

abstruse: difficult to understand; incomprehensible

Ex: physics textbooks can seem so abstruse to the uninitiated that readers feel as though they are looking at hieroglyphics

abysmal: extremely bad

Ex: coach ramsey took his newest player off the field after watching a few painful minutes of her abysmal performance.

accolade: an award or praise granted as a special honor

Ex: jean paul-sartre was not a fan of accolades, and as such, he refused to accept the nobel prize for literature in 1964

acerbic: harsh in tone

Ex: most movie critics are acerbic towards summer blockbusters, often referring to them as garbage

adulation: excessive admiration or praise

Ex: he found it difficult to cope with the adulation of the fans

alacrity: cheerful readiness, promptness or willingness

Ex: we accepted the invitation with alacrity

ambivalent: mixed or conflicting emotions about something

Ex: sam was ambivalent about studying for the exam because doing so ate up a lot of his time, yet he was able to improve his analytical skills

amenable: easily persuaded

Ex: even though she did not like the outdoors, shirley was generally amenable and so her brother was able to persuade her to go camping

amok: in a frenzied or uncontrolled state

Ex: wherever the bowl haircut teen-idol went, his legions of screaming fans ran through the streets amok, hoping for a glance at his boyish face.

antithetical: sharply contrasted in character or purpose

Ex: his deep emotional involvement with these ideas is, in fact, antithetical to the detachment buddhism preaches.

apocryphal: being of questionable authenticity

Ex: the web is notorious for sandwiching apocryphal stories between actual news.

approbation: an expression of approval or praise

Ex: a term of approbation

artful: 1. (adj) exhibiting artistic skill;

2. (adj) clever in a cunning way

Ex: 1. picasso is generally considered the most artful member of the cubist movement;

2. bernie madoff's artful ponzi scheme stole billions of dollars from investors and is considered the largest financial fraud in u.s. history

assail: attack in speech or writing

Ex: in the weekly paper, the editor assailed the governor for wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars in public projects that quickly failed

badger: to pester

Ex: badgered by his parents to find a job, the 30-year-old loafer instead joined a gang of itinerant musicians

balk: refusing to comply

Ex: the students were willing to clean up the broken glass, but when the teacher asked them to mop the entire floor, they balked, citing reasons why they needed to leave

beatific: blissfully happy

Ex: often we imagine all monks to wear the beatific smile of the buddha, but, like any of us, a monk can

have a bad day and not look very happy

begrudge: 1. envy someone for possessing or enjoying something;
2. to give reluctantly

Ex: 1. sitting all alone in his room, harvey begrudged the happiness of the other children playing outside his window;

2. we never begrudge money spent on ourselves

belie: to give a false representation to; misrepresent

Ex: the smile on her face belies the pain she must feel after the death of her husband.

belligerent: characteristic of one eager to fight

Ex: tom said that he was arguing the matter purely for philosophical reasons, but his belligerent tone indicated an underlying anger about the issue

benign: 1. (adj) kind

2. (adj) (medicine) not dangerous to health; not recurrent or progressive

Ex: 1. i remember my grandfather's face was wrinkled, benign, and calm.

2. the tumor located in your ear lobe seems to be benign and should not cause you any trouble.

besiege: harass as with questions or requests; cause to feel distressed or worried

Ex: after discovering a priceless artifact in her backyard, jane was besieged by phone calls, emails, and reporters all trying to buy, hold or see the rare piece of history.

boorish: ill-mannered and coarse or contemptible in behavior or appearance

Ex: bukowski was known for being a boorish drunk and alienating close friends and family

burgeon: grow and flourish

Ex: china's housing market is burgeoning, but some predict that the growth is merely a bubble and will burst much like the u.s. real estate bubble of

2008

buttress: make stronger or defensible

Ex: china's economy has been buttressed by a global demand for the electronic parts the country manufactures

cadaverous: emaciated; gaunt

Ex: some actors take challenging roles in which they have to lose so much weight that they appear cadaverous

calumny: making of a false statement meant to injure a person's reputation

Ex: a bitter struggle marked by calumny and litigation

canonical: pertaining to accepted traditions or standards or canons

Ex: the canonical rites of roman church

carping: persistently petty and unjustified criticism

Ex: what seemed like incessant nagging and carping about my behavior from my mother turned out to be wise and useful advice that has served me well.

caustic: 1. (adj) burning or stinging; causing corrosion;

2. (adj) sarcastic in a scathing and bitter way

Ex: 1. a caustic cleaner;

2. the players were making caustic comments about the refereeing

cavalier: given to haughty disregard of others

Ex: percy dismissed the issue with a cavalier wave of his hand

champion: to fight for a cause

Ex: martin luther king jr. championed civil rights fiercely throughout his short life.

chary: wary; cautiously or suspiciously reluctant to do something

Ex: she had been chary of telling the whole truth

check: 1. (verb) to limit (usually modifying the growth of something);

2. (noun) the condition of being held back or limited

Ex: 1. deserted for six months, the property began to look more like a jungle and less like a residence—
weeds grew unchecked in the front yard;

2. when government abuses are not kept in check, that government is likely to become autocratic

checkered: marked by disreputable or unfortunate happenings

Ex: one by one, the presidential candidates dropped out of the race, their respective checkered pasts—
from embezzlement to infidelity—sabotaging their campaigns.

chicanery: the use of deception or trickery or subterfuge to achieve one's purpose

Ex: storylines packed with political chicanery

clemency: leniency or compassion shown towards offenders by a person or agency charged with
administering justice

Ex: in the final moments of the trial, during his closing speech, phillips was nearly begging the judge for
clemency.

cohesive: well integrated; forming a united whole

Ex: a well-written, cohesive essay will keep on topic at all times, never losing sight of the main argument

collusion: agreement on a secret plot

Ex: many have argued that lee harvey oswald, jfk's assassin, was in collusion with other criminals; others
maintain that oswald was a lone gunman

connive: taking part in immoral and unethical plots

Ex: with the help of prince, the queen connived to overthrow the king

construe: interpreted in a particular way

Ex: the author's inability to take a side on the issue was construed by both his opponents and supporters
as a sign of weakness

consummate: 1. (adj) having or revealing supreme mastery or skill;

2. (verb) to make perfect and complete in every respect

Ex: 1. tyler was the consummate musician: he was able to play the guitar, harmonica, and the drum at the
same time

2. the restoration of the ancient church was only consummated after a twenty years of labor

contentious: causing or likely to cause an argument; controversial

Ex: a contentious issue

contrive: to pull off a plan or scheme, usually through skill or trickery

Ex: despite a low gpa, he contrived to get into college, going so far as to write his own glowing letters of
recommendation.

copious: in abundant supply

Ex: in midsummer, there are copious popsicle stands at the beach; in the winter, there are none

craven: pathetically cowardly

Ex: though the man could have at least alerted the police, he crouched cravenly in the corner as the old
woman was mugged

debase: reduce the quality or value of something

Ex: the third-rate script so debased the film that not even the flawless acting could save it from being a
flop

demur: to object or show reluctance

Ex: wallace disliked the cold, so he demurred when his friends suggested they go skiing in the alps.

demure: to be modest and shy

Ex: the portrait of her in a simple white blouse was sweet and demure

denigrate: charge falsely or with malicious intent; attack the good name and reputation of someone
Ex: count rumford denigrated the new theory of heat, demonstrating that it was wholly inadequate to explain the observations

derisive: abusing vocally; expressing contempt or ridicule
Ex: i was surprised by her derisive tone; usually, she is sweet, soft spoken, and congenial

destitute: 1. (adj) poor enough to require help;
2. completely wanting(or lacking) usually destitute of
Ex: 1. he was at first destitute, but with help of achyuth he stood back up on his legs
2. pakistan is destitute of any economic activity

deter: 1. (verb) turn away from by persuasion;
2. (verb) try to prevent; show opposition to
Ex: 1. his mother tried to deter him from joining the army, but he was too intoxicated with the idea of war to listen;
2. the government's primary job should involve deterring paths to war, not finding ways to start them

devolve: 1. (verb) pass on or delegate to another;
2. (verb) grow worse (usually into)
Ex: 1. the company was full of managrs known for devolving tasks to lower management, but never doing much work themselves;
2. the dialogue between the two academics devolved into a downright bitter argument.

differentiate: 1. (verb) be a distinctive feature, attribute, or trait (sometimes in positive sense);
2. evolve so as to lead to a new species or develop in a way most suited to the environment;
Ex: 1. mozart's long melodic lines differentiate his compositions from other works of late 18th century music.;
2. animals on madagascar differentiated from other similar animal species due to many years of isolation on the island.;

diffident: showing modest reserve; lacking self-confidence
Ex: as a young girl she was diffident and reserved, but now as an adult, she is confident and assertive

dilapidated: in terrible condition; (of a building or object) in a state of disrepair or ruin as a result of age or neglect
Ex: the main house has been restored but the gazebo is still dilapidated and unusable.

dilettante: an amateur who engages in an activity without serious intentions and who pretends to have knowledge
Ex: fred has no formal medical training; while he likes to claim authority on medical issues, he is little more than a dilettante

diligence: characterized by care and perseverance in carrying out tasks
Ex: michael was a diligent gardener, never leaving a leaf on the ground and regularly watering each plant

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discreet: careful to protect one's speech or actions in order to avoid offense or draw attention
Ex: the professor thought that he was discreet, subtly wiping the stain off of his shirt, but as soon as he stepped off the podium a heckler in the audience burst out, "you missed a spot"

discretion: the quality of behaving or speaking in such a way as to avoid causing offence or revealing confidential information
Ex: she knew she could rely on his discretion

disseminate: cause to become widely known
Ex: before the effects of anesthesia were disseminated, patients had to experience the full pain of a surgery

docile: easily handled or managed; willing to be taught or directed or led or supervised; submissive
Ex: barnyard animals are considerably more docile than the wild animals

duress: compulsory force or threat

Ex: the witness said he signed the contract under duress and argued that the court should cancel the agreement

ebullience: the quality of lively or enthusiastic expression of thoughts and feelings

Ex: the ebullience of happy children

efficacious: producing the intended result

Ex: since maggie's cough syrup, which had expired five years back, was no longer efficacious, she coughed through the night

effrontery: extreme boldness or presumptuousness

Ex: one juror had the effrontery to challenge the coroner's decision

egotist: a conceited and self-centered person

Ex: an egotist, natasha had few friends because of her inability to talk about anything except her dream of becoming the next american idol.

egregious: standing out in a negative way; shockingly bad

Ex: the dictator's abuse of human rights was so egregious that many world leaders demanded that he be tried in an international court for genocide

eke: to live off meager resources, to scrape by

Ex: he was able to eke out an existence on canned food

elegy: (in modern literature) a poem of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead'

Ex: the song passed gradually into an elegy, plaintive and full of pain.

elude: (of an achievement or something desired) failed to be attained by(someone); escape understanding

Ex: some physics concepts might elude newbies

elusive: difficult to capture or difficult to remember

Ex: many first time skydivers say that describing the act of falling from the sky is elusive

embellish: make more beautiful or make more attractive by adding ornaments etc

Ex: lennon would embellish his lyrics with poetic images and puns

embroiled: involved in argument or contention

Ex: these days we are never short of a d.c. politician embroiled in scandal—a welcome phenomenon for those who, having barely finished feasting on the sordid details of one imbroglio, can sink their teeth into a fresh one.

emollient: 1. (adj) attempting to avoid confrontation or anger; calming or conciliatory;

2. (adj) having the quality of softening or soothing the skin

Ex: 1. the president's emollient approach to the differences;

2. a rich emollient shampoo

ennui: a feeling of listlessness and dissatisfaction arising from a lack of occupation or excitement

Ex: he succumbed to ennui and despair

enumerate: 1. (verb) determine the number or amount of;

2. specify individually, one by one;

Ex: 1. the survey enumerates the number of happy workers and the number of unhappy workers;

2. i sat and listened as she enumerated all of the things she did not like about the past three months.;

errant: to be wandering; not sticking to a circumscribed path

Ex: unlike his peers, who spent their hours studying in the library, matthew preferred errant walks through the university campus

esoteric: nfined to and understandable by only an enlightened inner circle

Ex: map collecting is an esoteric hobby to most, but to geography geeks it is a highly enjoyable pastime.

espouse: to adopt or support an idea or cause

Ex: as a college student, charlie espoused marxism, growing his beard out and railing against the evils of the free-market

eulogy: a speech or piece of writing that praises someone or something highly, especially a tribute to someone who has just died

Ex: a eulogy to the queen mother

euphoria: a feeling of great (usually exaggerated) elation

Ex: the euphoria of winning her first gold medal in the 100 meter dash overwhelmed shelly-ann fraser and she wept tears of immense joy.

evasive: 1. (adj) avoiding or escaping from difficulty or danger or commitment;

2. (adj) deliberately vague or ambiguous

Ex: 1. his responses were clearly evasive; he obviously did not want to take on any responsibility or any new work.;

2. every time i call the bank, i receive the same evasive answers about our mortgage and never get a clear response

exacerbate: make worse

Ex: her sleeplessness exacerbated her cold--when she woke up the next day, her sinuses were completely blocked

exalt: praise or glorify

Ex: the teenagers exalted the rock star, covering their bedrooms with posters of him

exasperate: to irritate or frustrate intensely

Ex: as a child, i exasperated my mother with never ending stupid questions

exhort: to strongly urge on; encourage

Ex: nelson's parents exhorted him to study medicine, urging him to choose a respectable profession; intransigent, nelson left home to become a graffiti artist.

exigent: urgent; pressing; demanding

Ex: the exigent demand of her contemporaries' music took a toll on her voice

expound: add details or explanation; clarify the meaning; state in depth

Ex: the ceo refused to expound on the decision to merge our department with another one, and so i quit

extenuating: making less guilty or more forgivable

Ex: the jury was hardly moved by the man's plea that his loneliness was an extenuating factor in his crime of dognapping a prized pooch

fallacious: of a belief that is based on faulty reasoning

Ex: the widespread belief that eskimos have forty different words for snow is fallacious, based on one false report.

fawn: try to gain favour by extreme flattery

Ex: the media fawned over the handsome new ceo, praising his impeccable sense of style instead of asking more pointed questions

fete: to celebrate a person

Ex: after world war ii, war heroes were feted at first but quickly forgotten.

filibuster: an action such as prolonged speaking which obstructs progress in a legislative assembly in a way that does not technically contravene the required procedures

Ex: paul has altered the national conversation once before, with his filibuster on drones.

finagle: achieve something by means of trickery or devious methods

Ex: steven was able to finagle one of the last seats on the train by convincing the conductor that his torn stub was actually a valid ticket.

fleece: to deceive

Ex: many people have been fleeced by internet scams and never received their money back

flounder: behave awkwardly; have difficulties

Ex: sylvia has excelled at advanced calculus, but ironically, when she has to deal with taxes, she flounders

flux: a state of uncertainty about what should be done (usually following some important event)

Ex: ever since elvira resigned as the head of marketing, everything about our sales strategy has been in a state of flux

foible: a behavioral attribute that is distinctive and peculiar to one individual

Ex: when their new roommate sat staring at an oak tree for an hour, marcia thought it indicated a mental problem, but jeff assured her it was a harmless foible

forlorn: marked by or showing hopelessness

Ex: after her third pet dog died, marcia was simply forlorn: this time even the possibility of buying a new dog no longer held any joy.

forthcoming: 1. (adj) available when required or as promised;

2. (adj) at ease in talking to others

Ex: 1. the president announced that the senators were about to reach a compromise, and that he was eager to read the forthcoming details of the bill.

2. as a husband, larry was not forthcoming: if jill didn't demand to know details, larry would never share them with her.

forthright: characterised by directness in manner or speech; without subtlety or evasion

Ex: i did not expect the insurance agent to give us any straight answers, but i was pleasantly surprised by how forthright he was.

fortuitous: occurring by happy chance; having no cause or apparent cause

Ex: though maria's neighbor ernie "bumped into" her at the farmer's market, the encounter wasn't nearly as fortuitous as maria was led to believe: ernie desperately wanted to ask maria out on a date and had been following her about town.

fulminate: express vehement protest or loudly attack or denounce

Ex: all fulminated against the new curriculum

gainsay: deny or contradict; speak against or oppose

Ex: i can't gainsay a single piece of evidence james has presented, but i still don't trust his conclusion.

gauche: lacking social polish

Ex: sylvester says the most gauche things, such as telling a girl he liked that she was much prettier when she wore makeup

genial: agreeable, conducive to comfort

Ex: betty is a genial young woman: everyone she meets is put at ease by her elegance and grace

genteel: marked by refinement in taste and manners

Ex: a live string quartet would provide a more genteel air to the wedding than would a folk singer

glib: (of a person) speaking with ease but without sincerity

Ex: i have found that the more glib the salesman, the worse the product

grovel: show submission or fear

Ex: every time susan comes to the office, frank grovels as if she were about to fire him

hamstrung: made ineffective or powerless

Ex: the fbi has made so many restrictions on the local police that they are absolutely hamstrung, unable to accomplish anything

harried: troubled persistently especially with petty annoyances

Ex: with a team of new hires to train, martha was constantly harried with little questions and could not focus on her projects

haughty: having or showing arrogant superiority to and disdain of those one views as unworthy

Ex: the haughty manager didn't believe that any of his subordinates could ever have an insight as brilliant as his own

hegemony: dominance over a certain area

Ex: until the spanish armada was defeated in 1587, spain had hegemony over the seas, controlling waters stretching as far as the americas

idiosyncrasy: a behavioral attribute that is distinctive and peculiar to an individual

Ex: peggy's numerous idiosyncrasies include wearing mismatched shoes, laughing loudly to herself, and owning a pet aardvark.

ignominious: (used of conduct or character) deserving or bringing disgrace or shame

Ex: since the politician preached ethics and morality, his texting of revealing photographs was ignominious, bringing shame on both himself and his party

impecunious: lacking funds; without money

Ex: a titled but impecunious family

impending: close in time; about to occur

Ex: the impending doom of our world has been discussed and debated for 2000 years—maybe even longer

implausible: describing a statement that is not believable

Ex: the teacher found it implausible that the student was late to school because he had been kidnapped by outlaws on horseback

implicate: 1. convey a meaning; imply;

2. to indicate in wrongdoing usually a crime

Ex: 1. by saying that some of the guests were uncomfortable, the manager implicated to the hotel staff that it needed to be more diligent;

2. the crime boss was implicated for a long list of crimes, ranging from murder to disturbing the peace.

impregnable: immune to attack; incapable of being tampered with

Ex: as a child, amy would build pillow castles and pretend they were impregnable fortresses

imprudent: not wise

Ex: hitler, like napoleon, made the imprudent move of invading russia in winter, suffering even more casualties than napoleon had

impudent: improperly forward or bold

Ex: in an impudent move, the defendant spoke out of order to say terribly insulting things to the judge

inadvertent: happening by chance or unexpectedly or unintentionally

Ex: although prohibition was rooted in noble ideals, the inadvertent and costly consequences of making alcohol illegal in the u.s. led to its repeal

incense: make furious

Ex: when herb bought football tickets for a game on the day of their wedding anniversary, jill was incensed.

incessant: uninterrupted in time and indefinitely long continuing

Ex: i don't mind small children in brief doses, but i think the incessant exposure that their parents have to them would quickly wear me down

incipient: beginning to happen or develop

Ex: he could feel incipient anger building up

inclement: 1. (adj) (of weather) unpleasant, stormy

2. (adj) used of persons or behavior; showing no mercy

Ex: 1. after a week of inclement weather, we finally are able to go outside and enjoy the sun;

2. marcus aurelius, though a fair man, was inclement to christians during his reign, persecuting them violently

incumbent: necessary(for someone) as a duty or responsibility

Ex: the real responsibility for the financial well-being of the corporation is ultimately incumbent on the ceo.

indict: to formally charge or accuse of wrong-doing

Ex: the bankrobber was indicted on several major charges, including possession of a firearm

indignant: feeling anger over a perceived injustice

Ex: when the cyclist swerved into traffic, it forced the driver to brake and elicited an indignant shout of "hey, punk, watch where you're going!"

inert: unmoving; lethargic; sluggish

Ex: she lay inert in her bed

inexorable: impossible to stop or prevent

Ex: the rise of the computer was an inexorable shift in technology and culture.

ingenuity: the power of creative imagination

Ex: daedalus was famous for his ingenuity; he was able to fashion his son icarus with a pair of wings, using wax to hold them together.

insidious: working in a subtle but destructive way

Ex: plaque is insidious: we cannot see it, but each day it eats away at our enamel, causing cavities and other dental problems

insipid: dull and uninteresting; lacking flavour; weak or tasteless

Ex: 1. the movie director was known for hiring beautiful actors in order to deflect attention away from the insipid scripts he would typically use;
2. mugs of insipid coffee

insolent: rude and arrogant

Ex: lilian could not help herself from being insolent, commenting that the queen's shoes were showing too much toe

intransigent: unwilling to change one's beliefs or course of action

Ex: despite many calls for mercy, the judge remained intransigent, citing strict legal precedence

intrepid: fearless

Ex: captain ahab was an intrepid captain whose reckless and fearless style ultimately lead to his downfall

inured: accustom(someone) to something esp. something unpleasant

Ex: these children have been inured to violence

inveigle: persuade someone to do something by means of deception and flattery

Ex: we cannot inveigle him into putting pen to paper

irascible: having or showing a tendency to be easily angered

Ex: if arthur's dog is not fed adequately, he becomes highly irascible, even growling at his own shadow

irresolute: uncertain how to act or proceed

Ex: he stood irresolute at the split in the trail, not sure which route would lead back to the camp.

jocular: characterized by jokes and good humor

Ex: my uncle was always in a jocular mood at family gatherings, messing up people's hair and telling knock-knock jokes to anyone who would listen.

jubilant: full of high-spirited delight because of triumph or success

Ex: my hardwork paid off, and i was jubilant to receive a perfect score on the gre

languid: not inclined towards physical exertion or effort; slow and relaxed

Ex: as the sun beat down and the temperature climbed higher, we spent a languid week lying around the house

largess: extreme generosity and giving

Ex: uncle frank was known for his largess, so his nephew was sad when he did not receive a present for his birthday.

lassitude: extreme tiredness, either mental or physical

Ex: upon finishing a 6-hour standardized exam, dahlia emerged from the testing center overcome by lassitude.

leery: openly distrustful and unwilling to confide

Ex: without checking his references and talking to previous employers, i am leery of hiring the candidate

maladroit: clumsy

Ex: as a child she was quite maladroit, but as an adult, she has become an adept dancer.

malady: a disease or sickness

Ex: the town was struck by a malady throughout the winter that left most people sick in bed for two weeks

maxim: a short saying expressing a general truth

Ex: the maxim that actions speak louder than words

melee: a wild, confusing fight or struggle

Ex: after enduring daily taunts about my name, i became enraged and pummeled the schoolyard bully and his sycophantic friends in a brutal melee.

miscreant: a person who breaks the law

Ex: "come back you miscreant!" yelled the woman who just had her purse stolen.

mitigate: 1. (verb) make less severe or harsh;

2. (verb) lessen the severity of an offense

Ex: 1. i can only spend so much time mitigating your disagreements with your wife, and at certain point, you need to do it on your own;

2. if it weren't for the mitigating circumstances, he would have certainly lost his job

munificent: very generous

Ex: uncle charley was known for his munificence, giving all seven of his nephews lavish christmas presents each year

myriad: a large indefinite number

Ex: there are a myriad of internet sites hawking pills that claim to boost energy for hours on end

obdurate: unable to be persuaded or moved emotionally; stubborn; unyielding.

Ex: no number of pleas and bribes would get him to change his obdurate attitude

obsequious: attentive in an ingratiating or servile manner; attempting to win favor from influential people by flattery

Ex: the obsequious waiter did not give the couple a moment's peace all through the meal, constantly returning to their table to refill their water glasses and to tell them what a handsome pair they made

odious: evoking intense aversion or dislike

Ex: a pretty odious character

onerous: (of a task or responsibility) involving a great deal of effort, trouble, or difficulty

Ex: he found his duties increasingly onerous

opulence: wealth as evidenced by sumptuous living

Ex: russian oligarchs are famous for their opulence, living in fancy homes and dining on expensive caviar

ostentatious: intended to attract notice and impress others; tawdry or vulgar

Ex: matt wanted to buy stone lions for front of the house, but cynthia convinced him that such a display would be too ostentatious for a modest house in an unassuming neighborhood

panache: distinctive and showy elegance

Ex: jim, with his typical panache, came to the wedding reception with a top hat and cane.

parochial: narrowly restricted in scope or outlook

Ex: jasmine was sad to admit it, but her fledgling relationship with jacob did not work out because his culinary tastes were simply too parochial; "after all," she quipped on her blog, "he considered chef boyardee ethnic food."

pedantic: marked by a narrow focus on or display of learning especially its trivial aspects

Ex: professor thompson was regarded as an expert in his field, but his lectures were utterly pedantic, focused on rigorous details of the most trivial conventions in the field

pejorative: expressing disapproval (usu. refers to a term)

Ex: most psychologists object to the pejorative term "shrink", believing that they expand the human mind, not limit it

penurious: 1. (adj) unwilling to spend money

2. (adj) extremely poor

Ex: 1. a tight-fisted, penurious boss whose wage scale is well below other bandleaders;

2. a penurious old tramp

perfunctory: (of an action) done without real interest feeling or effort

Ex: he gave a perfunctory nod

perquisite: a right reserved exclusively by a particular group or person (esp a hereditary or official right)

Ex: even as the dishwasher at the french restaurant, josh quickly learned that he had the perquisite of being able to eat terrific food for half the price diners would pay

perspicacious: acutely perceptive; having a keen discernment

Ex: to exhibit perspicacious judgement

petulant: easily irritated or annoyed

Ex: although the three year old was often described as mature for his age, he was petulant and whiny whenever his father forgot to remove the crust from his sandwiches

piquant: having a pleasantly pungent taste or appetising flavour

Ex: the chef, with a mere flick of the salt shaker, turned the bland tomato soup into a piquant meal.

pithy: concise and full of meaning

Ex: i enjoy reading the daodejing for its pithy and insightful prose; it always gives me something to think about.

plodding: (of movement) slow and laborious

Ex: charlie may seem to run at a plodding pace, but he is an ultramarathoner, meaning he runs distances of up to 100 miles, and can run for ten hours at a stretch

ploy: a clever plan to turn a situation to one's advantage

Ex: dennis arranged an elaborate ploy, involving 14 different people lying for him in different situations, so that it could appear that he was meeting mary completely by chance at the wedding reception.

poignant: emotionally touching

Ex: after the montagues and capulets discover the dead bodies of romeo and juliet, in the play's most poignant moment, the two griefstricken families agree to end their feud once and for all

posit: assume as fact

Ex: initially, einstein posited a repulsive force to balance gravity, but then rejected that idea as a blunder.

prattle: to babble meaninglessly

Ex: she began to prattle on about her visit to the dentist

precarious: fraught with danger

Ex: people smoke to relax and forget their cares, but ironically, in terms of health risks, smoking is far more precarious than either mountain-climbing or skydiving

precedent: an example that is used to justify similar occurrences at a later time

Ex: the principal explained that even though one student had done modelling work outside of school, the outfits that student wore in those photographs in no way established a precedent for what could be worn at school dances.

precocious: characterized by or characteristic of exceptionally early development or maturity (especially in mental aptitude)

Ex: though only seven years old, she was a precocious chess prodigy, able to beat players twice her age.

preempt: take the place of or have precedence over

Ex: a governmental warning about an imminent terrorist attack would preempt ordinary network programming on television

preen: devote effort to making oneself look attractive and then admire one's appearance

Ex: adolescents preening in their bedroom mirrors

presumption: 1. an assumption that is taken for granted;

2. audacious (even arrogant) behavior that you have no right to;

Ex: 1. when mr. baker found out the family car was gone, he acted under the presumption that his rebellious son had taken the car, calling his son's phone and yelling at him; only later did mr. baker realize that mrs. baker had simply gone out to get her nails done.;

2. the new neighbor quickly gained a reputation for her presumption; she had invited herself to several neighbors' homes, often stopping over at inopportune times and asking for a drink.

presumptuous: excessively forward; (of a person or their behaviour) failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate

Ex: many felt that barney was presumptuous in moving into the large office before the management even made any official announcement of his promotion

prevail: 1. be widespread in a particular area at a particular time; be current;

2. prove superior

Ex: 1. during the labor negotiations, an air of hostility prevailed in the office;

2. before the cricket match, australia was heavily favored, but india prevailed;

prevaricate: to speak in an evasive way

Ex: the cynic quipped, "there is not much variance in politicians; they all seem to prevaricate"

prodigal: rashly or wastefully extravagant

Ex: successful professional athletes who do not fall prey to prodigality seem to be the exception—most live decadent lives

profligate: 1. (adj) spending resources recklessly or wastefully;

2. (noun) someone who spends resources recklessly or wastefully

Ex: 1. the composer wagner, while living on a limited salary, was so profligate as to line all the walls of his apartment with pure silk;

2. most lottery winners go from being conservative, frugal types to outright profligates who blow millions on fast cars, lavish homes, and giant yachts

proponent: a person who pleads for a cause or propounds an idea

Ex: ironically, the leading proponent of flat-earth theory flies all over the world in an effort to win more adherents.

pugnacious: eager to fight or argue; verbally combative

Ex: the comedian told one flat joke after another, and when the audience started booing, he pugnaciously spat back at them, "hey, you think this is easy – why don't you buffoons give it a shot?"

putrefy: (of a body or other organic matter) decay or rot and produce a fetid smell

Ex: the body was beginning to putrefy

quaff: drink (something, especially an alcoholic drink) heartily

Ex: he quaffed pint after pint of good berkshire ale

qualify: to make less severe; to limit (a statement)

Ex: chris qualified his love for san francisco, adding he didn't like the weather there as much as he liked the weather in los angeles.

quandary: state of uncertainty or perplexity especially as requiring a choice between equally unfavorable options

Ex: steve certainly is in a quandary: if he doesn't call elaine, she will blame him for everything, but if he does call her, the evidence of where he currently is could cost him his job

quiescence: stillness; motionlessness; inactivity; dormancy

Ex: this method has been shown to induce sleep-like quiescence in adult animals

raffish: marked by a carefree unconventionality or disreputableness

Ex: the men found him raffish, but the women adored his smart clothes and casual attitude

rakish: marked by carefree unconventionality or disreputableness

Ex: as soon as he arrived in the city, the rakish young man bought some drugs and headed straight for the seedy parts of town

rankle: gnaw into; make resentful or angry

Ex: his constant whistling would rankle her, sometimes causing her to leave in a huff

recant: to retract esp a previously held belief

Ex: heretics were burned if they would not recant

reconcile: make (one thing) compatible with (another)

Ex: peggy was unable to reconcile her kind friend jane with the cruel and merciless character jane played on television.

redoubtable: (of a person) formidable, especially as an opponent

Ex: he was a redoubtable debater

refractory: stubbornly resistant to authority or control

Ex: used to studious high school students, martha was unprepared for the refractory kindergarteners who neither sat still nor listened to a single word she said.

refute: prove to be false or incorrect

Ex: no one could refute his theories or propositions, and that is why he was esteemed by all his colleagues in the philosophy department.

renege: fail to fulfill a promise or obligation

Ex: we will no longer work with that vendor since it has reneged on nearly every agreement.

reproach: to express criticism towards

Ex: at first, sarah was going to yell at the boy, but she didn't want to reproach him for telling the truth about the situation

reprobate: a person without morals who is disapproved of

Ex: mr. smith's two boys couldn't be more different; one was a hard-working and principled, the other was the town reprobate, always having run-ins with the law

repudiate: reject as untrue or unfounded

Ex: many in the public believed the rumors of a ufo crash outside town, so the chief of police did everything he could to repudiate the rumors

rescind: cancel officially

Ex: the man's driver's license was rescinded after his tenth car accident, which meant he would never be allowed to legally drive again

resignation: the acceptance of something unpleasant which cant be avoided

Ex: since jack could not think of a convincing reason why he had to miss the seminar, he attended it with a sense of resignation

resolve: reach a conclusion after a discussion or deliberation

Ex: after much thought, ted resolved not to travel abroad this summer because he didn't have much money in his bank account.

reticent: disinclined to talk, not revealing one's thoughts

Ex: when asked about her father, helen lost her outward enthusiasm and became rather reticent

retiring: to be shy, and to be inclined to retract from company

Ex: nelson was always the first to leave soirees—rather than mill about with “fashionable” folk, he was retiring, and preferred the solitude of his garret.

rile: cause annoyance in; disturb esp by minor irritations

Ex: dan is usually calm and balanced, but it takes only one intense glare from sabrina to rile him

robust: sturdy and strong in form, constitution, or construction

Ex: chris preferred bland and mild beers, but bhavin preferred a beer with more robust flavor.

sanctimonious: making a show of being pious; holier-than-thou

Ex: even during the quiet sanctity of evening prayer, she held her chin high, a sanctimonious sneer forming on her face as she eyed those who were attending church for the first time

sanction: 1. give authority or permission to;

2. a legal penalty for a forbidden action

Ex:

sanguine: cheerful; optimistic

Ex: with the prospect of having to learn 3,000 words during the course of the summer, paul was anything but sanguine

savvy: 1. (noun) a perceptive understanding;

2. (verb) get meaning of something; 3. well-informed or perceptive

Ex: 1. he did not have the political savvy to win the election;

2. the student savvies the meaning of astrophysics with little effort

scintillating: describes someone who is brilliant and lively

Ex: richard feynman was renowned for his scintillating lectures—the arcana of quantum physics was made lucid as he wrote animatedly on the chalkboard

screed: an abusive rant (often tedious)

Ex: joey had difficulty hanging out with his former best friend perry, who, during his entire cup of coffee, enumerated all of the government's deficiencies—only to break ranks and launch into some screed against big business.

scrupulous: 1. (adj) characterized by extreme care and great effort

2. (adj) having a sense of right and wrong; principled

Ex: 1. because of his scrupulous nature, mary put him in charge of numbering and cataloging the entire collection of rare stamps;

2. everyone trusted what he said and followed his example because he was scrupulous and honest

serendipity: the instance in which an accidental, fortunate discovery is made

Ex: by pure serendipity, sarah discovered, at a flea market in peoria, a matching earring to replace the one that fell down the storm drain back home.

smug: marked by excessive complacency or self-satisfaction

Ex: when phil was dating the model, he had a smug attitude that annoyed his friends

snub: refuse to acknowledge; reject outright and bluntly

Ex: wheeler was completely qualified for the committee, but the board snubbed him, choosing an obviously lesser qualified candidate instead.

solicitous: characterised by showing interest or concern

Ex: she was always solicitous about the welfare of the students

soporific: inducing mental lethargy; sleep inducing

Ex: although the professor is brilliant, his bland monotone gives his lectures a soporific effect.

specious: 1. (adj) based on pretense; deceptively pleasing;

2. (adj) plausible but false

Ex: 1. almost every image on tv is specious and not to be trusted;

2. he made a career out of specious arguments and fictional lab results, but lost his job and reputation when his lies were exposed by an article in the new york times

spurious: plausible but false

Ex: when listening to a politician speak, it is hard to distinguish the spurious claims from the authentic ones.

spurn: reject with contempt

Ex: she spurned all his flattery and proposals, and so he walked off embarrassed and sad

squalid: (of a place) extremely dirty and unpleasant, especially as a result of poverty or neglect

Ex: the squalid, overcrowded prison

squander: spend thoughtlessly; waste time money or an opportunity

Ex: fearing that his money would be squandered by his family, he gave all of it to charity when he died

staid: characterized by dignity and propriety

Ex: frank came from a staid environment, so he was shocked that his college roommate sold narcotics

steadfast: marked by firm determination or resolution; not shakeable

Ex: a good captain needs to be steadfast, continuing to hold the wheel and stay the course even during the most violent storm

stem: to hold back or limit the flow or growth of something

Ex: to stem the tide of applications, the prestigious ivy requires that each applicant score at least 330 on the revised gre.

stoic: a person who can endure pain or hardship without showing their feelings or complaining

Ex: we knew she must be in pain, despite her stoic attitude

stolid: having or revealing little emotion or sensibility; not easily aroused or excited

Ex: elephants may appear stolid to casual observers, but they actually have passionate emotional lives

stringent: demanding strict attention to rules and procedures

Ex: most of the students disliked the teacher because of his stringent homework policy, but many students would later thank him for demanding so much from them

stupefy: 1. (verb) to stun baffle or amaze;

2. (verb) to put into a state of little or no sensibility; benumb; put into a stupor

Ex: 1. the amount they spend on clothes would appal their parents and stupefy their grandparents;

2. the offence of administering drugs to a woman with intent to stupefy her

subsume: 1. (verb) contain or include;

2. (verb) consider (an instance of something) as part of a general rule or principle;

Ex: 1. the rogue wave quickly subsumed the pier and boardwalk, destroying everything in its path;

2. don quixote of la mancha subsumes all other modern novels, demonstrating modern literary devices and predating even the idea of a postmodern, metanarrative

subversive: in opposition to an established system or institution

Ex: the ruling political party has begun a campaign to shut down subversive websites that it deems as a threat to "national safety"

surly: inclined to anger or bad feelings with overtones of menace

Ex: every morning, bhavin was a surly, unhappy person, but once he ate breakfast, he became loving, laughing, and a joy to be around

taciturn: habitually reserved and uncommunicative

Ex: while the ceo enthusiastically shares his plans and agenda with all who will listen, the cfo is far more taciturn, rarely revealing his perspective

tact: consideration in dealing with others and avoid giving offense

Ex: in a tremendous display of tact, shelly was able to maintain a strong friendship with marcia, even though marcia's husband, frank, confessed to finding shelley more attractive than marcia

tantamount: being essentially equal to something

Ex: in many situations, remaining silent is tantamount to admitting guilt, so speak to prove your innocence

temperance: the trait of avoiding excesses

Ex: weller wasn't known for his temperance--he usually ate enough for two and drank enough for three

tempered: moderated in effect

Ex: the wide-eyed optimism of her youth was now tempered after she had worked many years in the criminal justice system

tender: offer up something formally

Ex: the government was loath to tender more money in the fear that it might set off inflation

tout: advertise in strongly positive terms; show off

Ex: at the conference, the ceo touted the extraordinary success of his company's research & development division.

transitory: lasting a very short time

Ex: if we lived forever and life was not transitory, do you think we would appreciate life less or more?

travail: painful and laborious effort; hard work

Ex: while they experienced nothing but travails in refinishing the kitchen, they completed the master bedroom in less than a weekend

treacherous: 1. (adj) tending to betray;

2. (adj) dangerously unstable and unpredictable

Ex: 1. even though jesse james was an outlaw, his killer, robert ford, is remembered more for his treacherous actions than for eliminating a criminal and murderer;

2. the bridge built from twine and vine is treacherous to walk across, and so i think i will stay put right here.

tribulation: something esp. an event that causes difficulty and suffering

Ex: as of

2013, nearly 1.5 million syrians have fled their country hoping to escape the tribulations of a civil war tearing their country to pieces

truculent: eager or quick to argue or fight; aggressively defiant

Ex: the truculent attitude of farmers to cheaper imports

ubiquitous: present, appearing, or found everywhere; widespread

Ex: his ubiquitous influence was felt by all the family

uncanny: strange or mysterious esp. in unsettling way; suggesting the operation of supernatural influences; surpassing the ordinary or normal

Ex: reggie has an uncanny ability to connect with animals: feral cats will readily approach him, and sometimes even wild birds will land on his finger.

unconscionable: unreasonable; unscrupulous; excessive

Ex: the lawyer's demands were so unconscionable that rather than pay an exorbitant sum or submit himself to any other inconveniences, the defendant decided to find a new lawyer

underwrite: to support financially

Ex: the latest symphony broadcast was made possible with underwriting from the carnegie endowment

unseemly: not keeping with what is accepted or proper in a polite society; indecorous

Ex: he acted in an unseemly manner, insulting the hostess and then speaking ill of her deceased husband.

urbane: showing a high degree of refinement and the assurance that comes from wide social experience
Ex: because of his service as an intelligence officer and his refined tastes, w. somerset maugham became the inspiration for the urbane and sophisticate spy james bond.

vacuous: devoid of intelligence, matter, or significance
Ex: to the journalist's pointed question, the senator gave a vacuous response, mixing a few of his overall campaign slogans with platitudes and completely avoiding the controversial subject of the question

vanquish: come out better in a race, competition or conflict
Ex: for years, argentina would dominate in world cup qualifying matches, only to be vanquished by one of the european countries during the late stages of the tournament.

vehement: marked by extreme intensity of emotions or convictions
Ex: while the other employees responded to the bad news in a measured way, andrew responded in a vehement manner, tipping over his desk and shouting at the top of his lungs.

venality: the condition of being susceptible to bribes or corruption
Ex: even some of the most sacred sporting events are not immune to venality, as many of the officials have received substantial bribes to make biased calls

vicarious: felt or undergone as if one were taking part in the experience or feelings of another
Ex: the advent of twitter is a celebrity stalker's dream, as he or she can—through hundreds of intimate "tweets"—vicariously live the life of a famous person

vie: compete for something
Ex: while the other teams in the division actively vie for the championship, this team seems content simply to go through the motions of playing

vindicate: to clear of accusation, blame, suspicion, or doubt with supporting arguments or proof
Ex: even seven tour de france wins cannot vindicate lance armstrong in the eyes of the public—that the athlete used performance enhancing drugs invalidates all those wins.

virulent: 1. (adj) bitterly hostile;
2. (adj) extremely harmful or poisonous(disease/poison)
Ex: 1. a virulent attack on liberalism;
2. a virulent strain of influenza

wanton: without check or limitations; showing no moral restraints to one's anger, desire, appetites
Ex: due to wanton behavior and crude language, the drunk man was thrown out of the bar and asked to never return.