

100 Toughest English Vocabulary Words

abrogate: to abolish or annul by authority

acumen: keen insight or shrewdness

adumbrate: to foreshadow vaguely or intimate

alacrity: cheerful readiness or eagerness

anathema: a strong curse or denunciation

antediluvian: ridiculously old-fashioned

apocryphal: of doubtful authenticity

ascetic: practicing strict self-discipline

assiduous: showing great care and perseverance

beguile: to charm or enchant, sometimes deceptively

bellicose: demonstrating aggression or willingness to fight

blandishment: a flattering or pleasing statement intended to persuade

bombastic: high-sounding with little meaning; inflated

cabal: a secret political clique or faction

calumny: a false and malicious statement to damage someone's reputation

capitulate: to surrender or yield

chicanery: use of trickery to achieve a political, financial, or legal purpose

cogent: clear, logical, and convincing

conflagration: a large destructive fire

contumacious: stubbornly disobedient to authority

corpulent: excessively fat

defenestrate: to throw someone or something out of a window

deleterious: harmful or damaging

demagogue: a political leader who seeks support by appealing to desires and prejudices

diaphanous: light, delicate, and translucent

dirge: a lament for the dead

disparate: essentially different in kind; not allowing comparison

ebullient: cheerful and full of energy

effulgent: shining brightly; radiant

egregious: outstandingly bad or shocking

enervate: to weaken or drain of energy

ephemeral: lasting a very short time

equanimity: mental calmness, composure

esoteric: intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people

excoriate: to criticize severely

exigent: pressing or demanding

execrable: extremely bad or unpleasant

fastidious: very attentive to detail

fatuous: silly and pointless

feckless: lacking initiative or strength of character

fractious: irritable and quarrelsome

grandiloquent: pompous or extravagant in language

gregarious: sociable; fond of company

harangue: a lengthy and aggressive speech

iconoclast: a person who attacks cherished beliefs

ignominious: deserving or causing public disgrace

impecunious: having little or no money

impetuous: acting quickly without thought

implacable: unable to be calmed down or appeased

inchoate: just begun and not fully formed

inimical: tending to obstruct or harm

insouciant: casually indifferent

inveterate: firmly established and long-standing

jejune: naive, simplistic, and superficial

lachrymose: tearful or given to weeping

limpid: completely clear and transparent

lubricious: offensively displaying sexual desire

mendacious: not telling the truth; lying

meretricious: apparently attractive but having no real value

milieu: a person's social environment

misanthrope: a person who dislikes humankind

nefarious: wicked or criminal

nugatory: of no value or importance

obdurate: stubbornly refusing to change

obfuscate: to render obscure or unclear

obsequious: excessively obedient or attentive

officious: assertive of authority in an annoyingly domineering way

opprobrium: harsh criticism or censure

ostensible: stated or appearing to be true, but not necessarily so

palliate: to make less severe without removing the cause

parsimony: extreme unwillingness to spend money

pellucid: translucently clear

penurious: extremely poor; poverty-stricken

perfidious: deceitful and untrustworthy

perspicacious: having a ready insight into and understanding of things

phlegmatic: calm and unemotional in temperament

precipitous: dangerously high or steep; done suddenly without thought

proclivity: a natural tendency to behave in a certain way

promulgate: to promote or make widely known

propinquity: nearness in place or relationship

pugnacious: eager or quick to argue or fight

pulchritudinous: physically beautiful

quixotic: exceedingly idealistic; unrealistic and impractical

recalcitrant: resisting authority or control

recondite: little known or obscure

reprobate: a morally unprincipled person

sagacious: wise or shrewd

sanguine: optimistic or positive, especially in a bad situation

scurrilous: grossly abusive or slanderous

spurious: not genuine, authentic, or true

stentorian: extremely loud

supercilious: behaving as if superior to others

surreptitious: kept secret, especially because it would not be approved of

sycophant: a person who acts obsequiously toward someone important

temerity: excessive confidence or boldness

torpid: mentally or physically inactive

trenchant: vigorous or incisive in expression or style

turpitude: depravity or wickedness

ubiquitous: present or found everywhere

unctuous: excessively flattering

vicissitude: a change of circumstances or fortune

vociferous: loud and forceful

winsome: attractive or appealing in a charming way

zephyr: a soft gentle breeze