short connection unreliable.

43. Cumulative

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Increasing through the addition of successive amounts or effects.

Use it accurately: Distinguish the combined effect over time from the effect of one event.

Useful combinations: a cumulative effect; cumulative costs.

Sample sentence: The cumulative cost of several small subscriptions can be difficult to notice until a household reviews its spending.

44. Diminish

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To become smaller or make something less important or effective.

Use it accurately: It can describe quantity or strength; choose the object carefully.

Useful combinations: diminish confidence; diminish over time.

Sample sentence: The appeal of a low-cost service may diminish if customers repeatedly encounter unexpected additional charges.

45. Erratic

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Changing unpredictably or lacking a regular pattern.

Use it accurately: It is not simply a synonym for fast or frequent; the irregularity is central.

Useful combinations: erratic demand; erratic behaviour.

Sample sentence: Erratic delivery times make it difficult for small businesses to plan production and keep customers informed.

46. Plateau

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To stop increasing after a period of growth and remain fairly steady.

Use it accurately: Say plateau at a level; in a chart, use it only when a stable period is visible.

Useful combinations: plateau at; reach a plateau.

Sample sentence: In the illustrative dataset, enrolment rose for three years and then plateaued at around 800 students.

47. Proliferation

noun; formal

Meaning: A rapid increase in the number of something.

Use it accurately: Often followed by of; use it for multiplying items rather than any small rise.

Useful combinations: the proliferation of apps; rapid proliferation.

Sample sentence: The proliferation of subscription services gives consumers more choice but can make total spending harder to track.

48. Sporadic

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Occurring occasionally and without a regular pattern.

Use it accurately: It concerns frequency, whereas erratic can describe broader unpredictability.

Useful combinations: sporadic attendance; sporadic interruptions.

Sample sentence: Sporadic internet interruptions are particularly frustrating when students need to participate in a live discussion.

49. Volatile

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Liable to change quickly and unpredictably.

Use it accurately: Useful for markets, prices or situations; it does not simply mean high.

Useful combinations: volatile prices; a volatile market.

Sample sentence: Small firms may struggle to plan ahead when the prices of essential materials are highly volatile.

50. Provisional

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Temporary and subject to later confirmation or change.

Use it accurately: Label estimates or arrangements as provisional when they have not been finalised.

Useful combinations: provisional figures; a provisional agreement.

Sample sentence: The council released provisional figures and explained that the final totals would follow after the remaining surveys were checked.

51. Fluctuate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To rise and fall rather than move in one steady direction.

Use it accurately: Use fluctuate between two values or around a level; it is normally intransitive.

Useful combinations: fluctuate between; fluctuate considerably.

Sample sentence: In the practice chart, monthly demand fluctuated between 200 and 260 units without a clear upward trend.

52. Stagnate

verb; neutral to formal; usually negative

Meaning: To stop developing or growing.

Use it accurately: It suggests an undesirable lack of progress; remain stable is more neutral in a data report.

Useful combinations: wages stagnate; economic stagnation.

Sample sentence: If opportunities for training disappear, employees may feel that their professional development is beginning to stagnate.

53. Stabilise

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To become steady or make something steadier after change.

Use it accurately: British spelling is stabilise; stabilize is also standard, especially in American English.

Useful combinations: stabilise prices; stabilise at.

Sample sentence: After several sharp fluctuations, the figures in the example stabilised at approximately 45 deliveries per day.

54. Surge

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To increase suddenly and substantially.

Use it accurately: Use surge in demand as a noun phrase or demand surged as a verb pattern.

Useful combinations: surge in demand; surge sharply.

Sample sentence: Demand for the new evening class surged after the college introduced a timetable suitable for working parents.

55. Plummet

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To fall very rapidly and by a large amount.

Use it accurately: Too strong for a small decline; do not use it merely to avoid repeating fall.

Useful combinations: prices plummet; attendance plummets.

Sample sentence: In the hypothetical example, attendance plummeted from 500 visitors to fewer than 100 after the venue closed most of its rooms.

56. Negligible

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: So small that it has little practical importance in context.

Use it accurately: It does not mean exactly zero; explain what comparison makes the amount unimportant.

Useful combinations: a negligible effect; negligible costs.

Sample sentence: The saving per journey may appear negligible, but its value depends on how frequently the service is used.

57. Marginal

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Small in size or importance in the comparison being made.

Use it accurately: For trends, a marginal increase is slight; the word has other meanings in economics and social description.

Useful combinations: a marginal improvement; a marginal difference.

Sample sentence: The revised design produced only a marginal improvement in capacity, so the additional expense needs careful justification.

58. Substantial

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Large enough to be important or noticeable.

Use it accurately: There is no fixed percentage that always counts as substantial; judge the scale and context.

Useful combinations: a substantial increase; a substantial investment.

Sample sentence: A substantial investment in maintenance may be necessary before the old building can be used safely for public events.

59. Gradual

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Happening in small stages over time.

Use it accurately: Contrast gradual change with abrupt change; gradually is the adverb used with a verb.

Useful combinations: a gradual decline; a gradual transition.

Sample sentence: A gradual transition would give smaller businesses time to replace equipment without interrupting their usual operations.

60. Disproportionate

adjective; formal

Meaning: Too large or too small relative to another relevant amount.

Use it accurately: Use disproportionate to; identify the comparison rather than merely meaning large.

Useful combinations: a disproportionate burden; disproportionate effects.

Sample sentence: A flat application fee may place a disproportionate burden on people with very limited disposable income.



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Education and learning

61. Alumnus

noun; institutional contexts

Meaning: A former student of a school, college or university, traditionally a man.

Use it accurately: Alumni is a plural form; graduate or former student is often simpler and gender-neutral.

Useful combinations: a university alumnus; an alumni network.

Sample sentence: As an alumnus of the college, he returned to explain how the practical training had influenced his career choices.

62. Assimilate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To absorb new information and connect it with existing knowledge.

Use it accurately: This learning sense differs from assimilation into a culture; identify what is being absorbed.

Useful combinations: assimilate information; assimilate new ideas.

Sample sentence: Students need time to assimilate new concepts before they are expected to apply them in unfamiliar situations.

63. Diligent

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Showing steady care and effort in completing work.

Use it accurately: It describes working habits, not intelligence or guaranteed success.

Useful combinations: a diligent student; diligent preparation.

Sample sentence: She is a diligent student who reviews feedback carefully and changes her approach when a method is not working.

64. Erudite

adjective; formal; low priority for everyday use

Meaning: Having or showing extensive knowledge gained through study.

Use it accurately: More specific and more formal than intelligent; usually describes learned people or discussion.

Useful combinations: an erudite scholar; an erudite discussion.

Sample sentence: The lecturer was erudite, but what impressed me most was his ability to explain unfamiliar ideas without unnecessary jargon.

65. Novice

noun; neutral

Meaning: A person who is new to an activity and has little experience.

Use it accurately: Use a novice at something or novice + noun; beginner is a common alternative.

Useful combinations: a novice teacher; a complete novice.

Sample sentence: As a complete novice at coding, I found short practical exercises more helpful than lengthy explanations of advanced theory.

66. Procrastinate

verb; neutral

Meaning: To delay doing something that needs to be done.

Use it accurately: Usually intransitive; procrastinate over a task or avoid naming an object altogether.

Useful combinations: procrastinate over decisions; a tendency to procrastinate.

Sample sentence: I tend to procrastinate when an assignment feels overwhelming, so I divide it into small tasks with clear deadlines.

67. Attainment

noun; formal; education contexts

Meaning: The level of achievement reached, especially in education.

Use it accurately: Distinguish attainment, an achieved level, from attendance, being present.

Useful combinations: educational attainment; academic attainment.

Sample sentence: Educational attainment should be considered alongside access to resources when schools compare students' progress.

68. Curriculum

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The subjects and learning content included in a course of study.

Use it accurately: Use a curriculum for one programme; curricula and curriculums are plural forms.

Useful combinations: a broad curriculum; curriculum development.

Sample sentence: A broad curriculum can give students opportunities to discover interests that are not represented in their examination subjects.

69. Literacy

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The ability to read and write, or competence in a named field.

Use it accurately: Specify digital or financial literacy when you mean those particular abilities.

Useful combinations: adult literacy; digital literacy.

Sample sentence: Digital literacy involves judging the reliability of online information as well as knowing how to operate a device.

70. Numeracy

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The ability to understand and work with numbers in practical situations.

Use it accurately: Do not confuse it with advanced mathematics; everyday numerical understanding is central.

Useful combinations: basic numeracy; numeracy skills.

Sample sentence: Everyday tasks such as comparing prices and interpreting bills show why numeracy matters beyond the classroom.

71. Pedagogy

noun; formal; education contexts

Meaning: The methods and principles used in teaching.

Use it accurately: A specialist term; teaching methods may communicate the same idea more clearly to a general audience.

Useful combinations: effective pedagogy; language pedagogy.

Sample sentence: The course examined pedagogy through classroom examples rather than expecting trainees to memorise theories without applying them.

72. Retention

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The ability to keep information, people or something else over time.

Use it accurately: Name what is retained: knowledge retention and staff retention concern different processes.

Useful combinations: knowledge retention; student retention.

Sample sentence: Repeated opportunities to use new vocabulary can make retention a clearer learning goal than simply completing another word list.

73. Vocational

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Related to preparation for a particular occupation or type of work.

Use it accurately: Vocational training is not inherently less demanding than academic study; the emphasis is different.

Useful combinations: vocational training; vocational qualifications.

Sample sentence: Vocational courses should offer practical experience while also helping students adapt when workplace requirements change.

74. Tuition

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Teaching, particularly in a small group or for a specific subject.

Use it accurately: Tuition fees means payment for education; in American English tuition can itself refer to those charges.

Useful combinations: individual tuition; tuition fees.

Sample sentence: Individual tuition may help a learner address a specific weakness, but it still requires independent practice between lessons.

75. Aptitude

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A natural capacity to learn or perform a particular activity.

Use it accurately: Use an aptitude for + noun or -ing form; ability can also develop through experience.

Useful combinations: an aptitude for languages; demonstrate aptitude.

Sample sentence: An aptitude for languages may help at the beginning, but steady practice remains important when progress becomes less noticeable.

76. Cognitive

adjective; formal

Meaning: Related to thinking, understanding, remembering or other mental processes.

Use it accurately: Use it for mental functions; it is not a general synonym for intelligent.

Useful combinations: cognitive skills; cognitive development.

Sample sentence: The activities were designed to practise cognitive skills such as comparing information, identifying patterns and explaining decisions.

77. Autonomous

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Able to act or make decisions with some independence.

Use it accurately: An autonomous learner takes responsibility; the word does not mean working without any guidance.

Useful combinations: autonomous learning; an autonomous institution.

Sample sentence: Students become more autonomous when they can identify a weakness, choose a useful resource and judge whether it has helped.

78. Inquisitive

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Eager to ask questions and learn more.

Use it accurately: Usually positive in education, but it can suggest excessive curiosity about private matters in other contexts.

Useful combinations: an inquisitive learner; an inquisitive mind.

Sample sentence: An inquisitive student often asks why a rule works rather than accepting an example without examining it.

79. Comprehension

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Understanding the meaning of information.

Use it accurately: Comprehension goes beyond recognising individual words; reading and listening both require it.

Useful combinations: reading comprehension; check comprehension.

Sample sentence: To check comprehension, the teacher asked students to explain the writer's argument in their own words.

80. Formative

adjective; formal; education contexts

Meaning: Intended to guide improvement while learning is still taking place.

Use it accurately: Formative assessment provides feedback during learning; do not confuse it with a final judgement alone.

Useful combinations: formative assessment; formative feedback.

Sample sentence: Formative feedback is most useful when students have an opportunity to act on it before submitting their final work.

Work, business and money

81. Compensate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To make up for a loss, disadvantage or missing benefit.

Use it accurately: Use compensate someone for something or compensate for a disadvantage.

Useful combinations: compensate for delays; compensate customers.

Sample sentence: A lower price may not compensate for unreliable delivery when a business depends on receiving materials at a particular time.

82. Cumbersome

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Awkward to handle or unnecessarily complicated to use.

Use it accurately: It can describe a physical object or an administrative process; explain the inconvenience.

Useful combinations: a cumbersome procedure; a cumbersome system.

Sample sentence: The application process is so cumbersome that small firms may abandon it before they receive the support intended for them.

83. Exorbitant

adjective; neutral to formal; strongly negative

Meaning: Unreasonably high, especially in relation to prices or charges.

Use it accurately: Stronger and more judgemental than expensive; give context when making the criticism.

Useful combinations: exorbitant fees; exorbitant rents.

Sample sentence: Some students may reject an otherwise suitable course because the additional accommodation charges seem exorbitant.

84. Hierarchy

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: An arrangement in which people or things are ranked at different levels.

Use it accurately: Often used for organisations or priorities; a hierarchy is not necessarily unfair.

Useful combinations: a management hierarchy; a hierarchy of needs.

Sample sentence: A rigid management hierarchy can make it difficult for junior employees to raise concerns with the people making decisions.

85. Nominal

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Very small in amount, especially when describing a fee.

Use it accurately: This sense differs from nominal wages, which are not adjusted for inflation, and in name only.

Useful combinations: a nominal fee; a nominal charge.

Sample sentence: The museum charges a nominal fee for school visits so that cost is less likely to prevent participation.

86. Prohibitive

adjective; formal

Meaning: So high or difficult that it prevents or strongly discourages an action.

Use it accurately: Usually used for costs; it does not necessarily mean that the action is legally forbidden.

Useful combinations: prohibitive costs; prohibitively expensive.

Sample sentence: For a small community organisation, the cost of renting a central venue may be prohibitive even when demand is strong.

87. Procure

verb; formal

Meaning: To obtain something, often through a planned process or with effort.

Use it accurately: Common in institutional purchasing; obtain or buy is usually more natural in personal conversation.

Useful combinations: procure equipment; procure supplies.

Sample sentence: Schools should have enough time to procure suitable equipment rather than being required to spend their budgets at short notice.

88. Versatile

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Useful in several ways or capable of doing different tasks.

Use it accurately: Describe the range of uses; versatile does not simply mean high-quality.

Useful combinations: a versatile employee; versatile equipment.

Sample sentence: A versatile meeting room can accommodate workshops, interviews and community events without requiring extensive alterations.

89. Productivity

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The amount produced in relation to the resources or time used.

Use it accurately: It is not identical to working longer hours; output and efficiency need to be considered.

Useful combinations: improve productivity; labour productivity.

Sample sentence: Longer working hours do not necessarily improve productivity if employees spend more time correcting avoidable mistakes.

90. Remuneration

noun; formal; employment contexts

Meaning: Payment received for work or services.

Use it accurately: A formal alternative to pay; remuneration packages may include more than a basic salary.

Useful combinations: fair remuneration; a remuneration package.

Sample sentence: Fair remuneration matters, but opportunities to develop and a manageable workload can also influence whether employees stay.

91. Incentive

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Something that encourages a person or organisation to act.

Use it accurately: Use an incentive to do something; incentives can be financial or non-financial.

Useful combinations: financial incentives; an incentive to invest.

Sample sentence: A reduced membership fee could provide an incentive to join, although the service must still meet users' needs.

92. Expenditure

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Money spent on something, or the act of spending it.

Use it accurately: Usually expenditure on an item; do not treat it as synonymous with income.

Useful combinations: public expenditure; expenditure on training.

Sample sentence: Before increasing expenditure on advertising, the company should examine why existing customers are not returning.

93. Revenue

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Income received from sales, services or other regular sources.

Use it accurately: Revenue is not profit; costs have not necessarily been deducted.

Useful combinations: generate revenue; tax revenue.

Sample sentence: Higher sales revenue does not guarantee a healthier business if the cost of producing each item rises even faster.

94. Affluent

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Having considerable money and material resources.

Use it accurately: More specific than successful; avoid assuming all residents of an affluent area share the same circumstances.

Useful combinations: affluent households; an affluent neighbourhood.

Sample sentence: Services designed only around affluent households may overlook people who have less money but face the same essential needs.

95. Disposable income

noun phrase; economics contexts

Meaning: Income available after direct taxes have been paid.

Use it accurately: It is not the same as money left after every essential living expense.

Useful combinations: household disposable income; disposable income rises.

Sample sentence: An increase in disposable income may offer little relief if rent and other essential costs rise at the same time.

96. Entrepreneurship

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The activity of developing and running new business ventures.

Use it accurately: Use it for business creation and initiative, not for employment in any company.

Useful combinations: encourage entrepreneurship; support entrepreneurship.

Sample sentence: Support for entrepreneurship should include practical advice on planning and managing costs, not only encouragement to start a business.

97. Precarious

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Insecure and at risk of becoming worse or being lost.

Use it accurately: Useful for employment or finances; it implies vulnerability rather than simple inconvenience.

Useful combinations: precarious employment; a precarious position.

Sample sentence: Workers in precarious employment may find it difficult to plan childcare when their hours change at very short notice.

98. Credit

noun; finance contexts

Meaning: An arrangement that allows payment or borrowing now and repayment later.

Use it accurately: This financial sense differs from praise, academic credit and the verb credit someone with something.

Useful combinations: access to credit; buy on credit.

Sample sentence: Access to credit may help a small business purchase equipment, but the repayment terms must be manageable.

99. Automation

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The use of machines or software to perform tasks with less direct human input.

Use it accurately: Discuss which tasks are automated rather than assuming every job disappears.

Useful combinations: process automation; increased automation.

Sample sentence: Automation can change the tasks employees perform, making training an important part of any transition plan.

100. Workload

noun; neutral

Meaning: The amount of work a person or team is expected to complete.

Use it accurately: A heavy workload concerns quantity and demands; it does not automatically describe difficulty alone.

Useful combinations: a manageable workload; an excessive workload.

Sample sentence: A manageable workload allows employees to complete urgent tasks without repeatedly postponing training and longer-term planning.

101. Advent

noun; formal

Meaning: The arrival or beginning of an important development.

Use it accurately: Usually the advent of; reserve it for a notable development, not any ordinary arrival.

Useful combinations: the advent of smartphones; the advent of a technology.

Sample sentence: The advent of online booking changed how travellers compare options, but it did not remove the need for reliable customer support.

102. Compatible

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Able to work or exist together without conflict.

Use it accurately: Use compatible with; it can describe technology, schedules, values or goals.

Useful combinations: compatible software; compatible with existing systems.

Sample sentence: New software should be compatible with the systems staff already use, otherwise a useful upgrade may create additional work.

103. Incompatible

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Unable to work together or inconsistent with something else.

Use it accurately: Use incompatible with, not incompatible to; it expresses a conflict, not merely a difference.

Useful combinations: incompatible formats; incompatible goals.

Sample sentence: A policy requiring everyone to attend late meetings may be incompatible with the organisation's stated commitment to flexible working.

104. Obsolete

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: No longer used or useful because something newer has replaced it.

Use it accurately: Old does not automatically mean obsolete; some older tools remain effective.

Useful combinations: obsolete equipment; become obsolete.

Sample sentence: Training should develop transferable skills so that employees are not dependent on a single system that may become obsolete.

105. Fabricate

verb; neutral to formal; negative in this sense

Meaning: To invent false information and present it as real.

Use it accurately: This dishonest sense differs from manufacturing an object; state which sense you mean.

Useful combinations: fabricate evidence; fabricate a story.

Sample sentence: A researcher who fabricates results damages the credibility of the study regardless of how convincing the final report appears.

106. Manipulate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To control or alter something, sometimes to gain an unfair advantage.

Use it accurately: It can be neutral for operating tools, but manipulating people or evidence usually sounds negative.

Useful combinations: manipulate data; manipulate public opinion.

Sample sentence: Presenting only favourable figures can manipulate the reader's impression even when each individual figure is technically accurate.

107. Innovation

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A new idea, method or product, or the introduction of such changes.

Use it accurately: Innovation is not automatically beneficial; its usefulness depends on what problem it addresses.

Useful combinations: technological innovation; encourage innovation.

Sample sentence: Innovation is valuable when it solves a real problem rather than adding complexity to a process that already works well.

108. Digital divide

noun phrase; neutral to formal

Meaning: The gap between people with effective access to digital technology and those without it.

Use it accurately: Access includes skills and reliable connections, not merely ownership of a device.

Useful combinations: bridge the digital divide; widen the digital divide.

Sample sentence: A service that moves entirely online may widen the digital divide unless users can obtain both equipment and practical support.

109. Algorithm

noun; technology contexts

Meaning: A set of rules or steps used to solve a problem or process information.

Use it accurately: Do not use algorithm as a synonym for all software or for artificial intelligence in general.

Useful combinations: a search algorithm; an algorithm ranks results.

Sample sentence: The platform should explain which factors its algorithm considers when recommending content to different users.

110. Privacy

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Control over personal information and freedom from unwanted observation or intrusion.

Use it accurately: Distinguish privacy from security: information can be securely stored but still collected unnecessarily.

Useful combinations: protect privacy; privacy concerns.

Sample sentence: Convenient digital services should explain what information they collect and give users meaningful choices about their privacy.

111. Cybersecurity

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The protection of digital systems and information against unauthorised access or disruption.

Use it accurately: A specialist topic word; use it when discussing digital protection rather than safety in general.

Useful combinations: cybersecurity measures; cybersecurity training.

Sample sentence: Cybersecurity training should use clear examples so that employees understand the purpose of the procedures they are asked to follow.

112. Accessibility

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The extent to which something can be reached, understood or used by different people.

Use it accurately: Specify the barrier being removed, such as physical access, cost or design for disabled users.

Useful combinations: improve accessibility; website accessibility.

Sample sentence: Website accessibility should be considered from the start, so that people using different devices or assistive technologies can complete essential tasks.

113. Nascent

adjective; formal

Meaning: Only beginning to exist or develop.

Use it accurately: Useful for early-stage industries or movements; new is usually more natural in everyday conversation.

Useful combinations: a nascent industry; a nascent movement.

Sample sentence: A nascent technology may attract investment before its practical benefits and limitations are fully understood.

114. Scalability

noun; technical and business contexts

Meaning: The ability of a system to handle increased demand or size effectively.

Use it accurately: Specify what can grow and what performance must be maintained; it is not simply popularity.

Useful combinations: system scalability; assess scalability.

Sample sentence: The trial should examine scalability as well as initial performance, because a service for fifty users may face different demands from one serving thousands.

115. Robust

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Strong and able to remain effective under difficulty or scrutiny.

Use it accurately: For research, robust evidence withstands careful checking; the adjective does not replace an explanation of quality.

Useful combinations: robust evidence; a robust system.

Sample sentence: A robust evaluation should examine unsuccessful cases as well as the examples that support the programme's aims.

116. Reliable

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Consistently dependable or likely to provide accurate information.

Use it accurately: Reliable concerns dependability; it is not identical to valid, relevant or recent.

Useful combinations: a reliable source; reliable transport.

Sample sentence: A reliable source explains where its information comes from and makes it possible for readers to check important claims.

117. Replicate

verb; formal; research contexts

Meaning: To repeat a study, process or result in a sufficiently similar way.

Use it accurately: Replication examines whether a finding can be obtained again; it is more specific than repeating a sentence.

Useful combinations: replicate a study; replicate findings.

Sample sentence: Other researchers should be able to replicate the procedure using the information provided in the report.

118. Quantitative

adjective; formal; research contexts

Meaning: Concerned with numerical measurement and analysis.

Use it accurately: Contrast it with qualitative; numbers alone do not guarantee a well-designed investigation.

Useful combinations: quantitative data; quantitative analysis.

Sample sentence: Quantitative data can show how many residents use the service, while interviews can explore their reasons for doing so.

119. Hypothesis

noun; formal; research contexts

Meaning: A proposed explanation or prediction that can be investigated.

Use it accurately: Plural: hypotheses; a hypothesis is not an established conclusion.

Useful combinations: test a hypothesis; a working hypothesis.

Sample sentence: The study was designed to test the hypothesis that shorter waiting times would increase repeat visits.

120. Breakthrough

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: An important advance that overcomes a significant difficulty.

Use it accurately: Stronger than improvement; use it only when the development changes what can be achieved.

Useful combinations: a major breakthrough; a scientific breakthrough.

Sample sentence: A promising result should not be described as a breakthrough until its importance and reliability have been examined carefully.

Environment and resources

121. Calamity

noun; neutral to formal; strong emphasis

Meaning: A disaster or event that causes serious harm or distress.

Use it accurately: Much stronger than inconvenience; avoid exaggerating a minor problem with this word.

Useful combinations: a natural calamity; avert a calamity.

Sample sentence: A local emergency plan should explain how essential services would continue after a calamity such as a major flood.

122. Feral

adjective; nature contexts

Meaning: Living in the wild after coming from a domesticated population.

Use it accurately: Feral animals differ from species that have always lived wild; avoid using the word casually about people.

Useful combinations: feral cats; a feral population.

Sample sentence: The reading passage examined how a growing population of feral cats affected wildlife on the island.

123. Migrate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To move between regions, often seasonally or to live elsewhere.

Use it accurately: Animals and people can migrate; emigrate and immigrate specify movement out of and into a country.

Useful combinations: migrate seasonally; migrate to cities.

Sample sentence: The report explored why young adults migrate to larger cities and whether they intend to return to their home towns.

124. Carbon-neutral

adjective; environmental contexts

Meaning: Having net carbon dioxide emissions balanced over a stated scope and period.

Use it accurately: It does not necessarily mean producing no emissions; the scope and method of balancing matter.

Useful combinations: carbon-neutral operations; a carbon-neutral target.

Sample sentence: A company describing its operations as carbon-neutral should explain which activities are included and how remaining emissions are balanced.

125. Sustainable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Able to continue over time without exhausting the resources it depends on.

Use it accurately: Specify environmental, financial or social sustainability rather than treating the word as an unexplained compliment.

Useful combinations: sustainable transport; a sustainable business model.

Sample sentence: A sustainable transport plan must be affordable to operate as well as useful to the people expected to rely on it.

126. Biodiversity

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The variety of living organisms and biological systems in an area.

Use it accurately: It includes more than the number of large animal species; avoid reducing it to wildlife alone.

Useful combinations: protect biodiversity; biodiversity loss.

Sample sentence: The proposal should consider biodiversity rather than judging the value of the site only by its potential for construction.

127. Conservation

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The protection and careful management of resources, habitats or heritage.

Use it accurately: Name what is being conserved; conservation can involve active management rather than leaving everything untouched.

Useful combinations: wildlife conservation; water conservation.

Sample sentence: Community involvement can make conservation projects more responsive to the people whose livelihoods depend on the surrounding land.

128. Depletion

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: A reduction in the amount of something available.

Use it accurately: Often used for stocks and resources; depletion suggests that continued loss matters.

Useful combinations: resource depletion; depletion of supplies.

Sample sentence: The essay linked the depletion of local water supplies to the need for better information about demand and waste.

129. Emissions

plural noun; environmental contexts

Meaning: Substances, especially gases, released into the surrounding environment.

Use it accurately: Specify carbon dioxide, vehicle or industrial emissions when the distinction matters.

Useful combinations: reduce emissions; vehicle emissions.

Sample sentence: A fair comparison of transport options should consider emissions per passenger as well as the convenience of each journey.

130. Renewable

adjective; environmental contexts

Meaning: Replenished through natural processes, as with certain energy sources.

Use it accurately: Renewable does not automatically mean impact-free; specify the resource or technology.

Useful combinations: renewable energy; renewable resources.

Sample sentence: Investment in renewable energy should be accompanied by planning for the infrastructure needed to use it reliably.

131. Ecosystem

noun; science contexts

Meaning: A community of living things interacting with each other and their physical surroundings.

Use it accurately: It includes relationships and non-living conditions, not simply a collection of species.

Useful combinations: a marine ecosystem; ecosystem restoration.

Sample sentence: The project aims to restore the wetland ecosystem rather than focusing on a single attractive species.

132. Habitat

noun; nature contexts

Meaning: The natural place and conditions in which an organism lives.

Use it accurately: A habitat belongs to a species or community; it is not a synonym for the entire environment.

Useful combinations: habitat loss; a natural habitat.

Sample sentence: A wildlife corridor is useful only if it connects areas that provide a suitable habitat for the species concerned.

133. Deforestation

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The removal of forest cover, often for a different use of the land.

Use it accurately: Distinguish permanent forest loss from routine management that maintains a forest.

Useful combinations: prevent deforestation; large-scale deforestation.

Sample sentence: An argument about deforestation should consider both environmental losses and the economic pressures that encourage land clearance.

134. Scarcity

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A situation in which something is insufficient or difficult to obtain.

Use it accurately: Use scarcity of + noun; scarcity concerns availability relative to need.

Useful combinations: water scarcity; a scarcity of resources.

Sample sentence: A scarcity of affordable space can prevent local groups from offering activities even when volunteers are available.

135. Resilience

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The ability to withstand difficulty and recover or adapt afterwards.

Use it accurately: Explain resilience to what; it applies to people, communities, systems and ecosystems.

Useful combinations: community resilience; resilience to shocks.

Sample sentence: Community resilience depends partly on whether residents can obtain reliable information and help when normal services are disrupted.

136. Ecological footprint

noun phrase; environmental contexts

Meaning: A measure of human demand on biologically productive land and water.

Use it accurately: It is broader than a carbon footprint; do not use the two labels as exact synonyms.

Useful combinations: reduce an ecological footprint; ecological footprint analysis.

Sample sentence: The lesson used ecological footprint comparisons to explore how different consumption patterns create demands on natural resources.

137. Biodegradable

adjective; environmental contexts

Meaning: Able to be broken down by biological processes under suitable conditions.

Use it accurately: It does not mean harmless in every setting or guaranteed to disappear quickly wherever discarded.

Useful combinations: biodegradable materials; biodegradable packaging.

Sample sentence: A label saying biodegradable should explain the conditions needed for the material to break down rather than implying that littering is harmless.

138. Contamination

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The presence or introduction of an unwanted substance that makes something impure or unsafe.

Use it accurately: Specify the substance or source when possible; contamination is not any visible change.

Useful combinations: water contamination; prevent contamination.

Sample sentence: The investigation focused on the source of the contamination before recommending how the affected area should be restored.

139. Overexploitation

noun; formal

Meaning: Use of a resource at a level that causes serious depletion or damage.

Use it accurately: Stronger than exploitation, which can simply mean use; the excessive level is essential.

Useful combinations: overexploitation of fisheries; resource overexploitation.

Sample sentence: The passage described how the overexploitation of a shared resource created tension between short-term income and future availability.

140. Restoration

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The process of bringing something damaged or altered back towards an earlier condition.

Use it accurately: Restoration need not recreate every original detail; state the intended condition or function.

Useful combinations: habitat restoration; building restoration.

Sample sentence: Successful river restoration requires clear goals, such as improving access, recovering habitats or addressing previous damage.

Health and well-being

141. Chronic

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Continuing for a long time or repeatedly present.

Use it accurately: In health contexts it concerns duration, not necessarily severity; it can also describe persistent social problems.

Useful combinations: a chronic condition; chronic understaffing.

Sample sentence: The organisation needs a long-term staffing plan rather than temporary measures that leave chronic understaffing unresolved.

142. Sedentary

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Involving a great deal of sitting and little physical movement.

Use it accurately: Use it for work, habits or a lifestyle; it does not mean lazy.

Useful combinations: sedentary work; a sedentary lifestyle.

Sample sentence: Because my job is sedentary, I try to include movement in my routine rather than spending every break at my desk.

143. Endurance

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The ability to continue through sustained effort or difficulty.

Use it accurately: Endurance concerns lasting effort, whereas strength usually concerns force or capacity.

Useful combinations: physical endurance; test someone's endurance.

Sample sentence: The long walk tested my endurance, but completing it gradually gave me more confidence about planning similar trips.

144. Fatality

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A death resulting from an accident, disaster or other event.

Use it accurately: A fatality is a death, not an injury; use numerical comparisons accurately.

Useful combinations: road fatalities; prevent fatalities.

Sample sentence: The road-safety report distinguished between serious injuries and fatalities instead of combining them into an unclear total.

145. Vulnerable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: More likely to be harmed or adversely affected by a situation.

Use it accurately: Use vulnerable to something; describe the circumstances rather than treating vulnerability as a person's whole identity.

Useful combinations: vulnerable to disruption; vulnerable households.

Sample sentence: Households with little financial flexibility may be particularly vulnerable to a sudden increase in essential living costs.

146. Prevention

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Action intended to stop a problem or event from occurring.

Use it accurately: Distinguish prevention from treatment or repair after the problem has developed.

Useful combinations: disease prevention; accident prevention.

Sample sentence: The proposal places greater emphasis on accident prevention by examining where risks arise before an incident occurs.

147. Prevalence

noun; formal; research contexts

Meaning: How widespread a condition or characteristic is within a defined population.

Use it accurately: It is not the same as the number of new cases over time; specify the population and period.

Useful combinations: the prevalence of; high prevalence.

Sample sentence: The report compared the prevalence of the condition across age groups without assuming that the groups had identical circumstances.

148. Well-being

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: A person's overall condition of health, comfort and welfare.

Use it accurately: Broader than happiness alone; use the hyphen consistently within your writing.

Useful combinations: employee well-being; emotional well-being.

Sample sentence: An employer concerned about well-being should examine workload and working conditions as well as offering occasional social activities.

149. Rehabilitation

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Support that helps a person recover abilities or return to ordinary life.

Use it accurately: It can concern recovery after illness or support after imprisonment; make the context clear.

Useful combinations: rehabilitation services; a rehabilitation programme.

Sample sentence: The article described a rehabilitation programme that helped participants regain confidence and prepare for a return to everyday activities.

150. Diagnosis

noun; medical contexts

Meaning: The identification of a condition through examination and relevant information.

Use it accurately: Plural: diagnoses; distinguish diagnosis from the treatment chosen afterwards.

Useful combinations: an accurate diagnosis; a diagnosis of.

Sample sentence: The patient information leaflet explained the next steps after a diagnosis in language that readers could understand.

151. Immunity

noun; medical contexts

Meaning: The body's capacity to resist a particular infection or harmful agent.

Use it accurately: Do not treat immunity as a guarantee against every illness; legal immunity is a different sense.

Useful combinations: immunity to; acquired immunity.

Sample sentence: The science lesson distinguished immunity to a particular infection from the broader idea of being in good general health.

152. Malnutrition

noun; medical and public-health contexts

Meaning: Poor nutrition caused by too little, too much or an unsuitable balance of nutrients.

Use it accurately: It is not limited to hunger or low body weight; undernutrition is a narrower term.

Useful combinations: address malnutrition; causes of malnutrition.

Sample sentence: The report examined malnutrition through access to food, dietary quality and the circumstances affecting household choices.

153. Obesity

noun; medical and public-health contexts

Meaning: A condition involving an excessive accumulation of body fat.

Use it accurately: Use neutral, respectful language; avoid reducing a person to a label or assuming a single cause.

Useful combinations: childhood obesity; obesity prevention.

Sample sentence: A discussion of obesity should avoid blaming individuals while ignoring the wider conditions that influence daily routines and food choices.

154. Contagious

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Able to spread from one person to another, especially through contact.

Use it accurately: Often used for illness; it can also describe spreading laughter or enthusiasm figuratively.

Useful combinations: a contagious illness; contagious enthusiasm.

Sample sentence: Her enthusiasm for the project was contagious, and even the quieter members of the group began contributing ideas.

155. Therapeutic

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Related to treatment, or experienced as soothing and restorative.

Use it accurately: A personal description of an activity as therapeutic is not proof that it treats a medical condition.

Useful combinations: therapeutic benefits; a therapeutic activity.

Sample sentence: I find gardening therapeutic because it gives me a quiet task to focus on after a demanding day.

156. Panic

noun; neutral

Meaning: Sudden intense fear that makes calm thought or action difficult.

Use it accurately: A panic about a minor event differs from the clinical term panic attack; do not casually diagnose someone.

Useful combinations: cause panic; in a panic.

Sample sentence: Clear instructions can help prevent panic when people are uncertain about what to do during an unexpected disruption.

157. Screening

noun; medical and organisational contexts

Meaning: Checking people or things to identify possible problems that need further investigation.

Use it accurately: In healthcare, screening is not itself a confirmed diagnosis; the word also has security and recruitment uses.

Useful combinations: health screening; a screening programme.

Sample sentence: The leaflet explained the purpose and limitations of the screening programme before asking people to decide whether to participate.

158. Sanitation

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Systems and conditions for managing waste and maintaining hygienic surroundings.

Use it accurately: Often includes safe handling of human waste; it is broader than cleaning one surface.

Useful combinations: adequate sanitation; sanitation facilities.

Sample sentence: Plans for a new settlement should include sanitation facilities from the beginning rather than treating them as a later addition.

159. Health literacy

noun phrase; public-health contexts

Meaning: The ability to find, understand and use information relevant to health decisions.

Use it accurately: It depends partly on how clearly services communicate, not only on the reader's education.

Useful combinations: improve health literacy; health literacy needs.

Sample sentence: Clear forms and explanations can support health literacy by making unfamiliar information easier to understand and discuss.

160. Stigma

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A negative social judgement attached to a characteristic or situation.

Use it accurately: Use stigma attached to or surrounding something; distinguish social judgement from the condition itself.

Useful combinations: reduce stigma; social stigma.

Sample sentence: Reducing the stigma surrounding requests for help may make it easier for students to discuss difficulties before they fall behind.

Cities, housing and transport

161. Cosmopolitan

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Including or showing familiarity with people and influences from many places.

Use it accurately: Usually describes cities, communities or outlooks; it does not simply mean large or modern.

Useful combinations: a cosmopolitan city; a cosmopolitan outlook.

Sample sentence: I enjoy living in a cosmopolitan city because ordinary activities often bring me into contact with different languages and traditions.

162. Refurbish

verb; neutral

Meaning: To improve an existing building or item by repairing or updating it.

Use it accurately: Refurbishment keeps an existing structure or item; it is not the same as replacing it completely.

Useful combinations: refurbish a building; a refurbished library.

Sample sentence: The council could refurbish the unused library and adapt its rooms for community activities instead of leaving it empty.

163. Resident

noun; neutral

Meaning: A person who lives in a particular place.

Use it accurately: A resident is not necessarily a citizen, owner or long-term inhabitant.

Useful combinations: local residents; a permanent resident.

Sample sentence: Local residents should have a chance to explain how a proposed road change would affect their daily journeys.

164. Proximity

noun; formal

Meaning: Nearness in distance, time or relationship.

Use it accurately: Usually proximity to; close proximity is common but close is often unnecessary.

Useful combinations: proximity to transport; geographical proximity.

Sample sentence: Proximity to a railway station is attractive, but the frequency and affordability of the service also matter.

165. Congestion

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Overcrowding that restricts movement or flow.

Use it accurately: For transport, traffic congestion is usually uncountable; avoid traffics.

Useful combinations: traffic congestion; relieve congestion.

Sample sentence: A new road may not resolve congestion if it attracts additional traffic to junctions that already lack capacity.

166. Infrastructure

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The basic facilities and systems that enable a community or activity to function.

Use it accurately: Specify transport, digital or social infrastructure when a narrower meaning is intended.

Useful combinations: transport infrastructure; maintain infrastructure.

Sample sentence: Building more homes without improving infrastructure can put additional pressure on existing transport links, schools and public services.

167. Urbanisation

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The growth of towns and cities and the increasing share of people living in them.

Use it accurately: Urbanization is an alternative spelling; do not equate urbanisation automatically with good or bad development.

Useful combinations: rapid urbanisation; patterns of urbanisation.

Sample sentence: Rapid urbanisation creates planning challenges when housing and essential services develop at different speeds.

168. Commute

verb; neutral

Meaning: To travel regularly between home and a place of work or study.

Use it accurately: Use commute to a workplace or commute by train; the noun a commute describes the journey.

Useful combinations: commute by bus; a long commute.

Sample sentence: I would accept a slightly smaller flat if it allowed me to commute by train instead of spending hours in traffic.

169. Affordable

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Within the financial means of the people expected to pay.

Use it accurately: Affordable is relative to income and other costs; it is not an absolute synonym for cheap.

Useful combinations: affordable housing; affordable transport.

Sample sentence: Housing described as affordable should be assessed against local incomes rather than only against the price of nearby luxury developments.

170. Walkability

noun; urban-planning contexts

Meaning: How suitable and convenient an area is for travelling on foot.

Use it accurately: Consider crossings, connected routes and access to destinations, not just the presence of pavements.

Useful combinations: improve walkability; neighbourhood walkability.

Sample sentence: The neighbourhood's walkability would improve if residents could reach the shops without crossing a wide road with no safe crossing.

171. Zoning

noun; urban-planning contexts

Meaning: Rules that divide land into areas with different permitted uses.

Use it accurately: A specialist planning term; it does not refer to every kind of geographical division.

Useful combinations: zoning rules; residential zoning.

Sample sentence: Changes to zoning could allow more homes near transport routes, but the effects on existing residents need careful consideration.

172. Redevelopment

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Major changes to an existing site or area to give it a new use or form.

Use it accurately: More extensive than routine maintenance; distinguish the proposed benefits from potential disruption.

Useful combinations: urban redevelopment; a redevelopment project.

Sample sentence: The redevelopment could provide new facilities, but local traders need clear information about whether they can remain in the area.

173. Displacement

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The movement of people or things from their existing place, often under pressure.

Use it accurately: When discussing residents, explain whether the move is forced or driven by rising costs.

Useful combinations: residential displacement; prevent displacement.

Sample sentence: A regeneration scheme should consider the risk of displacement if existing tenants can no longer afford to stay.

174. Density

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The amount or number of something within a defined space.

Use it accurately: Specify population or housing density; density and overcrowding are not identical concepts.

Useful combinations: population density; high-density housing.

Sample sentence: Higher housing density can support local services, provided that planning also addresses open space, light and access.

175. Municipal

adjective; formal

Meaning: Related to the government or services of a town or city.

Use it accurately: Use it for local administration, not national government in general.

Useful combinations: municipal services; municipal authorities.

Sample sentence: Municipal authorities need reliable information about how residents use public spaces before deciding where improvements are most needed.

176. Amenity

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A useful or pleasant facility that makes a place more convenient to live in.

Use it accurately: Often plural: local amenities; name the facilities when making a specific argument.

Useful combinations: local amenities; essential amenities.

Sample sentence: The flat is small, but nearby amenities include a library, a park and several shops within walking distance.

177. Segregation

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The separation of groups, activities or materials.

Use it accurately: Social segregation often implies unequal separation; waste segregation has a neutral technical meaning.

Useful combinations: residential segregation; social segregation.

Sample sentence: The essay examined how residential segregation can limit everyday contact between people from different economic backgrounds.

178. Connectivity

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The extent to which places, people or systems are linked.

Use it accurately: Specify transport or digital connectivity; more connections do not necessarily mean better service.

Useful combinations: transport connectivity; digital connectivity.

Sample sentence: Improved connectivity would allow residents to reach neighbouring towns without making several inconvenient changes along the way.

179. Sprawl

noun; urban-planning contexts; usually negative

Meaning: The spread of development over a large area, often with little coordination.

Use it accurately: Urban sprawl is not a neutral label for every increase in city size.

Useful combinations: urban sprawl; suburban sprawl.

Sample sentence: Unplanned urban sprawl can make daily journeys longer when homes are built far from employment and essential services.

180. Public realm

noun phrase; urban-planning contexts

Meaning: Spaces accessible to the public, such as streets, squares and parks.

Use it accurately: It refers to shared public space, not necessarily only land owned by the government.

Useful combinations: improve the public realm; public realm design.

Sample sentence: Investment in the public realm should consider seating, shade and access for people who move through the area in different ways.

Society, policy and public life

181. Legislation

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Laws considered collectively, or the process of making them.

Use it accurately: Say legislation or a piece of legislation, not a legislation in ordinary use.

Useful combinations: introduce legislation; existing legislation.

Sample sentence: New legislation should be accompanied by clear guidance so that the people affected understand what they are expected to do.

182. Consent

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Permission or agreement given for something to happen.

Use it accurately: Consent to something should not be confused with agreement that an idea is correct.

Useful combinations: informed consent; obtain consent.

Sample sentence: Researchers should obtain meaningful consent by explaining the purpose of participation in language that people can understand.

183. Coerce

verb; formal; negative

Meaning: To force someone to act through pressure or threats.

Use it accurately: Use coerce someone into doing something; persuade does not necessarily involve force.

Useful combinations: coerce someone into; coercive pressure.

Sample sentence: Employees should not feel coerced into accepting additional responsibilities simply because they are reluctant to challenge a manager.

184. Condemn

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To express strong disapproval of an action or situation.

Use it accurately: Much stronger than question or criticise; it conveys a clear negative judgement.

Useful combinations: strongly condemn; condemn discrimination.

Sample sentence: It is possible to condemn discriminatory behaviour while still examining the social conditions in which it develops.

185. Prohibit

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To officially forbid an action.

Use it accurately: Use prohibit something or prohibit someone from doing something; prohibition implies a ban.

Useful combinations: prohibit entry; prohibit the use of.

Sample sentence: A rule that prohibits all deliveries during the day may create difficulties for businesses that cannot receive supplies at night.

186. Restrict

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To limit the amount, range or freedom of something.

Use it accurately: Restriction can be partial; unlike prohibit, it does not necessarily mean a complete ban.

Useful combinations: restrict access; restrict the use of.

Sample sentence: The centre could restrict noisy activities to certain hours while allowing quieter uses throughout the day.

187. Xenophobia

noun; formal

Meaning: Fear, hostility or prejudice directed towards people regarded as foreign.

Use it accurately: A strong social term; do not use it as a label for every disagreement about migration policy.

Useful combinations: challenge xenophobia; xenophobic attitudes.

Sample sentence: Education about migration should challenge xenophobia without assuming that every community has had the same experiences.

188. Reciprocal

adjective; formal

Meaning: Involving actions or benefits exchanged by both sides.

Use it accurately: Reciprocal does not guarantee that the contributions are identical in size.

Useful combinations: a reciprocal arrangement; reciprocal support.

Sample sentence: A reciprocal arrangement between libraries could give residents access to a wider collection without requiring each branch to purchase every title.

189. Equity

noun; social-policy contexts

Meaning: Fairness that takes account of different circumstances and needs.

Use it accurately: This sense differs from financial equity; equity and equal treatment are related but not always identical.

Useful combinations: educational equity; promote equity.

Sample sentence: Promoting educational equity may require additional support for students who face barriers that their classmates do not encounter.

190. Inclusion

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Making it possible for people to participate and belong.

Use it accurately: Inclusion involves meaningful participation, not simply being present in a group.

Useful combinations: social inclusion; inclusive participation.

Sample sentence: A community event supports inclusion when residents can participate regardless of income, language or access needs.

191. Accountability

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Responsibility for explaining decisions and being answerable for their consequences.

Use it accurately: Use accountability to people or for actions; it concerns more than simply publishing information.

Useful combinations: public accountability; strengthen accountability.

Sample sentence: Public accountability requires officials to explain why a decision was made and how its effects will be reviewed.

192. Transparency

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Openness about processes, decisions or information.

Use it accurately: Transparency concerns visibility; accountability also concerns responsibility and consequences.

Useful combinations: greater transparency; financial transparency.

Sample sentence: Greater transparency about selection criteria would help applicants understand how their proposals are assessed.

193. Regulation

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: An official rule or the activity of controlling something through rules.

Use it accurately: A regulation is one rule; regulation without an article can describe the overall system of control.

Useful combinations: safety regulations; effective regulation.

Sample sentence: Effective regulation should address a genuine problem while remaining understandable to the people who must follow it.

194. Compliance

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Acting in accordance with a rule, request or standard.

Use it accurately: Use compliance with; agreement with a rule's purpose is not required for compliance.

Useful combinations: compliance with rules; monitor compliance.

Sample sentence: Clear instructions can improve compliance by reducing uncertainty about what organisations are required to report.

195. Deterrent

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Something intended to discourage an action by making it less attractive.

Use it accurately: Use a deterrent to something; whether it works needs evidence in a real argument.

Useful combinations: a deterrent to crime; an effective deterrent.

Sample sentence: A penalty is unlikely to be an effective deterrent if people are unaware that the rule exists.

196. Rehabilitate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To help someone regain abilities or return to constructive participation in society.

Use it accurately: The noun is rehabilitation; in justice contexts, distinguish support for reintegration from punishment alone.

Useful combinations: rehabilitate offenders; rehabilitate an injured person.

Sample sentence: A programme designed to rehabilitate offenders should explain how participants will develop skills and prepare for life after release.

197. Disparity

noun; formal

Meaning: A noticeable and often unfair difference between groups or amounts.

Use it accurately: Common patterns include a disparity between groups and disparities in access.

Useful combinations: income disparities; a disparity in access.

Sample sentence: A disparity in access to reliable transport can affect employment options even when similar jobs exist across the region.

198. Cohesion

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The strength of connection that holds a group or text together.

Use it accurately: Social cohesion concerns relationships; textual cohesion concerns links within writing.

Useful combinations: social cohesion; community cohesion.

Sample sentence: Shared public spaces can support social cohesion when people from different backgrounds have reasons to use them regularly.

199. Civic

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Related to citizens' participation or the affairs of a town or community.

Use it accurately: Do not confuse civic with civil, which has several different legal and social meanings.

Useful combinations: civic participation; civic responsibility.

Sample sentence: Schools can encourage civic participation by helping students understand how local decisions are made and how they can contribute.

200. Defence

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Protection against attack, criticism or another threat.

Use it accurately: Defence is British spelling; defense is American. State whether the sense is physical, legal or argumentative.

Useful combinations: flood defences; in defence of.

Sample sentence: In defence of public libraries, supporters often emphasise the access they provide to information, study space and practical assistance.

Culture, media and communication

201. Archaeology

noun; academic subject

Meaning: The study of past human societies through material remains.

Use it accurately: A topic word for reading or cultural discussion, not a general synonym for history.

Useful combinations: archaeological evidence; study archaeology.

Sample sentence: The exhibition showed how archaeology can reveal aspects of ordinary life that are absent from written historical records.

202. Commemorate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To honour or remember an important person or event publicly.

Use it accurately: Commemorate takes a direct object; it is more specific than simply remember.

Useful combinations: commemorate an event; commemorate a contribution.

Sample sentence: The community decided to commemorate the volunteers' contribution with an exhibition of photographs and personal accounts.

203. Evoke

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To bring a feeling, memory or image to mind.

Use it accurately: It describes the response produced; provoke more often suggests a reaction such as anger or debate.

Useful combinations: evoke memories; evoke a sense of.

Sample sentence: The sound of the market traders evokes memories of the neighbourhood where I spent most of my childhood.

204. Prestige

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Respect and admiration associated with status or achievement.

Use it accurately: Prestige is not the same as demonstrated quality in every case.

Useful combinations: academic prestige; social prestige.

Sample sentence: Students should consider teaching and support as well as the prestige associated with a university's name.

205. Notorious

adjective; neutral to formal; negative

Meaning: Widely known for something bad or undesirable.

Use it accurately: Use notorious for; famous does not necessarily carry this negative meaning.

Useful combinations: notorious for delays; a notorious problem.

Sample sentence: The route is notorious for delays, so regular passengers often allow extra time even for a short journey.

206. Heritage

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Traditions, places and objects inherited from earlier generations.

Use it accurately: It can be cultural or natural; heritage is broader than old buildings alone.

Useful combinations: cultural heritage; protect heritage.

Sample sentence: Preserving cultural heritage can involve supporting living traditions as well as maintaining buildings and museum collections.

207. Authenticity

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The quality of being genuine rather than falsely presented or imitated.

Use it accurately: In cultural discussions, explain what counts as authentic instead of assuming one fixed version of a tradition.

Useful combinations: question authenticity; a sense of authenticity.

Sample sentence: Visitors may value authenticity, but local communities should have a voice in deciding how their traditions are presented.

208. Diversity

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The presence of meaningful variety within a group or setting.

Use it accurately: Specify diversity of languages, experiences or views; diversity alone does not guarantee equal participation.

Useful combinations: cultural diversity; a diversity of perspectives.

Sample sentence: A diversity of perspectives can improve discussion when participants have a genuine opportunity to explain and question each other's ideas.

209. Representation

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The way someone or something is portrayed or included.

Use it accurately: Distinguish portrayal in media from having a voice in decision-making.

Useful combinations: media representation; fair representation.

Sample sentence: Fair representation involves giving people a meaningful voice rather than including them only as background figures.

210. Stereotype

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: An oversimplified belief about a whole group.

Use it accurately: A stereotype can sound positive while still ignoring individual differences.

Useful combinations: challenge a stereotype; reinforce stereotypes.

Sample sentence: Films can challenge stereotypes by giving characters varied motivations rather than defining them through a single group identity.

211. Sensationalism

noun; usually uncountable; negative

Meaning: Presenting information in an exaggerated way to attract attention.

Use it accurately: It concerns presentation designed to excite; not every dramatic story is sensationalist.

Useful combinations: media sensationalism; avoid sensationalism.

Sample sentence: Sensationalism may attract immediate attention, but it can distract readers from the context needed to understand an issue.

212. Misinformation

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: False or inaccurate information, whether or not it is shared deliberately.

Use it accurately: Disinformation specifically emphasises deliberate deception; avoid assuming intent from an error alone.

Useful combinations: spread misinformation; correct misinformation.

Sample sentence: Correcting misinformation requires a clear explanation of the evidence rather than simply repeating that the original claim is wrong.

213. Censorship

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Suppression or restriction of material by an authority or controlling body.

Use it accurately: Distinguish censorship from criticism or an individual choosing not to read something.

Useful combinations: government censorship; censorship of publications.

Sample sentence: A debate about censorship should examine who makes the decision, which material is restricted and whether the process can be challenged.

214. Credibility

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The extent to which someone or something is believable and trustworthy.

Use it accurately: Credibility can be strengthened by transparent evidence; it is not the same as popularity.

Useful combinations: establish credibility; damage credibility.

Sample sentence: A news organisation can protect its credibility by correcting errors openly and explaining what has changed.

215. Impartial

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Not unfairly favouring one side in a decision or dispute.

Use it accurately: Impartial does not mean having no knowledge or values; it concerns fair treatment of competing sides.

Useful combinations: an impartial assessment; impartial reporting.

Sample sentence: An impartial assessment should examine the strongest evidence on each side rather than selecting only convenient examples.

216. Preservation

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: Keeping something from being damaged, lost or substantially changed.

Use it accurately: Preservation emphasises protection; restoration involves repairing or recovering a previous condition.

Useful combinations: heritage preservation; the preservation of records.

Sample sentence: The preservation of local records allows later generations to examine how their community developed and whose experiences were documented.

217. Commercialisation

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The process of organising something increasingly around commercial activity or profit.

Use it accurately: Commercialization is another spelling; the word is not always negative, so explain the concern.

Useful combinations: commercialisation of sport; increasing commercialisation.

Sample sentence: The commercialisation of a festival may provide funding while also changing which activities receive the most attention.

218. Articulate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To express an idea clearly in words.

Use it accurately: As a verb, articulate an argument; as an adjective, articulate describes someone who expresses ideas clearly.

Useful combinations: articulate a concern; articulate a position.

Sample sentence: Students need opportunities to articulate their reasoning rather than simply selecting an answer from a list.

219. Immersive

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Creating a strong sense of being involved in an experience.

Use it accurately: More specific than enjoyable or interesting; describe how the involvement is created.

Useful combinations: an immersive exhibition; immersive learning.

Sample sentence: The museum's immersive exhibition used recorded voices and reconstructed rooms to help visitors imagine everyday life in the past.

220. Vernacular

noun; formal; language and culture contexts

Meaning: The everyday language or dialect used by a particular community.

Use it accurately: It can also describe local building traditions as an adjective; do not use it for all informal English indiscriminately.

Useful combinations: the local vernacular; vernacular expressions.

Sample sentence: The novel's use of the local vernacular gives its dialogue a sense of place that a more standard register might not convey.

221. Adversity

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: Serious difficulty or unfavourable circumstances.

Use it accurately: It describes hardship, not merely a routine inconvenience.

Useful combinations: face adversity; overcome adversity.

Sample sentence: Supportive relationships can help people respond to adversity without implying that they should manage every difficulty alone.

222. Ambivalent

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Having mixed or conflicting feelings about something.

Use it accurately: Use ambivalent about; it does not mean indifferent or unable to understand.

Useful combinations: feel ambivalent about; an ambivalent attitude.

Sample sentence: I feel ambivalent about moving abroad because the professional opportunities are attractive, but I would miss being close to my family.

223. Apprehensive

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Worried about something that may happen.

Use it accurately: Usually apprehensive about; it concerns anticipation rather than fear after an event.

Useful combinations: apprehensive about change; feel apprehensive.

Sample sentence: I was apprehensive about speaking in front of the group, but preparing a clear outline made the task feel more manageable.

224. Candid

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Honest and direct, especially about something difficult.

Use it accurately: Candid does not mean deliberately rude; it can coexist with tact.

Useful combinations: a candid discussion; a candid assessment.

Sample sentence: A candid discussion of the project's weaknesses helped the team agree on realistic improvements rather than defend an ineffective plan.

225. Complacent

adjective; neutral to formal; negative

Meaning: Too satisfied with the present situation to notice risks or the need to improve.

Use it accurately: Usually complacent about; confident and complacent are not interchangeable.

Useful combinations: become complacent; complacent about risks.

Sample sentence: A business should not become complacent simply because its current customers have few alternatives.

226. Empathy

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The ability to understand another person's feelings or perspective.

Use it accurately: Empathy involves understanding; sympathy more often emphasises concern or compassion.

Useful combinations: show empathy; empathy for others.

Sample sentence: Listening carefully to residents can demonstrate empathy, but their concerns also need a practical response.

227. Elated

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Extremely happy, especially after a success or welcome event.

Use it accurately: Stronger than pleased; connect it to a reason rather than using it for every positive feeling.

Useful combinations: feel elated; elated at the news.

Sample sentence: I felt elated when I completed the course because balancing study with work had required several months of careful planning.

228. Gregarious

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Enjoying the company of other people.

Use it accurately: It describes sociability, not necessarily confidence in every situation.

Useful combinations: a gregarious person; a gregarious personality.

Sample sentence: My brother is much more gregarious than I am, so he usually starts conversations when we meet new people.

229. Oblivious

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Unaware of something happening nearby or affecting a situation.

Use it accurately: Usually oblivious to; it implies a lack of awareness, not deliberate disregard.

Useful combinations: oblivious to the noise; apparently oblivious.

Sample sentence: I was so absorbed in the book that I was almost oblivious to the conversation taking place beside me.

230. Perceive

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To notice something or understand it in a particular way.

Use it accurately: Use perceive something as something; a perception may differ from an objective measurement.

Useful combinations: perceive as unfair; perceive a difference.

Sample sentence: Residents may perceive a decision as unfair if they cannot see how the different options were assessed.

231. Adaptable

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Able to adjust to changing circumstances or requirements.

Use it accurately: Adaptable describes a capacity to change; it does not mean accepting every change without criticism.

Useful combinations: an adaptable employee; adaptable skills.

Sample sentence: An adaptable employee can learn a new process while still questioning whether it solves the problem it was introduced to address.

232. Conscientious

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Careful and responsible about doing work properly.

Use it accurately: It concerns effort and responsibility; conscious means aware and has a different meaning.

Useful combinations: a conscientious worker; a conscientious approach.

Sample sentence: She is a conscientious colleague who checks the details and lets others know early if a deadline may be difficult to meet.

233. Resourceful

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Good at finding practical ways to deal with difficulties.

Use it accurately: It describes problem-solving ability, not simply having many resources available.

Useful combinations: a resourceful person; a resourceful approach.

Sample sentence: The team was resourceful enough to organise the event using borrowed equipment and a venue offered by a local school.

234. Tenacious

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Persistent and unwilling to give up easily.

Use it accurately: Usually positive for determination, but persistence should still be responsive to evidence.

Useful combinations: a tenacious campaigner; tenacious determination.

Sample sentence: Her tenacious effort helped keep the project moving, although she was willing to revise plans that were clearly not working.

235. Assertive

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Able to express needs and opinions confidently and directly.

Use it accurately: Assertive is not the same as aggressive; it can include respect for other people's needs.

Useful combinations: assertive communication; an assertive approach.

Sample sentence: Learning to be assertive helped me explain my workload without sounding either apologetic or confrontational.

236. Courageous

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Showing the willingness to act despite fear, difficulty or risk.

Use it accurately: Courage does not imply a lack of fear; explain the challenge being faced.

Useful combinations: a courageous decision; a courageous person.

Sample sentence: It was a courageous decision to admit the mistake publicly and explain how the organisation intended to put it right.

237. Perceptive

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Good at noticing and understanding things that are not obvious.

Use it accurately: It concerns insight, not simply good eyesight or access to information.

Useful combinations: a perceptive comment; a perceptive observer.

Sample sentence: Her perceptive question revealed a problem with the proposal that the rest of us had overlooked.

238. Pragmatic

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Focused on workable solutions in the circumstances.

Use it accurately: Pragmatic does not necessarily mean lacking principles; it emphasises practical judgement.

Useful combinations: a pragmatic solution; a pragmatic approach.

Sample sentence: A pragmatic approach would test the service on a smaller scale before committing the entire budget.

239. Reserved

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Quiet or restrained in expressing feelings and opinions.

Use it accurately: It describes manner, not necessarily shyness, hostility or a lack of interest.

Useful combinations: a reserved person; a reserved manner.

Sample sentence: Although my colleague is quite reserved in large meetings, she contributes thoughtful ideas when we discuss a project in a smaller group.

240. Overwhelmed

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Feeling unable to manage the amount or intensity of something.

Use it accurately: Use overwhelmed by or with; it can refer to difficulty or strong positive emotion.

Useful combinations: overwhelmed by demands; overwhelmed with gratitude.

Sample sentence: I initially felt overwhelmed by the number of tasks, so I listed them in order of urgency and dealt with one at a time.

Precision, evaluation and distinctions

241. Arbitrary

adjective; neutral to formal; usually critical

Meaning: Based on a choice without a clear, relevant or consistent reason.

Use it accurately: Arbitrary is not identical to random; a deliberate decision can still lack a defensible basis.

Useful combinations: an arbitrary rule; an arbitrary limit.

Sample sentence: An arbitrary age limit may exclude suitable applicants without addressing the skills that the role actually requires.

242. Discrete

adjective; formal

Meaning: Separate and distinguishable from other things.

Use it accurately: Do not confuse discrete with discreet, which means careful about privacy or avoiding attention.

Useful combinations: discrete stages; discrete categories.

Sample sentence: The training programme has three discrete stages, but students are encouraged to connect what they learn across all of them.

243. Distinct

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Clearly different or separately recognisable.

Use it accurately: Use distinct from; different does not always carry the same emphasis on clear separation.

Useful combinations: distinct roles; distinct from.

Sample sentence: The two organisations have distinct roles, so residents need clear information about which one can address their concern.

244. Identical

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Exactly the same in the respects being compared.

Use it accurately: Identical is stronger than similar; use identical to rather than identical with if you want the most familiar pattern.

Useful combinations: identical conditions; virtually identical.

Sample sentence: Two students may receive identical instructions but need different kinds of support to complete the task successfully.

245. Inevitable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Certain to happen or impossible to avoid in the circumstances.

Use it accurately: A strong certainty claim; use likely or possible when the evidence does not justify it.

Useful combinations: an inevitable consequence; almost inevitable.

Sample sentence: Conflict is not inevitable when priorities differ, provided that people have a fair way to discuss the available choices.

246. Principle

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A basic rule, belief or standard guiding judgement or action.

Use it accurately: Do not confuse principle with principal, meaning main or the head of an institution.

Useful combinations: a guiding principle; in principle.

Sample sentence: Equal access should be a guiding principle when a public service decides which facilities to offer and where to locate them.

247. Superfluous

adjective; formal

Meaning: Unnecessary because more than enough is already present.

Use it accurately: It means excess or redundancy, not simply unimportant in every context.

Useful combinations: superfluous detail; a superfluous requirement.

Sample sentence: Removing superfluous details can make an explanation clearer without reducing the information readers need to understand the argument.

248. Underestimate

verb; neutral

Meaning: To judge an amount, ability or difficulty as smaller than it really is.

Use it accurately: Use a direct object; distinguish underestimating a risk from deliberately ignoring it.

Useful combinations: underestimate costs; underestimate the importance of.

Sample sentence: Planners may underestimate demand if they consult only current users and ignore people who cannot access the existing service.

249. Feasible

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Possible to carry out with the available resources and circumstances.

Use it accurately: A feasible plan can be implemented; it is not automatically desirable or the best option.

Useful combinations: a feasible solution; economically feasible.

Sample sentence: The proposal may be technically feasible, but the council still needs to consider whether it is affordable to maintain.

250. Crucial

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Extremely important to an outcome or decision.

Use it accurately: Use crucial to or for in suitable contexts; avoid labelling every supporting detail crucial.

Useful combinations: a crucial factor; crucial to success.

Sample sentence: Reliable information about demand is crucial to deciding whether the new route would serve enough passengers.

251. Pertinent

adjective; formal

Meaning: Directly relevant to the issue being considered.

Use it accurately: Use pertinent to; relevant is often a simpler equivalent.

Useful combinations: a pertinent question; pertinent information.

Sample sentence: The most pertinent question is whether the proposed change addresses the problem residents actually experience.

252. Inherent

adjective; formal

Meaning: Existing as a natural or essential part of something.

Use it accurately: Use inherent in; it should not describe a feature that is merely occasional or accidental.

Useful combinations: inherent limitations; inherent in a method.

Sample sentence: The report acknowledged the limitations inherent in relying on participants to remember events that occurred several years earlier.

253. Accuracy

noun; usually uncountable

Meaning: The degree to which information or performance is correct.

Use it accurately: Accuracy differs from detail and fluency; a long, confident explanation can still contain mistakes.

Useful combinations: check accuracy; factual accuracy.

Sample sentence: The accuracy of the figures matters more than the visual sophistication of the chart used to present them.

254. Comprehensive

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Covering the main relevant aspects of a subject in substantial detail.

Use it accurately: It does not have to mean literally every possible detail; explain the scope of the coverage.

Useful combinations: a comprehensive review; comprehensive guidance.

Sample sentence: A comprehensive induction should explain everyday procedures as well as the organisation's wider goals and expectations.

255. Tentative

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Not yet certain or final and open to revision.

Use it accurately: Useful for plans and conclusions based on limited information.

Useful combinations: a tentative conclusion; tentative arrangements.

Sample sentence: The findings support a tentative conclusion, but the small sample makes it unwise to generalise too broadly.

256. Plausible

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Reasonable enough to be believable or possible.

Use it accurately: Plausible does not mean proven; several competing explanations can be plausible.

Useful combinations: a plausible explanation; a plausible scenario.

Sample sentence: A change in opening hours is a plausible explanation for the increase in visitors, although other factors should also be examined.

257. Rigorous

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Thorough, careful and conducted to demanding standards.

Use it accurately: Rigorous is not a synonym for harsh; it usually concerns the quality of a method or examination.

Useful combinations: rigorous analysis; rigorous testing.

Sample sentence: A rigorous evaluation should use clear criteria and explain how conflicting evidence was considered.

258. Explicit

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Expressed clearly and directly rather than left to inference.

Use it accurately: Contrast explicit information with an implied meaning; it need not be lengthy.

Useful combinations: explicit instructions; explicit criteria.

Sample sentence: Applicants need explicit criteria so that they understand what evidence to provide and how their submissions will be judged.

259. Implicit

adjective; formal

Meaning: Suggested or understood without being stated directly.

Use it accurately: Do not assume an implicit meaning unless the context supports it.

Useful combinations: an implicit assumption; implicit in.

Sample sentence: The plan contains an implicit assumption that everyone can travel independently, which may leave some residents without a workable option.

260. Consistent

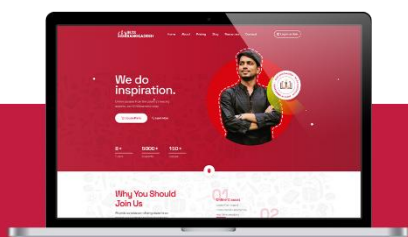
adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Following a stable pattern or agreeing without contradiction.

Use it accurately: Use consistent with evidence or consistent in behaviour; consistency does not by itself prove correctness.

Useful combinations: consistent results; consistent with.

Sample sentence: The conclusion should be consistent with the evidence presented, even when that evidence does not support the writer's initial expectations.



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Versatile verbs for explaining ideas

261. Allocate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To assign money, time or resources to a particular purpose.

Use it accurately: Use allocate something to someone or something, or allocate something for a purpose.

Useful combinations: allocate funding; allocate time.

Sample sentence: Schools should allocate time for teachers to review new materials before expecting them to use those materials in class.

262. Prioritise

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To decide which tasks or needs should receive attention first.

Use it accurately: Prioritize is also standard; explain the basis for the order rather than treating everything as a priority.

Useful combinations: prioritise essential services; prioritise spending.

Sample sentence: When resources are limited, the council should prioritise repairs that directly affect residents' ability to use essential facilities.

263. Implement

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To put a plan, policy or decision into practice.

Use it accurately: Implementation follows a decision; proposing a policy is not the same as implementing it.

Useful combinations: implement a policy; implement changes.

Sample sentence: A policy may be well designed but difficult to implement if staff have insufficient time, training or equipment.

264. Evaluate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To judge the quality, value or effects of something using relevant criteria.

Use it accurately: State the criteria or purpose of the evaluation; it goes beyond describing what happened.

Useful combinations: evaluate effectiveness; evaluate a proposal.

Sample sentence: The programme should be evaluated against its stated aims rather than judged only by the number of people who enrolled.

265. Assess

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To examine something and form a judgement about its condition, scale or value.

Use it accurately: Often used with needs, risks or performance; it overlaps with evaluate but is not always interchangeable.

Useful combinations: assess needs; assess the impact.

Sample sentence: Before introducing a new service, the organisation should assess whether potential users can reach it and afford to participate.

266. Enhance

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To improve the quality, value or effectiveness of something.

Use it accurately: Use it for making an existing quality better; do not assume it means increasing a numerical amount.

Useful combinations: enhance understanding; enhance accessibility.

Sample sentence: Well-chosen examples can enhance understanding by showing how an abstract idea applies to a familiar situation.

267. Consolidate

verb; formal

Meaning: To strengthen something by bringing gains, knowledge or resources together.

Use it accurately: In learning, consolidate knowledge means make it more secure through further use.

Useful combinations: consolidate learning; consolidate gains.

Sample sentence: A short revision task can help students consolidate what they have learnt before moving to a more demanding topic.

268. Diversify

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To introduce a wider range of activities, products or approaches.

Use it accurately: It can be transitive or intransitive; explain which range is becoming broader.

Useful combinations: diversify income; diversify the economy.

Sample sentence: A community organisation may need to diversify its sources of funding so that one lost grant does not end the entire programme.

269. Optimise

verb; formal

Meaning: To adjust something so that it works as effectively as possible for a goal.

Use it accurately: Optimize is also standard; define the goal because improving one measure can worsen another.

Useful combinations: optimise performance; optimise resource use.

Sample sentence: A timetable designed to optimise room use should still allow students enough time to move between classes.

270. Regulate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To control or govern an activity through rules or adjustments.

Use it accurately: It does not always mean ban; regulation can set limits or conditions.

Useful combinations: regulate an industry; regulate access.

Sample sentence: Governments need clear reasons when they regulate an activity, along with a way to review whether the rules remain useful.

271. Undertake

verb; formal

Meaning: To begin or accept responsibility for a task or activity.

Use it accurately: Undertake a study is common; undertake to do something means promise to do it.

Useful combinations: undertake research; undertake a review.

Sample sentence: The council should undertake a review of existing services before committing money to a project that may duplicate them.

272. Justify

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To give adequate reasons or evidence for an action or claim.

Use it accurately: Use justify + noun or -ing form; do not write justify to do something.

Useful combinations: justify expenditure; justify a decision.

Sample sentence: A higher price may be justified by better support, but the provider should explain what additional service customers receive.

273. Challenge

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To question whether an idea, decision or assumption is sound.

Use it accurately: Challenging a claim means examining it critically, not necessarily disproving it.

Useful combinations: challenge an assumption; challenge a decision.

Sample sentence: The discussion encouraged students to challenge assumptions respectfully and support their objections with relevant examples.

274. Acknowledge

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To recognise or accept that something exists or is true.

Use it accurately: Acknowledge a limitation or acknowledge that; acknowledging a concern does not require agreeing with every proposed solution.

Useful combinations: acknowledge limitations; acknowledge a concern.

Sample sentence: A balanced argument can acknowledge the convenience of online shopping while examining its effects on local businesses.

275. Distinguish

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To recognise or explain a meaningful difference.

Use it accurately: Use distinguish between A and B, or distinguish A from B.

Useful combinations: distinguish between; distinguish from.

Sample sentence: The report should distinguish between people who choose not to use the service and those who cannot access it.

276. Accommodate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To make room or suitable arrangements for people or needs.

Use it accurately: It can mean provide space or adapt to a requirement; it does not always refer to overnight lodging.

Useful combinations: accommodate different needs; accommodate more people.

Sample sentence: Flexible scheduling could accommodate students with caring responsibilities without requiring everyone to follow an identical routine.

277. Empower

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To give people greater ability, confidence or authority to act.

Use it accurately: Use empower someone to do something; explain the practical power gained rather than using it vaguely.

Useful combinations: empower residents; empower learners.

Sample sentence: Access to clear information can empower residents to question proposals and contribute more effectively to local decisions.

278. Engage

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To involve someone or take an active part in an activity.

Use it accurately: Use engage with an idea or engage in an activity; engaging someone can mean attracting their attention.

Useful combinations: engage with evidence; engage in discussion.

Sample sentence: Students are more likely to engage with feedback when they can see how to apply it in their next piece of work.

279. Distribute

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To share or spread something among people or across places.

Use it accurately: Use distribute resources among groups or distribute information to people; the arrangement need not be equal.

Useful combinations: distribute resources; distribute information.

Sample sentence: The aim should be to distribute resources according to need rather than repeat an allocation pattern that no longer reflects local circumstances.

280. Embrace

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To accept an idea or change willingly.

Use it accurately: This figurative sense differs from physically hugging someone; acceptance need not be uncritical.

Useful combinations: embrace change; embrace an opportunity.

Sample sentence: Organisations can embrace new technology while still examining whether it improves the experience of the people who use their services.

Precise adjectives and useful phrases

281. Viable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Able to work successfully and continue under realistic conditions.

Use it accurately: Viable often includes continuing practicality; feasible focuses on whether something can be carried out.

Useful combinations: a viable alternative; financially viable.

Sample sentence: Public transport becomes a viable alternative to driving when it is reliable enough to fit people's everyday commitments.

282. Equitable

adjective; formal

Meaning: Fair in how benefits, responsibilities or opportunities are distributed.

Use it accurately: Equitable does not always mean giving everyone an identical amount.

Useful combinations: an equitable system; equitable access.

Sample sentence: An equitable funding system should consider the additional costs faced by communities that are difficult to reach.

283. Inclusive

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Designed to include people with different circumstances and needs.

Use it accurately: Explain who can participate and how barriers are addressed; the label alone proves little.

Useful combinations: inclusive education; an inclusive environment.

Sample sentence: An inclusive classroom offers different ways to participate without assuming that every student learns or communicates in the same way.

284. Ubiquitous

adjective; formal

Meaning: Present or encountered almost everywhere in a particular setting.

Use it accurately: A strong claim; widespread may be more accurate when exceptions are important.

Useful combinations: ubiquitous technology; become ubiquitous.

Sample sentence: Smartphones may seem ubiquitous in some settings, but public services should not assume that every user owns one.

285. Redundant

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: No longer needed because another part already performs the same function.

Use it accurately: In British employment contexts, made redundant means losing a job because the role is no longer needed.

Useful combinations: redundant information; a redundant procedure.

Sample sentence: The revised form removes redundant questions so that applicants do not have to provide the same information several times.

286. Indispensable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: So necessary that something cannot function properly without it.

Use it accurately: Stronger than useful; reserve it for a genuinely essential role in the context.

Useful combinations: indispensable support; indispensable to.

Sample sentence: For residents who cannot drive, the local bus may be an indispensable link to work, shops and medical appointments.

287. Detrimental

adjective; formal

Meaning: Causing harm or damage.

Use it accurately: Use detrimental to; name the harm rather than assuming the judgement is obvious.

Useful combinations: detrimental effects; detrimental to learning.

Sample sentence: Constant interruptions can be detrimental to concentrated work, especially when a task requires a sustained train of thought.

288. Beneficial

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Producing a helpful or favourable effect.

Use it accurately: Use beneficial to or for in an appropriate context; explain who benefits and how.

Useful combinations: mutually beneficial; beneficial effects.

Sample sentence: Peer feedback can be beneficial when students understand the criteria and have time to respond to the comments they receive.

289. Contentious

adjective; formal

Meaning: Likely to cause disagreement or argument.

Use it accurately: It describes disagreement, not necessarily danger or factual inaccuracy.

Useful combinations: a contentious issue; a contentious proposal.

Sample sentence: The proposal became contentious because residents disagreed about whether its benefits would be shared fairly.

290. Polarised

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Divided into strongly opposing positions.

Use it accurately: Polarized is also standard; it suggests more than ordinary differences of opinion.

Useful combinations: a polarised debate; polarised views.

Sample sentence: A polarised debate can make compromise difficult when each side treats the other's concerns as entirely unreasonable.

291. Incremental

adjective; formal

Meaning: Developing through a series of small additions or changes.

Use it accurately: Incremental progress can be meaningful; the word does not imply that the change is unimportant.

Useful combinations: incremental improvements; an incremental approach.

Sample sentence: Incremental improvements may be more practical than a complete redesign when a service must continue operating throughout the changes.

292. Transformative

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Producing a major change in how something works or is experienced.

Use it accurately: Stronger than helpful; explain the scale of the change rather than using it as promotional language.

Useful combinations: a transformative effect; transformative change.

Sample sentence: Reliable internet access could be transformative for a remote community if it also becomes affordable and residents can obtain support.

293. Unprecedented

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Not previously experienced or recorded within the stated context.

Use it accurately: Specify the scope; unusually large is safer when you cannot justify a claim about all previous cases.

Useful combinations: unprecedented demand; an unprecedented change.

Sample sentence: The centre faced unprecedented demand within its ten-year history after a neighbouring facility closed temporarily.

294. Pervasive

adjective; formal; often negative

Meaning: Spread throughout a place or situation and strongly noticeable.

Use it accurately: It often describes an influence or problem; widespread is a more neutral alternative in some contexts.

Useful combinations: a pervasive problem; a pervasive influence.

Sample sentence: A pervasive lack of trust can make even a well-designed consultation difficult to carry out effectively.

295. Sceptical

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Doubtful about whether a claim is true or well supported.

Use it accurately: Use sceptical about or of; skeptical is a common American spelling.

Useful combinations: sceptical about claims; remain sceptical.

Sample sentence: I remain sceptical about the claim that one study method suits every learner, because people face different goals and constraints.

296. Susceptible

adjective; formal

Meaning: Easily affected or influenced by something.

Use it accurately: Use susceptible to; the influence is often harmful, though the word has broader uses.

Useful combinations: susceptible to pressure; susceptible to damage.

Sample sentence: People may be more susceptible to misleading claims when the subject is unfamiliar and the information appears authoritative.

297. Comparable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Similar enough in relevant respects to allow a useful comparison.

Use it accurately: Usually comparable to or with; comparable does not mean identical.

Useful combinations: comparable results; comparable circumstances.

Sample sentence: The two schools are not directly comparable unless differences in resources, student intake and local conditions are taken into account.

298. Complementary

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Different but useful together because each adds something the other lacks.

Use it accurately: Do not confuse complementary with complimentary, meaning praising or provided free of charge.

Useful combinations: complementary skills; complementary approaches.

Sample sentence: Online resources and classroom discussion can be complementary when each is used for the kind of support it provides most effectively.

299. Mutually exclusive

adjective phrase; formal

Meaning: Unable to occur or be true together in the same relevant situation.

Use it accurately: Do not use it for choices that merely compete for attention but can coexist.

Useful combinations: mutually exclusive options; not mutually exclusive.

Sample sentence: Economic development and environmental protection are not necessarily mutually exclusive, although particular proposals may involve difficult trade-offs.

300. Cost-effective

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Providing worthwhile results in relation to the money spent.

Use it accurately: It does not simply mean cheapest; compare the outcomes achieved for the cost.

Useful combinations: a cost-effective measure; cost-effective provision.

Sample sentence: Repairing the existing building may be more cost-effective than replacing it if the result meets the community's needs for many years.

301. Aberration

noun; formal

Meaning: Something that departs noticeably from the usual pattern.

Use it accurately: Use it when a normal pattern is established; an unusual event alone may not justify the label.

Useful combinations: a statistical aberration; an isolated aberration.

Sample sentence: The unusually low figure may be an aberration, so several more observations are needed before a lasting decline can be identified.

302. Abhorrence

noun; formal; strong emotion

Meaning: An intense feeling of disgust or moral rejection.

Use it accurately: Use abhorrence of; stronger than dislike and usually unsuitable for a minor personal preference.

Useful combinations: abhorrence of violence; express abhorrence.

Sample sentence: The speaker expressed abhorrence of violence while arguing that communities also needed practical ways to resolve disputes peacefully.

303. Acquiesce

verb; formal

Meaning: To accept something without protest, often despite reservations.

Use it accurately: Use acquiesce in or to; agree is clearer when acceptance is active and enthusiastic.

Useful combinations: acquiesce in a decision; reluctantly acquiesce.

Sample sentence: Residents should not be expected to acquiesce in a major change without receiving a clear explanation of its consequences.

304. Analogy

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A comparison used to explain one thing through similarities with another.

Use it accurately: An analogy helps understanding but does not prove that the two situations are identical.

Useful combinations: draw an analogy; an analogy between.

Sample sentence: The teacher drew an analogy between planning an essay and planning a journey, while explaining where the comparison stopped being useful.

305. Antique

noun; neutral

Meaning: An old object valued for its age, craftsmanship or historical interest.

Use it accurately: Not every old object is an antique; the word can also function as an adjective.

Useful combinations: an antique shop; an antique desk.

Sample sentence: The antique desk appealed to me because its worn surface suggested a history that a new piece of furniture would not have.

306. Appease

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To calm someone or satisfy demands in order to reduce anger or opposition.

Use it accurately: It can imply giving in too readily; reassure is often more suitable when the aim is to address a reasonable concern.

Useful combinations: appease critics; appease an opponent.

Sample sentence: A temporary discount may appease dissatisfied customers, but it does not address the service failure that caused their frustration.

307. Appetite

noun; neutral

Meaning: A desire for food or, figuratively, a strong interest in something.

Use it accurately: Use appetite for in the figurative sense; the object must suit the context.

Useful combinations: an appetite for change; an appetite for risk.

Sample sentence: There appears to be an appetite for evening classes, but the college needs more information about suitable times and subjects.

308. Astounding

adjective; neutral; strong emphasis

Meaning: Extremely surprising or impressive.

Use it accurately: Use it sparingly; a precise description is often preferable to unsupported praise.

Useful combinations: an astounding achievement; an astounding difference.

Sample sentence: I found her progress astounding because she had learnt to perform confidently in a language she had only recently begun studying.

309. Avarice

noun; formal or literary; negative

Meaning: An excessive desire for money or material possessions.

Use it accurately: Greed is a more common alternative; avarice can sound overly dramatic in an ordinary explanation.

Useful combinations: personal avarice; driven by avarice.

Sample sentence: The novel presents avarice as a force that gradually damages the character's relationships and sense of responsibility.

310. Banter

noun; informal

Meaning: Playful conversation involving teasing or joking.

Use it accurately: What one person calls banter may be unwelcome to another; context and relationships matter.

Useful combinations: friendly banter; light-hearted banter.

Sample sentence: I enjoy the friendly banter in our team, but everyone knows that personal concerns should be taken seriously.

311. Bedrock

noun; neutral to formal; figurative here

Meaning: The fundamental support on which something depends.

Use it accurately: Literally solid rock beneath loose material; figuratively use the bedrock of.

Useful combinations: the bedrock of trust; a bedrock principle.

Sample sentence: Reliable public information is the bedrock of meaningful debate because people need some shared basis for judging competing claims.

312. Bizarre

adjective; neutral; often conversational

Meaning: Very strange or unexpected.

Use it accurately: It expresses a judgement; unusual is more measured when describing evidence objectively.

Useful combinations: a bizarre situation; a bizarre coincidence.

Sample sentence: It was a bizarre coincidence that the person sitting beside me on the train had attended the same tiny school as my father.

313. Brazen

adjective; neutral to formal; negative

Meaning: Openly and shamelessly doing something considered wrong.

Use it accurately: Stronger than confident; it implies disregard for expected standards.

Useful combinations: a brazen attempt; a brazen lie.

Sample sentence: The article described the advertisement as a brazen attempt to distract customers from the company's unresolved service problems.

314. Callous

adjective; neutral to formal; negative

Meaning: Showing little concern for other people's suffering or feelings.

Use it accurately: A strong judgement about behaviour; do not use it merely for someone who disagrees with you.

Useful combinations: a callous remark; callous indifference.

Sample sentence: Dismissing residents' concerns without listening can appear callous, especially when the decision will disrupt their daily lives.

315. Camouflage

verb; neutral; nature or figurative contexts

Meaning: To conceal something by helping it blend in or appear different.

Use it accurately: Camouflage can be physical or figurative; conceal is often simpler in general arguments.

Useful combinations: camouflage a position; camouflage a weakness.

Sample sentence: An attractive presentation should not be used to camouflage weaknesses in the evidence behind a proposal.

316. Circumspect

adjective; formal

Meaning: Careful about possible risks before speaking or acting.

Use it accurately: A more formal alternative to cautious; it does not mean indecisive.

Useful combinations: a circumspect approach; circumspect about claims.

Sample sentence: A circumspect reader would check the source of a striking claim before sharing it with others.

317. Clandestine

adjective; formal

Meaning: Kept secret, often because it is unauthorised or disapproved of.

Use it accurately: It carries a stronger implication of concealment than private; not every confidential meeting is clandestine.

Useful combinations: a clandestine meeting; clandestine activity.

Sample sentence: The historical account described clandestine meetings in which campaigners planned how to circulate their ideas.

318. Coincidence

noun; neutral

Meaning: Two or more events occurring together without an established causal connection.

Use it accurately: A coincidence does not prove that no relationship exists; it means one has not been established by the coincidence itself.

Useful combinations: a remarkable coincidence; by coincidence.

Sample sentence: The two changes occurred in the same month, but that coincidence alone does not show that one caused the other.

319. Commence

verb; formal

Meaning: To begin an activity or process.

Use it accurately: Start and begin are usually more natural in everyday speech; commence is common in official notices.

Useful combinations: commence work; commence proceedings.

Sample sentence: Construction will commence only after residents have received information about access arrangements and the expected duration of the work.

320. Debase

verb; formal; negative

Meaning: To reduce the quality, dignity or value of something.

Use it accurately: A strong evaluative word; describe the actual decline rather than using it as a general insult.

Useful combinations: debase a debate; debase standards.

Sample sentence: Turning every disagreement into a personal attack can debase public debate and make serious discussion more difficult.

321. Decry

verb; formal

Meaning: To publicly criticise something strongly.

Use it accurately: Decry is not related to ordinary crying; it describes outspoken condemnation.

Useful combinations: decry a decision; decry a practice.

Sample sentence: Some commentators decry the loss of local shops but give little attention to the costs those businesses face.

322. Deference

noun; formal

Meaning: Respect shown by allowing another person's status or judgement to carry weight.

Use it accurately: Use deference to; it can suggest respect or excessive willingness to yield, depending on context.

Useful combinations: out of deference to; excessive deference.

Sample sentence: Excessive deference to senior staff may prevent junior colleagues from pointing out problems that they are well placed to notice.

323. Demeanour

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A person's outward manner and way of behaving.

Use it accurately: Demeanor is American spelling; do not confuse demeanour with demean, meaning belittle.

Useful combinations: a calm demeanour; a professional demeanour.

Sample sentence: Her calm demeanour helped the group focus on practical solutions when the original plan had to be changed.

324. Demure

adjective; formal or literary

Meaning: Quiet and modest in manner or appearance.

Use it accurately: It can carry gendered or old-fashioned associations; reserved is often a more neutral description.

Useful combinations: a demure manner; a demure appearance.

Sample sentence: The character's demure manner contrasts with the directness of her private thoughts, creating a difference between appearance and intention.

325. Derive

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To obtain something from a source or originate from it.

Use it accurately: Use derive something from something, or something derives from a source.

Useful combinations: derive benefits from; derive from.

Sample sentence: Students may derive more benefit from a short task they revise carefully than from a long exercise they never review.

326. Distraction

noun; neutral

Meaning: Something that takes attention away from the main activity.

Use it accurately: A distraction can be external or internal; it is not necessarily enjoyable.

Useful combinations: a constant distraction; minimise distractions.

Sample sentence: For me, the greatest distraction when studying is the urge to check messages whenever a task becomes difficult.

327. Divulge

verb; formal

Meaning: To reveal information that was private or previously unknown.

Use it accurately: It usually concerns information, not the physical discovery of an object.

Useful combinations: divulge details; divulge confidential information.

Sample sentence: Participants should know whether the organisation may divulge their details to others before they agree to take part.

328. Dominate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To have the greatest influence, control or presence.

Use it accurately: Dominate takes a direct object; it does not always mean having a majority of every measure.

Useful combinations: dominate a discussion; dominate a market.

Sample sentence: A few confident speakers can dominate a discussion unless the facilitator creates space for other participants to contribute.

329. Drown

verb; neutral; literal or figurative

Meaning: To die through inability to breathe underwater; figuratively, to be overwhelmed.

Use it accurately: In drown out, a sound prevents another from being heard; choose the intended sense carefully.

Useful combinations: drown out a voice; drown in paperwork.

Sample sentence: The background music was so loud that it threatened to drown out the speaker's explanation of the exhibition.

330. Equate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To treat two things as equivalent or essentially the same.

Use it accurately: Use equate A with B; question whether the equivalence is justified.

Useful combinations: equate success with wealth; equate with.

Sample sentence: It is misleading to equate educational success with examination results alone when the purpose of schooling is broader.

331. Exclude

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To leave someone or something out or prevent participation.

Use it accurately: Use exclude from; distinguish deliberate exclusion from an unintended barrier.

Useful combinations: exclude a possibility; exclude people from.

Sample sentence: A consultation held only during working hours may exclude residents who cannot take time away from their jobs.

332. Exemplary

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: So good that it provides a model for others.

Use it accurately: This positive sense differs from specialised uses such as an exemplary punishment intended to deter others.

Useful combinations: exemplary service; exemplary conduct.

Sample sentence: The receptionist provided exemplary service by listening carefully, explaining the options and following up when the problem was resolved.

333. Facade

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: The front of a building, or an outward appearance hiding a different reality.

Use it accurately: Also written façade; specify whether the architectural or figurative meaning is intended.

Useful combinations: a building facade; a facade of confidence.

Sample sentence: The restored facade preserved the building's street appearance while its interior was adapted for a new community use.

334. Fathom

verb; neutral; often conversational

Meaning: To understand something that is difficult to explain or comprehend.

Use it accurately: Often used negatively: cannot fathom why; understand is a straightforward alternative.

Useful combinations: cannot fathom; fathom the reason.

Sample sentence: I could not fathom why the form requested the same information in three different sections without explaining the reason.

335. Feature

noun; neutral

Meaning: A characteristic or part that helps describe something.

Use it accurately: For Academic Task 1, distinguish a main feature from a minor detail; as a verb, feature means include prominently.

Useful combinations: a distinctive feature; a key feature.

Sample sentence: A distinctive feature of the neighbourhood is that most everyday services can be reached on foot.

336. Ferment

noun; formal or literary

Meaning: A state of intense change, activity or development of ideas.

Use it accurately: This noun sense differs from the verb describing a biological process in food and drink.

Useful combinations: intellectual ferment; social ferment.

Sample sentence: The memoir describes a period of intellectual ferment in which students questioned ideas that had previously seemed settled.

337. Fleeting

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Lasting for only a short time.

Use it accurately: It emphasises brief duration; it does not necessarily mean unimportant.

Useful combinations: a fleeting impression; a fleeting glimpse.

Sample sentence: A fleeting visit can give a traveller an attractive impression of a place without revealing what everyday life there is like.

338. Forsake

verb; formal or literary

Meaning: To abandon something or leave it behind.

Use it accurately: Past forms: forsook and forsaken; give up or abandon is usually more natural in ordinary discussion.

Useful combinations: forsake a career; forsake a principle.

Sample sentence: The character refuses to forsake her principles even when doing so would make her immediate circumstances easier.

339. Garnish

verb; food contexts

Meaning: To add a small decorative or flavouring item to prepared food.

Use it accurately: This cooking sense differs from legal uses of garnish; do not confuse it with the main preparation process.

Useful combinations: garnish with herbs; garnish a dish.

Sample sentence: At the cooking class, we learnt to garnish the soup with a few fresh herbs rather than cover its flavour with unnecessary additions.

340. Gluttony

noun; formal; strongly negative

Meaning: Excessive eating or drinking, often judged as a moral failing.

Use it accurately: Avoid using it as a casual label for people or medical conditions; it belongs mainly in moral or literary discussion.

Useful combinations: a depiction of gluttony; condemn gluttony.

Sample sentence: The story uses gluttony to criticise excess, but its moral language should not be confused with a medical explanation of eating behaviour.

341. Gratuitous

adjective; formal; negative

Meaning: Unnecessary and without a good reason, often causing offence or harm.

Use it accurately: It does not usually mean free of charge in contemporary general English.

Useful combinations: gratuitous violence; a gratuitous insult.

Sample sentence: The documentary could explain the seriousness of the event without including gratuitous images that added little to viewers' understanding.

342. Haughty

adjective; neutral to formal; negative

Meaning: Behaving as though one is superior to other people.

Use it accurately: It is not the same as confident or reserved; it implies an attitude of superiority.

Useful combinations: a haughty manner; a haughty response.

Sample sentence: A haughty response to a reasonable question can discourage customers from raising concerns that the organisation needs to hear.

343. Hideaway

noun; neutral

Meaning: A quiet or secluded place used for retreat or privacy.

Use it accurately: Common in descriptions of travel and personal places; not every hiding place is a relaxing hideaway.

Useful combinations: a peaceful hideaway; a secluded hideaway.

Sample sentence: The small reading room became my favourite hideaway because it was quiet enough to concentrate without feeling isolated.

344. Hoard

verb; neutral; often negative

Meaning: To collect and keep a large amount, often more than is needed.

Use it accurately: Hoarding differs from ordinary saving or storing; it suggests excessive accumulation or reluctance to share.

Useful combinations: hoard supplies; hoard information.

Sample sentence: When departments hoard information, other teams may repeat work that has already been completed.

345. Impeccable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Meeting a very high standard without noticeable faults.

Use it accurately: A strong compliment; avoid claiming absolute perfection without a clear basis.

Useful combinations: impeccable manners; impeccable timing.

Sample sentence: Her impeccable preparation meant that she could answer practical questions without interrupting the flow of the presentation.

346. Impertinent

adjective; formal; negative

Meaning: Rude through showing inappropriate disrespect or familiarity.

Use it accurately: Usually concerns a remark or question; it does not merely mean relevant or irrelevant.

Useful combinations: an impertinent question; an impertinent remark.

Sample sentence: A question may sound impertinent if it demands private information without explaining why that information is necessary.

347. Impudent

adjective; formal; negative

Meaning: Boldly disrespectful or cheeky towards someone.

Use it accurately: Stronger and more judgemental than informal; it describes disrespect rather than simple confidence.

Useful combinations: an impudent reply; impudent behaviour.

Sample sentence: The character's impudent reply reveals his disregard for the authority that the other person expects him to respect.

348. Isolate

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To separate something from other people, things or influences.

Use it accurately: It can describe social separation or identifying one factor in analysis.

Useful combinations: isolate a factor; socially isolated.

Sample sentence: It is difficult to isolate the effect of advertising when the product's price and availability changed at the same time.

349. Jubilant

adjective; neutral to formal; strong emotion

Meaning: Extremely joyful, often because of a success shared with others.

Use it accurately: More celebratory than pleased; use it for a fitting occasion.

Useful combinations: a jubilant crowd; jubilant supporters.

Sample sentence: The volunteers were jubilant when the community centre reopened after months of work and uncertainty.

350. Knackered

adjective; very informal British English; recognition priority

Meaning: Extremely tired or worn out.

Use it accurately: Strongly colloquial and potentially inappropriate in formal settings; exhausted is a safer neutral alternative.

Useful combinations: absolutely knackered; completely knackered.

Sample sentence: After carrying boxes up three flights of stairs, I was absolutely knackered and ready for a quiet evening.

351. Launder

verb; neutral; specialised meanings

Meaning: To wash clothes; in finance, to disguise the criminal origin of money.

Use it accurately: Money laundering is not ordinary banking or transferring money; make the intended sense clear.

Useful combinations: launder money; launder clothing.

Sample sentence: The crime report distinguished the original theft from the later attempts to launder the money through apparently legitimate transactions.

352. Licence

noun; neutral

Meaning: Official permission to do something, often recorded in a document.

Use it accurately: In British English, licence is the noun and license the verb; American English uses license for both.

Useful combinations: a driving licence; obtain a licence.

Sample sentence: Applicants should receive clear information about the documents required before they begin the process of obtaining a licence.

353. Lithe

adjective; literary or descriptive

Meaning: Moving easily and gracefully, often with a flexible body.

Use it accurately: A specialised description of movement or physique; flexible is usually more useful in general discussion.

Useful combinations: a lithe dancer; lithe movements.

Sample sentence: The reviewer described the dancer's lithe movements as a contrast to the heavy, angular shapes of the stage set.

354. Ludicrous

adjective; neutral; strongly critical

Meaning: So unreasonable or absurd that it invites ridicule.

Use it accurately: Stronger than impractical; explain the problem rather than relying on the judgement alone.

Useful combinations: a ludicrous claim; a ludicrous situation.

Sample sentence: It would be ludicrous to advertise a service as accessible while requiring every applicant to climb several flights of stairs.

355. Malicious

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Intending to cause harm or distress.

Use it accurately: Malicious implies intent; an accidental mistake is not automatically malicious.

Useful combinations: malicious rumours; malicious intent.

Sample sentence: The article distinguished an accidental error from the deliberate spread of malicious rumours about a competitor.

356. Metamorphosis

noun; scientific or literary

Meaning: A major change in form or character.

Use it accurately: Use literally for certain biological transformations or figuratively for a profound change; plural metamorphoses.

Useful combinations: undergo a metamorphosis; a dramatic metamorphosis.

Sample sentence: The abandoned station underwent a remarkable metamorphosis when its platforms were converted into gardens and exhibition spaces.

357. Momentous

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Very important because of major consequences or historical significance.

Use it accurately: Do not confuse momentous with momentary, meaning brief.

Useful combinations: a momentous decision; a momentous occasion.

Sample sentence: For my family, moving to another country was a momentous decision that affected our work, education and everyday relationships.

358. Mundane

adjective; neutral

Meaning: Ordinary and often lacking excitement.

Use it accurately: It can sound dismissive; everyday is more neutral when the tasks remain important.

Useful combinations: mundane tasks; mundane details.

Sample sentence: Some of the most useful technology deals with mundane tasks, freeing people to spend more time on work that requires judgement.

359. Nadir

noun; formal or literary

Meaning: The lowest or worst point in an experience or development.

Use it accurately: Low point is usually clearer; it is an unnecessary ornament for most routine chart descriptions.

Useful combinations: reach a nadir; the nadir of.

Sample sentence: The memoir describes the closure of the family business as the nadir of a difficult year, followed by a gradual recovery.

360. Noble

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Admirable because it shows high moral purpose or generosity.

Use it accurately: This sense differs from belonging to an aristocratic class; good intentions do not prove good results.

Useful combinations: a noble aim; a noble gesture.

Sample sentence: Expanding educational opportunity is a noble aim, but the programme also needs practical arrangements that make participation possible.

361. Notwithstanding

preposition or adverb; very formal

Meaning: Despite something, or nevertheless.

Use it accurately: Often unnecessarily formal in IELTS; despite or although may make the relationship clearer.

Useful combinations: notwithstanding these concerns; these limitations notwithstanding.

Sample sentence: Notwithstanding these concerns, the proposal deserves consideration because it addresses a need that existing services have not met.

362. Oblige

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To require someone to act, or willingly do something helpful for them.

Use it accurately: Be obliged to do something means required; much obliged expresses thanks. Check the intended sense.

Useful combinations: be obliged to; happy to oblige.

Sample sentence: Residents should not be obliged to travel to a distant office for a procedure that could reasonably be completed locally.

363. Obtainable

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Possible to get or acquire.

Use it accurately: Available is often more natural; obtainable emphasises the possibility of acquiring something.

Useful combinations: readily obtainable; easily obtainable.

Sample sentence: The repair would be more practical if replacement parts were readily obtainable rather than requiring a lengthy special order.

364. Obtuse

adjective; formal; negative in this sense

Meaning: Slow or unwilling to understand something that appears clear.

Use it accurately: It is an insulting description of a person; the mathematical sense concerns an angle greater than ninety and less than 180 degrees.

Useful combinations: deliberately obtuse; an obtuse response.

Sample sentence: The fictional official seems deliberately obtuse, responding to the wording of each complaint while avoiding the problem it describes.

365. Overcome

verb; neutral

Meaning: To deal successfully with a difficulty or barrier.

Use it accurately: Past: overcame; past participle: overcome. It suggests successful handling, unlike merely facing a problem.

Useful combinations: overcome obstacles; overcome a difficulty.

Sample sentence: Clear guidance can help applicants overcome unfamiliar procedures, but it cannot remove financial barriers on its own.

366. Overdo

verb; neutral; often conversational

Meaning: To do more than is sensible, helpful or appropriate.

Use it accurately: Past: overdid; past participle: overdone. It can refer to effort, decoration or a repeated technique.

Useful combinations: overdo the detail; overdo the emphasis.

Sample sentence: It is easy to overdo the use of unusual vocabulary and make an otherwise clear explanation sound unnatural.

367. Paradigm

noun; formal; academic contexts

Meaning: A model or framework that shapes how a subject is understood.

Use it accurately: Reserve paradigm shift for a fundamental change in approach, not every new idea or minor update.

Useful combinations: a research paradigm; a paradigm shift.

Sample sentence: The author describes the change as a new paradigm because it alters the assumptions on which the earlier approach depended.

368. Petrify

verb; neutral or scientific, depending on sense

Meaning: To frighten someone intensely; literally, to turn material into stone.

Use it accurately: The frightened sense commonly appears as petrified of; do not confuse it with ordinary worry.

Useful combinations: petrified of; absolutely petrified.

Sample sentence: I was initially petrified of performing in public, but rehearsing with a small, supportive group made the experience less intimidating.

369. Pique

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To arouse interest or curiosity.

Use it accurately: The spelling is pique, not peak or peek; the noun can describe irritation in a different sense.

Useful combinations: pique interest; pique curiosity.

Sample sentence: The unusual opening of the documentary piqued my curiosity, but the clear explanations were what kept me watching.

370. Platitude

noun; neutral to formal; critical

Meaning: A familiar statement that sounds meaningful but offers little useful insight.

Use it accurately: A common idea is not automatically a platitude; the criticism concerns empty or unhelpful repetition.

Useful combinations: an empty platitude; repeat platitudes.

Sample sentence: Telling students to work harder becomes a platitude if they receive no guidance about what to change in their approach.

371. Plethora

noun; formal

Meaning: A very large or excessive number or amount.

Use it accurately: Use a plethora of, but many or a wide range of is usually simpler and more natural.

Useful combinations: a plethora of options; a plethora of resources.

Sample sentence: A plethora of learning resources can be confusing when students have no clear way to choose those that address their needs.

372. Proceed

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To continue or move to the next stage.

Use it accurately: Use proceed with a plan or proceed to the next step; do not confuse it with precede, meaning come before.

Useful combinations: proceed with caution; proceed to a stage.

Sample sentence: The committee should not proceed with the final design until access concerns have been examined and addressed.

373. Proclivity

noun; formal; often critical

Meaning: A tendency to behave or prefer things in a particular way.

Use it accurately: Usually a proclivity for + noun or -ing form; tendency is more natural in most everyday contexts.

Useful combinations: a proclivity for risk; a proclivity for exaggeration.

Sample sentence: The narrator's proclivity for exaggeration makes it difficult to know which details of the story should be taken literally.

374. Prognostication

noun; very formal; recognition priority

Meaning: A prediction or forecast about what may happen.

Use it accurately: Usually an unnecessarily elaborate alternative to prediction; recognise it rather than force it into an essay.

Useful combinations: economic prognostications; gloomy prognostications.

Sample sentence: The article contrasted confident prognostications about the future with the uncertainty of the evidence available at the time.

375. Protectorate

noun; specialised historical and political contexts

Meaning: A territory or state under the protection and significant control of a more powerful state.

Use it accurately: Not simply a protected natural area; use only when the historical or political relationship fits.

Useful combinations: a former protectorate; establish a protectorate.

Sample sentence: The history passage explained how the region's status as a protectorate influenced its administration and relations with neighbouring states.

376. Rash

adjective; neutral; negative

Meaning: Acting too quickly without considering the consequences.

Use it accurately: This adjective differs from the noun describing a skin condition; rash does not simply mean fast.

Useful combinations: a rash decision; rash behaviour.

Sample sentence: Closing the programme after one disappointing term would be a rash decision without first examining why attendance fell.

377. Reaffirm

verb; formal

Meaning: To state support or a position clearly again.

Use it accurately: Reaffirm implies an earlier commitment or statement; do not use it for a first announcement.

Useful combinations: reaffirm a commitment; reaffirm support.

Sample sentence: The organisation should reaffirm its commitment to access by explaining how the revised arrangements will meet users' needs.

378. Refinement

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A small improvement that makes something more precise, effective or polished.

Use it accurately: It can also describe elegance; specify whether you mean a design change, a process or personal style.

Useful combinations: further refinement; a design refinement.

Sample sentence: The trial suggested that the timetable needed refinement rather than complete replacement, particularly around the busiest arrival times.

379. Reiterate

verb; formal

Meaning: To state something again, often for emphasis or clarity.

Use it accurately: Reiterate already means repeat; reiterate again is usually unnecessary.

Useful combinations: reiterate a concern; reiterate that.

Sample sentence: The residents reiterated their concern that the proposal addressed visitor parking while overlooking the needs of people living nearby.

380. Repudiate

verb; formal; strong rejection

Meaning: To reject a claim, belief, association or obligation firmly.

Use it accurately: Stronger than disagree; it does not necessarily mean disproving the claim with evidence.

Useful combinations: repudiate an allegation; repudiate a belief.

Sample sentence: The organisation repudiated the claim that the consultation had been unnecessary and explained why local participation mattered.

381. Rotate

verb; neutral

Meaning: To turn around a central point or alternate people and tasks in a cycle.

Use it accurately: In work contexts, rotate responsibilities means exchange them systematically rather than change them randomly.

Useful combinations: rotate tasks; rotate around an axis.

Sample sentence: Teams can rotate routine responsibilities so that the same person is not always expected to perform the least popular tasks.

382. Scenario

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A possible situation or an account of how events might develop.

Use it accurately: A scenario is not a prediction that must come true; several scenarios can be examined.

Useful combinations: a possible scenario; a worst-case scenario.

Sample sentence: Planning should consider a scenario in which demand grows slowly, rather than relying entirely on the most optimistic forecast.

383. Seek

verb; neutral to formal

Meaning: To try to find, obtain or achieve something.

Use it accurately: Past forms: sought and sought; use seek advice, not seek for advice.

Useful combinations: seek assistance; seek to improve.

Sample sentence: Residents should be able to seek clarification before a decision is finalised, especially when the proposed arrangements are complex.

384. Squander

verb; neutral to formal; negative

Meaning: To waste something valuable through poor or careless use.

Use it accurately: Stronger than spend or use; it implies that the opportunity or resource was used badly.

Useful combinations: squander resources; squander an opportunity.

Sample sentence: A poorly planned launch can squander public interest if people encounter problems that could have been identified during a small trial.

385. Stringent

adjective; formal

Meaning: Strict and demanding in the standards or conditions imposed.

Use it accurately: It describes rules, checks or requirements, not simply a difficult experience.

Useful combinations: stringent requirements; stringent checks.

Sample sentence: Stringent application requirements should have a clear purpose, otherwise they may exclude capable people without improving the selection process.

386. Suspension

noun; neutral to formal

Meaning: A temporary stopping of an activity, service or permission.

Use it accurately: The word also has mechanical and scientific senses; a suspension is not necessarily a permanent cancellation.

Useful combinations: a temporary suspension; suspension of services.

Sample sentence: The temporary suspension of evening services left regular passengers needing clear information about alternative routes.

387. Tantamount

adjective; very formal

Meaning: Equivalent in effect or seriousness to something else.

Use it accurately: The pattern is tantamount to + noun or -ing form; it often introduces a strong critical judgement.

Useful combinations: tantamount to exclusion; tantamount to admitting.

Sample sentence: Charging a fee that the intended users cannot afford may be tantamount to excluding them from the service.

388. Teeming

adjective; vivid description

Meaning: Full of large numbers of moving people, animals or other living things.

Use it accurately: Use teeming with; it is vivid and often better suited to description than a neutral statistical report.

Useful combinations: teeming with visitors; teeming with wildlife.

Sample sentence: By late afternoon, the square was teeming with visitors, while the smaller streets nearby remained surprisingly quiet.

389. Tremendous

adjective; neutral; often conversational

Meaning: Very great in size, intensity or effect.

Use it accurately: It is broad and emphatic; a more precise adjective may be better in analytical writing.

Useful combinations: a tremendous effort; a tremendous difference.

Sample sentence: Having someone explain the application process made a tremendous difference when I was unfamiliar with the terminology.

390. Trivial

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Of little importance or seriousness in the circumstances.

Use it accurately: What seems trivial to one person may matter to another; explain the basis of the judgement.

Useful combinations: a trivial detail; a trivial difference.

Sample sentence: A delay of a few minutes may seem trivial, but it can matter greatly to someone trying to catch the last connection home.

391. Ultimate

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Final or most important in a sequence or hierarchy.

Use it accurately: It can also mean the greatest example of something; specify which sense is intended.

Useful combinations: the ultimate aim; ultimate responsibility.

Sample sentence: The ultimate aim of assessment should be to support sound educational decisions, not merely to generate a convenient ranking.

392. Vanquish

verb; literary or dramatic; recognition priority

Meaning: To defeat someone or something completely.

Use it accurately: Defeat or overcome is usually more natural in IELTS discussion; vanquish can sound theatrical.

Useful combinations: vanquish an opponent; vanquish an enemy.

Sample sentence: In the legend, the hero vanquishes the enemy through patience and ingenuity rather than physical strength alone.

393. Vaunt

verb; literary or uncommon; recognition priority

Meaning: To praise or display one's achievements boastfully.

Use it accurately: Often encountered as vaunted or much-vaunted; boast about is clearer in everyday speech.

Useful combinations: vaunt achievements; much-vaunted benefits.

Sample sentence: The advertisement vaunts the product's convenience but provides little information about the conditions attached to using it.

394. Velleity

noun; very rare; recognition priority

Meaning: A slight wish or intention, often too weak to lead to action.

Use it accurately: Usually unsuitable for ordinary IELTS output; wish or vague intention will communicate more naturally.

Useful combinations: a mere velleity; remain a velleity.

Sample sentence: Her plan to write a novel remained a velleity: she liked the idea but never made time to begin.

395. Venerable

adjective; formal or literary

Meaning: Respected because of age, history or long-established importance.

Use it accurately: It is not simply a synonym for old; respect is part of the meaning.

Useful combinations: a venerable institution; a venerable tradition.

Sample sentence: A venerable institution can respect its history while still questioning practices that no longer serve the people who depend on it.

396. Vicissitude

noun; formal or literary; usually plural

Meaning: An unexpected change in circumstances, especially one involving difficulty.

Use it accurately: Usually vicissitudes of life or fortune; ups and downs is a more natural conversational alternative.

Useful combinations: the vicissitudes of life; endure vicissitudes.

Sample sentence: The memoir follows the family through the vicissitudes of migration, showing both periods of uncertainty and moments of renewed confidence.

397. Wingspan

noun; nature and technical contexts

Meaning: The distance between the tips of fully extended wings.

Use it accurately: A precise descriptive noun for birds, insects or aircraft; it is not a general measure of height or body length.

Useful combinations: a wide wingspan; measure the wingspan.

Sample sentence: The museum display compared the birds' wingspans and explained why body size alone was not enough to describe their shape.

398. Woes

plural noun; journalistic or literary

Meaning: Problems or troubles causing concern or distress.

Use it accurately: Often found in headlines; problems is usually clearer in formal analysis.

Useful combinations: financial woes; economic woes.

Sample sentence: The article described the firm's financial woes but gave little detail about the decisions that had created them.

399. Zealous

adjective; neutral to formal

Meaning: Showing intense enthusiasm and commitment to a cause or activity.

Use it accurately: It can be positive or critical; overzealous clearly suggests excessive enthusiasm.

Useful combinations: a zealous supporter; zealous enforcement.

Sample sentence: Zealous enforcement of minor rules can damage trust when the organisation ignores more serious concerns raised by users.

400. Zenith

noun; formal or literary

Meaning: The highest point of success, development or influence.

Use it accurately: Peak is usually clearer in routine IELTS writing; the astronomical meaning is a separate technical sense.

Useful combinations: reach a zenith; at its zenith.

Sample sentence: The exhibition explores the artist's work at the zenith of her career while also showing the experiments that preceded it.



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