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GRE[®]

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Philip Geer, Ed.M.

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THIRD EDITION
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The excerpts and sample sentences included in this book are for educational purposes only. They should not be taken to reflect the views of either the author or Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

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This eBook also contains hyperlinks, which allow you to navigate through content, go to helpful resources, and click between all questions and their answers.

Please note, for best optimization for the Fill-in-the-Blank exercises and reading passages, please turn your device horizontally.

Introduction:

Mastering Advanced Vocabulary for the GRE

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) changed the format of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test in August 2011. The new Verbal Reasoning section of the GRE features more advanced reading passages with more demanding questions, as well as longer, more complex sentence-completion questions. The section no longer includes analogy or antonyms questions.

This is how ETS describes the new Verbal Reasoning section:

- Measure of ability to analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it, analyze relationships among component parts of sentences, and recognize relationships between words and concepts
- Emphasis on skills related to graduate work, such as complex reasoning
 - Greater emphasis on higher cognitive skills and less dependence on vocabulary knowledge alone
 - More text-based materials, such as reading passages
 - A broader selection of reading passages
 - Expansion of computer-enabled tasks (e.g., highlighting a sentence in a passage that serves the function described in the question)

What does this mean for you as a student preparing for the new Verbal Reasoning section of the GRE? It means that you have to practice the skills of analyzing information in a passage, understanding the relationships among parts of a sentence, and comprehending relationships between words and concepts that are specified by ETS. To do this you should work through the skills section and practice tests in a reputable GRE General Test guidebook, such as *Barron's GRE Verbal Workbook*. You also need to read widely, thinking critically about what you read. Read good books and periodicals such as *The New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Time*, *The Economist*, and *Scientific American*. Besides reading these, you should also read some material at an even higher level. This will improve your ability to understand complex sentence structure and follow a sophisticated line of reasoning. If, as you read, you look up words you do not know in a good dictionary, you will also improve your vocabulary.

Speaking of vocabulary, does the change in the GRE Verbal Reasoning section really mean that you no longer need to have a good vocabulary to do well on the test?

The answer is no. Look at what ETS says about the new test: “*Greater* emphasis on higher cognitive skills and *less* dependence on vocabulary knowledge *alone*” (italics). This means that having a good vocabulary is still very important. Although antonym and analogy questions emphasizing knowledge of vocabulary alone have been dropped, the revamped test does place a considerable emphasis on advanced vocabulary, especially in the new sentence equivalence and text completion questions that have been introduced. Let’s examine some of these types of questions and answer choices to see how important vocabulary is on the revised GRE.

SENTENCE-EQUIVALENCE AND TEXT-COMPLETION QUESTIONS

In the sentence-equivalence question below, you must choose *two* answers that could correctly complete the sentence.

It would be difficult to imagine two more different personalities—
Liz is shy and taciturn, while Stan is outgoing and _____

- A salubrious
- B laconic
- C specious
- D loquacious
- E doctrinaire
- F talkative

Can you arrive at the correct answers to this question without knowing the meaning of the advanced word in the sentence, *taciturn* (incommunicative, not inclined to speak much), and the meanings of the five advanced words that appear in the answer choices? If you don’t know the meanings of *salubrious*, *laconic*, *specious*, *loquacious*, and *doctrinaire*, you will be forced to guess one of the correct answers to this question, (D) *loquacious*, which means (F) *talkative*, the second correct answer. Not all sentence-equivalence questions are so vocabulary dependent but you can expect quite a few to require knowledge of very advanced words.

Let’s take a look at another type of question that requires knowledge of advanced words. In the first text-completion question below, you must choose *one* answer to fill in the blank.

In most industrial countries, government intervenes in the economy by changing fiscal and monetary policy to _____ the negative effects of the business cycle, despite the fact that there exists no theory supported by conclusive evidence to explain the underlying cause of the business cycle.

remonstrate
exacerbate
understand
establish
mitigate

If you don't know the definition of *mitigate* (to cause to become less harsh, severe, or painful), you will not be able to answer this question correctly. Also, the more words you know in the other answer choices, the more confident you can be in answering the question.

Here's a question that requires you to choose words to fill in *two* blanks.

Some scholars deny that there is a direct correlation between the scientific theory of relativity and intellectual fashions in the arts, pointing out that many important modernist works such as Igor Stravinsky's (i) _____ symphony *The Rites of Spring* (ii) _____ the theory of relativity.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
seminal	presage
syllogistic	antecede
ephemeral	subsume

In this question, all of the answer choices are advanced words. It is not possible to answer this question correctly without knowing the meanings of these advanced words, especially the meanings of the correct answer choices (i) *seminal* (containing the seeds of later development) and (ii) *antecede* (precede).

The final question below requires you to fill in *three* blanks.

The phrase “It’s a matter of (i) _____” is often used to indicate that the real meaning of a statement is being lost in verbiage, often with the implication that there is (ii) _____ or (iii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
definition	exculpation	peculation
semantics	meritriciousness	equivocation
debate	obfuscation	vacillation

Two key words in the sentence—*verbiage* and *implication*—are advanced words. It would be impossible to figure out the central meaning of the sentence without knowing the meaning of *verbiage* (an excess of words for the purpose)—and if you don’t know the meaning of *implication* (that which is hinted or suggested) you will be hard-pressed to follow the logic of the sentence.

Advanced vocabulary also plays a central part in the answer choices given for this question. Once again, this question would be impossible to answer without knowledge of the meanings of these difficult words. If you know that answer choice (i) *semantics* means “the meaning and interpretation of words,” answer choice (ii) *obfuscation* means “the act of confusing or obscuring,” and answer choice (iii) *equivocation* means “the intentional use of vague language,” the sentence makes good sense.

READING QUESTIONS

Next, let’s consider a GRE-level reading passage and questions. It uses quite a lot of advanced vocabulary. Do you know the difficult words in the passage and in the questions that follow it?

To chop a stick, to catch a fly, to pile a heap of sand, is a satisfying
 action; for the sand stays for a while in its novel arrangement,
 proclaiming to the surrounding level that we have made it our
 instrument, while the fly will never stir nor the stick grow together

(5) again in all eternity. If the impulse that has thus left its indelible

mark on things is constant in our own bosom, the world will have been permanently improved and humanized by our action. Nature cannot but be more favorable to those ideas which have once found an efficacious champion.

- (10) Plastic impulses find in this way an immediate sanction in the sense of victory and dominion which they carry with them; it is so evident a proof of power in ourselves to see things and animals bent out of their habitual form and obedient instead to our idea. But a far weightier sanction immediately follows. Man depends on
- (15) things for his experience, yet by automatic action he changes these very things so that it becomes possible that by his action he should promote his welfare. He may, of course, no less readily precipitate his ruin. The animal is more subject to vicissitudes than the plant, which makes no effort to escape them or to give chase to what it
- (20) feeds upon. The greater perils of action, however, are in animals covered partly by fertility, partly by adaptability, partly by success. The mere possibility of success, in a world governed by natural selection, is an earnest of progress. Sometimes, in impressing the environment, a man will improve it: which is merely to say that a
- (25) change may sometimes fortify the impulse which brought it about. As soon as this retroaction is perceived and the act is done with knowledge of its ensuing benefits, plastic impulse becomes art, and the world begins actually to change in obedience to reason.

The first question requires you to select the best answer choice.

1. According to the author

- Ⓐ whenever nature is shaped by a human being, art is produced
- Ⓑ art can only come into existence when the plastic impulse ceases to exist in a person
- Ⓒ art is created when a human being acts on a plastic impulse with awareness of its effect on the world
- Ⓓ a human creation can only be called art when it is in accord with nature
- Ⓔ actions prompted by the plastic impulse are always beneficial to human beings

The second question asks you to consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply.

2. Based on the information in the passage, which of the following statements would the author be likely to agree with?

- Ⓐ Art is an inherently irrational process.
- Ⓑ Any viable theory of aesthetics must take into account man's relationship to nature.
- Ⓒ All living things are subject to the process of natural selection.

The third question asks you to identify a sentence in the passage that best meets the description given in the question.

3. Select the sentence that provides examples of the plastic impulse at work in human beings.

The passage uses a lot of fairly advanced vocabulary (*indelible*, *dominion*, *retroaction*, *ensuing*) as well as some very advanced vocabulary (*efficacious*, *plastic*, *sanction*, *precipitate*, *vicissitudes*). You might already be familiar with the first group of words, while you may not

know the more advanced words. Not knowing any of these words would make it difficult to understand this passage. The word *plastic* is especially important because it expresses one of the central concepts discussed by the author—the human ability to consciously shape nature.

How did you do on the questions? The correct answer to Question 1 is C. To answer this question correctly you must understand the meaning of the final sentence of the passage: “As soon as . . . obedience to reason” (lines 26–28). And to comprehend this sentence, you must understand the meaning of that key word in the passage, *plastic*, which was discussed above.

The correct answer to Question 2 is B and C. Here, it is necessary to know advanced vocabulary in the answer choices: *inherently*, *viable*, *aesthetics*.

Finally, the correct answer to Question 3 is “To chop a . . . in all eternity” (lines 1–5). As with Question 1, you must know the meaning of the word *plastic* to answer this question correctly.

From our analysis, it is clear that vocabulary plays a critical part in answering GRE verbal reasoning questions. Therefore, what it boils down to is that to give yourself a good chance to correctly answer questions with a lot of advanced vocabulary you should learn the words that are most likely to appear in such questions.

You may say that you can figure out words from context and use elimination. This is true, but only to an extent. Also, guessing words from context and using a process of elimination consumes valuable test time that would better be used for figuring out tricky reading comprehension and other questions.

LEARN THE MOST FREQUENTLY TESTED GRE WORDS

Let’s look at the following list of advanced words that appeared in sample verbal sections of the GRE published recently by the Educational Testing Service. As a college graduate (or soon to be college graduate), you should already be familiar with many of these words. However, there are some with which you are probably not familiar. Soon, you will have a chance to take a test to tell you exactly what your vocabulary situation is for the GRE.

Look through the list. How many of these advanced words do you know? You probably know some of them, while others look familiar but you are not sure what they mean. Words that appear in **bold** are words that have appeared with the most frequency on the GRE over the past 10 years.

Turn to the list of 300 High-Frequency GRE Words and check to see if it contains the boldface advanced words from the list on the next page. Yes, these words, or one of their important forms, are all on the list of the 300 words that appear with the most frequency on the GRE and thus can

be learned specifically for the test. These 300 words, as well as an additional 500 important GRE words, will be taught to you in *Essential Words for the GRE*. The 300 High-Frequency GRE Words appear with asterisks.

Let's summarize the situation:

1. You need to know a lot of advanced words to do well on the GRE verbal test.
2. You may not know all the words you need to know to do well on the GRE verbal test.
3. If you don't know a lot of important GRE words, you need to learn them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

aberrant	dogmatism	juxtapose
acerbic	ebullient	laconic
aesthetics	eccentric	laudable
ahistorical	eclectic	loquacious
alleviated	empirical	meticulous
ambiguity	emulated	misnomer
ambivalence	enigmatic	obdurate
ameliorated	equivocate	obsequious
anachronism	euphonic	obtuse
anomaly	exacerbated	obviate
antithetical	exacting	oracular
apathy	exculpate	orthodox
arbitrary	exigency	panache
arcane	explicate	paradigm
arduous	explicit	pellucid
attenuation	extraneous	penitential
austerity	fastidiousness	pithy
belies	fatuous	polemical
caprice	fractious	pragmatism
capricious	frugality	probity
causality	garrulous	prodigality
circumscribed	guilelessly	profligate
commensurate	gullible	profundity
complaisant	heterogeneous	proximity
confounds	iconoclasm	prosaic
contentious	ideological	quixotic
conventional	idiosyncrasy	rarefied
cynicism	idolatry	recalcitrant
	igneous	resolute

delineate	immured	resolved
demur	immutable	reverence
derivative	impetuously	sartorial
desultory	inadvertent	scrupulous
didactic	inalienable	stigma
diffidence	incongruous	synoptic
diffuse	indecorous	syntactical
disapprobation	inherent	taciturn
discrepancy	inimical	tendentious
disingenuously	innocuous	unequivocal
disinterested	insipid	vapid
dismiss	intractable	verbose
disparaged	intransigent	vociferous
disparate	intrinsic	volubility
dispassionate	irresolute	whimsical
disseminate		

HOW ESSENTIAL WORDS WILL HELP YOU DO WELL ON THE GRE

Essential Words for the GRE teaches 800 advanced words that frequently appear on the GRE. Each word has been carefully selected through reference to published GRE lists and on the basis of my many years of experience in preparing students for the test. These 800 words also appear in Barron's *GRE Master Word List* and *High-Frequency Word List*. The principle behind this book is that the best way to learn new words for the GRE is to see how these words are used in complex sentences and practice on exercise material that is similar in content, structure, and level of difficulty to that which appears on the actual test. Practicing on such material will improve your skills in understanding complex sentences and arguments and increase your familiarity with important ideas that appear on the GRE.

THE SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF GRE WORDS

Essential Words for the GRE teaches the important words you need to know. Words are taught in units of ten words each, along with their parts of speech, most commonly used definitions on the GRE, and illustrative sentences showing how words are used. The content, style, and tone of the example sentences are consistent with that of sentences appearing in the actual GRE and generally deal with topics in the arts, sciences, and social sciences. Comprehensive exercises at the end of each unit ensure that you know the words and provide practice in their correct use. Many of the words taught in a given unit reappear in subsequent units, both in illustrative

sentences and in exercises, providing systematic reinforcement of learning.

To further build your knowledge for the GRE, definitions and background information on important terms mentioned in the illustrative sentences appear in highlighted boxes labeled “Terms from the Arts, Sciences, and Social Sciences.” The example below shows how this works. In the example, the illustrative sentence for the word *literati* refers to two important terms, the *First Amendment* and *Philistines*. These two important terms are explained in the highlighted box, helping you to gain a firm understanding of the context in which the word *literati* is used and expanding your knowledge of important terms.

literati *n.* scholarly or learned persons

“Any test that turns on what is offensive to the community’s standards is too loose, too capricious, too destructive of freedom of expression to be squared with the *First Amendment*. Under that test, juries can censor, suppress, and punish what they don’t like, provided the matter relates to ‘sexual impurity’ or has a tendency ‘to excite lustful thoughts.’ This is community censorship in one of its worst forms. It creates a regime where in the battle between the **literati** and the *Philistines*, the Philistines are certain to win.”

—U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas,
dissenting in the case of Roth v. United States, 1957.

Terms from the Arts, Sciences, and Social Sciences

First Amendment: A part of the United States Bill of Rights prohibiting the federal legislature from making laws that establish a state religion or prefer a certain religion, prevent free exercise of religion, infringe the freedom of speech; infringe the freedom of the press; limit the right to assemble peaceably; limit the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Philistines: People considered to be ignorant of the value of cultures and smug and conventional in their thinking.

It is recommended that you keep a good college dictionary handy as you work through this book. This will allow you to explore additional meanings of words you learn and fine-tune your understanding of nuances in meaning between similar words. Two of the best college dictionaries are *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (Fourth Edition) and *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Eleventh Edition). If you prefer to use an online dictionary, the excellent *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Fourth Edition) is available

for free at Bartelby.com.

MASTERING HIGH-FREQUENCY WORD ROOTS

Other than learning the difficult words likely to appear on the GRE, how can you improve your chances of doing well on the GRE Verbal Reasoning test? The answer is simple: learning important word roots. *Essential Words for the GRE* features extensive information on word roots, prefixes, and suffixes in the High-Frequency Word Roots section. This section contains a list of the 300 most important Latin and Greek roots that commonly appear in English words. It also gives you hundreds of derivative words, and includes exercises to improve your ability to make use of roots in remembering words you have learned in this book and in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. In addition to being useful for students taking the GRE, a knowledge of word roots provides a great foundation for the student embarking on a career in fields such as law, science, and medicine that use many specialized terms based on Latin and Greek.

GETTING STARTED

So, what do you do now? First, take the Pretest on the following pages. This will tell you how well prepared you are to deal with the advanced vocabulary that appears on the GRE. After that you should make a study plan based on how many words you have to learn and how much time you have to do it before the test.

In the beginning pages of this book, you will find some suggestions to help you plan how to use this book [most] effectively. It is best to study regularly for a relatively short amount of time (30 minutes, for example) rather than intermittently for longer amounts of time.

Pretest

It's time to test your readiness for graduate-level reading. Don't worry. If you aren't familiar with the GRE words in this test, you can be sure you will learn them in Essential Words for the GRE.

Fill in the blank in each sentence by selecting *two* answer choices that fit the overall meaning of the sentence and produce completed sentences that are equivalent in meaning. Answers that are not fully correct will receive no credit.

Remember, this is an eBook, so please record all of your answers separately.

1. The belief that music is the _____ for the other arts and best exemplifies the power of art to express subtle feelings, was expressed by the critic Walter Pater: "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music."

 A aesthetic
 B precursor
 C paradigm
 D tome
 E sensitivity
 F model
2. Some scholars believe that the impetus for the building of the Great Pyramid of Giza was for reasons other than the purely functional one of providing imposing and secure burial chambers for pharaohs; these experts see _____ meaning behind its design.

 A an arcane
 B an insipid

- C a nefarious
- D a sportive
- E an obscure
- F a desultory

3. Many statements are not true unless they are _____ by the use of words and phrases such as *sometimes*, *frequently*, *in many cases*, and *most*.

- A sanctioned
- B limited
- C superseded
- D embellished
- E qualified
- F supported

4. In the final stage in the impeachment process of an American president, the chief justice of the Supreme Court presides over the Senate, which sits as a body _____ to a jury to decide whether to convict the president.

- A comparable
- B commensurate
- C inherent
- D analogous
- E extraneous
- F impermeable

Fill in the blank in each sentence by selecting *one* entry from the corresponding column of choices in the way that best completes the text.

5. _____, law can be used either to tyrannize the populace, denying them liberty, or to protect their rights, enabling them to live as free citizens expressing their views and doing as they wish.

Enigmatically
Paradoxically
Purportedly
Felicitously
Preternaturally

6. Steeped in mysticism and allegory, alchemy has been a favorite subject of people speculating about the existence of an occult tradition concealed behind _____ facade.

a hermetic
a sedulous
an ephemeral
a mundane
an iconoclastic

7. In 1787, when the U.S. Constitution was being framed, it was proposed that slavery be abolished, but opponents of the measure forced a compromise whereby slavery would not be _____ until early in the next century.

disparaged
stipulated
proscribed
allowed
exculpated

Fill in all of the blanks in the sentences by selecting *one* entry from the corresponding column of choices in the way that best completes the text. Answers that are not fully correct