**The Top 20 Most Common GRE Words**

Okay, I know, every list purports to be the Top 10 or 20 Most Common GRE words. Just study those words and, voila, you’ll get the coveted 800 verbal score. While no list can truly be the definitive list of top GRE words, the ones below have been culled from my years as a GRE instructor. These are words that I’ve constantly encountered in ETS’s published materials.

Knowing these 20 most common words can only help your chances of doing well test day. Not knowing these words, on the other hand, is a liability come test day.

[**Extant**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/five-commonly-confused-gre-words/) (adj.) – in existence.

*Few documents antedating the advent of papyrus are extant today.*

**Ephemeral** (adj). – short-lived

*Youtube has made fame truly ephemeral. Just ask Rebecca Black.*

Test yourself: [Click here](http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2024) to try a question using ephemeral from our GRE product.

**Capricious** (adj.) – unpredictable, whimsical

*Because Martha was so capricious her friends felt they could not rely on her.*

Test yourself: [Click here](http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2094) to try a question using capricious.

**Corroborate** (v.) – to confirm, make stronger

*Three witnesses were able to corroborate Lucy’s alibi that she had been at the bowling alley at the time of the murder.*

[**Loquacious**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/useful-gre-synonym-group-%e2%80%93-to-talk-or-not-to-talk/)(adj.) – talkative

*Nancy was so loquacious her friends usually didn’t like to watch a movie with her.*

[**Esoteric**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/vocabulary-game-unscramble-these-words/) (adj) – known to a select few

*Many jazz artists once deemed esoteric have emerged due to the greater access users have to avant-garde music on-line.*

Test yourself: [Click here](http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2086) to try a practice question using esoteric.

**Erudite** (adj.) – scholarly

*A Rhodes Scholar, Max was a true erudite, and a formidable opponent on Jeopardy.*

Test yourself: [Click here](http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2247) to try a practice question using esoteric from our GRE product.

**Pragmatic** (adj.) – practical

*Edna never cared for abstract thinking and preferred the pragmatic world of business, in which every action, ideally, has an intended consequence.*

Test yourself: [Click here](http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2247) to try a practice question using pragmatic.

**Ambivalent** (adj.) – having contradictory feelings

*Erin was ambivalent about her freshman year in college; her classes were fascinating but she missed her high school friends.*

**Soporific** (adj.) – inducing sleep

*Professor’s Moore’s lectures were soporific to the point that students, before they nodded off in class, would usually quip, “It’s time for Professor Bore.”*

**Prolific** (adj.) – producing or creating abundantly

*Irving Berlin had one of the most prolific careers in song-writing history; dozens of his hundreds of tunes are familiar to us. Anyone dreaming of a “White Christmas?”*

[**Auspicious**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/five-commonly-confused-gre-words/) (adj.) – favorable

*The team’s run for the pennant started auspiciously with 24 wins. Two starting pitchers snapped their elbows mid-season, clearly an inauspicious sign.*

[**Sanguine**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/branch-out-your-vocab-with-synonym-trees/) (adj.) – cheerful; optimistic

*A Yale graduate with a 4.0, she was sanguine about finding a job right out of college.*

[**Enervate**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/the-top-five-most-commonly-confused-gre-words/) (v.) – to weaken; drain the energy from

*Sitting in the windowless room, the tropical humidity soaking through the walls, I was enervated before noon.*

**Magnanimous** (adj.) – big-hearted; generous

*Upon receiving his first Wall Street paycheck, Jerry was so magnanimous he not only bought his Mom a car, he bought his Dad one too.*

[**Mercurial**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/gre-interesting-word-origins/)(adj.) – 1. Changing one’s personality often and unpredictably. 2. Animated, sprightly

*One never knew exactly what the professor’s class would be like; he was so mercurial that many of his students thought of him as two different people.*

[**Belligerent**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/fighting-words/) (adj.) – Inclined to fighting

*After a few drinks Stevie was convivial; after two six-packs he became belligerent, challenging anyone around him to a head-butting contest.*

**Fastidious** (adj.) – nitpicky

*A fastidious eater, Herman would only eat the center of anything he touched. As a result, his plate was strewn with the remnants of his dinner, an eyesore for the hapless dinner guest.*

[**Reticent**](http://magoosh.com/gre/2011/useful-gre-synonym-group-%e2%80%93-to-talk-or-not-to-talk/)(adj.) – tightlipped, not prone to saying much, reluctant

*Paul was reticent and preferred observing others mannerisms.*

**Inculpate** (adj.) – to charge with wrong-doing; accuse

*To inculpate Eddy with the murder was absurd; he’d been bowling with Lucy.*