

7. SYNONYMS

Techniques for Solving Questions on Synonyms:

Synonym questions test knowledge of vocabulary more directly than do any of the other verbal question types, measuring the strength of your vocabulary and your ability to reason from a given concept. Synonyms may require only general knowledge of a word, or they may require that you make fine distinctions among answer choices. Synonyms are generally confined to nouns, verbs and adjectives; answer choice may be single word or phrase.

Here are some approaches that may be helpful in answering questions on synonyms:

- Remember that you are looking for the word that is the most nearly similar to the given word; you are **NOT** looking for an **antonym**! you must look for the answer choice that expresses a concept most nearly similar to that of the given word.
- In some cases, more than one of the answer choices may appear at first to be similar to the given word. When this happens, try to define more precisely or in greater detail the meaning of the given word.
- In weighing answer choices, it is often useful to make up a sentence using the given word or words. Substitute the answer choices in the phrase or sentence and see which best fits. Remember that a particular word may have more than one meaning.
- Use your knowledge of root, prefix and suffix meanings to help you determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Techniques for Solving Synonyms Questions:

1. On harder synonym questions, beware of tricky choices.

Can you spot the trick in the following example? Choose the best synonym:

Restive:

- (A) patient (B)rigorous (C)deceptive (D)agitated

The word, restive, is tricky, because it sounds like it has something to do with rest. Therefore, (A) would be the best synonym. However, this is a trick. Restive actually means restless. So, the correct answer is agitated, a good synonym for restless. It is beneficial to familiarize yourself with tricky words like restive, because they are commonly tested on the standardized examinations.

2. Take note of positively /negatively-charged answer choices. It is possible to associate a negative or positive charge with many words. Try to discern whether each word in the following list has a positive (+), negative (-), or neutral charge.

Choose the best synonym:

Maligned:

(A)beneficent (B)magnanimous (C)downtrodden (D) destitute

In the example, we are trying to find the best synonym for the word *maligned*. So, we should begin by ascertaining its charge. The prefix, "mal" is typically used in negatively charged words. Therefore, the answer will also have a negative charge.

Let's go through the list to see how each word is charged.

(A) beneficent (+) (B) magnanimous (+)
(C) downtrodden (-) (D) censured (-)

After labeling each, we are left with two words that are positively charged: *beneficent* and *magnanimous*. Even if you don't know the meaning of any answer choices, you have narrowed your choices down to two and are left with a 50% chance of answering correctly. This is a quick technique that can be very beneficial when attempting to answer a question with several words that you are unsure about. D) is the best choice.

3. Eliminate answer choices that are close synonyms.

Spotting synonyms within the answer choices can be valuable because it allows you to narrow your viable answer choices. If two of the answers have very similar meanings, then the correct answer is too ambiguous. Therefore, it is possible to eliminate these choices. See if you can eliminate two answer choices from the following example.

Choose the best synonym.

Foment:

(A) mitigate (B) engender (C)arouse (D)mollify

The words *mitigate* and *mollify* are close synonyms. They both mean "to reduce or soften in pain or intensity, to make less severe." This leaves only two remaining viable answer choices. C) is the best choice.

4. Try to associate the word with a familiar context.

Words on the GATE are tested for good reason: they are very effective. This being the case, they get included in many proverbial phrases. Note the following examples: "Gail force winds," "The Village Advocate," "Test your mettle", "Road to Perdition", "Patience is a virtue", "Abject poverty", "He made it through unscathed".

5. Use your knowledge of Romance Languages.

The roots of many words have similar meanings in foreign languages. For example, the Spanish word **malo** means bad. This is a common root for many negatively charged words:

- **maligned**
- **malignant**
- **malapropos**
- **malediction**
- **malevolent**
- **malicious**
- **malefactor**



EXERCISE-7(A)

Directions: In each of the following questions, identify the best synonym.

1. **CONSPICUOUS**
(A) featured (B) confusing
(C) unreliable (D) discernible
2. **EXACERBATE**
(A) remove (B) irritate
(C) forget (D) tender
3. **DEPRAVITY**
(A) degeneracy (B) denunciation
(C) disabuse (D) disapproval
4. **ABYSMAL**
(A) unfathomable (B) illusive
(C) miraculous (D) pertinent
5. **BLEARY**
(A) favorable (B) punishable
(C) blue (D) indistinct
6. **CAPITULATE**
(A) surrender (B) repeat
(C) escalate (D) signify
7. **IMPRECATE**
(A) allude (B) contaminate
(C) curse (D) impel
8. **MORES**
(A) excess (B) customs
(C) greed (D) funerals
9. **INGENUOUS**
(A) creative (B) artificial
(C) frank (D) guile
10. **QUERULOUS**
(A) complaining (B) fearful
(C) artless (D) inquisitive
11. **LURID**
(A) attractive (B) mild
(C) evasive (D) shocking
12. **GRAVID**
(A) expectant (B) serious
(C) fortunate (D) frustrated
13. **FACTITIOUS**
(A) unreal (B) unrivalled
(C) probable (D) perceptible
14. **VEGETATE**
(A) seed (B) divide (C) idle (D) avoid
15. **UNGUENT**
(A) disgrace (B) ointment
(C) variant (D) color
16. **TENACIOUS**
(A) unyielding (B) multiple
(C) divine (D) temporary
17. **STRAIT-LACED**
(A) proper (B) mandatory
(C) immobile (D) appropriate
18. **SARDONIC**
(A) pardonable (B) achievable
(C) sarcastic (D) mild
19. **PANACHE**
(A) ultimatum (B) elegance
(C) mustache (D) style
20. **PALAUVER**
(A) cajole (B) collapse
(C) render (D) pirate

ANSWER KEYS

1	D	2	B	3	A	4	A	5	D	6	A	7	C
8	B	9	C	10	A	11	D	12	A	13	A	14	C
15	B	16	A	17	C	18	C	19	D	20	A		



EXERCISE-7(B)

Directions: In each of the following questions, identify the best synonym.

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. MAUNDER
(A) mishandle
(C) wander | (B) insult
(D) assault | 11. TURGID
(A) shrunken
(C) turbulent | (B) bombastic
(D) elastic |
| 2. EXIGUOUS
(A) scanty
(C) healthy | (B) irrelevant
(D) proximate | 12. SQUELCH
(A) quell
(C) bite | (B) burp
(D) malign |
| 3. GOSSAMER
(A) filmy
(C) snake-like | (B) intractable
(D) wild | 13. CONFOUND
(A) slam
(C) bewilder | (B) excavate
(D) discover |
| 4. CARTEL
(A) decoration
(C) official | (B) syndicate
(D) knowledge | 14. VISAGE
(A) senility
(C) avenue | (B) countenance
(D) application |
| 5. FEINT
(A) obscure
(C) swear | (B) feeble
(D) dodge | 15. WELTER
(A) haven
(C) worship | (B) clutter
(D) protege |
| 6. MOROSE
(A) amiable
(C) gorgeous | (B) sullen
(D) jumbled | 16. SWILL
(A) gulp
(C) pettiness | (B) whirl
(D) persistence |
| 7. INDITE
(A) accuse
(C) compose | (B) jumble
(D) arouse | 17. NOSTRUM
(A) affinity
(C) podium | (B) therapeutic
(D) pulpit |
| 8. BRASH
(A) resonant
(C) impetuous | (B) plausible
(D) fragmented | 18. ESOTERIC
(A) abstruse
(C) variegated | (B) miscellaneous
(D) concealed |
| 9. PRIVATION
(A) want
(C) alienation | (B) privacy
(D) eccentricity | 19. MORTIFY
(A) ratify
(C) rectify | (B) embarrass
(D) amortize |
| 10. TENUOUS
(A) mushrooming
(C) vicious | (B) slight
(D) unlimited | 20. INNERVATE
(A) exhaust
(C) repudiate | (B) camouflage
(D) stimulate |

ANSWER KEYS

1	C	2	A	3	A	4	B	5	D	6	B	7	C
8	C	9	C	10	B	11	B	12	A	13	C	14	B
15	B	16	A	17	B	18	A	19	B	20	D		



8. ANTONYMS

Antonym questions test knowledge of vocabulary more directly than do any of the other verbal question types, measuring the strength of your vocabulary and your ability to reason from a given concept. Antonyms may require only general knowledge of a word, or they may require that you make fine distinctions among answer choices. Antonyms are generally confined to nouns, verbs and adjectives; answer choice may be a single word or phrase.

Here are some approaches that may be helpful in answering antonym questions:

- Remember that you are looking for the word that is the most nearly *opposite* to the given word; you are not looking for a synonym. Many words do not have a precise opposite, so you must look for the answer choice that expresses a concept *most nearly* opposite to that of the given word.
- In some cases, more than one of the answer choices may appear at first to be opposite to the given word. When this happens, try to define more precisely or in greater detail the meaning of the given word.
- In weighing answer choices, it is often useful to make up a sentence using the given word or words. Substitute the answer choices in the phrase or sentence and see which best fits. The best answer will be the one that reverses the meaning or tone of the sentence or phrase.
- Remember that a particular word may have more than one meaning.
- Use your knowledge of root, prefix and suffix meanings to help you determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Example 8.1:

HYPOTHETICAL

(A) chaotic

(B) axiomatic

(C) sovereign

(D) challenging

Answer: (B)

Explanation:

Something hypothetical is merely suggested to be true; something axiomatic is accepted as true.

Example 8.2:

SPECIOUS

- (A) high-minded (B) headstrong (C) promiscuous (D) correct

Answer: (D)

Explanation:

Something specious is fake or false and is therefore not correct.



EXERCISE-8(A)

Directions: In each of the following questions, identify the best opposite word.

1. **ARTIFICE**
(A) candor (B) wile
(C) wickedness (D) sacrifice
2. **CADAVEROUS**
(A) innovative (B) fickle-minded
(C) bubbling (D) pessimistic
3. **LITHE**
(A) supple (B) stiff
(C) truthful (D) reputable
4. **NESCIENT**
(A) unscientific (B) frivolous
(C) restless (D) gnostic
5. **PASTORAL**
(A) bucolic (B) urbane
(C) insensitive (D) prolific
6. **RETRIBUTION**
(A) recompense (B) clemency
(C) attribution (D) contribution
7. **PREEMPTIVE**
(A) rhetorical (B) permissive
(C) succeeding (D) posthumous
8. **PREDATORY**
(A) unprecedented (B) chronic
(C) timeless (D) unacquisitive
9. **HORTATORY**
(A) complex (B) discouraging
(C) sensational (D) jovial
10. **IMPUDENT**
(A) insolent (B) sagacious
(C) retiring (D) humiliating
11. **INANE**
(A) brazen (B) retiring
(C) rational (D) afflicted
12. **INDURATE**
(A) macerate (B) exacerbate
(C) inundate (D) inculcate
13. **AFFECTATION**
(A) naiveté (B) inertness
(C) pretence (D) innocuousness
14. **ASTUTE**
(A) obtuse (B) appropriate
(C) dissolute (D) cluttered
15. **BUCOLIC**
(A) pastoral (B) feeble
(C) arcadian (D) urban
16. **GRUELING**
(A) undemanding (B) liberal
(C) sympathetic (D) compelling
17. **MASOCHISM**
(A) egalitarianism (B) plagiarism
(C) sadism (D) feminism
18. **IMPUGNABLE**
(A) unquestionable (B) punishable
(C) pugnacious (D) pregnable
19. **PLEONASTIC**
(A) tautological (B) concise
(C) incorrigible (D) rigid
20. **ACHROMATIC**
(A) pale (B) innocent
(C) supercilious (D) colored

ANSWER KEYS

1	A	2	C	3	B	4	D	5	B	6	B	7	B
8	D	9	B	10	C	11	C	12	A	13	A	14	A
15	D	16	A	17	C	18	A	19	B	20	D		



EXERCISE-8(B)

Directions: In each of the following questions, identify the best opposite word.

1. CABALISTIC
(A) artistic (B) exoteric
(C) cryptic (D) acrylic
2. TENEBROUS
(A) unilateral (B) melodious
(C) light (D) harsh
3. IMBECILIC
(A) fundamental (B) regular
(C) populous (D) precocious
4. IMPUISSANT
(A) potent (B) poignant
(C) prevalent (D) placable
5. SETACEOUS
(A) barbed (B) disputatious
(C) unarmed (D) contagious
6. VENAL
(A) incorrupt (B) mutilated
(C) inanimate (D) spongy
7. OMINOUS
(A) parsimonious (B) unalarming
(C) vicious (D) fabulous
8. RECALCITRANT
(A) refractory (B) repulsive
(C) obedient (D) considerable
9. BIZARRE
(A) unique (B) cryptic
(C) idiosyncratic (D) conventional
10. UNTHEATRICAL
(A) histrionic (B) unemotional
(C) incredible (D) sensitive
11. RACY
(A) tasteless (B) relentless
(C) drowsy (D) stationery
12. RANGY
(A) little (B) achromatic
(C) innocent (D) diluted
13. FORFEITED
(A) borrowed (B) unclaimed
(C) won (D) unattained
14. AMATORY
(A) captivated (B) platonic
(C) objectionable (D) unloving
15. JUDICIOUS
(A) improvident (B) unethical
(C) illicit (D) turbid
16. CRABBED
(A) ill-tempered (B) obliging
(C) swift (D) expeditious
17. DEBONAIR
(A) depressing (B) solitary
(C) smirky (D) penniless
18. DISCONSOLATE
(A) unsociable (B) amicable
(C) effervescent (D) philistine
19. NETTLESOME
(A) testy (B) vexatious
(C) congenial (D) societal
20. NERVY
(A) backward (B) daredevil
(C) debile (D) feckless

ANSWER KEYS

1	B	2	C	3	D	4	A	5	C	6	A	7	B
8	C	9	D	10	A	11	A	12	A	13	C	14	D
15	A	16	B	17	A	18	C	19	C	20	B		

