

# *VERBAL ADVANTAGE*

## *Level I*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

# **Verbal Advantage Success Edition**

## **About This Guide**

This guide is an abstract-or condensed version- of all the lessons and information presented in Verbal Advantage. It is designed to serve both as a reference to the contents of the program and as a study aid.

Here are several ways you can use this guide in conjunction with the audio program:

1. Follow along in this guide as you listen.
2. After every ten key-word discussions in the program, there is an aural review quiz. Read the abstracts of the key-word discussions in the guide either before or directly after taking each review quiz.
3. Verbal Advantage contains ten levels of instructions, each more challenging than the last. When you finish listening to a level, review it in the guide before beginning the next level.

Using this guide in any (or all) of the above ways will reinforce what you learn by listening, accelerate your vocabulary growth rate, and enhance your enjoyment of the program.

# Verbal Advantage Success Edition

## Vowel Sounds

**A, a** - *flat, back, pass, exact*

**Y, y** and **EYE, eye** - *by, nice, pie, right, aisle*

**AH, ah** - *spa, father, odd, not*

*Note:* Y is used in combination with other letters to form a syllable: SLYT-lee (*slightly*). EYE is used when this sound by itself forms a syllable: EYE-land (*island*).

**AHR, ahr** - *car, jar, alarm*

**OH, oh** - *go, sew, coat*

**AIR, air** - *hair, stare, bear*

**OO, oo** - *do, ooze, rule*

**AY, ay** - *hay, wait, came, state*

**OR, or** - *for, door, born, war*

**AW, aw** - *raw, all, walk*

**OOR, oor** - *poor, tour, lure*

**E, e** - *yes, let, step*

**OW, ow** - *cow, out, tower, doubt*

**EE, ee** - *see, beat, key*

**OY, oy** - *oil, loin, boy, ahoy*

**EER, eer** - *pier, beer, fear*

**UH, uh** - *up, dull, some, color; also ago, allow*

**I, i** - *in, hit, sip*

**UR, ur** - *turn, stir, were, learn*

**UU, uu** - *pull, full, good, took, would*

## Obscure, Unstressed, Lightened, or Variable Vowel Sounds

**A, a** - *ago, final, woman, librarian*

**O, o** - *connect, polite, gallop, carrot*

**E, e** - *item, taken, shipment, difference*

**U, u** - *focus, circus, lettuce, raucous*

**I, i** - *edible, policy, charity, nation*

# Verbal Advantage Success Edition

## Consonant Sounds

**B, b** - *boy, cab, bubble*

**NG, ng** - *sing, anger, tank*

**CH, ch** - *chip, catcher, peach*

**P, p** - *pen, pepper, pop*

**D, d** - *dog, add, sudden*

**R, r** - *red, arrive, car*

**F, f** - *fat, effort, staff*

**S, s** - *sit, ask, pass*

**G, g** - *get, bigger, bogus, tag*

**SH, sh** - *she, rush, nation, conscious*

**H, h** - *hit, hope, behind*

**T, t** - *top, bitter, list*

**HW, hw** - *wheat, whale, whet, awhile*

**TH, th** - *thin, thirst, nothing, bath*

**J, j** - *jug, juice, tragic, age*

**TH, th** - *there, this, brother, bathe*

**K, k** - *king, cup, take, actor, pack*

**V, v** - *very, even, live*

**L, l** - *leg, also, bell*

**W, w** - *will, wait, power*

**‘l** - *ladle, cattle, turtle, apple*

**Y, y** - *yes, you, layer*

**M, m** - *my, humble, emblem*

**(Y), (y)** - indicates that some speakers employ the Y sound of *you* and others do not: N(Y)OO, *new*; D(Y)OO *tee*, *duty*; uh-ST(Y)OOT, *astute*

**‘m** - *spasm, prism, chasm, sarcasm*

**Z, z** - *zoo, daze, please*

**N, n** - *no, knee, end, winner*

**ZH, zh** - *vision, measure, azure, or French je*

**‘n** - *hidden, cotton, open, satin, reason*

# Verbal Advantage Success Edition

## Foreign Sounds

**KH, kh** - German *ach*, Scottish *loch*, (N), (n) - *French* vin, bon, blanc, garçon  
Hebrew *lechayim* A guttural sound, A nasalized sound-the N is stopped in  
like that of clearing the throat the nose.

## KEY TO PRONUNCIATION

Syllables are separated by a hyphen [-]

Syllables printed in CAPITAL letters are stressed.

Syllables printed in small (lower-case) letters are not stressed.

Words of one syllable are printed in CAPITALS.

Words of more than two syllables that have a primary and manner secondary stress are transcribed in the following:

The syllable with secondary stress is printed in CAPITALS, and the syllable with primary stress is printed in **BOLDFACED CAPITALS**: ED-i-fĭ- **KAY**-shĭn.

## Verbal Advantage Level One

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation **N.B.** stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

### 1. **PARAPHRASE** (PAR-uh-frayz)

To restate, put what someone else has expressed into different words.

### 2. **OSTENSIBLE** (ah-STEN-suh-buul)

Apparent, appearing or seeming to be true, professed or declared as true without being demonstrated or proved.

**Synonyms:** *plausible, specious.*

### 3. **DIGRESS** (di-GRES or dy-GRES)

To wander, stray from the point, ramble, deviate, go off in another direction.

**Corresponding noun:** *digression.*

**Related words:** *ingress*, the place you walk in, the entrance; *egress*, the place you walk out, the exit.

**Additional useful word:** *archaic* (ar-KAY-ik), old-fashioned.

### 4. **UNCANNY** (uhn-KAN-ee)

Eerie, strange, weird, mysterious.

### 5. **CANDOR** (KAN-dur)

Frankness, openness, sincere expression.

**Synonyms:** *straightforwardness, outspokenness, forthrightness, ingenuousness* (in-JEN-yoo-us-nis).

**Corresponding adjective:** *candid*, frank, open, sincere. Synonyms of *candid* include *forthright* and *ingenuous*.

## Verbal Advantage Level One

### 6. MOROSE (muh-ROHS)

Gloomy, moody, glum, grumpy, ill-tempered, depressed.

**Synonyms:** *sullen, dolorous, lugubrious, saturnine.*

**Antonyms:** *optimistic, jovial, sanguine.*

**Corresponding noun:** *moroseness.*

**Additional useful word:** *misanthropy*, hatred of humankind.

### 7. ADEPT (uh-DEPT)

Skilled, handy.

**Synonyms:** *clever, able, deft, expert, dexterous, proficient, adroit* (Level 3, Word 41).

**Corresponding noun:** *adept* (AD-ept), a highly skilled person, an expert.

### 8. SATURATED (SACH-uh-ray-tid)

Soaked, drenched, thoroughly wet, full of moisture.

**Synonyms:** *steeped, permeated, impregnated, imbued, sodden.*

**Corresponding noun:** *saturation.*

### 9. PRAGMATIC (prag-MAT-ik)

Practical, having to do with actual practice, concerned with everyday affairs as opposed to theory or speculation.

### 10. CONGENIAL (kun-JEE-nee-ul)

Sympathetic, agreeable, having the same taste, nature, or temperament.

**Synonyms:** *compatible, kindred, harmonious.*

**Antonyms:** *alien, dissident, incongruous* (in-KAHNG-groo-us).

### 11. CAPRICIOUS (kuh-PRISH-us)

Unpredictable, tending to change abruptly for no apparent or logical reason.

**Synonyms:** *flighty, changeable, impulsive, fickle, erratic, whimsical, volatile, mercurial.*

**Antonyms:** *stable, reliable, unwavering, steadfast, abiding.*

**Corresponding noun:** *caprice*, a sudden change of mind or change in the emotions.

**Pronunciation tip:** *caprice* is pronounced kuhPREES; *capricious* should rhyme with *delicious*.

## Verbal Advantage Level One

12. **BLATANT** (BLAY-tint)

Noisy, disagreeably or offensively loud, boisterous, clamorous; also, sticking out in a glaring way, obtrusive, flagrant.

13. **OBLIGATORY** (uh-BLIG-uh-tor-ee)

Required, necessary, binding, mandatory.

**Antonyms:** *optional, voluntary.*

14. **NEGLIGIBLE** (NEG-li-juh-buul)

Unimportant, trifling, of little consequence.

**Synonyms:** *trivial, insignificant*

15. **ADAMANT** (AD-uh-mint)

Unyielding, immovable, inflexible, refusing to give in.

**Synonyms:** *unshakable, unrelenting, implacable.*

16. **SPORADIC** (spor-RAD-ik)

Occasional, infrequent, irregular, not constant, happening from time to time, occurring in scattered or random way.

**Antonyms:** *constant, incessant, unremitting.*

17. **VANGUARD** (VAN-gard)

The forefront of an action or movement, leading position or persons in a movement.

18. **CONCUR** (kun-KUR)

(1) To agree, be in accord with, unite in opinion.

(2) To act together, combine in having an effect.

(3) To happen together, occur at the same time, coincide.

**Etymology tip:** One meaning of the Latin prefix *con-* is "together." By derivation, that which *concur*s happens together, acts together, or is together in opinion.



## Verbal Advantage Level One

19. **PRECOCIOUSNESS** (pruh-KOH-shus-nis)

Early development or maturity, especially in mental ability.

**Antonym:** *retardation*.

**Corresponding adjective:** *precocious*.

20. **ALOOF** (uh-LOOF)

Apart, at a distance, removed, withdrawn, not wishing to speak or associate with others.

**Synonyms:** *unsympathetic, unapproachable, standoffish, indifferent*.

21. **CREED** (KREED, rhymes with *seed*)

Belief, professed faith or opinion, especially a system of religious belief.

**Synonyms:** *doctrine, dogma, credo* (KREE-doh or KRAY-doh).

**Related words:** *incredible, credible, credulous*. *Credulous* means willing to accept something as true without questioning. *Credulous* and *gullible* are synonymous.

22. **TAWDRY** (TAW-dree)

Cheap and showy, gaudy, garish, sleazy.

**Etymology:** *Tawdry* comes from the phrase "tawdry lace," a corruption of "Saint Audrey lace," an inferior type of lace sold at Saint Audrey's fair in England.

23. **PEEVISH** (as spelled, PEE-vish)

Irritable, cross, complaining, fretful, ill-humored and impatient, difficult to please, full of complaints.

**Corresponding noun:** *peeve*, something that irritates or annoys.

**N.B.** Compare *cantankerous* (Level 1, Word 41).

24. **ARDUOUS** (AHR-joo-us)

Very difficult, hard to achieve or accomplish, requiring great effort.

**Synonyms:** *strenuous, laborious, toilsome*.

## Verbal Advantage Level One

### 25. REASONABLE (PUR-suh-nuh-buul)

Attractive, pleasing in appearance.

**Synonyms:** *handsome, comely, fair, presentable.*

**Usage tip:** Avoid using *personable* to mean having nice personality. *Sociable, affable,* and *amiable* already suggest people who are friendly, pleasant, and approachable. An awkward or unbecoming person, no matter how friendly and pleasant, cannot correctly be *personable*. Reserve *personable* either for someone who is attractive in appearance or attractive both in appearance and personality.

### 26. RESOLUTE (REZ-uh-loot)

Firmly determined or settled, resolved, having a set opinion or purpose.

**Synonyms:** *steadfast, unwavering, persevering.*

**Antonyms:** *irresolute, unsteady, vacillating.*

**Corresponding verb:** *resolve*, to decide, determine, settle once and for all.

### 27. SUPPOSITION (SUHP-uh-ZISH-un)

An assumption, theory, hypothesis, conjecture.

### 28. ARBITRARY (AHR-bi-trair-ee)

(1) Unreasoned; based on personal feelings or preferences rather than on reason, logic, or law; making discretionary judgments or decisions that may or may not be fair or reasonable.

(2) Determined or arrived at in a random or illogical manner.

(3) Exercising unrestrained or absolute power.

**Related words:** *Arbiter* and *arbitrator* both mean a judge or umpire who makes a final decision or resolves a dispute.

### 29. MONOTONOUS (muh-NAH-tub-nus)

Lacking variety, tediously uniform, unvarying and dull; literally, having one continuous sound or tone.

**Etymology tip:** The prefix *mono-* means "one, single," as in the related words *monogamy, monocle,* and *monogram.*

## Verbal Advantage Level One

### 30. **LEGACY** (LEG-uh-see)

Something handed down from the past.

**Synonyms:** *inheritance, bequest.*

### 31. **MANIFOLD** (MAN-i-fohld)

Numerous and varied, consisting of many kinds, containing many elements, features, or characteristics.

**Synonyms:** *multifarious, multitudinous.*

### 32. **PLIANT** (PLY-int)

Bending easily, flexible.

**Synonyms:** *adaptable, workable, pliable, supple.*

### 33. **RETORT** (ri-TORT)

A quick reply, especially one that is cutting or witty.

**Synonym:** *rejoinder.*

### 34. **OBSTINATE** (AHB-sti-nit)

Stubborn, inflexible, unwilling to give in or compromise, not yielding to argument or persuasion.

**Synonyms:** *hidebound, intractable, intransigent, adamant* (Level 1, Word 15).

**Pronunciation tip:** *Obstinate* is sometimes mispronounced as if it were spelled *obstant*. Take care to spell *obstinate* correctly and pronounce it AHB-sti-nit.

### 35. **LACERATE** (LAS-ur-ayt)

Literally, to tear, cut roughly, rend, mangle. Figuratively, to wound, afflict, cause pain.

### 36. **OMNIPOTENT** (ahm-NIP-uh-tint)

All-powerful, almighty, having unlimited power or authority.

**Etymology tip:** The element *omni-* means "all," as in *omnidirectional*, *omnipresent*, and *omniscient* (ahm-NISH-int), all-knowing.

## Verbal Advantage Level One

37. **UNSCRUPULOUS** (uhn-SKROO-pyoo-lus)

Untrustworthy, dishonorable, deceitful, corrupt, lacking integrity or moral principles.

**Related words:** *scruple*, something that causes hesitation or doubt in determining what is appropriate and proper; *scrupulous*, having scruples-hence, taking pains to do something exactly right.

38. **RENAISSANCE** (ren-uh-SAHNS or REN-uh-sahns)

A revival, renewal of life or vigor.

**Synonyms:** *rebirth, resurgence*

39. **GENESIS** (JEN-i-sis)

A coming into being, beginning.

**Synonyms:** *origin, birth, creation.*

40. **WARRANT** (WAH-rint or WAR-int)

(1) To justify, give good reason for, authorize, sanction.

(2) To guarantee, promise, give formal assurance of.

**Related word:** *unwarranted*, without good reason or authorization, unjustifiable.

41. **CANTANKEROUS** (kan-TANGK-uh-rus)

Difficult to deal with, disagreeable, argumentative, quick to quarrel or to exhibit ill will.

**Synonyms:** *contentious, malicious, irascible* (i-RAS-uh-buul).

**N.B.** Compare *peevish* (Level 1, Word 23).

42. **FLIPPANT** (FLIP-int)

Disrespectful in a frivolous way, treating something serious in a trivial manner.

**Synonyms:** *cheeky, fresh, thoughtless, impertinent.*

**Antonyms:** *solemn, sober, sedate, grave.*

43. **SUBJUGATE** (SUHB-juh-gayt)

To conquer, defeat, vanquish, overwhelm completely, bring under rigid control, make submissive, dominate, enslave.

**Corresponding noun:** *subjugation.*

## Verbal Advantage Level One

44. **WRY** (like *rye*, rhymes with *why*)

Twisted, crooked, lopsided, askew, distorted in an odd, amusing way.

45. **URBANE** (ur-BAYN)

Polished, sophisticated, suave, cosmopolitan.

**Related word:** *urban*, pertaining to or living in a city. *Urbane* suggests the polished sophistication of a city dweller.

46. **JARGON** (JAHR-gun)

Specialized and often pretentious language; unnecessarily complex phraseology; speech or writing that is highly technical and difficult to understand; specifically, obscure language or a private vocabulary used and understood only by members of a particular group or profession.

47. **PRUDENT** (PROO-dint)

(1) Cautious, careful, planning wisely, exercising sound judgment in practical matters.

**Synonyms:** *discreet, circumspect* (Level 3, Word 21).

(2) Spending carefully, using one's resources wisely.

**Synonyms:** *thrifty, economical, frugal* (Level 2, Word 35).

**Related words:** *provide, provident* (Level 4, Word 1).

48. **INVIOABLE** (in-VY'l-uh-buul)

Secure; safe from assault, infringement, or destruction.

**Synonyms:** *sacred, untouchable, unassailable, incorruptible*.

**Etymology tip:** *Inviolable* combines the prefix *in-*, not, the suffix *-able*, and the verb to *violate*, and means literally "not able to be violated."

49. **COMMODIOUS** (kuh-MOH-dee-us)

Spacious, having plenty of room, comfortably convenient.

**Synonyms:** *ample, capacious* (kuh-PAY-shus).

**Related words:** *commode, accommodate, accommodations*.

## Verbal Advantage Level One

### 50. **PROXIMITY** (prahk-SIM-i-tee)

Nearness, closeness, the state of being in the vicinity of something.

**Usage tip:** Avoid using the common phrase "close proximity." It's a redundancy.

Proximity means closeness; therefore "close **proximity**" means "**close closeness**." Drop *close* and let proximity do its work alone.

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**N.B.** Level I ends with a discussion of the proper use of the verbs to lay and to *lie*.

Also discussed is the useful expression *sotto voce* (SAW-toh VOH-chay), an Italian phrase meaning "under the breath," uttered in a soft voice so as not to be overheard.

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# *VERBAL ADVANTAGE*

## *Level II*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Two

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

### 1. ADVOCATE (AD-vuh-kayt)

To support, plead for, be in favor of, defend by argument; especially, to speak or write in favor or in defense of a person or cause.

**Synonyms:** *champion, endorse, espouse.*

**Corresponding noun:** *advocate*, a supporter or defender of a cause, a champion, or a person who speaks for another.

**Related words** (from the Latin *vocare*, to call, summon): *vocation; avocation; vocational; vocal; convoke*, to call together; *convocation*, the act of calling together, or a group that has been summoned; *evoke*, to call out, call forth; and *evocative*, calling forth a response, especially an emotional one.

### 2. DELEGATE (DEL-uh-gayt)

To entrust with authority or power, deliver to another's care or management, hand over to an agent or representative.

### 3. UNPRECEDENTED (uhn-PRES-uh-den-tid)

Unheard-of, novel, new, having no precedent or parallel, having no prior example or justification.

### 4. POIGNANT (POYN-yint)

Piercing, sharp, penetrating; specifically, piercing or penetrating to the senses, to the emotions, or to the intellect.

**Synonyms:** *biting, cutting, keen, acute.*

**Related words** (from the Latin *pungere*, to pierce or prick): *puncture; pungent*, piercing to the smell or taste; *expunge*, to punch out, erase, delete.

### 5. NEBULOUS (NEB-yuu-lus)

Unclear, vague, obscure, hazy, indefinite, indistinct.

**Related word:** *nebula*, a cloudy mass of dust or gas visible between stars in space (plural, *nebulae*).



## Verbal Advantage Level Two

### 6. CLANDESTINE (klan-DES-tin)

Kept secret, done in secrecy, especially for an evil, immoral, or illegal purpose.

**Synonyms:** *private, concealed, covert, underhand, sly, stealthy, furtive, surreptitious.*

**Pronunciation tip:** Avoid the recent variants klanDES-tyn, klan-DES-teen, KLAN-des-tyn, and KLAN-des-teen. The traditional and preferred pronunciation is klan-DES-tin.

### 7. TIRADE (TY-rayd or ty-RAYD)

A long-drawn-out speech, especially a vehement and abusive one.

**Additional useful words:** *protracted*, drawn out to great length (see Level 3, Word 25); *vituperative*, full of harsh, abusive language; *ensorious*, tending to *ensor*, to blame or condemn.

### 8. RECUR (ri-KUR or nee-KUR)

To happen again, occur again, especially at intervals or after some lapse of time.

**N.B.** This discussion explains the distinction between the verbs *recur* and *reoccur*.

### 9. TACIT (TAS-it)

Unspoken, silent, implied or understood without words, done or made in silence, not expressed or declared openly.

**Related word:** *taciturn* (Level 3, Word 2).

### 10. ALLEGATION (AL-uh-GAY-shin)

An assertion or declaration, especially one made without proof. In law, an *allegation* is an assertion of what one intends to prove.

### 11. GULLIBLE (GUHL-uh-buul)

Easily deceived, fooled, or cheated.

**Synonym:** *credulous*.

**Related words:** *gull* and *dupe*, which both mean to fool, cheat, deceive, take advantage of.

## Verbal Advantage Level Two

12. **BENIGN** (buh-NYN, rhymes with a *sign*)

- (1) Kindly, good-natured, gracious, mild, having or showing a gentle disposition.
- (2) Favorable, positive, propitious.
- (3) Of the weather or climate, healthful, beneficial, wholesome, salubrious.
- (4) In medicine: mild, not deadly, or severe.

13. **PERIPHERAL** (puh-RIF-uh-rul)

External, outer, lying at or forming the outside or boundary of something; hence, not essential, irrelevant.

14. **REBUFF** (ri-BUF or ree-BUF)

To refuse bluntly, reject sharply, turn down abruptly, snub, spurn.

**Corresponding noun:** *rebuff*, an abrupt refusal or rejection.

15. **ANIMOSITY** (AN-i-MAH-si-tee)

Ill will, hostility, antagonism, strong dislike or hatred.

**Synonyms:** malice, *aversion*, *malevolence*, *antipathy*, rancor, *enmity*.

16. **TENUOUS** (TEN-yoo-us)

Thin, slender, slight, flimsy, weak, not dense or substantial, lacking a strong basis, having little substance or strength.

17. **COMPLACENT** (kum-PLAY-sint)

Self-satisfied, smug, overly pleased with oneself.

**Usage tip:** Take care to distinguish between *complacent* and *complaisant*, which is pronounced kum-PLAY-zint and means inclined to please, gracious, obliging, courteous, affable, and urbane (Level 1, Word 45).

18. **ACME** (AK-mee)

The peak, highest point, especially the point of culmination, the highest possible point in the development or progress of something.

**Synonyms:** *summit*, *zenith*.

**Corresponding adjective:** *acmatic*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Two

19. **DEFUNCT** (dĭ-FUNGKT or dee-FUNGKT)

Dead, extinct, obsolete; no longer in existence, effect, operation, or use.

20. **ABET** (uh-BET)

To encourage, support, help, aid, promote, assist in achieving a purpose (either good or evil).

**Usage tip:** *Abet* is often used to mean assist in wrongdoing, as in the legal cliché "to aid and abet," but *abet* may also be used favorably to mean assist in achieving a good purpose.

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**N.B.** At this point in Level 2 there is a discussion of ending sentences with prepositions. Also noted is the **useful word** *debunk*, to expose as false, deceitful, or exaggerated.

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21. **HAGGARD** (HAG-urd)

Worn out, tired, drawn; wild-eyed and wasted, as from exhaustion, illness, or grief.

**Synonyms:** *gaunt, emaciated.*

22. **WAIVE** (like *wave*)

To relinquish voluntarily, give up, forgo; also, to postpone, defer, or dispense with.

23. **CARNAL** (KAHR-nŭl)

Bodily, pertaining to the flesh as opposed to the spirit.

**Synonyms:** *sensual, corporeal.*

**Usage tip:** *Carnal* is used of basic physical appetites.

24. **SANCTION** (SANGK-shin, be sure to pronounce the C)

To approve, allow, permit, authorize, certify, ratify.

## Verbal Advantage Level Two

### 25. **AMBIGUOUS** (am-BIG-yoo-us)

Uncertain, unclear, doubtful, dubious, questionable, puzzling, having an obscure or indefinite meaning.

**Synonyms:** *enigmatic, cryptic, equivocal.*

**Antonyms:** *distinct, apparent, evident, conspicuous, manifest.*

### 26. **SPENDTHRIFT** (pronounced as spelled, stress *on spend*)

Wasteful, spending extravagantly or foolishly, squandering one's resources.

**Synonyms:** *improvident, prodigal, profligate*

### 27. **MOLLIFY** (MAH-li-fy)

To calm, soothe, soften in feeling or tone, make less harsh or severe.

**Synonyms:** *pacify, appease, assuage* (Level 2, Word 37).

**Related word:** *emollient* (adjective), softening, soothing, mollifying; (noun) a softening or soothing agent.

### 28. **UNEQUIVOCAL** (UHN-i-KWIV-uh-kul)

Clear and direct, definite, straightforward, certain; having a single, obvious meaning; capable of being interpreted in only one way.

**Antonyms:** *equivocal, ambiguous* (Level 2, Word 25).

**Pronunciation tip:** Many people mispronounce (and misspell) *unequivocal* as *unequivocable*. *Unequivocal* ends with *-vocal*, not *-vocale*. Take care to pronounce the word in five syllables: *un-e-qui-vo-cal*.

### 29. **MALLEABLE** (MAL-ee-uh-buul or MAL-yuhbuul)

Capable of being shaped, able to be molded or manipulated.

**Synonyms:** *adaptable, impressionable, tractable.*

**Antonyms:** *inflexible, unyielding, stubborn, adamant, obstinate, intransigent.*

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Two

#### 30. VERBOSE (vur-BOHS)

Wordy, having too many words, long-winded, full of verbiage.

**Synonyms:** *garrulous* (Level 4, Word 8), *loquacious*, *voluble* (Level 5, Word 1), *prolix* (Level 9, Word 1).

**Corresponding noun:** *verbosity*.

**Related words** (from the Latin *verbum*, word): *verbal*; *verbatim*, expressed in precisely the same words; *verbiage*, an excess or overabundance of words.

**Additional useful word:** *proffer*, to put forward for acceptance, present as a gift.

**Pronunciation tip:** *Carriage* and *marriage* have two syllables, but *verbiage* and *foliage* have three. Don't say VUR-bij and FOH-lij (or FOY-lij). Take care to pronounce these words in three syllables: VUR-bee-ij and FOH-lee-ij.

**N.B.** This discussion concludes with a "Word to the Wise" on the proper distinction between *oral* and *verbal*.

#### 31. TRANSIENT (TRAN-shint)

Temporary, passing away with time, lasting or staying only a short while, momentary, fleeting, short-lived.

**Synonyms:** *transitory*, *evanescent*, *ephemeral* (Level 4, Word 12), *fugitive*, *fugacious*.

**Antonyms:** *permanent*, *timeless*, *eternal*, *everlasting*.

**Pronunciation tip:** Pronounce *transient* in two syllables, with the same *sh* sound as in *ancient*. Also, in the words *short-lived* and *long-lived*, the second half, *-lived*, does not come from the verb to *live* but from the noun *life* plus the suffix *-ed*. Therefore the preferred pronunciation for the *I* is long, as in the adjective *alive*.

#### 32. NETTLE (NET'l)

To irritate, annoy, vex, harass, pester, provoke.

#### 33. REPUDIATE (ri-PYOO-dee-ayt)

(1) To reject, cast off, disown, renounce, refuse to accept as one's own.

(2) To reject as false, deny the authority of, refuse to accept as true.

#### 34. IMPETUOUS (im-PETCH-oo-us)

Hasty, rash, overeager; acting in a sudden, vigorous, emotional way, with little thought.

**Synonyms:** *impulsive*.

**Antonyms:** *prudent* (Level 1, Word 47), *discreet*, *circumspect* (Level 3, Word 21).

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Two

35. **FRUGAL** (FROG-gul)

Spending carefully and wisely; also, involving little expense, not wasteful or lavish.

**Synonyms:** thrifty, economical, provident, parsimonious.

36. **INCONGRUOUS** (in-KAHNG-groo-us)

Out of place, inappropriate, inconsistent, unsuitable, lacking harmony of parts or agreement in character.

**Related words:** congruous and congruent, which both mean coming together harmoniously, fitting in consistently.

37. **ASSUAGE** (uh-SWAYJ)

To relieve, ease, make less severe or intense; also, to satisfy, appease, make content.

**Synonyms:** allay, mollify (Level 2, Word 27), mitigate.

**Pronunciation tip:** Don't pronounce the G in assuage like the G in garage or the Z in azure. In assuage, the A is long (as in day) and the G is pronounced like J: uh-SWAYJ.

38. **CORROBORATE** (kuh-RAHB-uh-rayt)

To confirm, support, make more certain or believable, strengthen by providing additional evidence or proof.

**Synonyms:** *authenticate, verify, substantiate.*

39. **EMBELLISH** (em-BEL-ish)

To decorate, dress up, adorn, enhance with ornamentation, make more beautiful, elegant, or interesting.

**Corresponding noun:** *embellishment*, an ornament, decoration.

40. **AVARICIOUS** (AV-uh-**RISH**-us)

Greedy, money-grubbing, miserly, consumed with a selfish desire to accumulate money or property.

**Synonyms:** *covetous, mercenary* (Level 3, Word 14).

**Corresponding noun:** *avarice*, greed, an inordinate desire for wealth.

## Verbal Advantage Level Two

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**N.B.** At this point in Level 2 there is a discussion of the distinction between *sensual* and *sensuous* and the proper use of the verb *comprise*.

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### 41. **CURSORY** (KUR-suh-ree or KUR-sur-ee)

Quick, hasty, not methodical, done rapidly with little attention to detail, passing quickly over or through something that deserves closer examination.

**Synonyms:** *hurried, haphazard, slapdash, superficial.*

**Antonyms:** *thorough, careful, scrupulous, exhaustive, prolonged, protracted.*

**Related words** (from the Latin *currere*, to run): *course, curriculum, courier.*

### 42. **VACILLATE** (VAS-i-layt)

To waver, fluctuate, be indecisive, show uncertainty, hesitate in making up one's mind.

### 43. **CLEMENT** (KLEM-int)

(1) Mild, calm, tranquil, moderate, temperate, not severe or extreme.

(2) Merciful, lenient, inclined to pardon or forgive.

**Corresponding noun:** *clemency.*

### 44. **LUCRATIVE** (LOO-kruh-tiv)

Profitable, producing wealth, money-making, financially productive, remunerative.

**Related word:** *lucre* (LOO-kur), money, profit, especially tainted money, ill-gotten gains (as in the cliché "filthy lucre").

### 45. **ALLOCATE** (AL-uh-kayt or AL-oh-kayt)

To assign, designate, earmark, set aside for a specific purpose.

### 46. **RECONCILE** (REK-un-syl or rek-un-SYL)

(1) To make friendly again, restore friendly relations between, settle, resolve, bring into harmony or agreement.

(2) To bring into agreement, make consistent.

(3) To resign oneself to accept something undesirable.

## Verbal Advantage Level Two

47. **PARAGON** (PAR-uh-gahn)

A model of excellence, perfect example.

48. **ANALOGOUS** (uh-NAL-uh-gus)

Similar, alike in certain ways, corresponding partially, sharing some aspects of form, function, or content.

**Synonyms:** *akin, comparable.*

**Related word:** *analogy*, a partial similarity, likeness, or resemblance that allows for a comparison between things.

49. **DIURNAL** (dy-URN-'l)

(1) Daily, recurring each day, performed or happening in the course of a day.

(2) Active during the day, as opposed to *nocturnal*, active at night.

50. **PRETEXT** (PREE-tekst)

An excuse, ostensible reason or motive, professed purpose; specifically, an excuse or false reason given to hide the true reason or purpose.



# *VERBAL ADVANTAGE*

## *Level III*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

#### 1. DEFRAY (di-FRAY)

To pay, provide money for, cover the cost or expenses of.

#### 2. TACITURN (TAS-i-turn)

Silent, not talkative, holding one's tongue, habitually silent and withdrawn.

**Synonyms:** *reserved, uncommunicative, reticent.*

**Antonyms:** *garrulous* (Level 4, Word 8), *loquacious, effusive, voluble* (Level 5, Word 1).

**Related word:** *tacit* (Level 2, Word 9), unspoken, done or made in silence.

#### 3. TERSE (rhymes with *curse*)

Brief and to the point, free of superfluous words, expressed in a pointed and polished way.

**Synonyms:** *concise, pithy, succinct, laconic* (Level 3, Word 18).

**Antonyms:** *long-winded, redundant, verbose* (Level 2, Word 30), *prolix* (Level 9, Word 1).

**Beastly mispronunciation:** suh-SINGKT for *succinct*. Take care to pronounce the double C like KS: suhk-SINGKT.

#### 4. BOON (rhymes with *moon*)

A blessing, timely and welcome benefit, something beneficial bestowed upon one, something to be thankful for.

**Additional useful words:** *yore*, time long past; *supplicant*, a person who begs for something; *supplication*, the act of begging for something humbly and earnestly; *archaic*, old-fashioned, of a former time.

#### 5. PROLETARIAT (PROH-Iuh-TAIR-ee-ĭt)

The working class, especially the industrial wageearning class, which earns its living by manual labor, the lowest and poorest class of people in society.

**Corresponding adjective:** *proletarian*, of or relating to the working class.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 6. **HETEROGENEOUS** (HET-uh-roh-**JEE**-nee-us)

Varied, composed of parts of different kinds, made up of unrelated or diverse elements, mixed, dissimilar, miscellaneous.

**Antonym:** *homogeneous* (HOH-moh-**JEE**-nee-us).

**Useful information:** The prefix *homo-* means same, similar, like; the prefix *hetero-* means other, different, unlike.

#### 7. **PITTANCE** (PIT'ns, rhymes with *admittance*)

A small amount, portion, or share, especially a small or meager amount of money.

**Memory aid:** Think of the pit of a fruit, which is . small and hard, and you'll easily remember that a *pittance* is a small amount of money that is hard to live on.

#### 8. **GLIB** (rhymes with *rib*)

Smooth-spoken, speaking in a ready, fluent manner, with natural or offhand ease, talkative in a nonchalant way.

**Synonyms:** *suave, facile, bland, voluble* (Level 5, Word 1), *flippant, unctuous*.

**Useful information:** The synonym *unctuous* means having a slimy, slippery, or smarmy manner; self-serving and insincere.

**Additional useful word:** *unguent*, a medicinal ointment, salve.

#### 9. **PENCHANT** (PEN-cḥɪnt)

A liking, leaning, strong inclination, decided taste.

**Synonyms:** *propensity, proclivity*.

#### 10. **SOLICITOUS** (suh-LIS-i-tus)

Concerned, showing care and attention, especially in a worried, anxious, or fearful way.

**Usage tip:** In the above sense, *solicitous* may be followed by the prepositions *of*, *for*, or *about*. When used to mean eager, full of desire, willing, *solicitous* is followed by the preposition *to*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Three

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### A Dictum on Diction

#### Useful words:

*dictum*: a formal pronouncement, official opinion or decree (plural, *dicta*).

*diction*: choice of words, manner of expression (also, vocal expression, enunciation).

*apposite* (AP-uh-zit): both relevant and appropriate.

#### Usage tips:

- *Irregardless* is not a legitimate word. Use *regardless* or *irrespective*.
- Use *peruse* to mean to read carefully and critically, examine closely, read through to the end (*not* skim, browse, dip into or glance through).
- Don't use *reticent* to mean *reluctant*. A *reluctant* person is hesitant, disinclined, unwilling to do something. A *reticent* person is reluctant to speak
- *Loathe* and *loath*: When you are *loath* to do or say something, you are reluctant almost to the point of aversion or disgust. The verb to *loathe* means to hate, despise. *Loath* rhymes with *both*; the TH in *loathe* is pronounced like the TH in *other*
- *Emulate* and *imitate*: To *imitate* is to follow the example of, take as a model. To *emulate* means to strive to equal or excel.

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### 11. CIRCUMSCRIBE (SUR-kum-SKRYB)

To limit, restrict, confine, hem in, fix the boundaries of (literally, to draw a line around).

**Related words:** *circum-* means around. You can see this combining form in the words *circumstance*; *circumcision*; *circumvent*, to go around, bypass, especially in a clever or resourceful way; *circumlocutory*, expressed in a roundabout way; and *circumnavigate*, to navigate or sail around.

### 12. DEARTH (rhymes with *earth*)

A lack, scarcity, insufficiency, inadequate supply of something needed.

**Synonym:** *paucity* (Level 10, Word 2).

**Antonyms:** *abundance*, *surplus*, *excess*, *superfluity*, *plethora*, *surfeit*.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 13. INGRATIATING (in-GRAY-shee-ay-ting)

Flattering, attempting to win approval or curry favor, trying to gain acceptance, done to charm or please another.

**Synonym:** *unctuous*.

**Usage tip:** Dictionaries and thesauruses often give *charming*, *pleasing*, and *agreeable* as synonyms of *ingratiating*, but today the word invariably has the negative suggestion of insincerely charming, pleasing or agreeable so as to gain approval or get into the good graces of another.

#### 14. MERCENARY (MUR-suh-ner-ee)

Greedy, done for payment only, motivated by a selfish desire for money or other reward.

**Synonyms:** *covetous*, *avaricious* (both discussed in Level 2, Word 40).

**Additional related word:** *venal*, corruptible, capable of being bribed or bought off.

**Corresponding noun:** *mercenary*, a hired soldier, one who fights not for a cause or for love of country but for money.

#### 15. EXTEMPORIZE (eks-TEM-puh-ryz)

To improvise, to speak or compose with little or no preparation or practice, perform something in an offhand or unpremeditated way.

**Corresponding adjective:** *extemporaneous* (eks-TEM-puh-**RAY**-nee-us), spoken or composed with little or no preparation or practice.

#### 16. ERUDITE (preferably, ER-uu-dyt or AIR-uu-dyt; commonly, AIR-yoo-dyt)

Learned, scholarly, possessing extensive knowledge acquired chiefly from books.

**Corresponding noun:** *erudition* (preferably ER- or AIR-uu-**DISH**-un; commonly, AIR-yoo-**DISH**-un), extensive knowledge acquired from reading books.

**Usage tip:** *erudite* may be used either of people or things.

#### 17. AUSTERE (aw-STEER)

Severe, serious, characterized by strict selfdiscipline or severe self-denial, stern in appearance, manner, or practice.

**Synonyms:** *somber*, *grim*, *grave*, *forbidding*, *dour* (rhymes with *poor*).

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 18. **LACONIC** (luh-KAHN-ik)

Using few words, briefly and often bluntly expressed.

**Synonyms:** *succinct, concise, pithy, succinct, terse* (Level 3, Word 3).

**Etymology:** *Laconic* comes from the Greek *lakonikos*, a resident of the ancient city state of Sparta, which was renowned for its austere and warlike people. By derivation *laconic* refers to the Spartans' reputation for rigorous self-discipline and reticence. Like the ancient Spartans, the *laconic* speakers and writers of today are determined to use no more words than are necessary to get the point across, even at the risk of giving offense.

**Illustrative anecdote:** Julius Caesar's three-word pronouncement, *Veni, vidi, vici* ("I came, I saw, I conquered"), is one of the most famous laconic statements of all time.

#### 19. **AMELIORATE** (uh-MEEL-yuh-rayt)

To make or become better or more tolerable, raise the condition or state of.

**Synonyms:** improve, amend, correct, reform, rectify.

**Usage tip:** Ameliorate is used chiefly of improving something that needs help because it is inferior, oppressive, or intolerable.

#### 20. **EXPUNGE** (ek-SPUNJ)

To erase, delete, cancel; punch, strike, or wipe out something completely so it appears as though it had never existed.

**Synonyms:** eradicate, obliterate.

#### 21. **CIRCUMSPECT** (SUR-kūm-spekt)

Careful, cautious, wary, watchful, carefully considering all circumstances before acting or making a judgment.

**Synonyms:** discreet, vigilant, prudent (Level 1, Word 47).

**Etymology:** Circumspect comes from the Latin *circum-*, around, and *specere*, to look at carefully, observe. The Latin *specere* is also the source of the words *spectator*, *spectacle*, and *spectacular*, wonderful to behold.

## Verbal Advantage Level Three

### 22. QUIESCENT (kwy-ES-int)

Still, quiet, tranquil, inactive, at rest or repose.

**Antonyms:** *vigorous, animated, sprightly, vivacious, ebullient.*

**Related words:** *latent*, which applies to something that has not yet been revealed;  
*dormant*, which applies to something inactive or that seems asleep.

**Connotation:** *Quiescent* suggests a temporary cessation of activity, a period of rest or repose.

### 23. FOIBLE (FOY-buul)

A weak point, slight fault or flaw, -minor failing, especially a (usually forgivable) weakness in a person's character.

**Etymology:** By derivation *foible* means the weak part of a sword, and it is related to the word *feeble*, weak, frail.

### 24. FERVENT (FUR-vint)

Passionate, having or showing great warmth or intensity of feeling, fiery, earnest, impassioned.

**Synonyms:** *vehement, ardent, fervid, zealous.*

**Antonyms:** *lukewarm, listless, apathetic, indifferent, impassive, phlegmatic* (fleg-MAT-ik).

**Etymology and usage tip:** *Fervent* and *fervid* both come from the Latin *fervere*, to boil, glow. *Fervent* suggests great warmth and earnestness. *Fervid* is stronger and suggests intense, even violent emotion.

### 25. PROTRACT (proh-TRAKT)

To draw out, drag out, extend in time, lengthen, prolong, especially to excess.

**Antonyms:** *abbreviate, condense, curtail, truncate* (Level 7, Word 5).

**Etymology and connotation:** *Protract* comes from the Latin *tractare*, to draw, drag around. It suggests drawing or dragging something out needlessly, often to the point of irritation or boredom.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 26. OSTENTATIOUS (AH-sten-TAY-shus)

Showy, extremely conspicuous, extravagant, flamboyant; specifically, displayed or done in a flashy, vain manner.

**Antonyms:** *simple, plain, modest, unassuming*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *pretentious, pompous*, and *ostentatious*, all of which refer to persons or things that are showy, extravagant, and self-important.

#### 27. QUANDARY (KWAHN-duh-ree)

A state of uncertainty, perplexity, or doubt.

**Synonyms:** *predicament, dilemma.*

#### 28. CENSURE (SEN-shur)

To blame, condemn, find fault with, criticize harshly, express stern disapproval of.

**Synonyms:** *denounce, reprimand, reprehend.*

**Antonyms:** *commend, extol, laud.*

**Connotation:** *Censure* usually implies condemnation of irresponsible behavior rather than condemnation of character.

**Usage tip:** Be careful not to confuse the words *censure*, to blame, condemn, find fault with, and *censor* (SEN-sur), to suppress or delete something objectionable.

#### 29. CAVIL (KAV'l)

To criticize or complain unnecessarily, point out petty flaws, raise trivial or frivolous objections.

**Synonyms:** *nitpick, niggle, carp, quibble.* (All these words suggest making unnecessary criticisms or complaining about trivial things.)

#### 30. ASSIMILATE (uh-SIM-i-layt)

To absorb, take in; also, to adapt to or become absorbed by a system or culture.

**Synonyms:** *comprehend, incorporate, appropriate.*

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**Fewer and Less:** *Less* modifies quantities, abstractions, things that are considered single or whole (*less food, less time, less money*). *Fewer* modifies things that can be itemized, enumerated, broken down into separate elements or parts (*fewer thoughts, fewer words, fewer mistakes*).

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## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 31. RESCIND (ri-SIND)

To cancel, take back, take away, remove; also, to render void, annul, repeal.

#### 32. DISCERNIBLE (di-SURN-i-buul)

Recognizable, detectable, perceptible, capable of being recognized by the senses or by the mind.

**Synonyms:** *apparent, evident, distinguishable, manifest.*

**Antonyms:** *obscure, invisible, indistinct, imperceptible.*

**Related words and etymology:** *Discernible* (adjective), *discern* (verb), *discernment* (noun), and *discerning* (adjective) come from a Latin word meaning to sift, separate, distinguish between, and all of these words pertain to sifting or separating things in order to distinguish them. Challenging synonyms of *discernment* include *astuteness, acumen* (uh-KYOO-min), and *perspicacity* (PUR-spi-KAS-i-tee).

#### 33. CATAclysm (KAT-uh-kliz'm)

A disaster, great mishap, catastrophe, violent upheaval.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the synonyms *disaster, catastrophe, calamity, debacle* (di-BAHK'l), and *cataclysm*, all of which refer to accidents, misfortunes, and sudden or violent changes.

**Etymology tips:** The negative prefix *dis-* denotes the absence or reverse of what follows: *dislike* is an absence of affection, *discomfort* is the absence of comfort, *disadvantage* is the reverse of an advantage. *Catastrophe* and *cataclysm* begin with the Greek *kata-*, which means "down."

**Additional useful words:** *deluge* (DEL-yooj), a great flood or downpour; *inundate* (IN-un-dayt), to overflow or overwhelm.

#### 34. NARCISSISM (NAR-si-SIZ'm)

Self-love, excessive admiration of oneself.

**Synonyms:** *vanity, conceit, egotism, amour-propre* (ah-MOOR PROH-pruh).

**Antonyms:** *humbleness, modesty, humility.*

**Etymology:** *Narcissism* comes from Narcissus, a character in Greek mythology who fell in love with his reflection in a pool of water.

**Related words:** *narcissist*, a person afflicted with narcissism, self-love; *narcissistic* (adjective) means full of admiration for one's own appearance, abilities, or achievements.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 35. INCRIMINATE (in-KRIM-i-nayt)

To charge with a crime, accuse of wrongdoing, implicate, present evidence or proof of involvement in a wrongful act.

#### 36. STIGMA (STIG-muh)

A mark of shame or disgrace, a moral blemish, a stain on one's character or reputation.

**Etymology:** Stigma, from Greek, means literally a mark, brand, tattoo; in its original but no longer common sense, stigma refers to a brand or scar made with a red-hot iron in the flesh of slaves and criminals. Later it came to be used of anything that branded a person as unwholesome or disgraceful, a mark of shame, stain on one's character or reputation.

**Corresponding verb:** stigmatize, to brand as shameful, set a mark of disgrace upon.

**N.B.** The plural of stigma is either stigmas or stigmata (preferably STIG-muh-tuh, often stigMAH-tuh). Stigmata, the Latinate plural, may also refer to marks resembling the wounds on the crucified body of Jesus Christ that are believed to have been supernaturally impressed on the bodies of certain persons, such as St. Francis of Assisi.

**Additional useful word:** anglicize, to make English, conform to English modes of spelling, pronunciation, and usage.

#### 37. BREVITY (BREV-i-tee)

(1) Shortness, briefness.

(2) Brief expression, shortness of speech.

**Synonyms:** (sense 2) *conciseness, succinctness, terseness, pithiness.*

**Etymology and related words:** *Brief* and *brevity* both come from the Latin *brevis*, short, the source also of the unusual word *breve* (rhymes with *leave*). A *breve* is one of the diacritical marks or symbols used to indicate pronunciation: It's a small curve, like a tiny smile, placed over a vowel to indicate a short sound, as in the *e* in *pet* or the *a* in *cat*.

#### 38. PERQUISITE (PUR-kwi-zit)

A benefit, incidental gain or reward; specifically, an expected or promised benefit, privilege, or advantage received in addition to one's normal salary or wages.

#### 39. INDIGENT (IN-di-jint)

Poor, needy, penniless, impoverished, down-and-out.

**Synonyms:** *destitute, impecunious* (IM-pi-KYOO-nee-us).

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 40. CLAIRVOYANT (klair-VOY-int)

Having exceptional powers of perception, unusually clear-sighted or discerning; specifically, able to see objects or events that others cannot, having extra-sensory perception or the power of divination.

**Etymology:** the Latin *clarus*, clear, and *videre*, to see (literally, "to see clearly what others cannot").

**Related words:** *clairvoyance* (noun), exceptional insight or perception; *clairvoyant* (noun), a person who supposedly possesses the power to see into the future, a medium, soothsayer.

#### 41. ADROIT (uh-DROYT)

Skillful, clever, dexterous; specifically, showing skill in using one's hands or in using one's brains.

**Synonyms:** *deft, resourceful, ingenious, artful, adept* (Level 1, Word 7).

**Antonyms:** *awkward, clumsy, inept, maladroit* (mal-uh-DROYT).

**Etymology tips and related words:** *Adroit* comes from Latin through the French *droit*, right, and means literally "to the right." The Latin *dexter* means on the right side; hence, skillful. From *dexter* we inherit the word *dexterous*, skilled with the hands or body. The Latin *sinister* means left, on the left side, and also wrong, evil, unfavorable, adverse, the meaning of the English word *sinister* today. People who are *ambidextrous* are equally skillful or dexterous with both hands. The unusual word *ambisinister* means literally having two left hands, equally awkward with both hands. In French *gauche* means left, but also crooked, awkward, clumsy; in English *gauche* refers to a person who is awkward, crude, or blundering, or to behavior that lacks culture or social grace.

**Usage tip:** *Adroit* may refer either to physical dexterity or mental ingenuity.

#### 42. PLATITUDE (PLAT-i-t(y)ood)

A flat, dull, ordinary, remark, a trite statement or hackneyed saying, especially one uttered as if it were original or profound.

**Synonyms:** *cliche, truism, bromide* (BROH-myd).

**Etymology:** *Platitude* comes from the French word for flat, and means literally "a flat remark."

**Related words:** *platitudinous* (adjective) refers to speech or expression that is dull, ordinary, commonplace, insipid, banal. *Platitudinize* (verb) means to utter platitudes. A *platitudinarian* (noun) is a person who habitually utters platitudes-flat, dull, ordinary remarks.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 43. FASTIDIOUS (fa-STID-ee-us)

(1) Extremely delicate, sensitive, or particular, especially in matters of taste or behavior.

**Synonyms:** *dainty, fussy, finicky, overnice.*

(2) Hard to please, extremely picky or demanding, exacting, critical to a fault.

**Etymology and usage:** *Fastidious* descends from Latin words meaning squeamish, disgusted, disdainful, and conceited. The *fastidious* person is so excessively concerned with details that he may become squeamish or disgusted if things are not just right. The *fastidious* person may also be so hard to please, so critical and demanding, that she appears contemptuous of others.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *scrupulous, meticulous, punctilious*, and *fastidious*, all of which suggest demanding standards and careful attention to detail.

#### 44. VENDETTA (ven-DET-uh)

A bitter, protracted feud or rivalry.

**Etymology:** *Vendetta* comes through Italian from the Latin *vindicta*, revenge, vengeance.

**Related word:** *vindictive*, vengeful, seeking a revenge.

**Usage:** *Vendetta* refers specifically to the violent tradition of revenging the murder of a relative by killing the murderer or a member of his family. *Vendetta* is now also used more generally to mean any long, bitter feud or rivalry, not necessarily between families and not necessarily attended by bloodshed.

#### 45. LUCID (LOO-sid)

(1) Clear, easy to see or understand, plainly expressed.

(2) Clear of mind, mentally sound, rational, sane.

**Synonyms:** (sense 1) *intelligible, comprehensible, limpid, perspicuous* (pur-SPIK-yoo-us).

**Antonyms:** *murky, obscure, befuddled, nebulous* (Level 2, Word 5), *ambiguous* (Level 2, Word 25), *abstruse*.

**Related word:** *pellucid* (pe-LOO-sid), exceptionally clear, extremely easy to see or understand.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

#### 46. **SALIENT** (SAY-lee-int)

Conspicuous, noticeable, prominent; sticking or jutting out.

**Synonyms:** *protruding, manifest, obtrusive, protuberant.*

**Antonyms:** *inconspicuous, unassuming, unobtrusive, indiscernible, unostentatious.*

**Etymology and usage:** *Salient* comes from the Latin verb *salire*, to leap, jump, spring. That which *is salient* seems to leap out at you, jump into view, or spring forward to command your attention. *Salient* may apply to things that are conspicuously attractive or unattractive.

#### 47. **CATEGORICAL** (KAT-uh-**GOR**-i-kuul)

Absolute, unqualified, explicit; without exceptions, conditions, or qualifications.

**Antonyms:** *ambiguous* (Level 2, Word 25), *doubtful, dubious, indefinite, enigmatic, equivocal.*

**Usage:** *Categorical* refers to statements or assertions that are absolute, unqualified, direct and explicit. The word often suggests a statement or state of mind that is rigid, narrow, arrogant, or arbitrary.

#### 48. **INSCRUTABLE** (in-SKROO-tuh-buul)

Incomprehensible, unfathomable, extremely difficult to understand, not open to investigation or analysis.

**Synonyms:** *mysterious, impenetrable, esoteric, arcane* (ar-KAYN).

**Antonyms:** *lucid* (Level 4, Word 45), *perspicuous.*

**Etymology:** *Inscrutable* combines the negative prefix *in-*, which means not, with the Latin *scrutari*, to examine, inspect, search thoroughly.

**Related words:** *scrutinize*, to investigate, examine closely; *scrutiny*, a close examination.

**Usage tips:** The phrase "an *inscrutable* smile" is a cliché, a hackneyed expression; unless you're trying to be humorous, it's best to avoid it altogether. Also, in the past *inscrutable* was often applied to Asians or to the Asian race. Today this use is considered not only cliché but also derogatory and offensive.

#### 49. **CONSTRUE** (kun-STROO)

To interpret, explain the meaning or intention of.

**Related words:** *construct, construction.*

**Etymology:** By derivation, the verb to *construe* means to put a particular construction on something, to interpret it, explain its underlying meaning or intention.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Three

50. **ALLUDE** (uh-LOOD)

To refer to something indirectly, make a casual reference.

**Synonyms:** *suggest, hint, insinuate, intimate* (IN-ti-mayt).

**Antonyms:** *indicate, specify, detail, enumerate.*

**Corresponding noun:** *allusion*, an indirect, casual, or passing reference.

# *VERBAL ADVANTAGE*

## *Level IV*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Four

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

### 1. PROVIDENT (PRAH-vi-dint)

Thrifty, economical, saving or providing for future needs.

**Synonyms:** *prudent* (Level 1, Word 47), *frugal* (Level 2, Word 35).

**Related word:** *provide*.

### 2. IMPUTE (im-PYOOT)

To charge or attribute, especially with a fault or misconduct, lay the responsibility or blame upon, ascribe, assign.

**Usage tip:** The verb to *credit* has a favorable connotation. The verbs to *assign* and to *ascribe* are neutral. The verb to *impute* often has a negative connotation: "We usually *ascribe* good, but *impute* evil" (Samuel Johnson).

**Corresponding noun:** *imputation*, a charge or accusation.

### 3. ASTUTE (uh-ST(Y)OOT)

Shrewd, clever, perceptive, discerning, acute, keenly aware, quick-witted.

**Synonyms:** *sagacious*, *perspicacious*, *sapient* (SAY-pee-int).

### 4. NEOPHYTE (NEE-uh-fyt)

A beginner, novice, amateur, tyro; specifically, a new member of or convert to a religion.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *tyro*, *amateur*, *dilettante*, *novice*, and *neophyte*.

### 5. ENIGMA (i-NIG-muh)

A mystery, puzzle, riddle; perplexing problem; something or someone hard to understand or explain; anything baffling, inexplicable, or inscrutable.



## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 6. **CREDENCE** (KREE-dīns)

Belief, acceptance, especially belief in a published report or acceptance of another's opinion or testimony.

**Related words:** *credence*, *creed*, *credible*, and *credulous* all come from the Latin *credere*, to believe.

**Usage tip:** *Credence* is often used with the verbs to *give* or *lend*.

#### 7. **VENERATE** (VEN-uh-rayt)

To respect deeply, revere, regard with awe and adoration.

**Corresponding adjective:** *venerable*, worthy of veneration, of being venerated. *Venerable* is often used of something or someone old or long-established.

#### 8. **GARRULOUS** (GAR-uh-lus, also GAR-yuh-lus)

Talkative, especially in a rambling, annoying, pointless, or long-winded way.

**Synonyms:** verbose (Level 2, Word 30), loquacious, voluble (Level 5, Word 1), and prolix (Level 9, Word 1).

**Antonyms:** reserved, reticent, taciturn (Level 3, Word 2), laconic (Level 3, Word 18).

**Etymology:** Garrulous comes from the Latin *garrere*, to chatter, babble, talk in a rambling and tiresome way (literally, "to chatter like a jaybird").

#### 9. **TRENCHANT** (TREN-chent)

Keen, penetrating, vigorously effective, sharp and to the point.

**Synonyms:** forceful, acute, incisive.

#### 10. **AUTONOMOUS** (aw-TAHN-uh-mus)

Independent, self-governing, not under the control of something or someone else.

**Etymology and related words:** The Greek *autos*, self, is the source of the English combining form *auto-*, self, which appears in many words, including autobiography, autograph, automobile, automatic, and autocracy, rule by one self or one personhence, dictatorship, tyranny, despotism.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 11. PANACEA (PAN-uh-SEE-uh)

A cure-all, universal antidote, remedy for all diseases and difficulties.

**Etymology and related words:** The English prefix *pan-* (from Greek), means "all." This prefix appears in front of a number of useful English words, including *panorama*, *pantheism*, and *pantheon*.

**Usage tip:** The common expression "a panacea for all ills" is redundant. *Panacea* by itself means a cure for all ills, a universal remedy.

#### 12. EPHEMERAL (e-FEM-ur-ul)

Short-lived, passing, fleeting, lasting for a short time.

**Synonyms:** *transitory*, *evanescent*, *fugitive*, *fugacious*. For more on these words, review the discussion of *transient* (Level 2, Word 31).

**Usage tip:** The common expression "daily journal" is redundant, for by derivation *journal* (from the French *jour*, day) means something written or published each day.

#### 13. ONEROUS (AHN-ur-us)

Burdensome, troublesome, oppressive, hard to bear, difficult to accomplish or endure.

**Related word:** *onus* (OH-nus, rhymes with *bonus*), a burden, obligation, especially a disagreeable responsibility.

#### 14. LAITY (LAY-i-tee)

Nonprofessionals, laypeople collectively, all the people outside of a given profession or specialized field; specifically, all who do not belong to the clergy, religious worshipers in general.

**Corresponding adjective:** *lay*, nonprofessional, not belonging to a particular profession; specifically, not a member of the clergy.

#### 15. PUNGENT (PUN-junt)

Sharp, penetrating, biting, acrid, caustic.

**Etymology and usage:** *Pungent* comes from the same Latin source as *poignant* and *expunge*—the Latin *pungere*, to pierce, prick. *Pungent* may refer to that which is sharp to the sense of taste or smell or to that which penetrates the mind or emotions.

## Verbal Advantage Level Four

### 16. PROSAIC (proh-ZAY-ik)

Dull, ordinary, uninteresting, unimaginative.

**Synonyms:** *commonplace, humdrum, tedious, dry, stale, mediocre, matter-of-fact, insipid, pedestrian, vapid, jejune* (Level 10, Word 1).

### 17. CHARLATAN (SHAR-luh-tin)

A fake, quack, impostor, fraud, humbug; specifically, a person who pretends to have a special skill or knowledge.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *charlatan* and *mountebank*, which are close in meaning.

**Memory aid:** In *The Wizard of Oz*, the Wizard is a classic example of a charlatan.

### 18. PERFUNCTORY (pur-FUNGK-tuh-ree)

Mechanical, routine, listless; done merely as a duty; performed in an indifferent, halfhearted, superficial, and often careless way, without interest or enthusiasm.

### 19. MORASS (muh-RAS or maw-RAS)

Literally, a swamp, marsh, bog; figuratively, some-thing that traps, confines, or confuses, a sticky situation or troublesome state of affairs.

### 20. SOPHISTRY (SAH-fis-tree)

Deceptive reasoning, subtle and misleading argument.

**Related word:** *sophisticated*.

**Corresponding adjective:** sophistic or sophistical

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### What Is Usage?

**N.B.** At this point in the program, there is a discussion of the concept of usage, which explores the creeds of permissivism and purism, defines the terms *prescriptive* and *descriptive*, points out what a dictionary does and doesn't tell you, and makes a case for a compromise between the ideological extremes of "Humpty Dumpty" and "Miss Thistlebottom."

**Useful word:** *lexicographer* (LEKS-i-KAHG-ruh-fur), a person who writes or edits a dictionary.

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## Verbal Advantage Level Four

### 21. **PROLIFIC** (proh-LIF-ik)

Fruitful, fertile, productive.

**Antonyms:** *unproductive, barren, sterile, impotent, effete.*

### 22. **MUNDANE** (muhn-DAYN)

Of the world, worldly, earthly, material as distinguished from spiritual.

**Synonyms:** *terrestrial, temporal, secular, sublunary* (suhb-LOO-nuh-ree).

**Antonyms:** *lofty, heavenly, sublime, celestial, ethereal, extraterrestrial.*

**Usage tip:** Some usage experts object to the use of *mundane* as a synonym of ordinary, humdrum, commonplace, banal, unimaginative, and prosaic. In strict usage, *mundane* is reserved for things that are worldly as opposed to heavenly, material as opposed to spiritual, secular as opposed to religious.

### 23. **MYRIAD** (MIR-ee-id)

Countless, innumerable, infinite, consisting of a great or indefinite number.

**Corresponding noun:** *myriad*, a great or indefinite number.

### 24. **DISSIDENT** (DIS-uh-dint)

Disagreeing, disaffected, dissenting, nonconformist.

**Etymology:** *Dissident* comes from the Latin *dis-*, apart, and *sedere*, to sit, and by derivation means to sit apart; hence, to withdraw one's approval or belief, disagree.

**Corresponding noun:** *dissident*, a person who disagrees with a prevailing opinion, method, or doctrine.

### 25. **LAUDABLE** (LAW-duh-buul)

Praiseworthy, commendable, worthy of approval or admiration.

**Synonyms:** *meritorious, estimable.*

**Antonyms:** *contemptible, deplorable, ignominious.*

**Corresponding verb:** *laud*, to praise, commend, extol (ek-STOHL).

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 26. INIMITABLE (in-IM-i-tuh-buul)

Unable to be imitated, copied, or reproduced; beyond compare.

**Synonyms:** *matchless, unrivaled, peerless, unparalleled, surpassing.*

**Etymology tip:** The prefix *in-* often means "in" or "into," as in the words *inhale*, to breathe in; *ingrain*, to rub in, fix in the mind; and *ingress*, the way in, the entrance. However, it is just as often privative (PRIV-uh-tiv), meaning it deprives or takes away the meaning of the word to which it is affixed. Like the prefix *un-*, the prefix *in-* often means "not," as in the words *informal*, not formal; *inaudible*, not audible, unable to be heard; and *injustice*, something that is not fair or just. *Inimitable* combines this privative prefix *in-* with the somewhat unusual word *imitable*, able to be imitated, to mean "not able to be imitated."

#### 27. JADED (JAY-did)

Worn out, tired, fatigued, weary, exhausted.

**Related words and usage tip:** One meaning of the noun *jade* is a worn-out or broken-down horse, a nag. The verb to *jade* means to be or become like a worn-out or broken-down horse. The adjective *jaded* means like that broken-down horse; specifically, worn out from overwork or overindulgence.

#### 28. MYOPIC (my-AHP-ik)

Short-sighted; not able to see the long-range picture; having a narrow or circumscribed view; lacking discernment, foresight, or perspective.

**Synonyms:** *narrowminded, purblind, obtuse.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the adjectives *purblind*, *obtuse*, and *myopic*.

**Antonyms:** *broadminded, liberal, tolerant, catholic, latitudinarian*

**Corresponding noun:** *myopia* (my-OH-pee-uh), nearsightedness.

#### 29. DEMONSTRABLE (di-MAHN-struh-buul)

(1) Capable of being demonstrated, able to be proved.

(2) Obvious, apparent, self-evident.

**Corresponding verb:** *demonstrate.*

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 30. CALLOW (KAL-oh)

Immature, inexperienced, unsophisticated, green, naive, lacking experience in and knowledge of the world.

**N.B.** *Callow* was formerly used of very young birds to mean without feathers, unfledged. Today *callow* and the word *fledgling* are used of persons, behavior, or things that are immature or inexperienced. A *fledgling* is a young bird that has just acquired its feathers and is learning to fly. From that original sense *fledgling* has come to refer either to a young and inexperienced person or to some thing that is just getting off the ground, as a *fledgling* enterprise.

*Callow* suggests an immaturity or inexperience manifested by a lack of sophistication. Because *callow* means immature, it sometimes also suggests childishness or foolishness. Synonyms of *callow* in this unfavorable sense include *juvenile*, *sophomoric*, and *puerile* (PYOOR-ul or PYOO-ur-ul).

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At this point in the program there is a "Word to the Wise" called "Just Between Us, This One's for You and Me," which covers the proper and improper use of the nominative personal pronoun *I* and the objective personal pronoun *me*.

**Wrong:** This is a good investment for you and *I*.

**Right:** This is a good investment for you and *me*.

**Wrong:** Let's keep this information just between you and *I*.

**Right:** Let's keep this information just between you and *me*.

**Rule of thumb:** Whenever something is *between* someone else and you, or *for* someone else and you, say *me*, not *I*: "There's no difference *between* you and *me*." Or try this little trick: Eliminate the other people in the sentence and see how it sounds. If you're about to say "It's for him and *I*," take out the "him" and you'll hear that "it's for *I*" sounds wrong, which it is.

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#### 31. ACQUIESCE (ak-wee-ES)

To agree without protest, accept without argument or resistance, give in quietly.

**Synonyms:** *consent*, *comply*, *submit*, *assent*, *accede*.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *assent*, *accede*, and *acquiesce*.

**Corresponding noun:** *acquiescence* (AK-wee-**ES**-ins), passive agreement, quiet acceptance.

**Usage tip:** *Acquiesce* is sometimes followed by the preposition *in*, as to *acquiesce in* a decision.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 32. PONTIFICATE (pahn-TIF-i-kayt)

To speak in a pompous and overbearing way; make pretentious or categorical statements; express one's opinion as though it were an official, authoritative decree.

**Corresponding noun:** *pontification* (pahn-TIF-iKAY-shin).

**Related words:** *pontiff*, the Roman Catholic pope, also known as the Bishop of Rome. The pontiff issues official decrees on church doctrine called *papal bulls*. To these decrees the pontiff affixes a seal called a *bull* (BUUL-uh).

**Additional useful word:** *dogmatic* (dawg-MATik), means opinionated, dictatorial, expressing an opinion as if it were fact.

#### 33. DELETERIOUS (DEL-i-TEER-ee-us)

Harmful, destructive, injurious, detrimental; especially, harmful to health or well-being.

**Synonyms:** *ruinous, noxious, pernicious, malignant*.

**Antonyms:** *healthful, advantageous, wholesome, salutary* (SAL-yuh-ter-ee).

#### 34. AMBIVALENT

Uncertain, indecisive; having conflicting feelings or desires; simultaneously drawn in opposite directions; attracted to and repulsed by something at the same time.

**Corresponding noun:** *ambivalence*, a state of uncertainty or indecisiveness.

**Etymology tip and related words:** One meaning of the combining form *ambi-* is "both," as in the words *ambidextrous*, skilled with both hands, and *ambivert*, a person who is both *introverted*, innerdirected, and *extroverted*, outer-directed. The word *ambivalent* combines *ambi-*, both, with the Latin *valere*, to be strong, to mean literally "having strong feelings both ways"; hence, uncertain, indecisive.

#### 35. PENSIVE (rhymes with *intensive*)

Thoughtful, absorbed in thought, especially in a deep, dreamy, or melancholy way.

**Synonyms:** *reflective, meditative, wistful, contemplative* (kuhn-TEM-pluh-tiv).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *pensive*, *contemplative*, and *wistful*.

**Etymology:** *Pensive* comes ultimately from the Latin *pensare*, to ponder, consider, weigh in the mind. When you are *pensive*, you are thinking deeply about something, pondering it, weighing it in your mind.

**Corresponding noun:** *pensiveness*.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 36. **IMPROMPTU** (im-PRAHMP-t(y)oo)

Made up or done on the spur of the moment, uttered or performed without preparation, improvised for the occasion.

**Synonyms:** *offhand, spontaneous, extemporaneous* (see *extemporize*, Level 3, Word 15).

**Usage:** *Impromptu* may apply either to spontaneous expression or activity: an *impromptu* speech; an *impromptu* party

#### 37. **CONJECTURE** (kuhn-JEK-chur)

To guess; especially, to make an educated guess; to form an opinion or make a judgment based on insufficient evidence.

**Synonyms:** *suppose, imagine, suspect, presume.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *guess, speculate, surmise*, and *conjecture*, all of which mean to form an opinion or reach a conclusion based upon uncertain or insufficient evidence.

**Corresponding noun:** *conjecture*, an educated guess, an assumption or conclusion based on insufficient evidence.



## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 38. SURREPTITIOUS (SUH- or SUR-rip-TISH-us)

Stealthy; characterized by secrecy and caution; done, made, obtained, or enjoyed in a secret and often sly or shifty manner, so as to avoid notice.

**Synonyms:** *crafty, furtive, covert, underhand, clandestine* (Level 2, Word 6).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the adjectives *stealthy, furtive, clandestine, covert*, and *surreptitious*, all of which mean secret, hidden from the knowledge or view of others.

**Antonyms:** *evident, unconcealed, overt, aboveboard, manifest*.

**Etymology and usage:** *Surreptitious* comes from the Latin verb *surripere*, to snatch, pilfer, take away or withdraw secretly. By derivation *surreptitious* means snatched while no one is looking, and in modern usage the word combines the deliberate, cautious secrecy suggested by *stealthy* with the crafty, evasive secrecy suggested by *furtive*.

**Pronunciation tip:** The traditional pronunciation of *covert* is KUH-vurt (like *cover* with a *t* at the end). Until the 1960s, KUH-vurt was the only pronunciation recognized by dictionaries. Since then the variant KOH-vurt has become so popular that several dictionaries now list it first. Dictionaries still list KUH-vurt and many older educated speakers prefer it out of respect for the word's tradition, which dates back to the 14th century. Another popular variant, koh-VURT, is often not listed at all (and is best avoided).

Those who prefer to say KOH-vurt are not wrong; that pronunciation is now fully standard (meaning "acceptable"). On the other hand, if you are not afraid to distinguish yourself as a cultivated speaker at the risk of raising a few eyebrows, then consider using the traditional pronunciation, KUH-vurt.

#### 39. EXEMPLARY (eg-ZEM-pluh-ree)

Worthy of imitation, praiseworthy, commendable, serving as a model of excellence, appropriateness, or correctness.

**Synonyms:** *ideal, admirable, meritorious, estimable, laudable* (Level 4, Word 25).

**Antonyms:** *shameful, disreputable, contemptible, deplorable, ignominious, odious, heinous* (HAY-nus).

**Etymology:** *Exemplary* comes from the same Latin source as the word *example*. By derivation, something *exemplary* sets an example, and is therefore worthy of imitation.

## Verbal Advantage Level Four

### 40. IMPECCABLE (im-PEK-uh-buul)

(1) Perfect, faultless, flawless; free from faults or imperfections.

(2) Unable to do wrong, incapable of sin.

**Synonyms:** *unimpeachable, irreproachable.*

**Antonyms:** *reprehensible, censurable, culpable.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *impeccable, immaculate, and infallible.*

**Etymology:** *Impeccable* combines the privative prefix *in-*, meaning "not," with the Latin *peccare*, to make a mistake, do wrong, blunder, sin. By derivation, *impeccable* means not able to make a mistake, incapable of sinning or doing wrong; hence, perfect, faultless.

**N.B.** When the prefix *in-* is attached to a word beginning with the letter B, P, or M, the N changes to an M: *imbalanced* means not balanced; *impossible* means not possible; and *immutable* means not *mutable*, not changeable, fixed. When the prefix *in-* appears before a word beginning with L or R, the N changes to an L or an R: *illogical* means not logical; *irreproachable* means not reproachable, without fault or blame. These alterations in the spelling of the prefix *in-* have occurred to make these and dozens of other analogous words easier to pronounce.

**Additional useful words:** *fallible* (FAL-i-buul), capable of error or likely to be wrong; *macula* (MAK-yuh-luh), a spot or stain, specifically a blemish on the skin or a sunspot; *maculate* (MAKyuh-lit), stained, blemished, impure, corrupt; *peccadillo* (PEK-uh-DIL-oh), a small sin, minor fault or flaw; *peccant* (PEK-int), guilty, sinful, culpable; and *peccable* (PEK-uh-buul), liable to sin or do wrong.

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**N.B.** At this point in the program there is a "Word to the Wise" on commonly mispronounced words. This discussion covers the preferred pronunciations for the following words:

- *respite*: RES-pit, not ruh-SPYT. (*Respite* means "an interval of rest or relief; a lull, hiatus.")
- *program*: PROH-gram, not PROH-grum.

Take care not to slur the second syllable, *-gram*.

- *influence*, not *influnce*
- *affluent*, not *affluent*
- *superfluous*, not *superfluos*
- *preferable*, not *preferable*
- *comparable*, not *compairable*
- *formidable*, not *formidable*
- *integral*, not *integral*

## Verbal Advantage

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- *hospitable*, not *hospitable*
- *applicable*, not *applicable*
- *exquisite*, not *exquisite*
- *err*: Traditionally, UR (rhymes with *sir*); now commonly AIR (rhymes with *hair*).
- *negotiate*, *negotiation*: nĕ-GOH-shee-ayt, nĕ-GOH-shee-AY-shĭn. The third syllable in these words should be pronounced -*shee*-, not -*see*-.
- controversial: KAHN-truh-VUR-shuul, not KAHN-truh-VUR-see-ul. The word should have four (not five) syllables, with the final syllable pronounced -*shuul* (rhymes with *pull*).
- *species*: SPEE-sheez, not SPEE-seez.

The discussion of pronunciation is followed by a look at these commonly confused words:

#### **imply, infer**

To *imply* is to suggest, hint, indicate indirectly. To *infer* means to deduce, conclude, draw a conclusion. Someone who *implies* throws out a hint, a suggestion; someone who *infers* catches that suggestion and makes a conclusion, deduction.

#### **disinterested, uninterested**

The words are not synonymous or interchangeable. *Uninterested* means not interested, unconcerned. *Disinterested* means impartial, unbiased, not influenced by selfish motives: a *disinterested* judge.

#### **anxious, eager**

Take care not to use *anxious* when you mean *eager*. *Anxious* means full of anxiety, worried, nervous, concerned. *Eager* means showing keen interest or impatient desire.

**Wrong:** "Mike is *anxious* to see the new movie"; "Amanda was *anxious* to get a promotion."

**Right:** "Mike is *eager* to see the new movie, but *anxious* about whether he'll be able to get a good seat"; "Amanda was *eager* to get a promotion, but *anxious* about handling the greater responsibility of the job."

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## Verbal Advantage Level Four

### 41. ATTEST (uh-TEST)

(1) To affirm to be true, genuine, or correct; certify or authenticate officially; stand as proof or evidence of.

(2) To bear witness to, give testimony.

**Etymology and related words:** Attest comes from the Latin *ad*, to, and *testari*, to bear witness, and ultimately from *testis*, a witness, the source also of the words *testify*; *testimony*; *testimonial*; *testator* (TES-tay-tur), a person who has made a valid will; and *intestate* (in-TES-tayt), not having made a legal will.

### 42. COPIOUS (KOH-pee-us)

Abundant, plentiful, large in amount or number.

**Synonyms:** ample, bountiful, profuse.

**Antonyms:** scanty, meager, sparse, paltry.

**Etymology and related word:** Copious comes from the Latin *copia*, abundance, plenty, the source also of the English word *cornucopia*, a horn of plenty, hence, any overflowing stock or supply.

### 43. FALLACIOUS (fuh-LAY-shus)

False, misleading, deceptive, invalid, based on a fallacy.

**Synonyms:** *erroneous*, *spurious*, *untenable*, *illusory*, *sophistical*.

**Related words:** A *fallacy* is a false or misleading idea or statement, an argument that violates the laws of reasoning. *Sophistry* (Level 4, Word 20) refers to reasoning that deliberately uses *fallacies* (misleading arguments) to confuse or deceive.

**Etymology:** *Fallacy* and *fallacious* come from the Latin *fallere*, to deceive, lead astray.

### 44. STOIC (STOH-ik)

Showing no feelings, unemotional, unaffected by pleasure or pain, bearing pain or suffering without complaint.

**Synonyms:** *impassive*, *dispassionate*, *indifferent*, *apathetic*, *placid*, *languid*, *phlegmatic*, *imperturbable*.

**Antonyms:** *ardent*, *vehement*, *zealous*, *fervid*, *fervent* (Level 3, Word 24).

**Corresponding noun:** *stoicism*, indifference to pleasure or pain.

**Etymology:** *Stoic* and *stoicism* come from the Greek *stoa*, a porch or covered walkway - specifically, the famous Painted Porch in ancient Athens where the philosophical doctrine of Stoicism was born.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Four

#### 45. RECRIMINATION (rĭ-KRIM-i-NAY-shĭn)

A countercharge or counter accusation.

**Etymology:** *Recrimination* combines the prefix *re-*, which means "back" or "again," with the Latin verb *criminari*, to accuse, bring a charge against, and means literally to accuse in return, accuse again.

**Corresponding noun:** *recriminate*, to bring a countercharge against, denounce in return.

**Corresponding adjective:** *recriminative* or *recriminatory*.

#### 46. AFFINITY (uh-FIN-i-tee)

(1) Close resemblance or relationship; a strong likeness, similarity, or connection.

**Synonyms:** *kinship, correspondence, compatibility, consanguinity*.

(2) A natural attraction to, or liking for, a person or thing.

**Synonyms:** *penchant* (Level 3, Word 9), *propensity, proclivity*.

#### 47. VOLATILE (VAHL-uh-tuul)

(1) Changeable, unstable, inconstant, likely to change or shift rapidly and unpredictably.

**Synonyms:** *fickle, flighty, capricious* (Level 1, Word 11), *erratic, protean, mercurial*.

**Antonyms:** *stable, fixed, steadfast, invariable, immutable, quiescent* (Level 3, Word 22).

**N.B.** Volatile, which entered English in the early 1600s, has a volatile history, full of many shifts and changes in meaning. The word may also mean:

(a) evaporating quickly, easily vaporized;

(b) fleeting, vanishing swiftly, transient, ephemeral;

(c) lighthearted, lively and carefree, whimsical, prone to flights of fancy;

(d) explosive, likely to erupt into violence.

**Etymology and related word:** Volatile comes from the Latin *volare*, to fly, and its original meaning was "flying" or "having the power to fly." Today volatile is rarely used in this sense, and instead we have the word *volant* (VOH-lint), from the same Latin *volare*, to fly. *Volant* means flying, able to fly, or quick, nimble, agile.

**Memory and usage tip:** Remember that in all of its senses volatile describes that which can swiftly fly away from one condition or mood into another.

**Corresponding noun:** *volatility*.

**Pronunciation tip:** The pronunciation VAH-luh-tyl (-tyl like *tile*) is British.

## Verbal Advantage Level Four

### 48. SQUALID (SKWAH-lid)

Dirty and run-down as a result of poverty or neglect, foul or filthy from lack of care, wretched, miserable, degraded.

**Synonyms:** *seedy, unkempt, dilapidated, slovenly* (see also *abject*, Level 5, Word 50).

**Antonyms:** *unsullied, immaculate, pristine*.

**Corresponding noun:** *squalor*, filthiness, foulness, degradation; a wretched, miserable condition resulting from poverty or neglect.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes between the adjectives *squalid* and *sordid*.

### 49. EXPEDITE (EKS-puh-dyt)

To speed up, hasten, facilitate, accelerate the progress of, handle or perform quickly and efficiently.

**Antonyms:** *delay, postpone, hinder, retard, slacken, protract* (Level 3, Word 25).

**Etymology:** *Expedite* comes from the Latin verb *expedire*, to set free, disentangle, get ready for action.

### 50. ABJECT (AB-jekt or ab-JEKT)

Degraded, brought low in condition or status; hence, lacking self-respect, contemptible, wretched.

**Synonyms:** *debased, despicable, ignoble, groveling, servile, squalid* (Level 4, Word 48).

**Antonyms:** *noble, dignified, lofty, majestic, eminent, illustrious*.

**Corresponding noun:** *abjection*, a degraded, wretched, contemptible state.

**Etymology:** In Middle English *abject* meant "outcast." The word comes ultimately from the Latin *ab*, meaning "away" or "off," and the verb *jacere*, to throw, and means literally "thrown away, cast off."

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**N.B.** Level Four ends with a discussion of the acceptability of the use of *done* to mean *finished*, *completed*, as in "I'm just trying to get the job done," concluding on the basis of overwhelming linguistic evidence that this usage is informal but not incorrect.

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# *VERBAL ADVANTAGE*

## *Level V*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Five

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

**N.B.** Level Five begins with an overview of the subject of pronunciation. Following is a summary of some of the main points - three things you can do, starting now, that will improve your speech:

- (1) pay closer attention to how other people speak;
- (2) make sure to check the pronunciation of every word you look up in the dictionary; and
- (3) learn how to interpret diacritical marks-the symbols dictionaries use to indicate pronunciation.

(The discussion covers the macron, **breve**, **schwa**, **dieresis**, and **circumflex**, as well as stress or accent marks.)

Watch out for these common mispronunciations:

- **height** with *kite*, not HYTH (like *high plus -th*).
- **wash** Don't insert an R and say *wash*
- **mischievous** MIS-chuh-vus (three syllables), not mis-CHEE-vee-us (four syllables).
- **accurate** AK-yuh-rit, not AK-ur-it.
- **drowned** One syllable, rhyming with *sound*, not DROWN-did (two syllables).
- **idea** Say eye-DEE-uh, not eye-DEER.
- **irrelevant** Say i-REL-uh-vint, not i-REV-uh-lint.
- **jewelry** Say JOO-wuul-ree, not JOO-luh-ree.
- **theater** Say TREE-uh-tur, not thee-AY-tur.
- **nuclear** Say NOO-klee-ur, not NOO-kyuh-lur.
- **admirable** Say ADmirable, not adMIRable.
- **formidable** Say FORMidable, not forMIDable.
- **comparable** Say COMparable, not comPAIRable.
- **impotent** Say IM-puh-tent, not im-POH-tent.
- **disparate** Say DIS-puh-rit, not dis-PAR-it.
- **gondola** Say GON-duh-luh, not gahn-DOH-luh.



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- **influence** Say INfluence, not inFLUence.
- **superfluous** Say soo-PURF-loo-us, not soo-pur-FLOO-us

Take care to eschew (avoid, shun) these two bad habits:

- (1) Don't invent your own pronunciations or guess how a word is pronounced.
- (2) Don't blindly imitate other people's pronunciation. When in doubt, go to the dictionary.

### 1. VOLUBLE (VAHL-yuh-buul)

Talkative, talking much and easily, characterized by a great and continuous flow of words.

**Synonyms:** *long-winded, glib* (Level 3, Word 8), *garrulous* (Level 4, Word 8), *loquacious, verbose* (Level 2, Word 30), *effusive*.

**Antonyms:** *reticent, terse* (Level 3, Word 3), *laconic* (Level 3, Word 18), *taciturn*.

### 2. COMMISERATE (kuh-MIZ-uh-rayt)

To sympathize, feel or express sympathy, show sorrow or pity for.

**Synonym:** *condole*.

**Usage tip:** *Commiserate* is often followed by with: "They commiserated with her."

### 3. DILEMMA (di-LEM-uh)

A predicament; specifically, a predicament in which one must choose between equally undesirable alternatives.

**Synonyms:** *quandary* (Level 3, Word 27), *quagmire*.

**Usage tip:** *Dilemma* is often used today of any difficult problem or troublesome situation, but many good writers and speakers object to that as loose usage. Strictly speaking, *dilemma* should be used only of situations in which one faces a choice between equally undesirable alternatives. Officials often face the *dilemma* of either voting for what their constituents want and going against their conscience, or voting their conscience and losing the support of their constituents.

### 4. TRANSITORY (TRAM-si-tor-ee or TRAN-zī-for-ee)

Passing, temporary, fleeting, not permanent or enduring.

**Synonyms:** *transient* (Level 2, Word 31), *ephemeral* (Level 4, Word 12), *evanescent*.

**Etymology and related words:** *Transitory, transient, transit, and transition* all come from the Latin *transire*, to go or pass over.

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#### 5. PHILANTHROPIC (FIL-an-THRAHP-ik)

Charitable, benevolent, humane; motivated by or done out of a desire to help or improve the welfare of others.

**Corresponding noun:** *philanthropy*.

**Etymology and related words:** *Philanthropy* and *philanthropic* both come from the Greek *philein*, to love (as in *philosophy*, literally "love of wisdom," and *philharmonic*, literally "loving or devoted to music"), and *anthropos*, man (as in *anthropology*, the study of mankind, of human customs, habits, and traditions, and *anthropomorphic*, shaped like or resembling a man or human being).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *philanthropic*, *humanitarian*, *altruistic*, and *charitable*, all of which mean "helping others."

#### 6. LETHARGY (LETH-ur-jee)

Lack of energy, sluggishness, dullness; an abnormally dull, drowsy, inactive condition or state of mind.

**Synonyms:** *apathy, stupor, torpor, somnolence, lassitude, languor, stupefaction*.

**Corresponding adjective:** *lethargic*.

#### 7. EXONERATE (eg-ZAHN-uh-rayt)

To free from blame; free from a charge or the imputation of guilt; declare blameless or innocent.

**Synonyms:** *acquit, absolve, exculpate* (ek-SKUHLpayt or EKS-kul-payt).

**Etymology:** *Exonerate* combines the Latin *ex-*, out, with *onus*, a burden; in modern usage, removing the burden of guilt.

#### 8. PUGNACIOUS (puhg-NAY-shus)

Given to fighting, combative, quarrelsome, ready and willing to fight.

**Synonyms:** *contentious, belligerent, bellicose*.

**Antonyms:** *peaceable, clement* (Level 2, Word 43), *amicable*.

**Etymology:** *Pugnacious* comes from the Latin *pugnare*, to box, fight with the fists, ready to put up his dukes.

#### 9. CONTRITION (kun-TRISH-in)

Remorse, penitence, repentance, deep and devastating sorrow for one's sins or for something one has done wrong.

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### 10. **ABROGATE** (AB-ruh-gayt)

To abolish by legal or authoritative action or decree.

**Synonyms:** *cancel, revoke, repeal, annul, nullify, rescind* (Level 3, Word 31).

### 11. **OFFICIOUS** (uh-FISH-us)

Meddlesome, nosy, intrusive, interfering, prying; specifically, offering unwanted advice or unnecessary services, especially in a highhanded, overbearing way.

**Related word:** *quidnunc* (KWID-nungk), a busybody, nosy person.

### 12. **INTRACTABLE** (in-TRAK-tuh-buul)

Hard to manage or control, stubborn, unruly.

**Antonyms:** *obedient, compliant, malleable* (Level 2, Word 29), *docile, tractable*.

**Etymology and related words:** The antonyms *tractable* and *intractable*, and the familiar words *traction* and *tractor*, come from the Latin *tractare*, to drag around, haul; also, to manage, control.

### 13. **ALTRUISM** (AL-troo-iz'm)

Selflessness, unselfish concern for the welfare of others.

**Antonym:** egoism, self-centeredness; specifically, the doctrine that self-interest is the proper goal of the individual.

**Usage tip:** Egoism is distinguished from egotism, which denotes extreme self-involvement, excessive reference to oneself in speech or writing.

**Corresponding noun:** altruist, a person who puts the needs of others and of society first.

### 14. **ACCOLADE** (ak-uh-LAYD, but see tip below)

An award; sign of respect or esteem; expression of praise; mark of acknowledgment; anything done or given as a token of appreciation or approval.

**Etymology:** Accolade comes from the Latin *accollare*, to embrace, which comes in turn from *ad-*, meaning "to," and *collum*, the neck, the source of the word collar. Originally, an accolade was an embrace, specifically the ritual embrace used in conferring knighthood.

**Pronunciation tip:** Accolade may also acceptably be pronounced AK-uh-layd, ak-uh-LAHd, and AKuh-lahd.

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#### 15. VERNACULAR (vur-NAK-yuh-lur)

The native language of a people; especially, the common, everyday, informal language of ordinary people.

**Corresponding adjective:** *vernacular*, of or pertaining to the common, everyday language of ordinary people; also, native as opposed to foreign.

**Related expression:** "In the vernacular" means in ordinary and unpretentious language.

**N.B.** The vernacular comprises all language that is common and informal, any word or expression that ordinary people use-whether it is considered bad or good, acceptable or improper.

#### 16. JUDICIOUS (joo-DISH-us)

Wise and careful, having or showing sound judgment.

**Synonyms:** *sensible, levelheaded, prudent* (Level 1, Word 47), *discreet*.

**Antonyms:** *thoughtless, foolhardy, impetuous, temerarious*.

**Etymology and related words:** From the Latin *judex*, a judge, and *judicare*, to judge, pass judgment, we inherit the words *judge, judgment, judicial, judiciary*, and *judicious*.

**Spelling tip:** *Judge* has an E at the end, but in American English there is no E in the middle of the word *judgment* (the British spell it *judgement*).

#### 17. CHRYSALIS (KRIS-uh-lis)

(1) The pupa of a butterfly; the stage during which the insect is enclosed in a case or cocoon.

(2) A sheltered and undeveloped state or stage of being.

#### 18. GENTEEL (jen-TEEL)

Refined, polite, well-bred, sophisticated; elegantly stylish or fashionable; pertaining or belonging to high society.

**Usage tip:** In current usage *genteel* often suggests an excessive or affected refinement.

#### 19. JOVIAL (JOH-vee-ul)

Merry, full of good humor, hearty and fun-loving, jolly.

**Synonyms:** *sociable, jolly, convivial* (Level 5, Word 46).

**Etymology:** *Jovial* comes from the name Jove (also Jupiter), the chief deity in Roman mythology, called Zeus by the ancient Greeks. Jove was renowned for his love of feasting and merriment.

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#### 20. SUBTERFUGE (SUHB-tur-fyooj)

A deception, trick, underhanded scheme.

**Synonyms:** *stratagem, artifice, ruse* (rhymes with *fuse* and *choose*).

**Usage tip:** *Subterfuge* applies to any secret or illicit plan or activity designed to conceal a motive, escape blame, or avoid something unpleasant.

**Pronunciation tip:** Don't soften the G and say SUHB-tur-fyoozh. The *fuge* should rhyme with *huge*.

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**N.B.** At this point in the program there is a discussion of the formation of English plurals for certain problematic words derived from Latin and Greek, such as *octopus*, and whether to use a singular or plural verb with the words *media*, *data*, and *bacteria*.

**Pronunciation tip:** The word *process* is pronounced PRAH-ses (the pronunciation PROHses is British), and the plural *processes* should be pronounced PRAH-ses-siz, not PRAH-ses-seez.

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#### 21. EBULLIENCE (i-BUHL-yints or i-BUUL-yints)

Lively enthusiasm, high spirits, bubbly excitement.

**Synonyms:** *exuberance, exhilaration, effervescence*.

**Etymology and related words:** The Latin *ebullire*, to boil, bubble, is the source of the English words *ebullition*, *ebullient*, and *ebullience*.

**Pronunciation tip:** In the words *ebullience* and *ebullient*, the second syllable, *-bul-*, may be pronounced either like *bul-* in *bulk* or in *bull*.

#### 22. IMPERVIOUS (im-PUR-vee-us)

Impenetrable, incapable of being entered or passed through; hence, unable to be moved or affected by something.

**Synonyms:** *impassable, impermeable, opaque*.

**Antonyms:** *penetrable, passable, accessible, permeable, translucent, diaphanous*.

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### 23. REMONSTRATE (ruh-MAHN-strayt)

To object, protest, reprove, rebuke, argue or plead against.

**Synonym:** *expostulate*

### 24. EFFACE (i-FAYS)

(1) To rub out, wipe out, erase.

(2) To withdraw from notice, make oneself inconspicuous.

**Synonyms:** *obliterate, expunge.*

**Usage tip:** Take care to distinguish *efface* and *deface*, to spoil the appearance of, ruin, disfigure,

### 25. CHIMERA (ky-MEER-uh, also ki-MEER-uh)

A foolish fancy, fantastic notion or idea, figment of the imagination.

**Synonyms:** *whimsy, crotchet, maggot, caprice.*

**Etymology:** In Greek mythology, the Chimera was a fire-breathing monster with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a serpent. In modern usage *chimera* may refer to that fabulous creature or to any absurd and fabulous creation of the mind.

**Corresponding adjective:** *chimerical*, imaginary, fantastic, preposterous, absurd.

### 26. INCORRIGIBLE (in-KOR-ij-uh-buul)

(1) Bad beyond correction or reform, hopeless, irreformable.

**Synonyms:** *irredeemable, irreclaimable, unrepentant, inveterate, unregenerate.*

(2) Unruly, unmanageable, difficult to control.

**Synonyms:** *obstinate* (Level 1, word 34), willful, *intractable*.

**Antonym:** *corrigible*, capable of being corrected, amended, or reformed.

### 27. JUXTAPOSE (juks-tuh-POHZ)

To place side by side or close together, especially so as to compare or contrast.

**Etymology and related words:** *Juxtapose* comes from the Latin *juxta*, near, close by, and *ponere*, to put, place, the source also of *position* and *posit* (PAH-zit), to put forward as true, set down as a fact.

**Corresponding noun:** *juxtaposition*.

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### 28. CONVERSANT (kun-VUR-sint)

Familiar, acquainted, well-informed or well-versed.

**Etymology and related words:** *Conversant* comes from the Latin *conversari*, to associate with, the source also of *converse* and *conversation*.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the synonyms *conversant* and *versed*.

### 29. ESOTERIC (ES-o-TER-ik)

Intended for or designed to be understood only by a select group, known only by a few people; hence, not public, secret, confidential.

**Synonyms:** *mysterious, impenetrable, inscrutable* (Level 3, Word 48), *cryptic, abstruse, arcane, recondite* (REK-un-dyt).

**Antonyms:** *plain, apparent, accessible, manifest, discernible* (Level 3, Word 32), *lucid* (Level 3, Word 45), *perspicuous*. The direct antonym is *exoteric*.

### 30. AUSPICIOUS (aw-SPISH-us)

Favorable, fortunate; marked by favorable circumstances or good fortune; conducive to success; boding well.

**Synonym:** propitious.

**Etymology:** Latin *auspiciu*m, the act of predicting the future by observing the flight of birds (from *avis*, bird, and *specere*, to look at, observe)

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**N.B.** At this point in the program there is a discussion of the word *unique*.

**Interesting words noted:** *rhinolalia* (RY-nuh-LAY-lee-uh), an abnormally strong nasal tone in a person's speech; *echolalia* (EK-uh-LAY-lee-uh), the habit of repeating what other people say.

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## Verbal Advantage

### Level Five

#### 31. ITINERANT (eye-TIN-ur-int)

Wandering, traveling about, moving from place to place, especially to perform work.

**Synonyms:** *migratory, wayfaring, vagrant, nomadic, ambulatory, peripatetic* (Level 9, Word 47).

**Etymology and related words:** *Itinerant* and *itinerary* come from the Late Latin verb *itinerari*, to travel, go on a journey. An *itinerary* is a route or course taken on a journey, especially a detailed plan or list of places to visit while traveling.

**Corresponding noun:** *Itinerant*, an itinerant person, a wanderer, wayfarer, someone who travels from place to place.

**Usage tip:** *Itinerary* and *agenda* are not synonymous. An *agenda* is a list of things to be done or dealt with, especially a list of items to be addressed in a meeting. An *itinerary* is a list of places to go, a detailed plan for a journey.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *itinerant, nomadic, vagrant*, and *ambulatory* all of which mean moving or traveling about.

#### 32. CULL (KUHL, rhymes with gull)

To pick out, select from various sources, gather, collect.

**Etymology and related words:** Cull comes from the Latin *colligere*, to gather, the source also of *collect* and *collection*.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs cull and *glean*.

#### 33. PROMULGATE (pruh-MUHL-gayt or PRAHM-ul-gayt)

To make known, publish, proclaim, make public in an official manner.

**Synonyms:** *announce, advertise, broadcast, disseminate, bruit* (like *brute*). All these words suggest bringing something to the attention of the public, making it widely known.

**Corresponding nouns:** *promulgation*, the act of making something public or widely known; *promulgator*, a person who makes something widely known, who proclaims or publicizes it.

**Etymology and usage:** *Promulgate* comes from the Latin *promulgare*, to publish, proclaim. The word applies chiefly to making something known in a formal or official way.



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#### 34. GRATUITOUS (gruh-T(Y)OO-i-tūs)

(1) Free; given without charge or obligation.

(2) Without legitimate cause or reason; uncalled for, unjustified, baseless, unwarranted.

**Etymology and related words:** *Gratuitous* comes from the Latin *gratuitus*, meaning not paid for, unprovoked, or spontaneous. From the same source come *gratis* (rhymes with *lattice*), free, without charge, and *gratuity*, a gift or favor given in return for a service.

**Usage tip:** This discussion concludes with an admonition to avoid the redundant phrases "free gift" (all gifts are free) and "toll-free 800 number" (all 800 numbers are tollfree), and to drop the unnecessary *for* in the illogical phrase "for free." (You get something either *free* or *for nothing*, not *for free*.)

**Interesting word:** *joculism* (as defined by William Safire, language columnist for *The New York Times*), "a word or phrase intended to be an amusing error that is taken up as accurate by the unwary."

#### 35. NOMENCLATURE (NOH-men-KLAY-chur)

A system of names, especially a system of names used in a science, art, or branch of knowledge.

**Etymology and related word:** *Nomenclature* combines the Latin *nomen*, name, with *calare*, to call. From the same source comes *nomenclator* (NOH-men-KLAY-tur), originally (in ancient Rome) an attendant who informed candidates for office of the names of the persons they met; in modern usage, a person who assigns names in scientific classification.

#### 36. DROLL (rhymes with *coal* and *hole*)

Amusing, humorous, comical; especially, funny or witty in an odd or outrageous way.

**Synonyms:** *ridiculous, ludicrous, farcical, waggish.*

**Antonyms:** *sober, sedate, staid* (rhymes with *fade*), *austere* (Level 3, Word 17).

**Corresponding noun:** *drollery.*

#### 37. INSATIABLE (in-SAY-shuh-buul)

Greedy, hungry, unable to be satisfied or appeased.

**Synonyms:** *ravenous, voracious, unquenchable, unappeasable.*

**Antonym:** *satiable*, capable of being satisfied.

**Etymology and related words:** From the Latin *satis*, enough, sufficient, English has inherited the words *insatiable*, *satiable*, *satisfy*, and *satiate*, to satisfy completely or somewhat to excess; and *satiety*, a state of excessive gratification, satisfaction beyond what one normally desires.

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#### 38. BEGUILE (bi-GYL, rhymes with *a smile*)

(1) To deceive, delude, or mislead.

**Synonyms:** *dupe, gull, hoodwink, swindle, bamboozle, ensnare, cozen* (pronounced like *cousin*).

(2) To charm, amuse, or delight.

**Synonyms:** *enchant, enrapture, enthrall, ensorcel* (en-SOR-sul).

**Etymology:** The prefix *be-* at the beginning of the verb *to beguile* is an intensifier meaning "completely, thoroughly," as in *besmirch, befuddle, and beware*. The word *guile* (craftiness, deceit, treacherous cunning) comes through Old French probably from an Old English word meaning sorcery or divination.

#### 39. VINDICTIVE (vin-DIK-tiv)

Seeking or wanting revenge, vengeful, characterized by a desire to get even.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the synonyms *vengeful* and *vindictive*.

**Related word:** *retribution*, repayment in the form of punishment in return for a wrong.

#### 40. REPLETE (ri-PLEET)

Fully or richly supplied, well-stocked, chock-full, filled to capacity.

**Synonyms:** *stuffed, crammed, gorged, abounding, brimming, teeming, laden, surfeited*.

**Etymology and related words:** *Replete* comes from the Latin *replere*, to refill, fill again, from *reagain*, and *plere*, to fill. From the Latin *plere* and the adjective *plenus*, full, come the English words *plenty, plentiful, plenitude*, an abundance, ample amount, and *plenary* (PLEE-nuh-ree), full or complete in all respects.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *replete* and *fraught*.

**Usage tip:** *Replete* and *complete* are not synonymous or interchangeable. *Complete* means lacking nothing, having all necessary elements, ingredients, or parts: a *complete* set of encyclopedias. *Replete* means well-stocked, fully or richly supplied: a river *replete* with fish.

#### 41. PRECLUDE (pri-KLOOD)

To prevent, make impossible, exclude or shut off all possibility of something happening.

**Synonyms:** *avert, obviate, forestall*.

**Antonyms:** *incite, instigate, engender*.

**Etymology:** Latin *prae-*, before, and *claudere*, to shut, close up.

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### 42. CASTIGATE (KAS-ti-gayt)

To punish or criticize severely.

**Synonyms:** *chasten, chastise, rebuke, reprimand, reprove, censure* (Level 3, Word 28).

**Antonyms:** *approve, reward, praise, commend, laud, extol, eulogize.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *castigate*, to *chasten*, and to *chastise* (the corresponding noun, *chastisement*, may be pronounced either CHAS-tiz-mint or chas-TYZ-mint.)

**Corresponding noun:** *castigation.*

### 43. COLLOQUIAL (kuh-LOH-kwee-ul)

Conversational; pertaining to, characteristic of, or used in spoken language; hence, informal, casual, natural.

**Etymology and related words:** Colloquial comes from the Latin loqui, to speak, converse—the source also of loquacious, extremely talkative, a synonym of garrulous (Level 4, Word 8); colloquy (KAHLuh-kwee), a conversation—specifically, a formal or intellectual discussion; and colloquium (kuh-LOHkwee-um), a conference or meeting for discussion.

**Corresponding noun:** colloquialism, a colloquial expression; a bit of vernacular language; a word or phrase used in common, everyday, informal speech.

**Dictionary usage tip:** When you see the abbreviation coll. or colloq. in a dictionary, it means colloquial, appropriate to or characteristic of informal speech.

**Colloquial usage tip:** Avoid the expression "I could care less"; instead say "I could not care less." If you can care less, that means you still have some caring left in you; if you cannot care less, then you do not care at all.

**N.B.** This discussion concludes with an exploration of the nature of colloquial speech and colloquialisms.

### 44. OBFUSCATE (uhb-FUHS-kayt or AHB-fuh-skayt)

To make obscure, cloud over, darken, make unclear or indistinct.

**Synonyms:** *confuse, complicate, muddle, bewilder, shroud, eclipse, adumbrate* (ad-UHMbrayt or AD-uhm-brayt).

**Antonyms:** *expose, unveil, clarify, elucidate.*

**Corresponding noun:** *obfuscation.*

**Etymology:** Latin *obfuscare*, to darken.

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#### 45. **FACILE** (FAS'l, rhymes with *castle*)

Easy, easily done; performed or achieved in an easy, effortless way; working or acting in a smooth, free, and unrestrained manner.

**Synonyms:** *quick, ready, fluent, nimble, dexterous, expert, adroit* (Level 3, Word 41).

**Antonyms:** *difficult, awkward, unwieldy, laborious, irksome, obstinate* (Level 1, Word 34), *onerous* (Level 4, Word 13), *intractable* (Level 5, Word 12), *refractory* (ri-FRAK-tuh-ree).

**Etymology and related words:** *facile, facility, and facilitate* all come through the Latin *facilis*, easy to do, from *facere*, to make or do.

#### 46. **CONVIVIAL** (kun-VIV-ee-ul)

Sociable, merry, festive.

**Synonyms:** *jovial* (Level 5, Word 19), *genial, companionable, affable, gregarious*.

**Antonyms:** *unsociable, reserved, solitary, aloof*.

**Etymology:** Latin *convivium*, a feast, banquet, from *con-*, meaning "together," and *vivere*, to live. By derivation *convivial* means gathering together to eat, drink, and be merry.

#### 47. **ESCHEW** (es-CHOO)

To avoid, shun, abstain from; keep away from something harmful, wrong, or distasteful.

**Usage tip:** *Eschew* has nothing to do with chewing-for which the fancy synonym is *mastication*.

#### 48. **PRODIGIOUS** (pruh-DIJ-us)

Enormous, huge, tremendous, immense; extraordinary in size, extent, force, or degree.

**Synonyms:** *mammoth, monumental, colossal, gargantuan, elephantine* (EL-uh-FAN-tin, EL-uh-FAN-teen, or EL-uh-FAN-tyn, in order of preference), *herculean* (hur-KYOO-lee-in or HUR-kyoo-LEE-in), *Brobdingnagian* (BRAHB-ding-NAG-ee-in; antonym: *Lilliputian*). The last four synonyms listed are discussed in detail.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *prodigiosus*, strange, wonderful, marvelous, from *prodigium*, an omen, portent, sign. From the same source comes *prodigy*, a person of marvelous talent or wonderful ability.

## Verbal Advantage Level Five

### 49. **IDIOSYNCRASY** (ID-ee-oh-**SIN**-kruh-see)

A peculiarity; distinctive characteristic of a person or group; an identifying trait or mannerism.

**N.B.** This lesson distinguished the synonyms *idiosyncrasy*, *eccentricity*, and *quirk*, which designate behavior that is peculiar or distinctive.

**Corresponding adjective:** *idiosyncratic*, peculiar, distinctive, odd.

### 50. **APPROBATION** (AP-roh-**BAY**-shin)

Approval, acceptance; especially, official approval or authorization.

Synonyms: *commendation*, *endorsement*, *sanction*, *ratification*, *acclamation*.

**Antonyms:** *rejection*, *opposition*, *disapprobation*, *renunciation*, *repudiation*, *disavowal*, *abjuration*.

**Etymology:** Latin *approbare*, to approve.

*VERBAL ADVANTAGE*  
*SUCCESS EDITION*  
*ADVANCED*

*Level VI*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

The introduction to this level explores how vocabulary is acquired, average vocabulary growth at different ages and stages of life, and the difference between your *active* and *passive* vocabularies.

### 1. LEGERDEMAIN (LEJ-ur-duh-MAYN)

Sleight of hand; a cleverly executed trick or deception.

**Synonyms:** *magic, prestidigitation, thaumaturgy.*

**Etymology and usage:** *Legerdemain* comes from a Middle French phrase "light of hand." Today the word may refer specifically to adroitness with the hands, as in performing magic tricks; to any display of clever skill and adroitness; or a cleverly executed trick or deception. Spelling tip: There is no *e* at the end of *legerdemain*.

### 2. PUERILE (PYOOR-ul or PYOO-ur-ul)

Childish, immature; hence, foolish, silly. Etymology: Latin *puerilis*, youthful, from *puer*, a child.

**Synonyms:** ("childish or immature") *infantile, juvenile*; ("foolish or silly") *inane, frivolous, asinine, fatuous, sophomoric, callow* (Level 4, Word 30).

**Corresponding nouns:** *puerilism*, a psychiatric term for the abnormal appearance of childish behavior in an adult; *puerility*, childishness, immaturity, or in civil law, the status of a child between infancy and puberty.

### 3. COMPLICITY (kuhm-PLIS-i-tee)

Conspiracy, partnership in wrongdoing, criminal participation, direct association in guilt, the state of being an accomplice.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *conspiracy, confederacy, collusion*, and *complicity*, all of which refer to partnership or participation in disreputable or illegal activities. It also explores a usage problem concerning the words *connivance*, feigning ignorance of wrong doing, and *connive*, to feign ignorance of wrong doing.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *complicare*, to fold up or fold together, the source also of the words *complicate* and *accomplice*.

### 4. TRANSMUTE (tranz-MYOOT)

To transform; specifically, to change from one nature, form, or substance into another, especially to a higher, better, or more refined one. Etymology: Prefix *trans-*, "across" or "beyond," and Latin *mutare*, to change. Literally, *transmute* means "to change across the board" or "to change something beyond what it is."

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 5. ABSTRUSE [ab-STROOS]

Difficult to understand, hard to grasp mentally, deep, profound, incomprehensible, unfathomable.

**Synonyms:** *inscrutable* (Level 3, Word 48), *esoteric* (Level 5, Word 29), *occult*, *cryptic*, *enigmatic*, *arcane*, *recondite*, *acroamatic*.

**Antonyms:** *manifest*, *discernible* (Level 3, Word 32), *lucid* (Level 3, Word 45), *perspicuous*.

### 6. EDIFY (ED-i-fy)

To instruct, improve, teach, enlighten; especially, to instruct or improve intellectually, morally, or spiritually.

**Corresponding noun:** *edification*, enlightenment; intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement.

**Usage tip:** Except when used humorously, the phrase "for your *edification*" should probably be avoided; it has become cliché and often has a condescending overtone.

### 7. SUPERCILIOUS (SOO-pur-SIL-ee-us)

Haughty, proud, scornful, contemptuous, disdainful.

**Etymology:** Latin *super-*, over, above, and *cilium*, eyebrow; by derivation it means with raised eyebrows.

### 8. DISSEMBLE (di-SEM-buul)

To disguise; conceal under a false appearance; speak or behave hypocritically; cover up the facts or one's true feelings or motives; mask under a pretense or deceptive manner.

**Synonyms:** *feign*, *affect*, *simulate*, *camouflage*, *equivocate*, *prevaricate*.

### 9. VACUOUS (VAK-yoo-us)

Empty, vacant; devoid of substance, interest, intelligence, expression, or meaning.

**Synonyms:** *blank*, *unintelligent*, *shallow*, *stupid*, *senseless*, *inane*, *fatuous*.

**Corresponding noun:** *vacuity*, emptiness, an absence of matter or intellectual content.

**Etymology:** Latin *vacuus*, empty.

**Usage tip:** *Vacuous* is not used where the words *empty* or *vacant* would be appropriate: an empty box or a vacant apartment cannot be described as *vacuous*. *Vacuous* usually applies to a figurative lack of content, meaning, or interest: *vacuous* eyes, a *vacuous* discussion, a *vacuous* mind, a *vacuous* remark, a *vacuous* proposal.



## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 10. CAPACIOUS (kuh-PAY-shus)

Roomy, spacious, ample, able to contain or hold a great deal.

**Synonyms:** When used literally, *capacious* is a synonym of *spacious* and *roomy*: a *capacious* house; their *capacious* office. When used figuratively, *capacious* is a synonym of *broad* and *comprehensive*: a *capacious* intellect; a *capacious* view; a *capacious* treatment of a subject.

### 11. MNEMONIC (ne-MAHN-ik)

Helping or pertaining to the memory, assisting or improving the ability to recall.

**Etymology and related words:** *Mnemonic* comes from a Greek verb to remember, and by derivation means "mindful." In Greek mythology, *Mnemosyne* was the goddess of memory and the mother of the nine Muses who preside over literature, the arts, and the sciences. A *mnemonic device* is a memory-aid, something that helps one to remember. *Mnemonics* refers to any technique or system for improving the memory.

### 12. SONOROUS (suh-NOR-us or SAHN-uh-rus)

Resonant; deep, full, and rich in sound; having, or capable of producing, a powerful, impressive sound.

### 13. ADMONISH (ad-MANN-ish)

To warn or notify of a fault or error, especially in conduct or attitude; to criticize or reprove gently but earnestly.

**Synonyms:** *advise, counsel, caution, apprise, exhort, expostulate.*

**Corresponding noun:** *admonishment*, a gentle warning or mild criticism.

**Etymology:** Latin *admonere*, to warn, remind.

### 14. PARADIGM (PAR-uh-dim or PAR-uh-dym)

An example, model, or pattern.

**Corresponding Adjective:** *paradigmatic*, exemplary, typical, serving as a model or pattern.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 15. CIRCUITOUS (sur-KYOO-i-tūs)

Roundabout, indirect, not straightforward, following a roundabout and often extended course.

**Synonyms:** *devious, meandering, sinuous, tortuous, serpentine, labyrinthine* (like a labyrinth or maze).

**Etymology:** The adjective *circuitous* is formed by adding the suffix *-ous* to the noun *circuit*, a line or route that goes around and returns to where it started.

### 16. VINDICATE (VIN-dī-kayt)

To clear from blame, free from suspicion of wrongdoing or dishonor; uphold or maintain the truth or innocence of something or someone in the face of criticism or imputations of guilt.

**Corresponding noun:** *vindication*.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs *vindicate*, *exonerate*, and *acquit*, which mean to free from blame.

### 17. BUCOLIC (byoo-KAHL-ik)

Rural, rustic, of or pertaining to country life.

**Synonyms:** *pastoral, provincial, agrarian, idyllic, Arcadian*.

**Antonyms:** *urban, municipal, civic, metropolitan, cosmopolitan*.

**Etymology:** Latin and Greek words meaning a herdsman, shepherd, ultimately from the Greek *bous*, an ox.

### 18. OSTRACIZE (AHS-truh-syz)

To banish, send into exile, expel from a place; to bar, exclude, or reject from a group or from acceptance by society.

**Corresponding noun:** *ostracism*, banishment.

**Etymology and related word:** Greek *ostrakon*, a potsherd, piece of broken pottery. *Ostracism* and *petalism* were forms of banishment employed by the ancient Greeks. *Ostracism* was practiced by the ancient Athenians; citizens would vote by writing the name of the person to be expelled on a potsherd or earthenware tablet, and banishment was for ten years. *Petalism* was practiced in ancient Syracuse; citizens would write the name of the person to be banished on an olive leaf, and the length of exile was five years.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 19. PLETHORA (PLETH-uh-ruh)

An excess, surplus, overabundance, oversupply.

**Synonyms:** *superabundance, profusion, superfluity, surfeit* (Level 8, Word 49).

**Antonyms:** *scarcity, insufficiency, dearth* (Level 3, Word 12), *paucity* (Level 10, Word 2).

**Etymology:** Greek *plethein*, to be full.

**Corresponding adjective:** *plethoric*.

**Pronunciation tip:** *Plethora* is sometimes mispronounced ple-THOR-uh. Dictionaries do not recognize ple-THOR-uh. Be sure to stress the first syllable: PLETH-uh-ruh.

### 20. PROCLIVITY (pro-KLIV-i-tee)

An inclination, liking, leaning; a strong natural bent or tendency, often toward something disagreeable, objectionable, or wicked.

**Synonyms:** *partiality, penchant* (Level 3, Word 9), *predisposition, predilection* (Level 8, Word 42), *propensity*.

\* \* \* \* \*

At this point in the program there is a discussion of several interesting and useful words derived from Greek names and Greek place names. The discussion covers the origin and meaning of the following words:

- *Procrustean*: producing conformity by cruel or violent means. To place someone on a *Procrustean bed* means to use ruthless measures to make the person conform.
- *draconian*: ruthlessly severe.
- *epicure*: a person with fastidious tastes, especially in food or wine; also, someone devoted to sensual pleasure. The adjective *epicurean* means devoted to or appreciating the comforts of life, especially good food and drink. The doctrine of *epicureanism* is distinguished from *hedonism*, the pursuit of self-indulgent pleasure-colloquially, "living for the moment." Additional useful phrase: *summum bonum*, (Latin) "greatest good."
- *Pyrrhonism*: absolute skepticism, universal doubt.
- *Pyrrhonist*: a person who doubts everything.
- *Boeotian*: (noun) a dull, ignorant person; (adjective) stupid, boring, obtuse. *Boeotian ears*: ears unable to appreciate music or rhetoric.
- *Arcadian*: of or pertaining to the simplicity and innocence of rustic life.
- *solecism*: a gross grammatical error or a social impropriety.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

- *Laodicean*: (noun) an indifferent or complacent person; (adjective) indifferent or lukewarm, especially in matters of religion.

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### 21. COMMENSURATE (kuh-MEN-shur-it)

Proportionate, corresponding in amount, measure, or degree; also, equal, of the same size or extent.

### 22. INCESSANT (in-SES-int)

Constant, uninterrupted, continuous, unceasing.

**Etymology:** *Incessant* combines the privative prefix *in-*, not, and the Latin *cessare*, to stop, cease.

**Synonyms:** *interminable, relentless, unremitting, continuous.*

**Antonyms:** *occasional, irregular, intermittent, incidental, sporadic, fitful, erratic.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *continuous* and *continual*, which are often confused and misused. *Continual* means happening again and again at short intervals: *continual* reminders, *continual* attempts, *continual* laughter, the *continual* ringing of the telephone. *Continuous* means uninterrupted or unbroken: *continuous* noise, *continuous* rain, a *continuous* effort, the *continuous* rotation of the earth. This discussion also distinguishes *continuous* and *incessant*, which are close synonyms.

### 23. SYCOPHANT (SIK-uh-fint)

A flatterer, parasite, toady, fawning follower, hanger-on.

**N.B.** This discussion explores the curious (and still uncertain) history of the word *toady* and *sycophant*.

**Corresponding adjective:** *sycophantic* (SIK-uh-FAN-tik).

### 24. TANGENTIAL (tan-JEN-shul)

Not closely related, only slightly connected, digressive, divergent.

**Related word:** *tangent*, (geometry) a line that touches a curve but does not intersect it; the phrase *to go off on a tangent* means to make an abrupt change of course (usually in speech), diverge, digress.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 25. **TENABLE** (TEN-uh-buul)

Defensible, reasonable; able to be defended, maintained, or upheld (as, a *tenable* law, a *tenable* reason).

**Etymology:** Latin *tenere*, to hold, grasp.

**Related words:** *tenaculum*, a pointed, hooked instrument used in surgery for lifting and holding parts, such as blood vessels; *tenacious*, holding firmly (*a tenacious* grip, a *tenacious* memory).

**Antonym:** *untenable*, indefensible.

### 26. **IMPALPABLE** (im-PAL-puh-buul)

Incapable of being felt or understood, not able to be perceived either by the sense of touch or by the mind.

**Synonyms:** *untouchable*, *imperceptible*, *intangible*.

**Antonyms:** *palpable*, *perceptible*, *manifest*, *tangible*.

**Etymology:** *Palpable* and *impalpable* come from the Latin *palpare*, to touch or stroke gently.

**Related words:** *palpate*, (medicine) to examine or explore by touch; *palpation*, the act of examining by touch.

### 27. **ODIOUS** (OH-dee-us)

Hateful, detestable, offensive, revolting, arousing strong dislike or aversion.

**Synonyms:** *disgusting*, *obnoxious*, *objectionable*, *disagreeable*, *contemptible*, *repellent*, *repugnant*, *loathsome*, *abominable*, *abhorrent*, *heinous*, *opprobrious*, *flagitious*, *execrable*.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *odiosus*, hateful, from *odium*, hatred, the direct source of the English noun *odium*, hatred (usually hatred experienced or incurred rather than felt).

**Corresponding noun:** *odiousness*, the state or quality of being odious.

**Usage tip:** Be careful to distinguish the words *odious* and *odorous* both in spelling and usage. *Odorous* means emitting an odor, having a distinct aroma or smell. *Odious* means hateful, detestable, revolting. *Odorous* armpits or *odorous* garbage may be *odious*, but there is nothing *odious* about *odorous* flowers.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 28. UBIQUITOUS (yoo-BIK-wuh-tus)

Existing or seeming to exist everywhere at the same time.

**Antonym:** *nonexistent*.

**Synonyms:** *ever-present, universal, pervading, omnipresent*.

**Corresponding noun:** *ubiquity*, the state of being or seeming to be everywhere at once, omnipresence.

**Etymology:** Latin *ubique*, everywhere.

**Usage tip:** Because few things other than the air we breathe can accurately be described as *ubiquitous*, existing everywhere at the same time, *ubiquitous* is often used to mean *seeming* to exist everywhere at once, extremely widespread. *Ubiquitous* is also often used to achieve an exaggerated effect.

### 29. RUMINATE (ROO-mi-nayt)

To turn over in the mind, think about again and again, consider carefully or at length.

**Synonyms:** *ponder, contemplate, meditate, deliberate, muse, cogitate, mull*.

**Etymology:** Latin *ruminare*, to chew the cud; by derivation, *ruminate* means to chew the cud mentally, regurgitate a thought and turn it over and over in the mind.

**Related words:** *ruminant*, (zoology) an animal that chews its cud; (adjective) chewing the cud; *rumen*, the first chamber of the multi-chambered stomachs of ruminant animals.

**Additional useful word:** *mastication*, the act of chewing.

**Usage tip:** Just as we often say that we chew *on* something, we often say that we ruminate *on* something.

### 30. REMUNERATION (ri-MYOO-nuh-**RAY**-shin)

Payment, compensation, or reward.

**Synonyms:** *reimbursement, recompense, consideration, indemnification, emolument* (Level 8, Word 3).

**Corresponding verb:** *remunerate*, to pay or compensate for services rendered, trouble taken, or goods provided.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 31. PECCADILLO (PEK-uh-DIL-oh)

A small sin, slight offense, minor fault or flaw.

**Etymology:** *Peccadillo* means literally "a small sin." It comes through Spanish and Italian ultimately from the Latin *peccare*, to make a mistake, blunder, sin.

**Related words:** *peccant*, guilty, sinful, culpable; *peccable*, liable to sin or do wrong; and *impeccable* (Level 4, Word 40), incapable of sin, unable to do wrong-hence, free from all faults or imperfections.

**Synonyms:** *failing, frailty, foible* (Level 3, Word 23).

**Spelling and usage tip:** The plural may be spelled either *peccadilloes* or *peccadillos*.

### 32. SUPINE (soo-PYN)

Lying down on the back, with the face turned upward.

**Etymology:** Latin *supinus*, lying on the back with the face up.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *supine*, *prone*, *prostrate*, *recumbent*, which denote lying down in various ways.

**Usage tip:** Be careful not to confuse the adjective *prostrate* with the noun *prostate*. *Prostrate* means lying flat, stretched out, either on the back (*supine*) or the belly (*prone*). *Prostate* denotes the gland in men that contributes to the production of semen and helps control urination.

### 33. BANAL (BAY-nul or buh-NAL)

Common, ordinary, unoriginal; flat, dull, and predictable; lacking freshness or zest.

**Synonyms:** *trite, commonplace, conventional, humdrum, hackneyed, shopworn, stereotyped, insipid, vapid, bromidic*.

**Antonyms:** *creative, imaginative, unconventional, unorthodox, ingenious, innovative, novel, pithy*.

**Corresponding noun:** *banality*, the quality or state of being common, ordinary, and unoriginal.

**Pronunciation tip:** Most educated speakers pronounce *banal* either BAY-nul (rhyming with *anal*) or buh-NAL (rhyming with *canal*). The variant buh-NAHL is less frequently heard; it is more common among British speakers. The variant BAN-al, preferred by several early 20<sup>th</sup>-century authorities, is nearly obsolete.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 34. **HETERODOX** (HET-ur-uh-dahks)

Having or expressing an opinion different from the accepted opinion; not in agreement with established doctrine or belief.

**Corresponding noun:** *heterodoxy*, an opinion or belief contrary to what is accepted and established.

**Antonym:** *orthodox*, agreeing with established opinion, adhering to accepted beliefs.

**Etymology:** The prefix *hetero-* means other, different, unlike; the *-dox* in *heterodox* comes from the Greek *doxa*, an opinion, which in turn comes from the verb *dokein*, to think.

**Related words:** *doxy*, an opinion or doctrine, especially a religious opinion; *doxastic*, pertaining to opinion or to the formation of an opinion *doxology*, (Christian worship) an expression of praise to God, usually in the form of a brief hymn or chant.

**Additional useful information:** The prefix *ortho-* means right, upright, proper, or correct. It appears in *orthodontics*, the dental specialty of correcting irregularities of the teeth; *orthoscopic*, having normal or correct vision; *orthography*, correct spelling; and *orthoepy*, the study of the proper pronunciation of words (pronounced OR-thoh-ep-ee or or-THOH-uh-pee).

**N.B.** This discussion concludes by distinguishing *heterodox* and *heretical*.

### 35. **GRANDILOQUENT** (gran-DIL-uh-kwint)

Characterized by lofty, high-flown language; full of grand or high-sounding words.

**Synonyms:** *bombastic, grandiose, florid, turgid*.

**Antonyms:** *plain-spoken, forthright, unaffected, candid*.

**Etymology and related words:** *Grandiloquent* combines the word *grand* with the suffix *-iloquent*, which comes from the Latin *loqui*, to speak. By derivation, *grandiloquent* means speaking in a grand manner. The Latin *loqui* is also the source of *loquacious*, talkative, and *colloquial* (Level 5, Word 43), pertaining to informal speech or conversation.

**Additional grandiloquent words:** English has more than twenty words that incorporate the suffix *-iloquent* and designate different ways of speaking. This discussion covers the following selection: *magniloquent*, speaking pompously, using grand or high-flown language (*magniloquent* and *grandiloquent* are virtually interchangeable); *multiloquent*, using many words, talking up a storm; *breviloquent*, speaking briefly; *suaviloquent*, speaking in an urbane, sophisticated manner; *doctiloquent*, speaking like a scholar or an expert on some subject; *sanctiloquent*, speaking solemnly or of sacred matters; *somniloquent*, talking in one's sleep.



## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 36. LUGUBRIOUS (luh-GOO-bree-us)

Mournful and gloomy; expressing sadness or sorrow, often in an exaggerated, affected, or ridiculous way.

**Synonyms:** *dismal, melancholy, dreary, funereal, doleful, dolorous, disconsolate, plaintive, woeful, lachrymose, saturnine.*

**Antonyms:** *cheerful, jubilant, joyous, gleeful, mirthful, jovial* (Level 5, Word 19), *sanguine.*

**Etymology:** Latin *lugere*, to mourn or lament.

**Corresponding noun:** *lugubriousness.*

**Corresponding adverb:** *lugubriously.*

### 37. INFINITESIMAL (IN-fin-i-TES-i-mul)

Too small to be measured or calculated.

**Synonyms:** *tiny, minute, microscopic, minuscule.*

**N.B.** This discussion explores in detail the pronunciation, spelling, and history of the word *minuscule*. The traditional pronunciation is mi-NUHS-kyool; now also acceptable is MIN-i-skyool. Take care not to misspell *minuscule* as *minuscule* (an erroneous reflection of the pronunciation MIN-i-skyool). There is no *mini-* in *minuscule*.

**Usage tip:** In precise usage, *infinitesimal* is not interchangeable with *tiny*, *minute*, and *minuscule*, which mean very small, and *microscopic*, which means too small to be seen without a microscope. Properly, *infinitesimal* means too small to be measured or calculated. *Loose usage:* Scientists detected an *infinitesimal* amount of mercury and lead in the city's tap water. *Precise usage:* In a test of the city's tap water, scientists determined that if mercury and lead were present, the amounts were *infinitesimal*.

### 38. GOAD (GOHD, rhymes with *road*)

To prod or urge to action, stimulate, arouse, stir up.

**Synonyms:** *egg on, spur, incite, impel, instigate.*

**Antonyms:** *soothe, pacify, appease, assuage* (Level 2, Word 37), *mollify.*

**Corresponding noun:** *goad*, a pointed stick used to prod animals and get them to move; figuratively, a stimulus, spur, incitement, anything that urges or drives something on.

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### 39. MALINGER (muh-LING-gur)

To pretend to be sick or incapacitated so as to avoid work or duty; to shirk or dodge responsibility by feigning illness or inability.

**Usage tip:** Don't be misled by the presence of the word *linger* in *malingering*, which does *not* mean to linger, loiter, or hang around in a shiftless or threatening way.

**Related word:** *malady*, an illness or affliction. Corresponding noun: *malingerer*, a person who malingers.

### 40. AVER (uh-VUR)

To state positively, declare with confidence.

**Synonyms:** *assert, affirm, avow, profess, contend, asseverate.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *state, declare, assert, asseverate, affirm,* and *aver.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Here the program departs from the key-word discussions to explore several problematic issues of usage and diction, as follows:

1. *Redundancy.* This section advises that you should avoid the (common but) redundant and verbose phrases *at the present time, at this point in time,* and *at this particular point in time.* The preferred forms are *at present, at this point, at this time,* or *now.*

2. *Commonly confused words.* This section covers the proper distinctions between *continual* and *continuous* (also discussed under *incessant*, Level 6, Word 22); *childish* and *childlike*; *immigrate* and *emigrate*; and *eminent* and *imminent.*

3. *Commonly misused or misunderstood words.* This section explains the traditional meanings and precise use of the words *transpire, condone,* and *promiscuous.*

Other useful words noted: *untoward,* improper or inappropriate; *erroneous,* wrong, mistaken, based on error.

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## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 41. CACOPHONY (kuh-KAHF-uh-nee)

A harsh, jarring sound, especially a harsh and unpleasant blend of sounds.

**Synonyms:** *dissonance, discord, disharmony, stridency.*

**Antonyms:** *silence, tranquility, serenity, placidity, quiescence.*

**Corresponding adjective:** *cacophonous*, having a harsh, unpleasant, jarring sound.

Synonyms of *cacophonous* include *dissonant, discordant, raucous*, and *strident*

**Etymology:** Greek *kakos*, bad, and *phone*, sound.

**Additional useful information:** The Greek *phone*, sound, occurs in a number of English words, including *phonetic*, pertaining to or representing the sounds of speech; *symphony*, which means literally "sounding together"; and *telephone*, which by derivation means "a voice from afar."

The Greek *kakos*, bad, is the source of the English prefix *caco-*, which appears in front of a number of English words to mean "bad" or "wrong." Examples: *cacography*, bad writing; *cacology*, bad speaking or a bad choice of words; *cacoepy*, bad pronunciation (as opposed to *orthoepy*, good pronunciation); *caconym*, a bad or erroneous name; *cacodoxy*, a bad or unacceptable opinion (*cacodoxy* is a synonym of *heterodoxy*); *cacoeconomy*, bad economy or bad management; and *cacoëthes* (KAK-oh-EE-theez), a bad habit, incurable itch, or an insatiable urge or desire.

### 42. REFRACTORY (ri-FRAK-tur-ee)

Stubborn and disobedient, actively resisting authority or control, unruly, impossible to work with or manage.

**Synonyms:** *willful, headstrong, ungovernable, rebellious, obstinate* (Level 1, Word 34), *intractable* (Level 5, Word 12), *perverse, recalcitrant, intransigent, contumacious.*

**Antonyms:** *obedient, submissive, compliant, deferential, malleable* (Level 2, Word 29), *docile, tractable, acquiescent, obsequious.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *refractory, intractable, contumacious, intransigent*, and *recalcitrant*, all of which suggest stubborn resistance to control.

### 43. ICONOCLAST (eye-KAHN-uh-klast)

A person who attacks cherished or popular beliefs, traditions, or institutions; someone who destroys or denounces an established idea or practice.

**Etymology:** Greek *eikonoklastes*, an imagebreaker, a person who smashes icons or images.

**Synonyms:** *radical, extremist, insurgent, firebrand.*

**Corresponding adjective:** *iconoclastic*, attacking or opposing established or popular beliefs, customs, or institutions.

## Verbal Advantage

### Level Six

#### 44. **ENERVATE** (EN-ur-vayt)

To weaken, drain of energy, deprive of force or vigor.

**Synonyms:** *exhaust, deplete, devitalize, debilitate.*

**Antonyms:** *energize, invigorate, stimulate, revive, enliven, animate, vitalize, fortify.*

**N.B.** Because *enervate* sounds like *energize*, many people are tempted to think the words are synonymous when in fact they are antonyms. Take care to distinguish these words: to *energize* is to infuse with energy, invigorate; to *enervate* is to weaken, drain of energy.

**Corresponding adjective:** *enervated*, lacking energy, drained of vitality or strength.

#### 45. **LEVITY** (LEV-i-tee)

Lightness or gaiety of manner or expression; specifically, a lightness or lack of seriousness that is inappropriate or unbecoming.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *levitas*, lightness, from *levis*, light, the source also of *levitate* and *levitation*.

**Synonyms:** *silliness, foolishness, frivolity, flippancy, tomfoolery, triviality, jocularly.*

**Antonyms:** *seriousness, earnestness, sobriety, solemnity, gravity.*

#### 46. **EQUANIMITY** (EE-kwuh-NIM-i-tee)

Composure, calmness, evenness of mind and temper.

**Etymology:** French, through the Latin *aequanimitas*, calmness, ultimately from *aequus*, even or level, and *animus*, mind or spirit.

**Synonyms:** *poise, self-possession, serenity, tranquility, placidity, imperturbability, sangfroid* (saw(n)-FWAH).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *equanimity* and *composure*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 47. STRICTURE (STRIK-chur)

A criticism, critical comment, especially an unfavorable or hostile observation or remark.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *strictus*, past participle of the verb *stringere*, to draw tight, bind, the source also of the English words *strict* and *stringent*, which means tight, constricted, or rigorous and severe.

**Synonyms:** *reproof, censure, condemnation, disapprobation, castigation, objugation, animadversion.*

**Antonyms:** *praise, compliment, commendation, acclamation, plaudit.*

**Additional useful information:** *Plaudit, applause, and applaud* all come from the Latin *plaudere*, to clap the hands, express approval. A *plaudit* is an enthusiastic expression of approval or praise.

**Usage tip:** *Stricture* is a noun, not a verb. You cannot *stricture* something, but if you have an unfavorable opinion of a person or a thing, you can express your *strictures*, sharp criticisms or hostile remarks.

### 48. OPULENT (AHP-yuh-lint)

Rich, wealthy, very well-to-do, having substantial means.

**Etymology:** Latin *opulentus*, rich, wealthy, and *opis*, power, might, ultimately from Ops, the ancient Roman goddess of the harvest and the wife of Saturn, the god of agriculture who presided over the sowing of the fields.

**Antonyms:** *indigent, destitute, impecunious.* These words are distinguished in the discussion of *indigent* (Level 3, Word 39).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the adjectives *opulent, affluent, and prosperous*, which connote wealth and success.

**Corresponding noun:** *opulence*, great wealth or a display of great wealth.

## Verbal Advantage Level Six

### 49. **DISPARAGE** (di-SPAR-ij)

To belittle, depreciate, discredit, lower in estimation or value, speak of or treat as inferior.

**Synonyms:** *abuse, ridicule, scorn, slander, defame, censure* (Level 3, Word 28),  
*denigrate, malign, vilify, traduce, calumniate.*

**Etymology and related words:** *Disparage* comes from an Old French verb that meant to marry unequally, marry a person who was not a peer or on a par with your rank in society. *Disparage* is related to the noun *peer*, an equal, a person of equal status. *Peer* comes from the Latin *par*, equal, the source of the English *par*, which is perhaps most often heard in the phrase "on a *par* with," on an equal footing.

**Corresponding adjective:** *disparaging.*

**Corresponding noun:** *disparagement.*

### 50. **DISCURSIVE** (dis-KUR-siv)

Rambling, roving, covering a wide range of topics, wandering from one subject to another.

**N.B.** Don't be confused by the presence of the word *cursive* in *discursive*. *Discursive* has nothing to do either with cursing or with cursive script, in which the letters are joined or flow together.

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *discursus*, running about, the past participle of the verb *discurrere*, to run to and fro or in different directions. In modern usage, *discursive* applies to speech or writing that runs to and fro or in many different directions.

**Synonyms:** *desultory* (DES-ul-tor-ee), *digressive*. This discussion distinguishes these synonyms from the key word, *discursive*.

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Level Six concludes with a discussion of the ubiquitous vogue-word impact.

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*VERBAL ADVANTAGE*  
*SUCCESS EDITION*  
*ADVANCED*

*Level VII*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

In addition to the vocabulary lessons, Level 7 contains an overview of the subject of *abusage*, the abuse of language.

The author identifies five general categories of *abusage* that plague the average educated person: (1) redundancy; (2) the "sounds-like syndrome"; (3) vogue words; (4) "adverbiage"; and (5) jargon. Throughout Level 7, after each set of ten key-word discussions, the author explores one of these categories of *abusage*.

### 1. **REDRESS** (REE-dres or ri-DRES)

Reparation, compensation, satisfaction for a wrong done.

**Synonyms:** *amends, recompense, retribution, rectification, requital, quittance.*

**Usage:** *Redress* may take the form of a monetary compensation or it may be an act or statement that makes amends, that repairs or compensates for a wrong.

**Corresponding verb:** *redress* (ri-DRES), to repair, set right, make amends for.

### 2. **ANOMALOUS** (uh-NAHM-uh-lus)

Irregular, abnormal, out of place; deviating from what is usual or expected; not fitting in with a common type or conforming to a general rule.

**Synonyms:** *inconsistent, unnatural, eccentric, aberrant* (uh-BER-int).

**Corresponding noun:** *anomaly*, a deviation from the norm, an irregularity.

### 3. **OBSEQUIIOUS** (uhb-SEE-kwee-us)

Subservient, submissive, obedient; ready and willing to serve, please, or obey.

**Corresponding noun:** *obsequiousness*, subservience, obedience, an eager desire to serve or obey.

**Synonyms:** *compliant, servile, slavish, ingratiating* (Level 3, Word 13), *deferential, fawning, toadying, truckling, sycophantic.*

**Antonyms:** *unruly, defiant, intractable* (Level 5, Word 12), *refractory* (Level 6, Word 42), *recalcitrant, intransigent.*



## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 4. DIDACTIC (dy-DAK-tik)

Instructive, designed or intended to teach.

**Synonyms:** *edifying, preceptive, expository, hortatory, pedagogic.*

**N.B.** *Pedagogic* is the adjective corresponding to the noun *pedagogue*. A *pedagogue* is a teacher, but today the word is sometimes used disparagingly to mean a teacher who is strict, narrowminded, or dogmatic.

**Etymology:** Greek *didaktikos*, skillful or adept at teaching.

**Connotation:** *Didactic* often connotes morally instructive or edifying: A great work of fiction may be as *didactic* as it is entertaining. Sometimes *didactic* has the negative connotation of inclined to lecture others in a tedious or excessively moralistic way: "His *didactic* manner of telling everyone how the organization should be run."

**Corresponding noun:** *didactics*, the art or science of teaching.

**N.B.** The word *pedagogy* may also refer to the art or science of teaching, but more often it means the teaching profession.

### 5. TRUNCATE (TRUNGK-ayt, like *trunk* + *ate*)

To cut short, shorten by cutting or lopping off.

**Synonyms:** *condense, abridge, abbreviate, curtail.*

**Antonyms:** *lengthen, extend, elongate, prolong, protract* (Level 3, Word 25).

**Etymology:** Latin *truncare*, to maim, mutilate, shorten by cutting off. *Truncare* comes in turn from *truncus*, (adjective) maimed, mutilated, cut short or lopped off; (noun) a tree that has been cut down.

**Usage:** *Truncate* usually suggests a more severe or substantial cutting or shortening than its synonyms *condense, abridge, abbreviate, and curtail*, which comes closest to the severity of *truncate*. *Truncate* may refer to a cutting short in number, length, or duration.

**Corresponding adjective:** *truncated*, cut short, abbreviated, terminated abruptly.

### 6. ABSTEMIOUS (ab-STEE-mee-us)

(1) Sparing or moderate, especially in eating or drinking.

(2) Characterized by abstinence, not partaking or indulging, especially in alcoholic beverages.

**Etymology:** Latin *abstemius*, abstaining from liquor.

**Corresponding noun:** *abstemiousness.*

**Synonyms:** *sober, temperate, ascetic.* *Ascetic* means rigorously abstemious, practicing strict and extreme abstinence or self-denial.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 7. **ETHEREAL** (i-THEER-ee-ul)

Heavenly, not earthly; hence, very light, airy, delicate, or refined.

**Synonyms:** *celestial, lofty, elevated, tenuous, rarefied, sublime.*

**Antonyms:** *mundane* (Level 4, Word 22), *terrestrial, sublunary.*

**Related word:** *ether*, which in one of its senses refers to an imaginary substance that the ancients believed filled the upper regions of space. *Ether* was the lightest and most subtle of the elements, which included earth, water, and fire.

### 8. **BOMBASTIC** (bahm-BAS-tik)

Pompous, pretentious, inflated, overblown.

**Usage:** *Bombastic* applies to speech or writing that is pompous, overblown, or pretentious, or to people who express themselves in this way.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the synonyms *bombastic, grandiloquent* (Level 6, Word 35), and *turgid*, which denote extravagant language.

**Corresponding noun:** *bombast*, verbal padding; speech or writing that is wordy, puffed-up, and pretentious.

### 9. **SENESCENT** (si-NES-int)

Aging, growing old, on the decline.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *senex*, old, the source also of *senile* and *senate*, which means literally "a council of elders."

**Usage:** *Senescent* may apply to persons, things, or ideas that are growing old, decrepit, or outworn.

**Antonym:** *juvenescent*, growing younger.

**Corresponding noun:** *senescence*, the process of becoming old or the state of being old.

### 10. **PERNICIOUS** (pur-NISH-us)

Deadly, fatal, destructive, causing great harm or injury.

**Synonyms:** *injurious, ruinous, deleterious* (Level 4, Word 33), *noxious, baneful, malign, noisome* (Level 9, Word 38).

**Antonyms:** *healthful, wholesome, salutary, salubrious.*

**Etymology:** Latin *perniciosus*, destructive, ruinous, and *perniciēs*, destruction, disaster, ultimately from *nex*, a violent death.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

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The discussion of abuse begins here with an exploration of the first category, *redundancy*.

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### 11. CATHOLIC (KATH-uh-lik or KATH-lik)

Universal, all-inclusive, all-embracing, comprehensive; specifically, broadminded, tolerant, or all-embracing in one's sympathies, interests, or tastes.

**Usage tip:** *Catholic*, with a capital C, refers to the Roman Catholic Church, to the religion of Catholicism, or to a member of the Catholic Church. *Catholic*, with a small c, has nothing to do with religion. It comes directly from Latin and Greek words meaning universal, general, and suggests a broadminded, tolerant, all-embracing outlook on life.

**Synonyms:** *open-minded, liberal, ecumenical, latitudinarian.*

**Antonyms:** *narrow-minded, bigoted, biased, intolerant, dogmatic, parochial.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *ecumenical* and *catholic*.

### 12. OBJURGATION (AHB-jur-GAY-shin)

A harsh rebuke, vehement scolding or denunciation.

**Synonyms:** *reproof, reproach, upbraiding, vilification, vituperation.*

**Corresponding verb:** *objurgate* (pronounced AHB-jur-gayt or uhb-JUR-gayt), to rebuke sharply, chide harshly, denounce vehemently. Etymology: Latin *ob-*, against, and *jurgare*, to scold or quarrel.

### 13. EFFUSIVE (i-FYOO-siv)

Gushing, overflowing, overly demonstrative, expressing emotion in an excessive or unrestrained manner.

**Synonyms:** *exuberant, profuse, ebullient, impassioned, ecstatic, rhapsodic.*

**Antonyms:** *undemonstrative, reserved, aloof, indifferent, reticent, diffident, taciturn* (Level 3, Word 2), *laconic* (Level 3, Word 18).

**Etymology:** Latin *effusio*, a pouring forth, from *effundere*, to pour out or pour forth.

**Corresponding noun:** *effusion*, a pouring or gushing forth. *Effusion* may be used of a literal gushing (as of gas or fluid), or it may be used figuratively of an unrestrained emotional outburst in speech or writing.

**Usage:** *Effusive* is nearly always used figuratively to mean gushing or overflowing with emotion, overly demonstrative.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 14. UMBRAGE (UHM-brij)

Offense, resentment.

**Synonyms:** *displeasure, irritation, indignation, pique.*

**Usage:** *Umbrage* is most commonly used today in the phrase "to take umbrage," meaning to take offense. You may also *feel* umbrage, resentment, at something, or *give* umbrage, offense, to someone else, but these constructions are less common.

### 15. VICISSITUDE (vi-SIS-i-t(y)ood)

A change, variation.

**Synonyms:** *alternation, fluctuation, mutation.*

**Usage:** *Vicissitude* is often used in the plural, *vicissitudes*, to refer to the changes that occur during the course of something, the ups and downs.

### 16. CONTENTIOUS (kuhn-TEN-shus)

Argumentative, quarrelsome; ready and eager to argue, bicker, or debate.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *contentious*, *litigious*, *pugnacious* (Level 5, Word 8), *disputatious*, *belligerent*, and *bellicose*, all of which refer to quarrelsome or hostile parties who are inclined to engage in argument or conflict.

**Antonyms:** *peaceable, obliging, civil, tolerant, amiable, amicable, benevolent, equable, forbearing.*

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *contentio*, striving, effort, ultimately from *contendere*, to strain or strive against another. From the same source we inherit the verb to *contend* and the noun *contention*, which may mean either a struggle, opposition, or an assertion made in an argument.

### 17. OBEISANCE (oh-BAY-sins)

A gesture of respect or submission, or an attitude of respect and submission.

**Synonyms:** *deference, homage, adoration, reverence, veneration.*

**Usage:** *Obeisance* is used chiefly of formal situations in which respect or homage is paid to a god, a ruler, a religious leader, or a person of great influence or power.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 18. ASSIDUOUS (uh-SIJ-oo-us)

Hardworking, industrious; done with persistent, careful, and untiring attention.

**Synonyms:** *diligent, painstaking, persevering, unremitting, indefatigable, sedulous.*

**Antonyms:** *lazy, shiftless, indolent, languid, phlegmatic* (Level 9, Word 33), *otiose.*

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *adsiduus*, sitting continuously in one place, engaged in an occupation, ultimately from *sedere*, to sit down, the source also of the English words *sedate* and *sedentary*.

**Corresponding noun:** *assiduousness*, hard and careful work.

### 19. DUPLICITY (d(y)oo-PLIS-i-tee)

Deceit, cunning, double-dealing, hypocritical deception.

**Synonyms:** *trickery, dishonesty, fraud, guile, chicanery, casuistry, mendacity.*

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *duplicitas*, doubleness, and *duplicare*, to double, ultimately from *duplex*, twofold, double. Literally, *duplicity* means doubleness of heart or speech; in modern usage it refers to double-dealing, an act of deception in which one uses hypocritical or misleading words or actions to hide one's true intentions.

**Corresponding adjective:** *duplicitous*, twofaced, deceitful.

### 20. INSOUCIANT (in-SOO-see-int)

Carefree, nonchalant, lightheartedly unconcerned or indifferent, free from worry or anxiety, calm and unbothered.

**Etymology:** The French phrase *sans souci* means without care or worry. *Insouciant* combines the privative prefix *in-*, not, with the French *souci*, care, worry, to mean literally not caring, free from worry, lightheartedly unconcerned.

**Usage:** *Insouciant* sometimes implies a carefree indifference or lack of concern for consequences.

**Corresponding noun:** *insouciance*, lighthearted indifference, nonchalance, a carefree lack of concern.

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The discussion of abuse continues here with an exploration of the second category, the *sounds-like syndrome*.

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## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 21. MYRMIDON (MUR-mi-dahn or MUR-mi-dun)

A loyal follower, faithful servant or subordinate, especially someone who is unquestioningly obedient.

**Etymology:** In ancient Greek legend, the *Myrmidons* were a savage, warlike people of the region of Thessaly who fought in the Trojan War under their king, the great warrior Achilles. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces *myrmidon* back to the year 1400, and shows that by the 17th century it had come to be used in a general sense to mean "an unscrupulously faithful follower or hireling; a hired ruffian."

**Additional useful word:** *rapine* (RAP-in, rhymes with *happen*), the act of seizing and carrying off property by force, plunder.

### 22. NASCENT (NAS-int, also NAY-sent)

Beginning to exist or develop; in the process of being born or begun; coming or having just come into being.

**Synonyms:** *emerging, dawning, developing, commencing, embryonic, incipient, inchoate* (Level 7, Word 35).

**Antonyms:** *ancient, extinct, outworn, outmoded, antiquated, obsolete, senescent* (Level 7, Word 9), *antediluvian*. *Antediluvian* means of the time before the Deluge, the great flood described in the first book of the Bible, Genesis; hence, extremely old or old-fashioned.

**Etymology:** Latin *nasci*, to be born.

**Corresponding noun:** *nascency*, birth or beginning.

### 23. ACCEDE (ak-SEED)

To consent, yield, give in or agree to.

**Synonyms:** *comply, submit, assent, concur* (Level 1, Word 18), *acquiesce* (Level 4, Word 31).

**Antonyms:** *resist, disagree, oppose, protest, contradict, dispute, dissent, wrangle, cavil* (Level 3, Word 29).

**Etymology:** Latin *accedere*, to approach, come near.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *accede*, *acquiesce*, *assent*, *concur*, and *consent*.

**Usage:** *Accede* implies yielding a position or giving in to a demand or request, often under pressure. *Accede* may also be used to mean to attain or assume an office or title (to *accede* to the throne or to the presidency).

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 24. MAGNANIMOUS (mag-NAN-i-mus)

Noble, honorable; generous in overlooking injury or insult; high-minded, unselfish.

**Synonyms:** *courageous, exalted, lofty* (for the noble, high-minded connotation); *charitable, altruistic, beneficent* (for the generous, unselfish connotation).

**Antonyms:** *vile, contemptible, malicious, despicable, ignominious, covetous, avaricious* (Level 2, Word 40), *mercenary* (Level 3, Word 14), *venal* (Level 9, Word 14), *vindictive* (Level 5, Word 39), *churlish, sordid, abject, servile, sycophantic, pusillanimous* (Level 9, Word 16).

**Etymology:** Latin *magnus*, great, and *animus*, spirit.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *noble* and *magnanimous*.

**Corresponding noun:** *magnanimity*, noble generosity, greatness or dignity of mind or heart.

### 25. NONAGE (NAHN-ij)

Immaturity, youth; especially the period of legal minority, the state of being a minor in the eyes of the law.

**Etymology:** Middle English, from AngloFrench, combining the prefix *non-*, not, with the word *age* (literally, "not of age").

### 26. INVECTIVE (in-VEK-tiv)

Vehement or abusive language involving bitter, scathing accusations or denunciations.

**Synonyms:** *slander, defamation, aspersion, objurgation* (Level 7, Word 12), *billingsgate, vituperation, obloquy*.

**Antonyms:** *praise, commendation, adulation, eulogy, encomium*.

**N.B.** This discussion covers the origin and precise meaning of the words *billingsgate*, *vituperation*, and *obloquy*, and distinguishes the words *abuse* and *invective*.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *invehere*, to attack with words, the source also of the English verb to *inveigh*, to attack violently with words, protest furiously or express angry disapproval. *Inveigh* is always followed by *against* (*inveigh against* an unfair company *policy*; *inveigh against* an abuse of First Amendment rights).

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 27. MACHINATION (MAK-i-NAY-shin)

A crafty or treacherous plot, malicious scheme, cunning design or plan to achieve a sinister purpose (often used in the plural, *machinations*).

**Synonyms:** *stratagem, conspiracy, contrivance, ruse, cabal* (kuh-BAHL).

**Etymology:** Latin *machinari*, to plot, devise, contrive to do evil, from *machina*, a device or contrivance for performing work.

**Related word and phrase:** The Latin **machina** is also the source of *machine*, something devised to perform work, and it appears in a Latin expression now used in English: *deus ex machina* (DAY-uus eks MAH-ki-nah). *Deus ex machina* means literally "a god out of a machine"; in English it means "an unexpected occurrence that rescues someone or something from an apparently hopeless predicament" (*Eugene Ehrlich, Amo, Amas, Amat, and More*). Pronunciation tip: The *ch* in *machine* is soft; the *ch* in *machination* is hard, like a K. Do not say *mashination* (a recent, erroneous variant). The preferred pronunciation is MAK-i-NAY-shin.

### 28. DOCILE (DAHS'l)

Submissive, obedient, compliant; easy to direct, manage, or supervise; following instructions.

**Synonyms:** *amenable, deferential, malleable* (Level 2, Word 29), *tractable, acquiescent, obsequious* (Level 7, Word 3).

**Antonyms:** *willful, wayward, headstrong, obstinate* (Level 1, Word 34), *intractable* (Level 5, Word 12), *intransigent, refractory* (Level 6, Word 42).

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *docilis*, teachable, from *docere*, to teach, instruct. From the same source comes *docent* (DOH-sint), which may mean either a teacher at a university who is not a member of the faculty, or a lecturing tour guide in a museum, cathedral, or some such place of cultural interest.

**N.B.** Avoid the phrase *docent guide*, which is redundant.

**Corresponding noun:** *docility*.

**Pronunciation tip:** The pronunciation DOH-syl is the preference of British and Canadian speakers. The preferred American pronunciation is DAHS'l (rhymes with fossil).



## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 29. REDOUBTABLE (rĭ-DOWT-uh-buul)

Formidable, fearsome, arousing awe or dread; hence, worthy of or commanding respect.

**Etymology and related words:** Middle English, through an Old French verb meaning to fear or dread, ultimately from the Latin *dubitare*, to doubt, waver in opinion or action, the source also of the words *dubious* and *dubiety*, doubtfulness, uncertainty, wavering.

**Usage:** *Redoubtable* may apply to people or things, as a *redoubtable* hero or a *redoubtable* problem. The word is sometimes used to achieve a humorous, gently mocking effect.

### 30. PROGNOSTICATE (prahg-NAHS-ti-kayt)

To predict; especially, to predict from signs, symptoms, or present indications.

**Synonyms:** *foretell, forecast, foresee, prophesy, presage, vaticinate.*

**Related words:** *prognostic* (noun), an indication of something in the future; *prognostic* (adjective), pertaining to or serving as the basis of a prediction (*prognostic* powers, *prognostic* evidence); *prognostication*, a prediction, prophecy, forecast (economic *prognostications*); *prognosticator*, a person who makes predictions; *prognosis*, a prediction of the probable course and outcome of a disease or medical condition.

**N.B.** Take care to distinguish the words *prognosis* and *diagnosis*. A *diagnosis* describes the nature of the medical condition; a *prognosis* predicts its likely course and outcome.

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The discussion of abuse continues here with an exploration of the third category, *vogue words*.

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### 31. ENGENDER (en-JEN-dur)

To bring about, bring into being, give rise to, cause to exist, sow the seeds of.

**Synonyms:** *produce, generate.*

**Antonyms:** *prevent, suppress, subdue, quell, quash.*

**Etymology:** Latin *generare*, to beget, produce, bring to life.

**Additional useful word:** *procreation*, sexual intercourse, especially when it results in the creation of offspring.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 32. FETID (FET-id)

Stinking, foul-smelling; having an extremely offensive odor, as of something rotten or decayed.

**Synonyms:** *rank, rancid, malodorous, putrid, noisome, mephitic, graveolent.*

**Antonyms:** *fragrant, scented, perfumed, aromatic, redolent.*

**Etymology:** Latin *fetidus*, stinking, from *fetere*, to stink.

**Usage:** *Fetid* is usually reserved for an extremely offensive odor, such as that produced by rotting or decay.

**Spelling and pronunciation tip:** The spelling *foetid* and the pronunciation FEE-tid are British; If you're American, spell it *fetid* and pronounce, it with a short E: FET-id.

### 33. PEDANTIC (puh-DANT-ik)

Absurdly learned; scholarly in an ostentatious way; making an inappropriate or tiresome display of knowledge by placing undue importance on trivial details, rules, or formalities.

**Useful phrase noted:** *mea culpa*, (Latin) "my fault"; pronounced MAY-uh KUUL-puh.

**Corresponding nouns:** *pedant*, a person who overrates learning, makes an inappropriate display of knowledge, or lays undue stress on trivial points or on exact knowledge of detail; *pedantry*, an inappropriate display of learning or a slavish or dogmatic attention to rules and minor details of learning.

**Etymology and related word:** Italian, through Latin, from the Greek *paidagogos*, a tutor of children, the source also of the word *pedagogue*, which may mean simply a teacher, or a teacher who is narrow-minded, dogmatic, and pedantic. The Greek *paidagogos* comes from *pais*, *paidos*, a boy or child, and *agein*, to lead or conduct, and means literally a leader or conductor of youngsters. "Among the ancient Greeks and Romans," says the *Century Dictionary*, "the *pedagogue* was originally a slave who attended the younger children of his master, and conducted them to school, to the theater, etc., combining in many cases instruction with guardianship."

### 34. CAPITULATE (kuh-PITCH-uh-layt)

To yield, surrender; specifically, to surrender on specified terms or conditions.

**Corresponding noun:** capitulation, the act of surrendering or yielding on specified terms or conditions.

**Etymology, related word, and usage:** Latin *caput*, *capitis*, the head, the source also of decapitate. By derivation *capitulate* means to list the terms of surrender under various headings in a document; although some current dictionaries define *capitulate* as "to surrender unconditionally or on stipulated terms," in precise usage *capitulate* means to yield or surrender only on stipulated terms, although the terms do not necessarily have to be drawn up in a document.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 35. INCHOATE (in-KOH-it)

Just begun; in an early stage of development; partly in existence; not fully formed; undeveloped; imperfect; incomplete.

**Synonyms:** elementary, preliminary, nascent (Level 7, Word 22), rudimentary, incipient.

**Etymology:** Latin *incohatus*, just begun, not finished, incomplete, the past participle of the verb *incohare*, to begin, take in hand, start work on.

### 36. EXPONENT (eks-POH-nint)

A person who stands or speaks for something, a representative or advocate.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *exponere*, to put forth, put on view, display, the source also of the English verb to *expound*, to explain, interpret, set forth point by point.

### 37. MENDACIOUS (men-DAY-shus)

Not truthful, lying, false, dishonest, deceitful.

**Etymology:** Latin *mendacium*, a lie, from *mendax*, lying, deceitful.

**Synonyms:** *fraudulent, hypocritical, disingenuous, evasive, equivocal, duplicitous, prevaricating.*

**Antonyms:** *truthful, honorable, upright, ethical, virtuous, scrupulous, veracious.*

**Corresponding noun:** *mendacity*, untruthfulness, lying, deceit.

### 38. STRIDENT (STRY-dint)

Loud and harsh-sounding, grating, shrill.

**Synonyms:** *earsplitting, screeching, discordant, clamorous, cacophonous, vociferous, stentorian.*

**Antonyms:** *faint, subdued, melodious, dulcet, euphonious.*

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *stridere*, to make a harsh noise. From *stridere*, English has also inherited *stridor* (STRY-dur), a harsh grating or creaking sound or, in medicine, a harsh sound made when breathing in or out that indicates obstruction of the respiratory tract; *stridulous* (STRIJ-uh-lus), making a harsh or shrill noise; and *stridulate* (STRIJ-uh-layt), to make a shrill, high-pitched grating or chirping sound (like a cricket).

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 39. OLIGARCHY (AHL-i-gahr-kee)

Government by a few; rule or control exercised by a few persons or by a small, elite group.

**Etymology:** Greek *oligos*, few, little, and *archein*, to govern, rule.

**Usage:** *Oligarchy* may denote rule or control exercised by a few people, a state or an organization run by a few people, or the few dominant people themselves, and the word often suggests the hoarding of power for corrupt or selfish purposes.

**Corresponding adjective:** *oligarchic* or *oligarchical*.

**Pronunciation tip:** Some speakers pronounce *oligarchy* with a long O: OH-*ligarchy*. This recent variant is listed second in two current dictionaries; all other authorities, past and present, do not recognize it. Properly, the initial O is short, as in olive and *college*: AHL-*igarchy*.

### 40. REFULGENT (ri-FUHL-jint)

Shining brightly, brilliant, radiant, resplendent.

**Synonyms:** *gleaming, blazing, sparkling, luminous, incandescent, scintillating, coruscating*. (The discussion defines and distinguishes the last three synonyms.)

**Antonyms:** (easy) *dull, dim, obscure, gloomy, murky*; (hard) *tenebrous*, dark and gloomy; *umbrageous*, shady or overshadowed; *subfuscous*, dusky or somber; *crepuscular*, pertaining to twilight, hence, characterized by dim, waning, or glimmering light.

**Etymology:** Latin *refulgere*, to shine brightly, from *re-*, back, and *fulgere*, to shine, flash, or gleam.

**Usage:** *Refulgent* may mean shining, brilliant, radiant, either literally (a *refulgent* smile, the *refulgent* beam of a flashlight) or figuratively (a *refulgent* wit, *refulgent* beauty).

**Corresponding noun:** *refulgence*, brilliance, radiance, resplendence.

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The discussion of abuse continues here with an exploration of the fourth category, *adverbiage*.

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## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 41. NEPOTISM (NEP-uh-tiz'm)

Favoritism shown to relatives.

**Etymology:** Latin *nepos*, *nepotis*, a nephew or grandson.

Usage: Despite its specific derivation, *nepotism* may denote favoritism shown to any relative, and the word usually applies to situations in business and public life where relatives are shown preference over "non-relatives" and receive privileges or positions that they may not necessarily deserve.

**Corresponding adjective:** *nepotistic*.

### 42. RIBALD (RIB-uld)

Humorous in a mildly indecent, coarse, or vulgar way.

**Synonyms:** *gross, indelicate, lewd, immodest, sensual, obscene*.

**N.B.** *Obscene* suggests lewdness or indecency that is strongly offensive, whereas *ribald* applies to coarse vulgarity that is humorous and only mildly indecent.

**Antonyms:** *refined, decent, polite, tasteful, cultured, polished, cultivated, decorous, urbane* (Level 1, Word 45).

**Corresponding noun:** *ribaldry*, language or behavior that is humorous in a mildly indecent or vulgar way.

**Pronunciation tip:** Certain dictionaries that cater to the gross whims of the vulgar masses now record the indelicate spelling pronunciation RY-bald and the equally uncultivated RIB-ald. There is no *rye* and there is no *bald* in *ribald*. The word should rhyme with *scribbled* and *dribbled*, as this limerick illustrates:

William Shakespeare, whenever he scribbled;  
Used a quill that incessantly dribbled;  
When his pen leaked a lot,  
It made Willy quite hot,  
And he wrote something suitably *ribald*.

### 43. AVUNCULAR (uh-VUNGK-yuh-lur)

Like an uncle, pertaining to an uncle, or exhibiting some characteristic considered typical of an uncle (an *avuncular* smile, an *avuncular* slap on the back, *avuncular* concern, *avuncular* generosity, *avuncular* advice).

**Etymology:** The noun *uncle* and the adjective *avuncular* both come from the Latin *avunculus*, a mother's brother.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 44. SUPPLICATE (SUHP-lĭ-kayt)

To ask, beg, or plead for humbly and earnestly.

Synonyms: *entreat, petition, importune, beseech*.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *supplicare*, to kneel, get on one's knees, from *supplex*, kneeling, on one's knees. By derivation, to *supplicate* means to beg or plead for something on bended knee. From the same source comes *supple*, bending easily.

**Corresponding nouns:** *supplication*, a humble and earnest request or the act of begging or pleading for something humbly and earnestly. A person who supplicates or who makes a supplication may be called either a *suppliant* or a *supplicant*.

### 45. IRASCIBLE (eye-RAS-i-buul or i-RAS-i-buul)

Easily angered, hot-tempered, extremely irritable or touchy.

**Synonyms:** *cranky, testy, peevish, petulant, irate, cantankerous, contentious* (Level 7, Word 16), *snappish, choleric, captious, splenetic*.

**Antonyms:** *calm, unruffled, placid, amiable, affable, equable*

**Etymology and related words:** The words *irascible* and *irate* both come from the Latin verb *irasci*, to be angry, which comes in turn from *ira*, anger, wrath. This Latin *ira* is also the direct source of the English word *ire*, anger, wrath.

**N.B.** *Irate* suggests temporary anger, the state of being infuriated or enraged at the moment or for the time being. *Irascible* suggests extreme irritability, and applies to a person easily provoked to anger. *Irascible* may also apply to that which displays anger or extreme irritability: *irascible* remarks.

### 46. INEXORABLE (in-EKS-uh-ruh-buul)

Relentless, unyielding, merciless; not able to be stopped, changed, or moved by entreaty or persuasion.

**Synonyms:** *unrelenting, unswerving, inflexible, immovable, uncompromising, intransigent, obdurate, implacable*.

**Antonyms:** *flexible, compromising, obliging, compliant, docile* (Level 7, Word 28), *tractable, acquiescent, complaisant* (kum-PLAY-zĭnt).

**Etymology:** Latin *inexorabilis*, not moved by entreaty or supplication.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *inexorable* and *implacable*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 47. PARVENU (PAHR-vuh-n(y)oo)

An upstart; specifically, a person who suddenly acquires wealth and power and rises to a higher class, but who is not accepted by the members of that class.

**Etymology:** French; literally, "a person newly come into success."

**Usage:** *Parvenu* almost always is used in a negative sense of a person who gains wealth and standing, but who cannot gain the social acceptance of the wealthy and powerful. In the eyes of the established elite, the *parvenu* is an upstart-undeserving, uncultured, immodest, and often pretentious.

**Related word:** *arriviste* (ar-ree-VEEST). This word also comes from French and means literally "a person who has recently arrived." *Arriviste* is used today of someone who attains social prominence or a position of power, sometimes by unscrupulous means and always without paying the necessary dues.

**N.B.** This discussion concludes by distinguishing *parvenu* and *arriviste*.

### 48. SALUBRIOUS (suh-LOO-bree-us)

Healthful, wholesome, favorable or conducive to well-being.

**Antonyms:** *insalubrious*, *deleterious* (Level 4, Word 33), *pernicious* (Level 7, Word 10), *noxious*, *baneful*, *malign*, *noisome* (Level 9, Word 38).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the synonyms *salubrious*, *salutary*, and *wholesome*.

**Etymology:** Both *salutary* and *salubrious* come from the Latin *salus*, health.

**Corresponding noun:** *salubriousness*.

### 49. HYPERBOLE (hy-PUR-buh-lee)

Exaggeration in speech or writing; especially, extravagant exaggeration that is intentional and obvious.

Corresponding adjective: *hyperbolic* (HY-pur-**BAHL**-ik); less often, *hyperbolical*.

**Pronunciation tip:** Occasionally, you will hear an educated speaker who has learned this word from reading, but who has not bothered to check its pronunciation in a dictionary, say *hyper-bowl*. Hy-PUR-buh-lee is the only recognized pronunciation.

## Verbal Advantage Level Seven

### 50. **SANCTIMONIOUS** (SANG-tĭ-MOH-nee-us)

Self-righteous; holier-than-thou; characterized by insincere or affected righteousness, virtuousness, or religious piety.

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *sanctus*, holy, sacred. In modern usage, *sanctimonious* refers to insincere, affected, or hypocritical holiness or righteousness.

**Corresponding noun:** *sanctimony*, righteousness or virtuousness that is affected or hypocritical.

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The discussion of abuse concludes here with an exploration of the fifth category, *jargon*

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*VERBAL ADVANTAGE*  
*SUCCESS EDITION*  
*ADVANCED*

*Level VIII*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

### 1. **ALACRITY** (uh-LAK-rĭ-tee)

Cheerful readiness, eagerness, or promptness in action or movement: "The duty of the firefighter is to answer every alarm with *alacrity*."

**Synonyms:** *quickness, liveliness, briskness, enthusiasm, animation, zeal, celerity* (suh-LER-ĭ-tee).

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *alacrity* and *celerity*.

### 2. **OBVIATE** (AHB-vee-ayt)

To prevent, make unnecessary, meet and dispose of, clear out of the way.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *obviare*, to prevent, from *obvius*, in the way, the source also of *obvious*, which means literally "lying in the way."

### 3. **EMOLUMENT** (i-MAHL-yuh-mĕnt)

Wages, salary, payment received for work.

**Synonyms:** *compensation, recompense, remuneration* (Level 6, Word 30).

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *emolumentum*, the fee a miller received for grinding grain, from *emolere*, to grind out. By derivation, *emolument* means "that which is ground out by one's exertion." In the modern world, *emolument* has come to mean wages, pay, compensation for one's labor.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 4. INTRANSIGENT (in-TRAN-si-jint)

Uncompromising, refusing to come to an agreement, unwilling to modify one's position or give ground.

**Synonyms:** *unreconcilable, unyielding, diehard, hidebound, obstinate* (Level 1, Word 34), *resolute* (Level 1, Word 26), *tenacious, recalcitrant, intractable, refractory* (Level 6, Word 42), *obdurate*.

**Antonyms:** *compromising, flexible, obliging, submissive, compliant, malleable* (Level 2, Word 29), *docile* (Level 7, Word 28), *tractable, deferential, acquiescent, complaisant* (kumPLAY-zint).

**Etymology:** *Intransigent* combines the privative prefix *in-*, meaning "not," with the Latin verb *transigere*, to come to a settlement, and means literally refusing to settle, unwilling to come to an agreement, uncompromising.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *resolute, tenacious, obstinate, intractable, refractory, obdurate*, and *intransigent*, which suggest firmness or fixity in ascending intensity.

### 5. MORDANT (MOR-dint or MORD'nt)

Biting, cutting, keen, sarcastic, scathing.

**Additional synonyms:** *incisive, caustic, trenchant, virulent, acrimonious*.

**Mnemonic device, etymology, and usage:** When you think of *mordant*, think of gnashing teeth. *Mordant* comes from Old French and Latin words meaning to bite, cut into, nip, or sting. Today *mordant* is chiefly used of speech or writing that is biting or cutting in a bitterly sarcastic way (*mordant satire, mordant wit, mordant criticism*).

### 6. SAGACIOUS (suh-GAY-shus)

Wise, shrewd, perceptive; showing sound judgment and keen insight, especially in practical matters.

**Synonyms:** *insightful, discerning, astute* (Level 4, Word 3), *judicious* (Level 5, Word 16), *percipient, sage, sapient, perspicacious*.

**Antonyms:** *undiscriminating, undiscerning, simpleminded, witless, inane, gullible, credulous, obtuse, addleheaded*.

**Corresponding noun:** *sagacity*, wisdom, shrewdness, keen insight or discernment.

**Etymology:** Latin *sagax*, having keen senses, especially a keen sense of smell. *Sagacious* originally was used of hunting dogs to mean quick in picking up a scent.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 7. ACERBIC (uh-SUR-bik)

Sour, bitter, and harsh in flavor, tone, or character.

**Synonyms:** *tart, caustic, pungent, astringent, acrid, acidulous.*

**Direct antonym:** *sweet.*

**Usage:** *Acerbic* may be used literally to mean sour or bitter tasting (the lemon is an *acerbic* fruit). However, the word *acidic* probably is more often used in this literal sense, and *acerbic* usually is used figuratively to mean sour, bitter, and harsh in tone or character (an *acerbic* mood, *acerbic* words, are bitter words; an *acerbic* person).

### 8. VARIEGATED (VAR-ee-uh-gay-tid)

In a broad sense, varied, diverse, showing variety of character or form; in a strict sense, spotted, streaked, or dappled; having marks or patches of different colors (a *variegated* quilt, *variegated* cat, *variegated* design).

**N.B.** The corresponding verb to *variegate* is now often used figuratively to mean to give variety to, diversify. The adjective *variegated* is, also frequently used in this way to mean varied, diverse, or multifaceted (*variegated* interests, a *variegated* selection, *variegated* accomplishments).

### 9. SUCCOR (SUHK-ur, like *sucker*)

To aid, help, relieve, give assistance to in time of need or difficulty (to *succor* the wounded, *succor* the sick).

**Corresponding noun:** *succor*, help, aid, relief, assistance in time of need or distress (to give *succor* to the homeless).

**N.B.** *Succor* and *sucker* have the same pronunciation but are otherwise unrelated.

### 10. IMPORTUNE (IM-por-T(Y)OON)

To trouble or annoy with requests or demands, make urgent or persistent entreaties or solicitations.

**Corresponding adjective:** *importunate* (im-POR-chuu-nit), troublesomely demanding, persistent in a vexatious way.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

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### Bad vs. Badly

At this point in the program there is a discussion of *feeling bad* as opposed to *feeling badly*. Educated speakers who don't feel well often make the mistake of saying they *feel badly*, which means they are having trouble feeling. You may do something *badly*, but you when you are sick, unhappy, or depressed, you feel *bad*.

The handbook of SPELL (Society for the Preservation of English Language and Literature) contains this advice: "It is incorrect to say 'I feel badly' unless you are referring to the *act* of feeling. If you want to describe your physical condition, *feel bad* is preferred."

**Mnemonic device:** "We feel *bad* when we perform badly" (from *Grammar for Smart People*, by Barry Tarshis).

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### 11. PALLIATE (PAL-ee-ayt)

To lessen the severity of, gloss over, make something seem less serious or severe.

**Synonyms:** *soften, diminish, mitigate, extenuate,*

**Antonyms:** *worsen, intensify, aggravate, exacerbate.* *Exacerbate* means to increase in bitterness or severity (to *exacerbate* a problem, *exacerbate* a conflict).

**Etymology:** Latin *palliare*, to cloak or conceal, from *pallium*, a cloak.

**Usage:** *Palliate* means to conceal or cloak the seriousness of something, make it appear less severe or offensive than it is (to *palliate* suffering, *palliate* a social indiscretion, *palliate* the enormity of a crime). *Palliate* often connotes glossing over or disguising the seriousness of something by making excuses or apologies.

### 12. WIZENED (WIZ-īnd)

Dried up, shriveled, withered, shrunken and wrinkled.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *wither*, *shrivel*, and *wizen*, which imply drying up.

**Usage:** The verb to *wizen* now is somewhat rare, but its past participle, *wizened*, is still often used of persons or parts of the body to mean shrunken and wrinkled, dried up by age or disease (a *wizened* face, a *wizened* body, a *wizened* man).

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 13. CAPTIOUS (KAP-shus)

Faultfinding, quick to point out faults or raise trivial objections.

**Synonyms:** *carping, quibbling, caviling, censorious, querulous*. This discussion distinguishes the adjectives *critical*, *carping*, and *captious*.

**N.B.** *Critical*, though often used in a negative sense, is in fact a neutral word: The *critical* person tries to judge something fairly and objectively by weighing its merits and faults; a *critical* assessment is a fair, impartial assessment, and a *critical* examination may result in a supportive conclusion.

### 14. EMENDATION (EE-men-**DAY**-shin)

A correction, alteration, change made to correct or improve, especially a change made in a piece of writing to correct an error or restore the text to its original state.

**Corresponding verb:** *emend*, to make scholarly corrections to a text.

**N.B.** *Emendation* may also mean the act of *emending*, correcting and improving a piece of writing.

### 15. TRUCULENT (TRUK-yuh-lint)

Fierce, ferocious, especially in a brutal, bullying, threatening, or aggressively defiant way.

**Corresponding noun:** *truculence*, fierceness, ferocity, brutal aggression.

**Synonyms:** *pugnacious, belligerent, malevolent, rapacious, feral* (FEER-ul).

**Antonyms:** *humane, merciful, compassionate, benevolent, clement*, which suggest mercy or mildness, and also *timid, demure, diffident, apprehensive*, and *timorous*, which suggest shyness or fear.

**Usage:** *Truculent* applies to fierce, savage, or ferocious people or to behavior that is brutal, threatening, bullying, or aggressively defiant. *Truculent* is now also used of speech or writing to mean scathing, vicious, or vitriolic.

### 16. EXPURGATE (EKS-pur-gayt)

To cleanse by removing offensive material, free from objectionable content.

**Synonyms:** *censor, purge, bowdlerize*.

**N.B.** *Bowdlerize* comes from Thomas Bowdler, an English editor who in the early 1800s published *expurgated*, or cleansed, editions of the Bible and Shakespeare's works.

**Etymology and related words:** *Expurgate* comes from the Latin *expurgare*, to cleanse, purify, and by derivation is related to the verb to *purge*, to free from impurities, and the adjective *pure*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 17. REPROBATE (REP-ruh-bayt)

Thoroughly bad, wicked, corrupt, morally abandoned, lacking all sense of decency and duty.

**Synonyms:** *unprincipled, shameless, base, vile, degenerate, depraved, irredeemable, incorrigible.*

**Antonyms:** *virtuous, pure, righteous, honorable, chaste, unsullied, exemplary.*

**Etymology:** Latin *reprobate*, to reprove, disapprove of strongly.

**Usage:** In theology, the adjective *reprobate* means damned, predestined for damnation; the noun *reprobate* means a person rejected by God and excluded from salvation. In general usage, the noun **reprobate** means a corrupt, unprincipled person, a scoundrel; the adjective *reprobate* means morally abandoned, bad-to-the-core, lacking all sense of decency and duty.

### 18. SPURIOUS (SPYOOR-ee-us)

False, counterfeit, artificial; not true, authentic, or genuine.

**Synonyms:** *sham, bogus, phony, fictitious, fabricated, fraudulent, illusory, apocryphal* (Level 9, Word 2), *supposititious.*

**Antonyms:** *genuine, authentic, valid, bona fide.*

**Usage:** *Spurious* applies to that which is not what it claims or is claimed to be (a *spurious* document, *spurious* gems, *spurious* statements, *spurious* feelings, a *spurious* charge).

### 19. VOLITION (voh-LISH-in)

Will, choice, decision, determination.

**Etymology and usage:** In Latin, *velle* means to will or wish, and *volo* means "I will." From these words comes the English noun *volition*, which may refer either to the power of using the will or the act of exercising it in making a conscious choice or decision.

### 20. INTERPOLATE (in-TUR-puh-layt)

To insert, introduce; specifically, to insert words into a piece of writing or a conversation.

**Corresponding noun:** *interpolation*, an insertion of words into a piece of writing or a conversation.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs *interpolate*, *interject*, and *interpose*, which mean to insert or place between.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 21. ADDUCE (uh-D(Y)OOS)

To offer or cite as a reason, as evidence, or as authority for an opinion or course of action.

### 22. MISCREANT (MIS-kree-int)

An evil, unscrupulous, vicious person; someone without principles or conscience; a villain, criminal.

**Synonyms:** *scoundrel, rascal, rogue, hoodlum, hooligan, ne'er-do-well, varlet, rapsallion, blackguard, desperado, scapegrace, scofflaw, malefactor, reprobate* (Level 8, Word 17).

**Etymology and usage:** *Miscreant* combines the prefix *mis-*, meaning "bad" or "not," with the Latin *credere*, to believe. By derivation a *miscreant* is someone who does not believe. *Miscreant* was once used to mean a heretic, but since the time of Shakespeare it has been used to mean a morally bad person, vile wretch, detestable scoundrel.

**Corresponding adjective:** *miscreant*, villainous, evil, destitute of conscience.

### 23. QUIXOTIC (kwik-SAHT-ik)

Foolishly impractical or idealistic, especially in an extravagantly chivalrous or romantic way; inclined to pursue lofty, unreachable goals or far-fetched, unworkable schemes.

**Synonyms:** *fanciful, whimsical, visionary, utopian, impracticable, chimerical* (ki-MER-i-kuul).

**Antonyms:** *realistic, practical, pragmatic, utilitarian*.

**Etymology:** **Quixotic** comes from *Don Quixote*, the hero and title of a 17th-century satirical romance by Miguel de Cervantes.

**Usage:** *Quixotic* may refer to a person who is extravagantly idealistic or romantic, like Don Quixote, or to an idea or goal that is so impractical and far-fetched as to seem foolish.

### 24. SUPPURATE (SUHP-ur-ayt)

To fester, form or discharge pus.

**Corresponding noun:** *suppuration*.

**Usage:** *Suppurate* applies to wounds, boils, ulcers, etc., that become infected and discharge pus.

**Additional useful words:** *lesion* (LEE-zhun), a wound, injury, infection, or harmful change in some part of the body; *putrefy*, to rot or decay; putrid, rotten, foul-smelling, fetid; *putrefaction*, rotting, decomposition, foul-smelling decay.



## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 25. MARTINET (mahr-ti-NET)

A strict disciplinarian, taskmaster, rigid enforcer of rules and regulations.

**Etymology:** General Jean Martinet was a 17th-century French drillmaster who became legendary for subjecting his troops to harsh discipline and for his rigid adherence to military rules and regulations.

**Usage:** A *martinet* may be a strict military disciplinarian, or any rigid, authoritarian enforcer of rules and regulations.

### 26. COMPUNCTION (kum-PUNGK-shin)

A twinge of regret caused by an uneasy conscience; a pang of guilt for a wrong done or for pain that one has caused another.

**Synonyms:** *remorse, misgiving, scruple, qualm*. A stronger synonym is *contrition* (Level 5, Word 9), repentance, deep and devastating sorrow for one's sins or for something one has done wrong.

**Etymology and related words:** Late Latin *compunctio*, a pricking of conscience, ultimately from the Latin *pungere*, to prick, sting, pierce, or stab. *Pungere* is also the source of *puncture*, to prick, pierce, or stab; *pungent*, piercing or stinging to the smell or taste; and *poignant*, piercing or penetrating to the senses, the emotions, or the intellect.

### 27. MERCURIAL (mur-KYOOR-ee-ul)

Quick to change moods or change one's mind, having an unpredictable temperament.

**Synonyms:** *flighty, impulsive, fickle, capricious* (Level 1, Word 11), *volatile* (Level 4, Word 47), *erratic, protean*.

**Antonyms:** *stable, fixed, steadfast, invariable, immutable*.

**Etymology:** *Mercurial* comes from the ancient Roman god Mercury, known to the Greeks as Hermes. Mercury was the messenger or courier of the gods, but he was also the deity who conducted the souls of the dead to the underworld, and the god of commerce, travel, eloquence, and thievery. The element mercury (named after this god) is used in thermometers, and also goes by the name *quicksilver*.

**Additional useful word:** *caduceus* (kuh-D(Y)OO-see-us), the winged staff with two serpents coiled around it, carried by Hermes. The *caduceus* is the symbol of the medical profession.

### 28. NOSTRUM (NAHS-trum)

A quack remedy or medicine; a panacea; hence, a dubious or dishonest plan or scheme for curing a social or political problem.

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *noster*, meaning "our." *Nostrum* means literally "our remedy."

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 29. PROPITIATE (pruh-PISH-ee-ayt)

To appease, gain or regain the goodwill or favor of, cause to become favorably inclined.

**Synonyms:** *conciliate, pacify, mollify, placate, assuage* (Level 2, Word 37).

**Antonyms:** *alienate, offend, antagonize, estrange, disaffect*.

**Corresponding noun:** *propitiation*, appeasement, conciliation, the act of getting into the good graces of.

**Related word:** *propitious*, favorable, marked by favorable conditions.

### 30. EFFICACY (EF-i-kuh-see)

Effectiveness; the power to produce a desired effect or result.

**Usage:** *Efficacy* applies to things that have the power to produce an intended effect: the *efficacy* of a drug, a scientific method, or an advertising campaign.

**Corresponding adjective:** *efficacious*, effective, capable of producing a desired effect or result (an *efficacious* law, policy, or marketing plan).

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## The Wonderful World of Eponyms

An *eponym* (EP-uh-nim) is a word derived from a name, or a name that becomes a word. The corresponding adjective is *eponymous* (i-PAHN-uh-mus).

At this point in the program there is a discussion of various eponyms, which notes those eponyms covered earlier in the program and explores the history of the following eponymous words: *sandwich, silhouette, maverick, Comstockery, and chauvinism*.

**Usage tip:** In precise usage, *chauvinism* means overzealous patriotism, and a *chauvinist* is a superpatriot, a person unreasonably and militantly devoted to his country. If you mean to describe a supercilious attitude of men toward women, say *male chauvinism*, and if you are talking about a man who treats women as inferior, say *male chauvinist*.

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### 31. TANTAMOUNT (TAN-tuh-mownt)

Equivalent; having equal force, effect, or value.

**Etymology and usage:** Anglo-French, "to amount to as much, be equal to"; ultimately from the Latin *tantus*, so much, so great. In modern usage, when one thing is *tantamount* to another, it amounts to as much as the other, adds up to the same thing.

**N.B.** Take care not to confuse *tantamount* and *paramount*, supreme in rank, preeminent.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 32. **PARIAH** (puh-RY-uh)

An outcast; a person despised or rejected by society.

**Etymology:** *Pariah* entered English in the early 1600s from Tamil, one of the languages of India. In the traditional social system of India, people were divided into classes called *castes* (pronounced like *casts*), and the *pariah* caste was one of the lowest on the social ladder. Its members worked chiefly as agricultural and domestic laborers and as servants to the British when India was a British colony. From this sense of social inferiority, the word *pariah* came to be used in English of any person despised or rejected by society, an outcast.

### 33. **GERMANE** (jur-MAYN)

Relevant, fitting, appropriate, precisely to the point.

**Synonyms:** *pertinent, suitable, applicable, apposite, apropos.*

**Antonyms:** *inappropriate, unsuitable, irrelevant, inapplicable, alien, extraneous, incongruous, malapropos.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *germane, apposite, pertinent, and relevant.*

### 34. **LICENTIOUS** (ly-SEN-shus)

Sexually abandoned; lacking moral restraint, especially in sexual conduct.

**Synonyms:** *lewd, loose, lustful, lecherous, lascivious, libertine, lickerish, libidinous, lubricious, bawdy, wanton, ribald, prurient, debauched, dissolute, salacious, concupiscent.*

**Antonyms:** *pure, chaste, virtuous.*

**Etymology, related word, and usage:** Latin *licentia*, freedom, leave, liberty, the source also of the English word *license*. By derivation *licentious* means taking license, and the word implies doing something one is not supposed to do, especially something sexually immoral.

### 35. **SUPERANNUATED** (SOO-pur-AN-yoo-ay-tid)

Retired because of age, weakness, or ineffective-ness; old and worn out; outdated, outmoded, obsolete.

**Synonyms:** *timeworn, antiquated, decrepit, passé, effete.*

**Etymology:** *Superannuated* combines the prefix *super-*, beyond, with the Latin *annum*, a year, and by derivation means beyond the useful years.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 36. EGREGIOUS (i-GREE-jus)

Conspicuously bad, remarkable or outstanding for some undesirable or offensive quality.

**Synonyms:** *flagrant, outrageous, excessive, shocking, gross, monstrous, notorious, grievous, arrant.*

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *egregius*, not of the common herd, and therefore select or outstanding. *Egregious* was once used to mean outstanding or remarkable, but this sense is long obsolete, and for at least three hundred years the word has most often been used to mean outstanding or remarkable in a bad way, conspicuously bad, offensive, or undesirable.

### 37. VAPID (rhymes with *rapid*)

Lifeless, dull, boring, flat, stale; lacking spirit, interest, or flavor.

**Synonyms:** *unsavory, insipid, unpalatable, trite, prosaic* (Level 4, Word 16), *pedestrian*, and *jejune* (Level 10, Word 1).

**Antonyms:** *lively, vigorous, vivid, animated, robust, vivacious, emphatic.*

**Etymology:** Latin *vapidus*, spiritless, spoiled, flat.

### 38. CROTCHET (KRAHTCH-it)

An odd notion or whim that one clings to stubbornly.

**Corresponding adjective:** *crotchety.*

**Etymology, related word, and usage:** *Crochet* comes from a Middle English word meaning a staff with a hook at the end. It is related to *crochet*, the form of needlework in which thread is looped with a hooked needle. In modern usage, a *crochet* is an odd notion or whim that hooks you or that you cling to stubbornly, as if with a hook.

### 39. EPIGRAPH (EP-i-graf)

An inscription; especially, an inscription on a building or monument, or a brief quotation at the beginning of a literary composition that suggests or is germane to its theme.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes an *epigraph* from an *epigram*, a short, witty poem or a short, pointed saying that displays terse wit or a clever twist of thought; and an *epitaph*, an inscription on a gravestone or tomb in memory of the person buried.

**Etymology:** *Epigraph* is formed from the prefix *epi-*, meaning "on" or "above," and the Greek verb *graphein*, to write.

**N.B.** Whenever you see a word containing *graph*, you can reasonably assume that it has something to do with writing.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 40. **EXPATiate** (ek-SPAY-shee-ayt)

To elaborate, speak or write at great length.

**Synonyms:** *discourse, expound, descant.*

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *expatiari*, to wander. *Expatiate* suggests wandering at will over a subject.

### 41. **SINECURE** (SY-nuh-kyoor, also SIN-uh-kyoor)

A position that provides a good income or salary but that requires little or no work; in colloquial terms, a cushy job.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *beneficium sine cura*, "a benefice without cure." A *benefice* (BEN-uh-fis) is an endowed church position or office that provides a member of the clergy with a fixed income or guaranteed living. A "benefice without cure" means a paid position for a member of the clergy that does not require pastoral work—in other words, the curing of souls.

### 42. **PREDILECTION** (PRED-i-LEK-shin)

A preference, partiality, preconceived liking; an inclination or disposition to favor something.

**Synonyms:** *fondness, leaning, bias, prejudice, predisposition, affinity* (Level 4, Word 46), *penchant* (Level 3, Word 9), *propensity, proclivity.*

**Etymology:** French, from Medieval Latin *praediligere*, to prefer.

**Usage:** Unlike the words *bias* and *prejudice*, which are often used negatively, *predilection* has either a neutral or positive connotation and is used as a stronger synonym of *preference* and *partiality*.

### 43. **IMBROGLIO** (im-BROHL-yoh)

A complicated or intricate situation; a difficult, perplexing state of affairs; also, a misunderstanding or disagreement of a complicated and confusing nature.

**Synonyms:** *entanglement, embroilment, predicament, quandary.*

**N.B.** The unraveling of an *imbroglio* is a common plot in many plays, novels, and operas, but there are plenty of *imbroglios* in real life as well political *imbroglios*, financial *imbroglios*, marital *imbroglios*, and criminal *imbroglios*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 44. **INEFFABLE** (in-EF-uh-buul)

Inexpressible, unable to be expressed or described in words.

**Synonyms:** *unutterable, unspeakable, indescribable.*

**Etymology:** Latin *ineffabilis*, unutterable, not able to be spoken.

**Usage:** *Ineffable* usually applies to good or pleasant things (*ineffable* beauty, *ineffable* joy), but it may occasionally apply to something unpleasant that is inexpressible (*ineffable* disgust).

### 45. **STOLID** (STAHL-id)

Not easily moved, aroused, or excited; showing little or no feeling or sensitivity; mentally or emotionally dull, insensitive, or obtuse.

**Synonyms:** *unemotional, unresponsive, sluggish, apathetic, impassive, indifferent, phlegmatic* (Level 9, Word 33).

**Etymology:** Latin *stolidus*, stupid, dull, unmoving.

**Usage:** Unlike *stoic* people, who display firmness of mind and character in their thick-skinned, unflinching indifference to pain and suffering, people who are *stolid* are not easily moved because they are oafs, dolts, louts, or half-wits. *Stolid* is sometimes also applied figuratively to behavior or things that are unresponsive, insensitive, or not easily moved (a *stolid* countenance or expression, a *stolid* bureaucracy, *stolid* opposition).

### 46. **OFFAL** (like awful, also AHF-ul)

Waste, garbage, refuse, rubbish.

**Etymology and usage:** Middle English, a combination of the words *off* and *fall*. Originally, *offal* applied to anything that fell off or was thrown off in the process of doing something. Since the early 1400s, *offal* has also been used of the waste parts removed in the process of butchering an animal. From that unsavory sense, the meaning of *offal* broadened to denote waste or garbage in general, anything thrown away as worthless.

### 47. **LISSOME** (LIS-um)

Limber, flexible, moving with ease and grace.

**Synonyms:** *nimble, agile, supple, lithe.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *lissome*, *lithe*, and *limber*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

### 48. MELLIFLUOUS (me-LIF-loo-us)

Flowing smoothly and sweetly, like honey.

**Usage:** *Mellifluous* often applies to sounds or words, as a *mellifluous* voice, *mellifluous* music, a *mellifluous* speaker, *mellifluous* writing.

### 49. SURFEIT (SUR-fit)

To supply, fill, or feed to excess, especially to the point of discomfort, sickness, or disgust.

**Synonyms:** *sate* and *satiate*, which may mean either to fill or supply to satisfaction or to fill or supply beyond what is necessary or desired; also, *stuff*, *cram*, *glut*, *gorge*, *choke*, *inundate*, *cloy*.

**Corresponding noun:** *surfeit*, an excess or oversupply.

### 50. BLANDISHMENT (BLAN-dish-mint)

Flattering or coaxing speech or action; an ingratiating remark or gesture.

**Etymology:** Latin *blandiri*, to flatter, caress, coax, from *blandus*, flattering, fondling, caressing. By derivation, *blandishment* means speech or action that flatters, fondles, coaxes, or caresses in an attempt to win over or persuade a person.

**Usage:** The word is usually employed in its plural form, *blandishments*. Unlike flattery, which is generally perceived as self-serving, blandishments are not necessarily insincere. They may be expressions of honest affection, kindness, or desire.

**Corresponding verb:** *blandish*, to coax with flattering or ingratiating statements or actions.

## Verbal Advantage Level Eight

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Level Eight concludes with a discussion of the following commonly mispronounced words:

- *query*: KWEER-ee, not KWER-ee or KWAIR-ee.
- *consul* and *consulate*: KAHN-suul and KAHN-suh-lit, not KOWN-suul and KOWN-suh-lit.
- *library*: LY-brer-ee, not LY-ber-ee. There is no *berry* in *library*. Be sure to pronounce the r in the middle of the word.
- *irrelevant*: Be careful not to transpose the L and V and say *irrevalant*. The proper pronunciation is I-REL-uh-vĭnt.
- *jewelry*: Don't transpose the L and the E in the second syllable and say *joo-luh-ree*; there is no *joola* in *jewelry*. To get it right, just say the word *jewel* and then add *-ree*. (In linguistics this transposition of letters and sounds in a word is called *metathesis*.)
- *grievous*: Don't say GREE-vee-us, as if the word were spelled *grievious*. The proper pronunciation has two, not three, syllables: GREE-vus.
- *pronunciation, mispronunciation*: Don't say *pronounciation* or *mispronounciation*. There is no *noun* and no *pronoun* in *pronunciation* and *mispronunciation*. And there are also no such verbs as *pronounciate* and *mispronounciate*. Be sure to put a *nun* in your *pronunciation* (and even in your *mispronunciation*).
- *siege, refuge, refugee*: In these words, the G should sound like the G in *cage* and *regiment*, not like the G in *collage*. Don't say SEEZH, REF-yoozh, and ref-yoo-ZHEE; say SEEJ, REF-yooj, and ref-yoo-JEE (or REF-yoo-jee).
- *succinct, flaccid, accident, accept, eccentric, succeed, success, accessory*: The rule for pronouncing double C in a word says that the first C sounds like K, the second like S; together they create the sound of KS, as in the name *Jackson*.
- *juror, vendor, defendant*: Don't overpronounce these words JOOR-or, VEN-dor, and dee-FEN-dant. Use the natural, everyday pronunciations most educated people use: JOOR-ur, VEN-dur, dĭ-FEN-dĭnt.
- *forte*: When you use this word to mean a strong point, specialty, say FORT (one syllable, like *fort*), not FOR-tay, or worse, for-TAY. The musical direction meaning "loud" is pronounced FOR-tay.

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*VERBAL ADVANTAGE*  
*SUCCESS EDITION*  
*ADVANCED*

*Levels IX*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

### 1. **PROLIX** (PROH-likes)

Wordy and tiresome; longwinded and boring; verbose; using more than necessary to get the point across.

**Synonyms:** *circumlocutory, tautological, pleonastic.*

**Antonyms:** *concise, terse, pithy, succinct, sententious.*

**Etymology and usage:** Latin *prolixus*, widely extended. *Prolix* applies to longwinded speech or writing that is tediously discursive, desultory, or protracted.

### 2. **APOCRYPHAL** (uh-PAHK-ruh-ful)

Not genuine, counterfeit, illegitimate; specifically, of doubtful authenticity or authorship.

**Synonyms:** *spurious* (Level 8, Word 18), *unauthorized, unauthenticated, fabricated, fraudulent, supposititious.*

**Antonyms:** *genuine, authentic, valid, bona fide.*

**Etymology and related words:** The *Apocrypha* are fourteen books of an early translation of the Old Testament into Greek called the Septuagint. The authenticity of these books was called into question. Today, *apocrypha*, spelled with a small *a*, refers to any writings of doubtful authenticity or authorship.

### 3. **CUPIDITY** (kyoo-PID-i-tee)

Greed, a strong desire for wealth or material things.

**Synonyms:** *avarice, acquisitiveness, covetousness, venality.*

**Etymology:** Latin *cupidus*, desirous, longing, eager; also, eager for power or money, avaricious. The corresponding Latin noun *cupido*, desire, is the source of Cupid, the cherubic god of love in Roman mythology.

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 4. VERNAL (VUR-nul)

Pertaining to spring, occurring in the spring; also, having the qualities of spring: fresh, warm, and mild.

**Antonyms:** *hibernal, hiemal* (pertaining to winter, wintry).

**Additional useful words:** *Hibernia*, poetic name for Ireland; *estival*, pertaining, like, or belonging to summer; *estivate*, to pass the summer (the opposite of *hibernate*, to pass the winter).

**Additional useful information:** The *vernal equinox*, which occurs in March and marks the beginning of spring, and the *autumnal equinox*, which occurs in September and marks the beginning of fall, are the times during the year when the sun crosses the equator and day and night are approximately the same length.

### 5. TEMERITY (tuh-MER-i-tee)

Recklessness, rashness, foolhardiness; reckless disregard for danger, risk, or consequences.

**Synonyms:** *nerve, cheek, gall, audacity, heedlessness, imprudence, impetuosity, presumptuousness, effrontery.*

**Antonyms:** *timidity, bashfulness, faintheartedness, sheepishness, apprehension, diffidence, timorousness.*

**Corresponding adjective:** *temerarious.*

**Etymology:** Latin *temere*, rashly, blindly, heedlessly.

### 6. RAPPROCHEMENT (rap-rohsh-MAH(N))

Reconciliation, a reestablishing of friendly relations.

**Etymology:** *Rapprochement* comes from a French verb meaning to bring together, and means literally to approach again.

### 7. DISQUISITION (DIS-kwi-ZISH-un)

A formal discussion of or inquiry into a subject; a discourse.

**Synonyms:** (general) *treatise, critique, commentary*; (specific) *lecture, thesis, oration, homily, tract, monograph, dissertation.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *discourse, dissertation*, and *disquisition*.

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 8. PROSCRIBE (proh-SKRYB)

To prohibit, forbid, outlaw.

**Synonyms:** *ban, denounce, disallow, condemn, censure, ostracize, expatriate, interdict.*

**Antonyms:** *permit, tolerate, legalize, authorize, sanction.*

**Etymology:** Latin *proscribere*, to post or publish the name of an outlaw or a person to be banished or put to death.

**Usage tip:** Be careful to distinguish the verbs to *proscribe* and to *prescribe*, which are opposite in meaning.

### 9. MUNIFICENCE (myoo-NIF-i-sins)

Great generosity, lavish giving.

**Synonyms:** *philanthropy, liberality, benevolence, bountifulness, bounteousness, beneficence, largess.*

**Antonyms:** *stinginess, miserliness, closefistedness, penuriousness, parsimony.*

**Corresponding adjective:** *munificent.*

**Etymology:** Latin *munificus*, generous, liberal, bountiful, from *munus*, a gift, present', or favor.

### 10. PROBITY (PROH-bi-tee)

Honesty, integrity; fairness, straightforwardness. and sincerity in one's dealings with others.

**Synonyms:** *uprightness, trustworthiness, scrupulousness, veracity, rectitude.*

**Antonyms:** *improbity, dishonesty, deceitfulness unscrupulousness, duplicity, malfeasance, perfidy.*

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At this point in the program there is a discussion of the distinction between the verbs to *convince* and to *persuade*.

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## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 11. **PUISSANT** (PYOO-i-sint; also, PWIS-int and pyoo-IS-int)

Powerful, mighty, strong, forceful.

**Synonyms:** *vigorous, potent, dynamic, stalwart.*

**Antonyms:** *weak, feeble, infirm, debilitated, enervated, flaccid, valetudinarian.*

**Corresponding noun:** *puissance, power, strength, might.*

### 12. **PECULATE** (PEK-yuh-layt)

To steal, embezzle; specifically, to steal or misuse money or property entrusted to one's care.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *peculate* and to *defalcate*.

**Corresponding noun:** *peculation.*

### 13. **DIFFIDENT** (DIF-i-dint)

Shy, timid, bashful, lacking in self-confidence, hesitant to speak or act.

**Etymology:** Latin *dis-*, not, and *fidere*, to trust, put confidence in.

### 14. **VENAL** (VEE-nal)

Corruptible, bribable, capable of being bribed or bought off, able to be obtained for a price.

**Synonym:** *mercenary* (Level 3, Word 14).

**Etymology:** Latin *venalis*, for sale.

Usage tip: The words *venal* and *venial* are often confused. *Venial*, means excusable, forgivable, minor, as a *venial* sin, offense, or error.

### 15. **PARSIMONIOUS** (PAHR-si-MOH-nee-us)

Stingy, miserly, extremely tight with money.

**Synonyms:** *grasping, money-grubbing, pennypinching, close-fisted, penurious, niggardly.*

**Antonyms:** *generous, liberal, open-handed, bountiful, beneficent, magnanimous, munificent.*

**Corresponding noun:** *parsimony, excessive or unnecessary economy or frugality.*

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 16. PUSILLANIMOUS (PYOO-si-LAN-i-mus)

Cowardly, lacking courage, timid, fainthearted, irresolute.

**Corresponding noun:** *pusillanimity*.

### 17. EXTANT (EK-stint)

Existing, still in existence, not extinct, not lost or destroyed.

**Etymology:** Latin *exstare*, to stand out, from *ex*, out, and *stare*, to stand.

### 18. MERETRICIOUS (MER-i-TRISH-is)

Tawdry, gaudy; attractive in a flashy or cheap way; falsely alluring; deceptively enticing.

**Etymology:** By derivation, *meretricious* means pertaining to or like a *meretrix*, a prostitute.

**Usage tip:** The words *meretricious* and *meritorious* are often confused, but they are nearly opposite in meaning. *Meritorious* means worth! of merit, deserving praise.

### 19. XENOPHOBIA (ZEN-uh-FOH-bee-uh)

Fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners, or of anything strange or foreign.

**Antonyms:** *xenomania*, an inordinate attachment to anything or anyone foreign; *xenophilia* means love for or attraction to foreigners, foreign cultures, or foreign customs.

**Etymology:** (Greek) prefix *xeno-*, alien, strange, and suffix *-phobia*, fear.

**Related words:** *xenophobe*, a person who fears or hates strangers; *xenophobic*, affected with xenophobia.

**Pronunciation tip:** In the words *xenophobia*, *xenophobe*, and *xenophobic*, the prefix *xeno-* should be pronounced ZEN-uh, not ZEE-nuh.

### 20. QUOTIDIAN (kwoh-TID-ee-in)

(1) Daily, recurring every day or pertaining to every day.

(2) Of an everyday nature; ordinary, commonplace, trivial.

**Synonym:** *diurnal* (Level 2, Word 49).

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

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Here there is a discussion of various foreign words and phrases that have been taken into English.

Expressions covered: (French) *faux pas*; *bête noire*; *bon mot*; *élan*; *qui vive*; *coup d'état*; *coup de grâce*; (Yiddish) *chutzpah*; (Latin) *ad infinitum*; *pro tempore*; *sine qua non*; *quid pro quo*; *caveat emptor*; *pro bono publico*.

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### 21. EXIGENCY (EKS-ĭ-jĭn-see)

An urgency, pressing need; a situation demanding immediate attention or action.

**Etymology:** Latin *exigere*, to demand, force or drive out.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *exigency*, *emergency*, and *crisis*.

### 22. PULCHRITUDE (PUHL-kri-t(y)ood)

Beauty, loveliness, attractiveness.

**Corresponding adjective:** *pulchritudinous*.

### 23. DENOUEMENT (DAY-noo-MAH(N))

The unraveling or resolution of a plot, as of a novel or a drama; the outcome or resolution of any complex situation.

### 24. FUGACIOUS (fyoo-GAY-shus)

Fleeting, passing quickly away.

**Synonyms:** *transient* (Level 2, Word 31), *ephemeral* (Level 4, Word 12), *transitory* (Level 5, Word 4), *evanescent*.

**Etymology:** *Fugacious* and *fugitive* come from the Latin *fugere*, to flee, fly away.

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 25. **TURBID** (TUR-bid)

Literally, muddy, clouded, roiled, murky, as if from stirred-up sediment; figuratively, muddled, obscure, confused, not lucid.

**Usage tip:** *Turbid* sometimes is confused with *turgid* and *tumid*, which mean swollen, inflated. *Tumid* usually is used literally to mean swollen or distended; *turgid* usually is used figuratively of language or style that is inflated pompous, pretentious, bombastic. *Turbid* never suggests swelling or inflation, but rather muddiness, cloudiness, disturbance, or confusion.

### 26. **INDEFEASIBLE** (in-de-FEEZ-uh-buul)

Not capable of being undone, taken away, annulled, or rendered void.

**Related words:** *defeasance*, the annulment or voiding of a deed or contract, or a clause within a deed or contract that provides a means for annulling it or rendering it void; *defeasible*, capable of being invalidated, undone, or rendered void.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *inalienable* and *indefeasible*.

### 27. **DISINGENUOUS** (DIS-in-JEN-yoo-us)

Insincere, crafty, sly, not straightforward or frank.

**Synonyms:** *wily, subtle, slippery, deceptive, hypocritical, fraudulent, mendacious.*

**Antonyms:** *ingenuous, truthful, frank, candid, unselfconscious, unaffected, guileless.*

**Corresponding noun:** *disingenuousness.*

**Etymology and related word:** *Disingenuous* combines the prefix *dis-*, meaning "not," with the Latin *ingenuus*, freeborn, of free birth; hence, noble, honorable, upright. From the Latin *ingenuus*, by way of French, English has also acquired the word *ingénue*, which the *Century Dictionary* defines as "a woman or girl who displays innocent candor or simplicity; specifically, such a character represented on the stage, or the actress who plays it."

### 28. **SCURRILOUS** (SKUHR-i-lus)

Foul-mouthed, obscene; using or expressed in language that is coarse, vulgar, and abusive.

**Synonyms:** *shameless, indelicate, lewd, smutty, ribald* (Level 7, Word 42), *irreverent, insolent, disparaging, derisive, contumelious.*

**Antonyms:** *polite, refined, tasteful, cultured, sophisticated, cultivated, decorous, urbane.*

**Etymology:** Latin *scurrilis*, mocking, jesting, or jeering like a buffoon.

**Corresponding nouns:** *scurrility* and *scurrilousness.*



## Verbal Advantage

### Level Nine

#### 29. RECRUDESCENCE (REE-kroo-DES-ints)

A revival, renewal, fresh outbreak after a period of inactivity or quiescence.

**Etymology and usage:** *Recrudescence* comes from the Latin *recrudescere*, to become raw again, break out again, open afresh. In medicine, *recrudescence* is used of a wound or sore that partially heals and then reopens, or of a fever that abates and then breaks out again.

**Corresponding verb:** *recrudesce*, to break out again, show renewed activity after an inactive period.

**Corresponding adjective:** *recrudescent*, breaking out afresh (a *recrudescent* epidemic, a *recrudescent* revolt).

#### 30. DEFENESTRATE (dee-FEN-i-strayt)

To throw something or someone out of a window.

**Etymology:** prefix *de-*, out, and Latin *fenestra*, a window.

**Corresponding noun:** *defenestration*, the act of throwing something or someone out of a window.

#### 31. DILATORY (DIL-uh-for-ee)

Delaying, causing or intended to cause delay; also, slow, tardy, characterized by delay or procrastination.

#### 32. VILIFY (VIL-uh-fy)

To defame, slander, attack with vicious, abusive language.

**Synonyms:** *disparage, denigrate, stigmatize, malign, revile, vituperate, calumniate, traduce.*

**Antonyms:** *praise, commend, laud, extol, glorify, eulogize, venerate.*

**Etymology:** Latin *vilis*, cheap, worthless.

**Corresponding noun:** *vilification.*

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 33. PHLEGMATIC (fleg-MAT-ik)

Calm and unemotional; having a sluggish, apathetic temperament; difficult to move to emotion or action.

**Etymology:** *Phlegmatic* comes from the Greek *phlegmatikos*, pertaining to the humor phlegm. In ancient and medieval physiology, there were four humors, or bodily fluids, thought to determine a person's health or disposition: blood, also known as the sanguine humor, which made you upbeat, cheerful, and confident; choler, also known as yellow bile, which made you passionate or irascible; melancholy, also known as black bile, which made you gloomy or dejected; and phlegm, which made you either cool and indifferent or dull and sluggish. From this medieval humor phlegm we inherit the adjective *phlegmatic*, which by derivation means full of phlegm; hence, having a sluggish, apathetic temperament, calm and unemotional, difficult to move to emotion or action.

### 34. ADVENTITIOUS (AD-ven-TISH-us)

Accidentally or casually acquired, not belonging naturally to something, associated by chance, not inherent or integral.

**Synonyms:** *foreign, extrinsic, incidental, extraneous, fortuitous, supervenient.*

### 35. DESICCATED (DES-ĭ-kay-tid)

Dried or dried up, dehydrated, deprived of moisture.

**Corresponding verb:** *desiccate*, to dry thoroughly.

**Corresponding noun:** *desiccation*, the act of drying or dehydrating.

**Etymology:** Latin *desiccare*, to dry completely.

### 36. COMITY (KAHM-ĭ-tee)

Courtesy, civility, politeness, respectful and considerate behavior.

**Etymology:** Latin *comitas*, courtesy, friendliness, from *comis*, courteous, kind, polite.

*Comity of nations:* courteous and friendly relations between nations involving recognition and respect for each other's laws and institutions.

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 37. SPECIOUS (SPEE-shus)

Appearing to be true, genuine, or correct but actually false or deceptive; superficially reasonable or just but not so in reality.

**Etymology:** Latin *speciosus*, beautiful, splendid, handsome, from *species*, outward appearance, and *specere*, to look at. By derivation, something *specious* has an outward appearance that is beautiful, splendid, or handsome to look upon but that underneath is false, deceptive, or flawed.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *specious* and *plausible*.

### 38. NOISOME (NOY-sum)

(1) Harmful to health or well-being, unwholesome, dangerous, destructive.

**Synonyms:** *injurious, ruinous, deleterious, noxious, baneful, malign, pernicious.*

(2) Foul-smelling, offensive, disgusting.

**Synonyms:** *rank, rancid, putrid, fetid, malodorous, mephitic.*

**Antonyms:** *salutary, salubrious.*

### 39. CALUMNY (KAL-um-nee)

Defamation of character, slander, a false and malicious statement or accusation meant to injure a person's reputation.

**Synonyms:** *backbiting, denigration, obloquy, vilification.*

**Corresponding adjective:** *calumnious.*

**Corresponding verb:** *calumniate.*

**Etymology:** Latin *calumniare*, to accuse falsely, from *calumnia*, a trick.

### 40. EXCORIATE (ek-SKOR-ee-ayt)

(1) To strip, scrape, or tear off the skin.

**Synonyms:** *abrade, chafe, scalp, gall, flay.*

(2) To rebuke or denounce harshly and severely.

**Synonyms:** *censure, castigate, vituperate.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *flay* and to *excoriate*.

**Corresponding noun:** *excoriation.*

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 41. LASSITUDE (LAS-i-t(y)ood)

Weariness, fatigue; a weak or exhausted state or feeling; a sluggish relaxation of body or mind.

**Synonyms:** *listlessness, lethargy, debility, indolence, inertia, enervation, torpor, languor, oscitancy.*

**Additional useful word:** *osculation*, the act of kissing.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *fatigue*, *weariness*, and *lassitude*.

### 42. TRADUCE (truh-D(Y)OOS)

To publicly disgrace or humiliate by making false and malicious statements; to make a mockery of; expose to public ridicule or contempt.

**Synonyms:** *defame, slander, denigrate, malign, vituperate, calumniate, vilify* (Level 9, Word 32).

**Etymology:** *Traduce* comes from the Latin *traducere*, to lead across or lead in front of others; hence, to exhibit as a spectacle, expose to ridicule, disgrace or humiliate in public

**Corresponding nouns:** *traducement*, the act of traducing; *traducer*, a person who traduces, who makes false, malicious, humiliating statements.

### 43. DISHABILLE (DIS-uh-BEEL)

(1) The state of being partly clothed; partial undress.

(2) The state of being casually or carelessly dressed, as in one's night clothes or lounging attire.

**Additional useful word:** *prurient* (PRUUR-ee-int), characterized by or arousing lust.

### 44. SATURNALIA (SAT-ur-NAY-lee-uh)

An orgy, licentious merrymaking, unrestrained revelry.

**Etymology:** Saturnalia (capital S) denotes the licentious seven-day festival of Saturn celebrated in December by the ancient Romans; from that, *saturnalia* (small s) has come to mean any period or occasion of unrestrained revelry.

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 45. **EXTIRPATE** (EK-stur-payt)

To pull or dig up by the roots, root out, exterminate, abolish or destroy completely.

**Etymology:** Latin *extirpare*, to tear up by the roots, from *ex-*, out, and *stirps*, the stem and roots of a plant.

**Synonyms:** *eradicate, deracinate.*

**Corresponding noun:** *extirpation.*

### 46. **FLAGITIOUS** (fluh-JISH-us)

Extremely wicked; shamefully and scandalously criminal, vice-ridden, or corrupt.

**Synonyms:** *atrocious, egregious, heinous, diabolical, nefarious, odious, execrable.*

**Etymology:** Latin *flagitiosus*, shameful, disgraceful, infamous, from *flagitium*, a shameful crime, disgraceful action.

**Usage:** *Flagitious* may be used of persons who are grossly wicked and guilty of atrocious crimes or vices, or of actions or things to mean shamefully wicked, villainous, or evil.

### 47. **PERIPATETIC** (PER-i-puh-TET-ik)

Walking about, going from place to place on foot.

**Synonyms:** *ambulating, itinerant.*

**Usage:** When spelled with a capital P, *Peripatetic* refers to the ancient Greek school of philosophy founded by Aristotle, who expounded his theories while strolling in the Lyceum in Athens. When spelled with a small *p*, *peripatetic* means walking about, traveling on foot.

**Corresponding noun:** *peripatetic*, a pedestrian or itinerant, someone who walks or moves about on foot.

### 48. **CACHINNATE** (KAK-i-nayt)

To laugh loudly and immoderately, laugh convulsively or hysterically.

**Corresponding noun:** *cachinnation*, immoderate, convulsive, or hysterical laughter.

## Verbal Advantage Level Nine

### 49. MANUMIT (MAN-yoo-MIT)

To set free, liberate, emancipate, deliver from slavery or bondage.

**Synonyms:** *unshackle, unfetter, enfranchise, disenthral.*

**Antonyms:** *enslave, enthrall, subjugate, shackle, fetter, manacle, trammel.*

**Etymology:** Latin *manumittere*, to free a slave, from *manus*, the hand, and *mittere*, to send, let go.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *manumit*, *emancipate*, and *enfranchise*.

### 50. EXPIATION (EK-spee-AY-shin)

Atonement; reparation for a sin, crime, or offense.

**Etymology:** Latin *expiare*, to atone for, purify, engage in a ritual cleansing.

**Corresponding verb:** *expiate*, to atone for, make amends for.

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Level Nine concludes with a discussion of the word *effete*, which has become a victim of the "sounds-like syndrome," confused with the words *effeminate* and *elite*. Traditionally, and in precise usage, *effete* means worn out, exhausted, barren of results, ineffective or unproductive.

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*VERBAL ADVANTAGE*  
*SUCCESS EDITION*  
*ADVANCED*

*Level X*

*By Charles Harrington Elster*

## Verbal Advantage Level Ten

*With Pronunciations, Synonyms, Antonyms and Related Information Listed in Order of Presentation, by Level and Number. The abbreviation N.B. stands for the Latin nota bene and means "note well, take good note of."*

### 1. JEJUNE (jĭ-JOON)

Dull, uninteresting, or unsatisfying; devoid of nourishment, substance, or significance.

**Synonyms:** *flat, stale, arid, insipid, vapid* (Level 8, Word 37).

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *jejunus*, fasting, hungry, barren, dry, the source also of *jejunum*, the middle section of the small intestine, between the duodenum and the ileum, believed to be empty after death.

**Usage problem:** If you look up *jejune* in a current dictionary, you will also see another definition of the word: youthful, childish, immature, puerile. This sense is objected to by certain usage experts who regard it as having developed through an erroneous analogy with the word *juvenile*.

According to Jacques Barzun, one of the world's foremost authorities on English usage, "the meaning 'youthful, childish' for *jejune* has got into the dictionaries only as a concession to the misusers."

On the other hand, William Safire, the language maven of *The New York Times*, believes that "childish, puerile" is the sense in which *jejune* is most commonly used today. "At a certain point, what people mean when they use a word becomes its meaning," writes Safire. "We should resist its adoption, pointing out the error, for years; mockery helps; if the meaning persists, though, it is senseless to ignore the new sense."

### 2. PAUCITY (PAW-sĭ-tee)

An insufficiency, scarcity, especially a serious or extreme one, a dire lack.

**Synonyms:** *dearth* (Level 3, Word 12), *shortage, deficiency, exiguity* (corresponding adjective: *exiguous*).

**Antonyms:** *superabundance, superfluity, plethora*.

**Etymology:** Latin *paucitas*, fewness, scarcity, from *paucus*, few.

### 3. MINATORY (MIN-uh-for-ee)

Threatening, menacing; having a threatening or menacing aspect or nature.

**Synonym:** *minacious*.

**Etymology and related word:** *Minatory* and *minacious* come from the Latin *minari*, to threaten and are related to the word *menace*.



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### 4. PUTATIVE (PYOO-tuh-tiv)

Supposed, reputed, commonly considered or regarded as such; deemed to be so but not proved.

**Antonyms:** *certain, definite, unquestionable, indisputable, indubitable, incontrovertible, irrefragable.*

**Etymology:** Latin *putare*, to consider, believe, think, suppose.

### 5. LUCUBRATION (LOO-kyoo-BRAY-shin)

Nocturnal labor; study, writing, or work done late at night.

**Etymology:** Latin *lucubrate*, to work by candlelight.

**Corresponding adjective:** *lucubratory*, literally "done by candlelight"; hence, pertaining to nocturnal study or labor.

**Corresponding verb:** *lucubrate*, to work, study, or write into the wee hours.

**Usage:** *Lucubrate* may also mean to compose with laborious effort, and especially to write in a scholarly or pedantic fashion; *lucubration* has also come to mean anything produced by laborious study or effort, especially an elaborate, pedantic, or pretentious piece of writing.

### 6. TROGLODYTE (TRAHG-luh-dyt)

(1) A cave dweller.

(2) A person who lives or behaves in a primitive, brutish, or crude manner.

(3) A person who lives in seclusion.

**Corresponding adjective:** *troglydytic*.

**Etymology:** Greek, literally "one who creeps into holes."

**Additional useful words:** *anchorite, eremite* (both mean "a hermit, recluse, person who lives in seclusion").

### 7. ALEATORY (AY-lee-uh-for-ee)

Depending on luck, chance, or on some contingent event; hence, uncertain, unpredictable.

**Etymology:** Latin *aleator*, a gamester, thrower of dice, craps shooter, which comes in turn from *alea*, a game of dice. *Aleatory* means literally depending upon the throw of the dice.

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### 8. **FARRAGO** (fuh-RAY-goh, also fuh-RAH-goh)

A mixture, especially a confused or jumbled mixture.

**Synonyms:** *conglomeration, medley, mishmash, hodgepodge, miscellany, potpourri, pastiche, salmagundi.*

**Etymology:** Latin, literally "mixed fodder for animals; a jumbled assortment of grains."

**Corresponding adjective:** *farraginous*, mixed, jumbled, miscellaneous, heterogeneous.

### 9. **CYNOSURE** (SY-nuh-shuur)

A center of attention or interest, focal point.

**Etymology:** Greek *kynosoura*, a dog's tail, from *kynos*, a dog.

**N.B.** This discussion explores the origin of the words *cynical*, *cynic*, and *cynicism*, and their relation to Diogenes of Sinope, a Cynic philosopher nicknamed *kynos*, or *kyon*, "the dog," for his outrageous behavior.

**Usage:** *Cynosure* (capital C) refers to the constellation Ursa Minor or to Polaris, the North Star, also called the polestar, which is part of this constellation.

### 10. **BADINAGE** (bad'n-AHZH, also BAD'n-azh)

Banter; playful, teasing talk; good-natured joking or gently mocking conversation.

**Synonyms:** *repartee, raillery, persiflage.*

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *banter*, *badinage*, *persiflage*, and *raillery*, which suggest good-humored jesting.

### 11. **HIERATIC** (HY-ur-AT-ik)

Priestly; pertaining to or used by priests; reserved for holy or sacred uses (*hieratic* writings, vestments, etc.).

**Synonyms:** *clerical, ministerial, pastoral, ecclesiastical, sacerdotal.*

**Related words:** The prefix *hier-* (or *hier-*) comes from Greek and means sacred, holy, divine. It appears in the words *hierocracy*, rule by priests, ecclesiastical government; *hierarch*, a person who rules over sacred things, a high priest, and also a person who occupies a high position in a hierarchy; and *hierarchy*, an organized body or system strictly arranged in order of rank, power, or class.

**Additional useful information:** *Hieratic* may also designate a form of ancient Egyptian writing in which the traditional hieroglyphics took on a more cursive, or flowing, form. The *hieratic* style was opposed to the *demotic* style. *Demotic* (Greek *demos*, the people) means of the people, popular. From the same source comes *democracy*, rule by the people. *Demotic* may also refer to speech or writing that is vernacular, popular, informal.

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### 12. SATURNINE (SAT-ur-nyn)

Gloomy, sullen, or somber in appearance, manner, or temperament.

**Synonyms:** *grave, melancholy, morose, taciturn, phlegmatic* (Level 9, Word 33).

**Antonyms:** *mercurial* (Level 8, Word 27), *sanguine* (Level 10, Word 21).

**Etymology:** Literally, "of or pertaining to the planet Saturn."

### 13. EXECRATE (EKS-uh-krayt)

To denounce vehemently, declare hateful or detestable; also, to loathe, abhor, detest utterly. Etymology: Latin, literally "to put under a curse."

Corresponding adjective: *execrable*, abominable, abhorrent, loathsome, utterly detestable. Corresponding noun: *execration*, a vehement denunciation or the act of *execrating*, declaring hateful or detestable.

### 14. VITIATE (VISH-ee-ayt)

To corrupt, spoil, ruin, contaminate, impair the quality of, make faulty or impure; also, to weaken morally, defile, debase.

**Etymology:** Latin *vitium*, a fault, vice.

**Legal usage:** A *vitiated* contract or a *vitiated* claim has been corrupted or violated and is therefore invalid, rendered ineffective.

**Corresponding noun:** *vitiating*, corruption, spoliation, the act of vitiating or the state of being vitiated.

### 15. VENIAL (VEE-nee-ul)

Excusable, forgivable, pardonable, able to be overlooked.

**Etymology:** Latin *venia*, grace, indulgence.

**Religious usage:** In theology, *venial* is opposed to *mortal*. *Venial* sins are pardonable; *mortal* sins exclude one from grace.

**Usage tip:** Be careful to distinguish *venal* (Level 9, Word 14) and *venial* in spelling and meaning. *Venal* means corruptible, capable of being bribed or bought off.

### 16. RISIBLE (RIZ-i-buul)

Provoking or capable of provoking laughter.

**Synonyms:** *laughable, amusing, ludicrous, hilarious, ridiculous, droll* (Level 5, Word 36).

**Etymology and related words:** *Risible, ridicule, and ridiculous* all come from the Latin *ridere*, to laugh at.

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### 17. LIONIZE (LY-uh-nyz)

To treat a person as a celebrity or as an object of great interest or importance.

**Related word:** *lion*, an important, famous, or celebrated person (a *lion* in his profession, a *lion* of industry, a literary *lion*).

### 18. CONTRETEMPS (KAHN-truh-ta(n))

An embarrassing, awkward, unexpected situation or event; a sudden mishap or hitch; an inopportune occurrence.

**Etymology:** French, literally "against the time" or "out of time"; first applied in English to the sport of fencing to mean (*OED*) "a pass or thrust ... made at a wrong or inopportune moment."

**Usage and pronunciation tip:** The plural is spelled the same, *contretemps*, but pronounced KAHN-truh-tah(n)z.

### 19. RODOMONTADE (RAHD-uh-mun-TAYD)

Arrogant boasting or bragging.

**Synonyms:** *bluster, braggadocio, vainglory, gasconade, fanfaronade, jactitation.*

**Etymology:** The character Rodomont, a boastful warrior king in Boiardo's *Orlando Inamorato* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, from Italian *rodomonte*, literally "one who rolls away mountains."

### 20. HEBETUDE (HEB-i-t(y)ood)

Stupidity, dullness, obtuseness, lethargy of mind or spirit.

**Corresponding verb:** *hebetate*, to make or become dull, blunt, or obtuse.

**Corresponding adjective:** *hebetudinous*, dull, stupid, obtuse.

**Etymology:** Latin *hebes*, blunt, dull.

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## What's Your Phobia?

This interlude in the program explores various *phobias*, exaggerated or unnatural fears (from Greek *phobos*, fear, dread, horror, flight).

As a combining form, *-phobia* can be joined with other elements to form a word meaning the fear, dread, or extreme dislike of something. The antonym of *-phobia* is *-philia* (Greek *philein*, to love).

The discussion covers the following phobias:

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- *claustrophobia*: fear of enclosed space.
- *agoraphobia*: fear of open space.
- *xenophobia*: (Level 9, Word 19) fear of strangers or foreigners, or of anything strange or foreign.
- *Francophobia, Gallophobia*: fear of the French.
- *Germanophobia*: fear of the Germans.
- *Japanophobia*: fear of the Japanese.
- *Grecophobia*: fear of the Greeks.
- *Russophobia*: fear of the Russians.
- *Anglophobia*: fear of the English.
- *bacteriophobia*: fear of germs.
- *demonophobia*: fear of demons.
- *pharmacophobia*: fear of medicine or drugs.
- *syphilophobia*: fear of syphilis, or fear that one is infected with it.
- *pyrophobia*: fear of fire.
- *neophobia*: fear of anything new.
- *aeronausiphobia*: fear of airplanes.
- *aviatophobia*: fear of flying in an airplane.
- *sitiophobia*: fear or dread of food.
- *ablutophobia*: fear of bathing.
- *sophophobia*: fear of learning.
- *allodoxaphobia*: fear of others' opinions.
- *thanatophobia*: fear of death.
- *ataxiophobia*: fear of disorder.
- *dysmorphophobia*: fear of deformity or anything misshapen.
- *dustophobia, rupophobia*: dread of dirt.
- *dishabillophobia*: fear of disrobing in front of someone (from *dishabille*, Level 9, Word 43).
- *philemaphobia*: fear of kissing.
- *staurophobia*: fear of crucifixes.
- *pantophobia*: fear of everything.
- *chronophobia*: fear of time.

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- *phobophobia*: the fear of those who have nothing to fear but fear itself.

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### 21. SANGUINE (SANG-gwin)

Confident, cheerful, hopeful, optimistic.

**Etymology:** (Latin *sanguis*, blood) *Sanguine* originally meant having blood as the dominant humor in one's system; hence, having a ruddy, healthy complexion and a warm temperament. Eventually this sense evolved into the current meaning: confident, cheerfully optimistic.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the words *sanguine* and *sanguinary*, which are sometimes confused.

### 22. DEIPNOSOPHIST (dyp-NAHS-uh-fist)

An adept conversationalist, especially one who enjoys conversing at the table.

**Etymology and related words:** *Deipnosophist* (noun), *deipnosophistic* (adjective), and *deipnosophism* (noun) come from the Greek *deipnon*, a meal, and *sophistes*, a wise man. The *Deipnosophistai* by Athenaeus details the conversation of a group of learned men who are dining together.

**Additional useful words:** *Symposium*, which means literally "a drinking party," comes from the title of a Platonic dialogue; *preprandial*, before dinner; *postprandial*, after dinner.

### 23. FRANGIBLE (FRAN-jī-buul)

Breakable, fragile, frail, delicate, easily damaged or destroyed.

**Additional useful word:** *friable*, easily crumbled, crushed, or pulverized.

### 24. APODICTIC (AP-uh-DIK-tik)

Absolutely certain, necessarily true, proved or demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt.

**Synonyms:** *incontestable*, *incontrovertible*, *irrefragable*.

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### 25. FULMINATE (FUHL-mi-nayt)

To explode, especially to explode with invective and denunciations; to shout forth condemnation and censure.

**Corresponding noun:** *fulmination*, an explosion, detonation; also (especially) a thundering verbal explosion, loud denunciation or condemnation.

**Etymology:** Latin *fulminare*, to strike with lightning, from *fulmen*, a stroke of lightning, thunderbolt.

### 26. SCARIFY (SKAR-i-fy)

(1) To wound the feelings of; make cutting remarks about; distress by criticizing sharply.

(2) (medicine) To make a series of shallow cuts or punctures in the skin, as in vaccinating.

(3) (agriculture) To cut into the ground; loosen or break up the soil either to aerate it or in preparation for planting.

**Synonyms:** *lacerate* (Level 1, Word 35), flay, *castigate*, *vituperate*, *excoriate* (Level 9, Word 40).

**Corresponding noun:** *scarification*.

**Etymology:** Literally, "to scratch," from Greek *skariphos*, a pencil or stylus.

**Usage:** *Scarify* and *scare* are similar in spelling and sound but entirely unrelated in derivation and meaning.

### 27. HEBDOMADAL (heb-DAHM-uh-dul)

Weekly; pertaining to a week or seven-day period.

**Corresponding noun:** *hebdomad*, a group of seven or a seven-day period, a week.

**Etymology:** Latin and Greek words for the number 7.

### 28. DIVAGATE (DY-vuh-gayt)

To wander, ramble, or drift about hence, to digress.

**Corresponding noun:** *divagation*, a digression or the act of wandering or rambling.

**Etymology:** Latin *divagari*, to wander about, from *dis-*, "apart," and *vagari*, to wander, ramble, roam.

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### 29. IATROGENIC (eye-AT-truh-JEN-ik)

Caused by medical examination or treatment.

**Antonym:** pathological, pertaining to or caused by disease.

**Etymology and related word:** Iatric, pertaining to medicine or medical doctors, and iatrogenic begin with the combining form iatro- (Greek iatros, a physician), which means "medical" or "medicine." The combining form -genic means "producing" or "generating."

### 30. TERGIVERSATION (TUR-jiv-ur-SAY-shin)

Desertion; specifically, the act of deserting something to which one was previously loyal, such as a cause, a party, or a religious faith.

**Synonyms:** abandonment, defection.

**Corresponding verb:** tergiversate (TUR-jiv-ursayt). Tergiversate and Apostatize are synonymous.

**Etymology:** Latin, literally "to turn one's back."

**Usage:** Tergiversate and tergiversation may also be used figuratively of language that is shifty and evasive, that does not take a firm stand. In this sense, tergiversate is a synonym of equivocate and tergiversation is a synonym of equivocation.

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At this point in the program there is a discussion of two common problems people have in using the word *number*.

#### ***Number vs. Amount***

*Number* refers to things that can be counted, itemized, enumerated, considered separately or individually (the *number* of people at an event, a *number* of things to do, a *number* of problems to solve, the *number* of papers on your desk, or the *number* of volts in an electric current).

*Amount* refers to things that are considered collectively, as a mass or whole (the *amount* of sugar, the *amount* of trouble we are having, the *amount* of food we buy, the *amount* of paper on your desk).

#### ***Number with a verb: singular or plural?***

When *number* is preceded by the indefinite article *a* (*a number*), the construction is plural and requires a plural verb: *a number of boxes were sent*; *a number of things were done*; *a number of people are here*; *a number of new employees have joined the health club* (not *has joined*).

When *number* is preceded by the definite article *the* (*the number*), the construction is singular and requires a singular verb: *the number of things left to do is overwhelming*; *the number of people in attendance is fifty*; *the number of members in the organization has decreased* (not *have decreased*).

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## Verbal Advantage Level Ten

### 31. NACREOUS (NAY-kree-us)

Pearly, consisting of or resembling mother-of-pearl.

**Synonyms:** *iridescent, margaritaceous.*

**Corresponding noun:** *nacre* (NAY-kur), a synonym of *mother-of-pearl*.

### 32. FAMANT (FAY-nee-int)

Lazy, idle, sluggish, good-for-nothing.

**Synonyms:** *do-nothing, shiftless, slothful,, lackadaisical, lethargic, indolent, somnolent, torpid, otiose, hebetudinous.*

**Pronunciation tip:** There is no *lax* in *lackadaisical*; say LAK-uh-DAY-zuh-kul.

**Etymology:** French, literally "to do nothing."

**Corresponding nouns:** *faineant*, a lazy person, an idler, sluggard; *faineance*, idleness, inactivity, indolence, or the lazy, do-nothing attitude of a *faineant* person.

**Pronunciation tip:** If you look *up faineant* in a current dictionary, you may find the French pronunciation, fay-nay-A(N), listed first or even listed alone. Despite what these sources say, the French pronunciation is not recommended because evidence shows that educated speakers have anglicized the word (made it sound English) since at least the 1920s. Two of the 20th century's most respected arbiters on pronunciation, the second edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary* (1934), and Kenyon and Knott's *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English* (1949), both prefer FAY-nee-int.

### 33. HISPID (HIS-pid)

Covered with stiff hairs, bristles, or small spines; rough and bristly.

**Etymology:** Latin *hispidus*, rough, hairy, bristly.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes *hispid* and *hirsute*, which means extremely hairy or covered with hair.

### 34. LONGANIMITY (LAHNG-guh-NIM-i-tee)

Long-suffering patience; the ability to calmly endure hardship or suffering.

**Synonym:** *forbearance.*

**Etymology:** Latin *longus*, meaning "long," and *animus*, spirit, mind.

## Verbal Advantage Level Ten

### 35. **SCIOLIST** (SY-uh-list)

A person who has only superficial knowledge of a subject, or who pretends to have knowledge.

**Etymology:** Latin, literally "a smatterer," ultimately from the Latin *scire*, to know.

**Corresponding noun:** *sciolism*, superficial or pretended knowledge.

### 36. **PROPINQUITY** (pro-PING-kwi-tee)

(1) Nearness in place or time, proximity.

(2) Nearness or similarity in nature, kinship, close relation.

**Etymology:** Latin *propinquitās*, nearness, proximity, or friendship, relationship.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes *proximity* and *propinquity*.

### 37. **FACTITIOUS** (fak-TISH-us)

Not natural or genuine, produced artificially.

**Synonyms:** sham, contrived, bogus, fraudulent, spurious (Level 8, Word 18).

**Etymology:** Latin *facticius*, made by art, artificial, from *facere*, to make.

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes artificial and factitious.

### 38. **PLEXIFORM** (PLEK-si-form)

In general, complicated or elaborate; specifically, like a plexus or network.

**Related word:** plexus, "a network" or "any complex structure containing an intricate network of parts" (Random House Webster's College Dictionary).

**Etymology:** Latin *plectere*, to braid, intertwine, interweave.

### 39. **SUSURRUS** (suu-SUR-us)

A soft, subdued sound; a whispering, murmuring, muttering, or rustling sound.

**Synonym:** susurration (SOO-suh-**RAY**-shin).

**Corresponding verb:** susurrate (suu-SUR-ayt), to whisper, murmur.

**Corresponding adjective:** susurrant (suu-SUR-int), softly whispering, rustling, or murmuring.

**Etymology:** Latin *susurrare*, to whisper, murmur, mutter.

## Verbal Advantage Level Ten

### 40. TRITURATE (TRICH-ur-ayt)

To grind, crush, or pound into fine particles or powder.

**Synonyms:** *pulverize, comminute, levigate.*

**Etymology:** Latin, "to thresh grain" or "tread out corn."

**N.B.** This discussion distinguishes the verbs to *pulverize* and to *triturate*.

**Corresponding noun:** *trituration*

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### *Sesquipedalia verba*

Here there is an interlude on *sesquipedalia verba*, Latin for "words a foot and a half long." The English word *sesquipedalian* may be used as a noun to mean a very long word, or as an adjective to mean measuring a foot and a half or given to using foot-and-half-long words.

The following *sesquipedalia verba* are noted:

- *muliebriety*: femininity, womanhood.
- *obnubilation*: clouding over, obscuring.
- *sarculation*: weeding with a hoe.
- *immorigerous*: rude, uncivil, disobedient.
- *vivisepulture*: the act of burying someone alive.
- *chryselephantine*: made of gold and ivory.
- *bruxomania*: the habit of grinding the teeth, especially in sleep or under stress.
- *philopatridomania*: a fanatic case of homesickness.
- *azygophrenia*: the psychoneurosis of single life.
- *uxorodespotism*: wifely tyranny.
- *borborygmus*: the sound of gas passing through the intestines, a gurgling in your gut.
- *cacophonopholist*: a lover of harsh sounds.
- *sacerdotophrenia*: clerical stagefright, fear of the pulpit.
- *horripilate*: to get goosebumps.
- *zenzizenzizenzic*: the 8th power of a number.
- *bathysiderodromophobia*: fear of subways or underground trains.
- *floccinaucinihilipilification*: the act of categorizing something as trivial or worthless.
- *hippopotomonstrosesquipedalian*: pertaining to an extremely long word.
- *graphospasm*: the technical term for writer's cramp.

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## Verbal Advantage Level Ten

### 41. PROTEAN (PROH-tee-in)

Highly variable or changeable; readily assuming different shapes, forms, characters, or meanings.

**Etymology:** *Proteus*, a sea god in ancient Greek mythology who could change his shape at will.

### 42. CREPITATE (KREP-i-tayt)

To crackle; make a crackling, snapping, or popping noise.

**Etymology and related word:** Latin *crepitare*, to crackle, creak, rattle, or clatter, the source also of *decrepit* and the unusual word *crepitaculum*, the rattle or rattling organ of the rattlesnake.

**Corresponding adjective:** *crepitant*, crackling or creaking.

**Corresponding noun:** *crepitation*, a crackling or creaking sound; in medicine, the grating sound or sensation produced by rubbing together the fractured ends of a broken bone.

### 43. NOCTIVAGANT (nahk-TIV-uh-gint)

Wandering at night.

**Etymology and related words:** Latin *noctivagus*, wandering by night, from *nox*, night, and *vagari*, to wander about. *Vagari* is also the source of *vague*, *vagabond*, a wanderer, and *vagary* (properly vuh-GAIR-ee, now usually VAY-guh-ree), an odd, whimsical idea or an unpredictable, capricious action or event (the *vagaries* of the stock market).

**Corresponding noun:** *noctivagation*, the act of wandering in the night.

### 44. FULIGINOUS (fyoo-LIJ-i-nus)

Sooty, smoky; pertaining to, resembling, or consisting of soot or smoke.

**Etymology:** Latin *fuligo*, soot.

### 45. HORTATORY (HOR-tuh-for-ee)

Encouraging or urging to some course of action; giving earnest counsel or advice.

**Related words:** *exhort*, to urge or advise earnestly to do what is deemed right or proper; *exhortation*, a statement that *exhorts*, "language intended to incite and encourage" (*Webster 2*).

**Etymology:** Latin *hortari*, to encourage, incite.

## Verbal Advantage Level Ten

### 46. HELIOLATRY (HEE-lee-AHL-uh-tree)

Worship of the sun.

**Etymology and related words:** Greek *helios*, the sun, and *latreia*, worship. The English combining form *hello-* means "the sun" and appears in *heliotherapy*, a form of medical treatment involving exposure to sunlight; *heliocentric*, regarding the sun as the center of our planetary system, as opposed to *geocentric*; and *heliotropism* (HEE-lee-AH-truh-piz'm), the tendency of plants to bend or move toward-or in some cases, away from-a source of light.

**Corresponding noun:** *heliolater*, a sun worshiper.

**Corresponding adjective:** *heliolatrous*, sun worshipping.

### 47. SCIAMACHY (sy-AM-i-kee)

Shadow-boxing; the act of fighting a shadow or an imaginary enemy.

**Etymology and related words:** Greek *skia*, a shadow, and *mache*, a battle, contest, struggle. The English combining form *-machy* denotes a battle, contest, or struggle, as in *theomachy*, a battle against or between gods; *gigantomachy*, a war or battle between giants or superhuman beings; and *logomachy* (Greek *logos*, word), a battle of words.

### 48. GLABROUS (GLAB-rus)

Smooth and bald.

**Etymology:** Latin *glaber*, without hair, bald.

### 49. PETTIFOGGER (PET-ee-FAHG-ur)

A mean, tricky lawyer; especially, a lawyer who handles petty cases in an unethical, unscrupulous way.

**Synonym:** *shyster*.

**Corresponding verb:** *pettifog*, to carry on a law practice in a petty, tricky, unscrupulous way; by extension, to engage in chicanery or unethical practices in a business of any sort.

**Corresponding noun:** *pettifoggery*, legal tricks or chicanery.

## Verbal Advantage Level Ten

### 50. EPICENE (EP-i-seen)

- (1) Having characteristics or qualities of both sexes.
- (2) Not having the characteristics or qualities of either sex, sexless, neuter.
- (3) (of style) lacking appeal or potency, feeble, flaccid.
- (4) (of a man) not virile, effeminate.

**Etymology:** Greek, literally "in common."

**Related words:** *hermaphroditic* (adjective) and *hermaphrodite* (noun), which come from *Hermaphroditus*, in Greek mythology the son of Hermes, the messenger of the gods, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. Hermaphroditus was united in one body with the water nymph Salmacis.

**Usage:** *Epicene* does not usually suggest having both male and female reproductive organs but rather having a range of characteristics of both sexes, emotional as well as physical.

**Corresponding noun:** *epicene* (an *epicene* person).

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### Final Pronunciation Tips

A special reminder about *nuclear*: Don't say NOOkyuh-lur. Think of *nuclear* as a combination of *new* and *clear*: Say NYOO-klee-ur or NOO-klee-ur.

*Schizophrenia* is properly pronounced SKITS-uh-FREE-nee-uh, not *schizo-FREN-ia*. The accent properly should be on the first syllable in the words *exquisite* and *hospitable*. For *atmospheric*, say AT-mus-FER-ik, not AT-mus-FEER-ik. PRAY-lood for *prelude* is a vogue pronunciation. The preferred pronunciation is PREL-yood. The pronunciations ONvuh-lope and ON-voy are pseudo-French; these words are thoroughly English and should be pronounced EN-voy and EN-vuh-lohp. Don't pronounce the H in *vehicle* and *herb*, and don't say zoo-ology or zoologist, as if these words had three O's. Say zoh-ology and zoh-ologist. Don't pronounce the extra in *extraordinary*; the word has five syllables, not six. Be sure to clearly pronounce the H in *huge* and *human*; don't say YOOJ and YOO-man. For the abbreviation etc., take your time and say ET SET-uh-ruh. It's sloppy to say ET SET-truh, and even worse to say EK SET-truh.

The eating disorder called *bulimia* properly is pronounced byoo-LIM-ee-uh, not buh-LEE-mee-uh. What you probably have often heard called a SKIZ'm (for the word *schism*) is in fact a SIZ'm. And last but not least, for the word (or credit card) *visa*, don't say VEE-suh with a hard S sound; say VEE-zuh with a soft S, which sounds like a Z, as in visor and *visible*.

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