

word	definition	part of speech	example
aberrant	markedly different from an accepted norm.	adjective	When the financial director started screaming and throwing food at his co-workers, the police had to come in to deal with his aberrant behavior.
aberration	a deviation from what is normal or expected.	noun	Aberrations in climate have become the norm: rarely a week goes by without some meteorological phenomenon making headlines.
abstain	choose not to consume or take part in (particularly something)	verb	
abstruse	difficult to understand; incomprehensible.	adjective	Physics textbooks can seem so abstruse to the uninitiated that readers feel as though they are looking at hieroglyphics.
adamant	refusing to change one's mind.	adjective	Civil rights icon Rosa Parks will forever be remembered for adamantly refusing to give up her seat on a public bus—even after the bus driver insisted, she remained rooted in place.
admonish	to warn strongly, even to the point of reprimanding.	verb	Before the concert began, security personnel admonished the crowd not to come up on stage during the performance.
admonitory	serving to warn; expressing reproof or reproach especially a	adjective	At the assembly, the high school vice-principal gave the students an admonitory speech, warning them of the many risks and dangers of prom night.
aesthete	one who professes great sensitivity to the beauty of art and	noun	A true aesthete, Marty would spend hours at the Guggenheim Museum, staring at the same Picasso.
aesthetic	concerned with the appreciation of beauty.	adjective	The director, not known for his aesthetic sensibilities, decided not to use costumes at all, and put on the play in everyday clothing.
aesthetic	a set of principles underlying and guiding the work of a parti	noun	The artist operated according to a peculiar aesthetic, not considering any photograph to be worth publishing unless it contained a marine mammal.
amalgam	a mixture of multiple things.	noun	The band's music was an amalgam of hip-hop, flamenco and jazz, blending the three styles with surprising results.
ambiguous	open to more than one interpretation.	adjective	The coach told his team, "Move towards that side of the field", because he did not point, his directions were ambiguous, and the team had no idea to which side he was referring.
ambivalent	mixed or conflicting emotions about something.	adjective	Sam was ambivalent about studying for the exam because doing so ate up a lot of his time, yet he was able to improve his analytical skills.
ameliorate	make something bad better.	verb	Three Cups of Tea tells the story of western men who hopes to ameliorate poverty and the lack of education in Afghanistan.
amenable	easily persuaded.	adjective	Even though she did not like the outdoors, Shirley was generally amenable and so her brother was able to persuade her to go camping.
amorphous	shapeless.	adjective	His study plan for the GRE was at best amorphous; he would do questions from random pages in any one of seven test prep books.
anomalous	not normal.	adjective	According to those who do not believe in climate change, the extreme weather over the last five years is simply anomalous—average temps should return to average, they believe.
anomaly	something that is not normal, standard, or expected.	noun	After finding an anomaly in the data, she knew that she would have to conduct her experiment again.
antipathy	an intense feeling of dislike or aversion.	noun	Maria had an antipathy for tour groups, often bolting to the other side of the museum as soon as she saw a chaperone leading a group of wide-eyed tourists.
antithetical	sharply contrasted in character or purpose.	adjective	His deep emotional involvement with these ideas is, in fact, antithetical to the detachment Buddhism preaches.
apathetic	marked by a lack of interest.	adjective	Mr. Thompson was so talented at teaching math that even normally apathetic students took interest.
apathy	an absence of emotion or enthusiasm.	noun	Widespread apathy among voters led to a very small turnout on election day.
apocryphal	being of questionable authenticity.	adjective	The web is notorious for sandwiching apocryphal stories between actual news.
appease	pacify by acceding to the demands of.	verb	Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister during WWII, tried to appease Hitler and in doing so sent a clear message: you can walk all over us.
arbitrary	based on a random, groundless decision.	adjective	One of the arbitrary decrees in place during the emperor's rule is that all citizens pay him weekly homage at his palace. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
arcane	requiring secret or mysterious knowledge.	adjective	Most college fraternities are known for arcane rituals that those hoping to join the fraternity must learn.
arduous	demanding considerable mental effort and skill; testing pow	adjective	
artful	exhibiting artistic skill.	adjective	Picasso is generally considered the most artful member of the Cubist movement.
artful	clever in a cunning way.	adjective	Bernie Madoff's artful Ponzi scheme stole billions of dollars from investors and is considered the largest financial fraud in U.S. history.
ascetic	practicing self-denial.	adjective	His ascetic life is the main reason he inspired so many followers, especially since he gave up wealth and power to live in poverty.
ascetic	one who practices great self-denial.	noun	Historically, ascetics like Ghandi are often considered wise men partially because of their restraint.
askance	with a look of suspicion or disapproval.	adverb	The old couple looked askance on the teenagers seated next to them, whispering to each other, "They've got rings through their noses and purple hair!"
audacious	willing to be bold in social situations or to take risks.	adjective	As all of the other campers covered in their tents, Bill, armed only with a flashlight, audaciously tracked down the bear that had raided their food.
audacity	aggressive boldness in social situations.	noun	She surprised her colleagues by having the audacity to publically criticize the findings of an distinguished scientist.
auspicious	favorable, the opposite of sinister.	adjective	Despite an auspicious beginning, Mike's road trip became a series of mishaps, and he was soon stranded and penniless, leaning against his wrecked automobile.
austere	practicing self-denial.	adjective	His lifestyle of revelry and luxurious excess could hardly be called austere.
austere	unadorned in style or appearance.	adjective	Late Soviet architecture, although remaining largely austere, moved into experimental territory that employed previously unused shapes and structures.
austere	harsh in manner of temperament.	adjective	The principal of my elementary school was a cold, austere woman; I could never understand why she chose to work with children.
avaricious	excessively greedy.	adjective	Since avaricious desire is similar to gluttony or lust—sins of excess—it was listed as one of the seven deadly sins by the Catholic church.
banal	repeated too often; overfamiliar through overuse.	adjective	The professor used such banal expression that many students in the class either fell asleep from boredom or stayed awake to complete his sentences and humor friends.
banality	a trite or obvious remark.	noun	Herbert regarded the minister's remark as a mere banality until Sharon pointed out profound implications to the seemingly obvious words.
belie	to give a false representation to; misrepresent.	verb	The smile on her face belies the pain she must feel after the death of her husband.
belligerent	characteristic of one eager to fight.	adjective	Tom said that he was arguing the matter purely for philosophical reasons, but his belligerent tone indicated an underlying anger about the issue.
betray	to reveal or make known something, usually unintentionally.	verb	With the gold medal at stake, the gymnast awaited his turn, his quivering lip betraying his intense emotions.
biant	without any attempt at concealment; completely obvious	adjective	
bolster	support and strengthen.	verb	The case for the suspect's innocence was bolstered considerably by the fact that neither fingerprints nor DNA were found at the scene. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
brazen	unrestrained by convention or propriety.	adjective	Their large "donations" to the local police department gave the drug cartel the brazen confidence to do their business out in the open.
bucolic	relating to the pleasant aspects of the country.	adjective	The noble families of England once owned vast expanses of beautiful, bucolic land.
bumbling	lacking physical movement skills, especially with the hands	adjective	
burgeon	grow and flourish.	verb	China's housing market is burgeoning, but some predict that the growth is merely a bubble and will burst much like the U.S. real estate bubble of 2008.
calumny	making of a false statement meant to injure a person's repu	noun	With the presidential primaries well under way, the air is thick with calumny, and the mud already waist- high.
capricious	determined by chance or impulse or whim rather than by ne	adjective	
castigate	to reprimand harshly.	verb	Drill sergeants are known to castigate new recruits so mercilessly that the latter often break down during their first week in training.
censure	to express strong disapproval.	verb	After being caught in bed with a mistress, the mayor was quickly censured by the city council.
chastise	to reprimand harshly.	verb	Though chastised for his wanton abuse of the pantry, Lawrence shrugged off his mother's harsh words, and continued to plow through jars of cookies and boxes of donuts.
chortle	to chuckle, laugh merrily.	verb	Walking past the bar, I could hear happy, chortling people and the blast of horns from a jazz band.
circumscribe	restrict or confine.	verb	Their tour of South America was circumscribed so that they saw only popular destinations and avoided the dangerous parts of cities. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
circumvent	cleverly find a way out of one's duties or obligations.	verb	One way of circumventing the GRE is to apply to a grad school that does not require GRE scores.
commensurate	to be in proportion or corresponding in degree or amount Th	adjective	
concede	acknowledge defeat   concede.	verb	You win!
concede	admit (to a wrongdoing).	verb	After a long, stern lecture from her father, Olivia conceded to having broken the window.
concede	give over; surrender or relinquish to the physical control of a	verb	The Spanish were forced to concede much of the territory they had previously conquered.
confound	be confusing or perplexing to.	verb	Though Harry loved numbers, he found calculus confounding.
confound	mistake one thing for another.	verb	Americans often confound sweet potatoes with yams, and refer to both vegetables by the same name.
conspicuous	without any attempt at concealment; completely obvious.	adjective	American basketball players are always conspicuous when they go abroad—not only are they American, but some are over seven feet tall.
constituent	a citizen who is represented in a government by officials for	noun	
constituent	an abstract part of something.	noun	The constituents of the metal alloy are nickel, copper, and tin.
construe	interpreted in a particular way.	verb	The author's inability to take a side on the issue was construed by both his opponents and supporters as a sign of weakness.
contingent	a gathering of persons representative of some larger group.	noun	A small contingent of those loyal to the king have gathered around the castle to defend it.
contingent	possible but not certain to occur.	adjective	Whether the former world champions can win again this year is contingent upon none of its star players getting injured.
contrition	the feeling of remorse or guilt that comes from doing some	noun	Those who show contrition during their prison terms—especially when under review by a parole board— often get shortened sentences.
contrive	to pull off a plan or scheme, usually through skill or trickery.	verb	Despite a low GPA, he contrived to get into college, going so far as to write his own glowing letters of recommendation. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
copious	in abundant supply.	adjective	In midsummer, there are copious popsicle stands at the beach; in the winter, there are none.
craven	pathetically cowardly.	adjective	Though the man could have at least alerted the police, he crouched cravenly in the corner as the old woman was mugged.
cryptic	mysterious or vague, usually intentionally.	adjective	Since Sarah did not want her husband to guess the Christmas present she had bought him, she only answered cryptically when he would ask her questions about it.
culminate	reach the highest or most decisive point.	verb	Beethoven's musical genius culminated in the 9th Symphony, which many consider his greatest work.
culpability	a state of guilt.	noun	Since John had left his banana peel at the top of the stairwell, he accepted culpability for Martha's broken leg.
decorous	characterized by good taste in manners and conduct.	adjective	Sally's parties are decorous affairs, and instead of the usual beer and music, there is tea and intellectual conversation.
decorum	propriety in manners and conduct.	noun	You will obey the rules of decorum for this courtroom or spend the night in a jail cell, said the judge to the prosecutor.

deferential	showing respect.	adjective	If you ever have the chance to meet the president, stand up straight and be deferential.
deleterious	harmful to living things.	adjective	The BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was deleterious to the fishing industry in the southern states.
delineate	describe in detail.	verb	After a brief summary of proper swimming technique, the coach delineated the specifics of each stroke, spending 30 minutes alone on the backstroke.
demur	to object or show reluctance.	verb	Wallace disliked the cold, so he demurred when his friends suggested they go skiing in the Alps.
denigrate	charge falsely or with malicious intent; attack the good name	verb	Count Rumford denigrated the new theory of heat, demonstrating that it was wholly inadequate to explain the observations.
denote	be a sign or indication of; have as a meaning.	verb	Even if the text is not visible, the red octagon denotes "stop" to all motorists in America.
derivative	(or a creative product, e.	adjective	g. music, writing, etc.) not original but drawing on the work of another person. Because the movies were utterly derivative of other popular movies, they did well at the box office. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
derive	come from; be connected by a relationship of blood, for exa	verb	Many words in the English language are derived from Latin, including the word "derive."
derive	reason by deduction; establish by deduction.	verb	From the multiple set of footprints in the living room, the investigator derived an important clue: Sheila was not alone in the room at the time of the murder.
dictatorial	expecting unquestioning obedience; characteristic of an abs	adjective	
didactic	instructive (especially excessively).	adjective	Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilyich is a didactic novel, instructing the reader on how to live a good life.
diffident	showing modest reserve; lacking self-confidence.	adjective	As a young girl she was diffident and reserved, but now as an adult, she is confident and assertive.
dilatory	wasting time.	adjective	Lawyers use dilatory tactics so that it takes years before the case is actually decided.
dilettante	an amateur who engages in an activity without serious inten	noun	Fred has no formal medical training; while he likes to claim authority on medical issues, he is little more than a dilettante.
disaffected	discontented as toward authority.	adjective	After watching his superior take rations from the soldiers, he quickly became disaffected and rebelled.
discrete	constituting a separate entity or part.	adjective	What was once known as Czechoslovakia has since split into two discrete, independent nations.
disinterested	unbiased; neutral.	adjective	The potential juror knew the defendant, and therefore could not serve on the jury, which must consist only of disinterested members.
dispassionate	unaffected by strong emotion or prejudice.	adjective	A good scientist should be dispassionate, focusing purely on what the evidence says, without personal attachment.
disseminate	cause to become widely known.	verb	Before the effects of anaesthesia were disseminated, patients had to experience the full pain of a surgery.
dogmatic	highly opinionated, not accepting that your belief may not be	adjective	Bryan is dogmatic in his belief that the earth is flat, claiming that all pictures of a spherical earth are computer generated.
duress	compulsory force or threat.	noun	The witness said he signed the contract under duress and argued that the court should cancel the agreement.
eclectic	comprised of a variety of styles.	adjective	Joey was known for his eclectic tastes in music, one moment dancing to disco the next "air conducting" along to Beethoven's 9th symphony.
economical	avoiding waste, efficient.	adjective	Journalists favor an economical style of writing, in which no unnecessary words are used and every sentence is as short as possible.
edifying	enlightening or uplifting so as to encourage intellectual or m	adjective	I recently read an article in the Times about whether good literature is edifying or not; specifically, does reading more make a person more moral.
efficacious	producing the intended result.	adjective	Since Maggie's cough syrup, which had expired five years back, was no longer efficacious, she coughed through the night.
egregious	standing out in negative way; shockingly bad.	adjective	The dictator's abuse of human rights was so egregious that many world leaders asked that he be tried in an international court for genocide.
elicit	call forth (emotions, feelings, and responses).	verb	Just smiling—even if you are depressed—can elicit feelings of pleasure and happiness.
elucidate	make clearer and easier to understand.	verb	Youtube is great place to learn just about anything—an expert elucidates finer points so that even a complete novice can learn.
eminent	standing above others in quality or position.	adjective	Shakespeare is an eminent author in the English language, but I find his writing uninteresting and melodramatic.
enervate	to sap energy from.	verb	John preferred to avoid equatorial countries; the intense sun would always leave him enervated after he'd spent the day sightseeing.
engender	give rise to.	verb	The restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles were so severe that they engendered deep hatred and resentment in the German people.
entrenched	fixed firmly or securely.	adjective	By the time we reach 60-years old, most of our habits are so entrenched that it is difficult for us to change.
ephemeral	lasting a very short time.	adjective	The lifespan of a mayfly is ephemeral, lasting from a few hours to a couple of days.
equivocal	confusing or ambiguous.	adjective	The findings of the study were equivocal—the two researchers had different opinions on what the results signified.
eradicate	to completely destroy.	verb	I tried eradicating the mosquitos in my apartment with a rolled up newspaper, but there were too many of them.
erudite	having or showing profound knowledge.	adjective	Before the Internet, the library was typically where you would find erudite readers.
eschew	avoid and stay away from deliberately; stay clear of.	verb	Politicians are the masters of eschewing morals; academics are the masters of eschewing clarity.
esoteric	confined to and understandable by only an enlightened inne	adjective	Map collecting is an esoteric hobby to most, but to geography geeks it is a highly enjoyable pastime.
espouse	to adopt or support an idea or cause.	verb	As a college student, Charlie espoused Marxism, growing his beard out and railing against the evils of the free-market.
exacerbate	make worse.	verb	Her sleeplessness exacerbated her cold—when she woke up the next day, her sinuses were completely blocked.
exact	requiring and demanding accuracy.	adjective	Though his childhood piano teacher was so exacting, Max is thankful now, as a professional pianist.
exalt	praise or glorify.	verb	The teenagers exalted the rock star, covering their bedrooms with posters of him.
exonerate	pronounce not guilty of criminal charges.	verb	The document clearly indicated that Nick was out of the state at the time of the crime, and so served to exonerate him of any charges.
expound	add details or explanation; clarify the meaning; state in dept	verb	The CEO refused to expound on the decision to merge our department with another one, and so I quit.
extant	the opposite of extinct.	adjective	Despite many bookstores closing, experts predict that some form of book dealing will still be extant generations from now.
fallacious	of a belief that is based on faulty reasoning.	adjective	The widespread belief that Eskimos have forty different words for snow is fallacious, based on one false report.
fastidious	overly concerned with details; fussy.	adjective	Whitney is fastidious about her shoes, arranging them on a shelf in a specific order, each pair evenly spaced.
flux	a state of uncertainty about what should be done (usually fo	noun	
foment	try to stir up public opinion.	verb	After having his pay cut, Phil spread vicious rumors about his boss, hoping to foment a general feeling of discontent.
forlorn	marked by or showing hopelessness.	adjective	After her third pet dog died, Marcia was simply forlorn: this time even the possibility of buying a new dog no longer held any joy.
forthcoming	available when required or as promised.	adjective	The President announced that the senators were about to reach a compromise, and that he was eager to read the forthcoming details of the bill.
forthcoming	at ease in talking to others.	adjective	As a husband, Larry was not forthcoming: if Jill didn't demand to know details, Larry would never share them with her.
fortuitous	occurring by happy chance; having no cause or apparent ca	adjective	While the real objects are vastly different sizes in space, the sun and the moon seem to have the same fortuitous size in the sky.
frivolous	not serious in content or attitude or behavior.	adjective	Compared to Julie's passionate concern for human rights, Jake's non-stop concern about football seems somewhat frivolous.
frugal	not spending much money (but spending wisely).	adjective	Monte was no miser, but was simply frugal, wisely spending the little that he earned.
frustrate	hinder or prevent (the efforts, plans, or desires) of.	verb	I thought I would finish writing the paper by lunchtime, but a number of urgent interruptions served to frustrate my plan. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
furtive	marked by quiet and caution and secrecy; taking pains to av	adjective	
gainsay	deny or contradict; speak against or oppose.	verb	I can't gainsay a single piece of evidence James has presented, but I still don't trust his conclusion.
gall	the trait of being rude and impertinent.	noun	Even though Carly was only recently hired, she had the gall to question her boss's judgment in front of the office.
gall	feeling of deep and bitter anger and ill-will.	noun	In an act of gall, Leah sent compromising photos of her ex-boyfriend to all his co-workers and professional contacts.
galvanize	to excite or inspire (someone) to action.	verb	At mile 23 of his first marathon, Kyle had all but given up, until he noticed his friends and family holding a banner that read, "Go Kyle"; galvanized, he broke into a gallop, finishing the last three miles in less than 20 minutes.
garrulous	full of trivial conversation.	adjective	Lynne was garrulous: once, she had a fifteen minute conversation with a stranger before she realized the woman didn't speak English.
gauche	lacking social polish.	adjective	Sylvester says the most gauche things, such as telling a girl he liked that she was much prettier when she wore makeup.
germane	relevant and appropriate.	adjective	The professor wanted to tell the jury in detail about his new book, but the lawyer said it wasn't germane to the charges in the cases.
glut	an excessive supply.	noun	The Internet offers such a glut of news related stories that many find it difficult to know which story to read first.
glut	supply with an excess of.	verb	In the middle of economic crises, hiring managers find their inboxes glutted with resumes.
gossamer	characterized by unusual lightness and delicacy.	adjective	The gossamer wings of a butterfly, which allow it to fly, are also a curse, so delicate that they are often damaged.
gregarious	to be likely to socialize with others.	adjective	Often we think that great leaders are those who are gregarious, always in the middle of a large group of people; yet, as Mahatma Gandhi and many others have shown us, leaders can also be introverted.
guileless	free of deceit.	adjective	At first I thought my niece was guileless, but I then found myself buying her ice cream every time we passed a shop.
hackneyed	lacking significance through having been overused.	adjective	Cheryl rolled her eyes when she heard the lecturer's hackneyed advice to "be true to yourself."
haphazard	marked by great carelessness; dependent upon or characte	adjective	
harangue	a long pompous speech; a tirade.	noun	Dinner at Billy's was more a punishment than a reward, since anyone who sat at the dinner table would have to listen to Billy's father's interminable harangues against the government.
harangue	to deliver a long pompous speech or tirade.	verb	Tired of his parents haranguing him about his laziness and lack of initiative, Tyler finally moved out of home at the age of thirty-five.
harried	troubled persistently especially with petty annoyances.	adjective	With a team of new hires to train, Martha was constantly harried with little questions and could not focus on her projects.
haughty	having or showing arrogant superiority to and disdain of th	adjective	The haughty manager didn't believe that any of his subordinates could ever have an insight as brilliant as his own.
hegemony	dominance over a certain area.	adjective	Until the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1587, Spain had hegemony over the seas, controlling waters stretching as far as the Americas.
heretic	a person who holds unorthodox opinions in any field (not me	noun	Though everybody at the gym told Mikey to do cardio before weights, Mikey was a heretic and always did the reverse.
iconoclast	somebody who attacks cherished beliefs or institutions.	noun	Lady Gaga, in challenging what it means to be clothed, is an iconoclast for wearing a "meat dress" to a prominent awards show.
iconoclastic	defying tradition or convention.	adjective	Jackson Pollack was an iconoclastic artist, totally breaking with tradition by splashing paint on a blank canvas.
idiosyncrasy	a behavioral attribute that is distinctive and peculiar to an in	noun	Peggy's numerous idiosyncrasies include wearing mismatched shoes, laughing loudly to herself, and, owning a pet aardvark.

ignoble	dishonorable.	adjective	In the 1920s, the World Series was rigged—an ignoble act which baseball took decades to recover from.
ignominious	(used of conduct or character) deserving or bringing disgrace	adjective	Since the politician preached ethics and morality, his texting of revealing photographs was ignominious, bringing shame on both himself and his party.
immutable	not able to be changed.	adjective	Taxes are one of the immutable laws of the land, so there is no use arguing about paying them.
impartial	free from undue bias or preconceived opinions.	adjective	The judge was not impartial since he had been bribed by the witness's family.
impertinent	being disrespectful; improperly forward or bold.	adjective	Dexter, distraught over losing his pet dachshund, Madeline, found the police officer's questions impertinent—after all, he thought, did she have to pry into such details as to what Madeline's favorite snack was?
implacable	incapable of making less angry or hostile.	adjective	Win or lose, the coach was always implacable, never giving the athletes an easy practice or a break.
implausible	describing a statement that is not believable.	adjective	The teacher found it implausible that the student was late to school because he had been kidnapped by outlaws on horseback.
imprudent	not wise.	adjective	Hitler, like Napoleon, made the imprudent move of invading Russia in winter, suffering even more casualties than Napoleon had.
impudent	improperly forward or bold.	adjective	In an impudent move, the defendant spoke out of order to say terribly insulting things to the judge.
incisive	having or demonstrating ability to recognize or draw fine details	adjective	The lawyer had an incisive mind, able in a flash to dissect a hopelessly tangled issue and isolate the essential laws at play.
incongruous	lacking in harmony or compatibility or appropriateness.	adjective	The vast economic inequality of modern society is incongruous with America's ideals.
incorrigible	impervious to correction by punishment.	adjective	Tom Sawyer seems like an incorrigible youth until Huck Finn enters the novel; even Sawyer can't match his fierce individual spirit.
indecorous	not in keeping with accepted standards of what is right or proper	adjective	Eating with elbows on the table is considered indecorous in refined circles.
indifference	the trait of seeming not to care.	noun	In an effort to fight indifference, the president of the college introduced a new, stricter grading system.
inexorable	impossible to stop or prevent.	adjective	The rise of the computer was an inexorable shift in technology and culture.
ingenuous	to be naïve and innocent.	adjective	Two-years in Manhattan had changed Jenna from an ingenuous girl from the suburbs to a jaded urbanite, unlikely to fall for any ruse, regardless of how elaborate.
ingratitude	gain favor with somebody by deliberate efforts.	verb	Even though Tom didn't like his new boss, he decided to ingratiate himself to her in order to advance his career.
inimical	hostile (usually describes conditions or environments).	adjective	Venus, with a surface temperature that would turn rubber to liquid, is inimical to any form of life.
innocuous	harmless and doesn't produce any ill effects.	adjective	Everyone found Nancy's banter innocuous—except for Mike, who felt like she was intentionally picking on him.
inscrutable	not easily understood; unfathomable.	adjective	His speech was so dense and confusing that many in the audience found it inscrutable.
insidious	working in a subtle but destructive way.	adjective	Plaque is insidious: we cannot see it, but each day it eats away at our enamel, causing cavities and other dental problems.
insolent	rude and arrogant.	adjective	Lilian could not help herself from being insolent, commenting that the Queen's shoes were showing too much toe.
intimate	to suggest something subtly.	verb	At first Manfred's teachers intimated to his parents that he was not suited to skip a grade; when his parents protested, teachers explicitly told them that, notwithstanding the boy's precocity, he was simply too immature to jump to the 6th grade. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
intransigent	unwilling to change one's beliefs or course of action.	adjective	Despite many calls for mercy, the judge remained intransigent, citing strict legal precedence.
intrepid	fearless.	adjective	Captain Ahab was an intrepid captain whose reckless and fearless style ultimately led to his downfall.
inveterate	habitual.	adjective	He is an inveterate smoker and has told his family and friends that there is no way he will ever quit.
involved	complicated, and difficult to comprehend.	adjective	The physics lecture became so involved that the undergraduate's eyes glazed over.
irrevocable	incapable of being retracted or revoked.	adjective	Once you enter your plea to the court, it is irrevocable so think carefully about what you will say.
itinerant	traveling from place to place to work	adjective	Doctors used to be itinerant.
jingoism	fanatical patriotism.	noun	North Korea maintains intense control over its population through a combination of jingoism and cult of personality.
joyial	full of or showing high-spirited merriment.	adjective	The political candidate and his supporters were joyial once it was clear that she had won.
joyful	full of high-spirited delight because of triumph or success	adjective	
juxtapose	place side by side.	verb	The meaning of her paintings comes from a classical style which juxtaposes modern themes.
laconic	one who says very few words.	adjective	While Martha always swooned over the husky, laconic types in romantic comedies, her boyfriends inevitably were very talkative—and not very husky.
lambast	criticize severely or angrily.	verb	Showing no patience, the manager utterly lambasted the sales team that lost the big account.
languid	not inclined towards physical exertion or effort; slow and relaxed	adjective	As the sun beat down and the temperature climbed higher, we spent a languid week lying around the house.
largess	extreme generosity and giving.	noun	Uncle Frank was known for his largess, so his nephew was sad when he did not receive a present for his birthday.
laudable	worthy of high praise.	adjective	To say that Gandhi's actions were laudable is the greatest understatement; he overthrew an empire without violence.
lionize	assign great social importance to.	verb	Students in the U.S. learn to lionize Jefferson, Franklin, and Washington because they are the founding fathers of the nation.
magnanimous	noble and generous in spirit, especially towards a rival or so	adjective	He was a great sportsman: in defeat he was complementary and in victory he was magnanimous.
maintain	to assert.	verb	The scientist maintained that the extinction of dinosaurs was most likely brought about by a drastic change in climate.
maladroit	clumsy.	adjective	As a child she was quite maladroit, but as an adult, she has become an adept dancer. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
maverick	someone who exhibits great independence in thought and	noun	Officer Kelly was a maverick, rarely following police protocols or adopting the conventions for speech common among his fellow officers.
mawkish	overly sentimental to the point that it is disgusting.	adjective	The film was incredibly mawkish, introducing highly likeable characters only to have them succumb to a devastating illness by the end of the movie.
mendacity	the tendency to be untruthful.	noun	I can forgive her for her mendacity but only because she is a child and is seeing what she can get away with.
mercurial	(of a person) prone to unexpected and unpredictable changes	adjective	The fact that Elia's moods were as mercurial as the weather was problematic for her relationships—it didn't help that she lived in Chicago.
meticulous	marked by extreme care in treatment of details.	adjective	The Japanese noodle maker was meticulous in making his noodles and would never let another person take over the task.
misconstrue	interpret in the wrong way.	verb	The politician never trusted journalists because he thought that they misconstrue his words and misrepresent his positions.
mitigate	make less severe or harsh.	verb	I can only spend so much time mitigating your disagreements with your wife, and at certain point, you need to do it on your own.
mitigate	lessen the severity of an offense.	verb	If it weren't for the mitigating circumstances, he would have certainly lost his job.
moilify	to make someone angry less angry; placate.	verb	In the morning, Harriet was unable to moilify Harry, if he happened to become angry, unless he had his cup of coffee.
mundane	repetitive and boring; not spiritual.	adjective	Nancy found doing dishes a thoroughly mundane task, although Peter found a kind of Zen pleasure in the chore.
mundane	relating to the ordinary world.	adjective	Though we think of the pope as someone always dealing in holy matters, he is also concerned with mundane events, such as deciding when to set his alarm each morning.
munificent	very generous.	adjective	Uncle Charley was known for his munificence, giving all seven of his nephews lavish Christmas presents each year.
myopic	lacking foresight or imagination.	adjective	The company ultimately went out of business because the myopic managers couldn't predict the changes in their industry. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
myriad	a large indefinite number.	noun	There are a myriad of internet sites hawking pills that claim to boost energy for hours on end.
negligible	so small as to be meaningless; insignificant.	adjective	The GRE tests cumulative knowledge, so if you cram the night before it is, at best, likely to only have a negligible impact on your score.
nonplussed	unsure how to act or respond.	verb	Shirley was totally nonplussed when the angry motorist cut her off and then stuck his finger out the window.
nuance	a subtle difference in meaning or opinion or attitude.	noun	Because of the nuances involved in this case, I hired an outside consultant to advise us and help.
obscure	make unclear.	verb	On the Smith's drive through the Grand Canyon, Mr. Smith's big head obscured much of Mrs. Robinson's view, so that she only saw momentary patches of red rock. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
obscure	known by only a few.	adjective	Many of the biggest movie stars were once obscure actors who got only bit roles in long forgotten films. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
obsequious	attentive in an ingratiating or servile manner; attempting to	adjective	The obsequious waiter did not give the couple a moment's peace all through the meal, constantly returning to their table to refill their water glasses and to tell them what a handsome pair they made.
opaque	not clearly understood or expressed.	adjective	The meaning of the professor's new research was opaque to most people, so no one asked any questions. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
opulence	wealth as evidenced by sumptuous living.	noun	Russian oligarchs are famous for their opulence, living in fancy homes and dining on expensive caviar.
ostentatious	intended to attract notice and impress others; tawdry or vulgar	adjective	Matt wanted to buy stone lions for front of the house, but Cynthia convinced him that such a display would be too ostentatious for a modest house in an unassuming neighborhood.
ostracize	exclude from a community or group.	verb	Later in his life, Leo Tolstoy was ostracized from the Russian Orthodox Church for his writings that contradicted church doctrine.
panache	distinctive and stylish elegance.	noun	Jim, with his typical panache, came to the wedding reception with a top hat, a cane, and a long cape covered in sequins.
parochial	narrowly restricted in scope or outlook.	adjective	Jasmine was sad to admit it, but her fledgling relationship with Jacob did not work out because his culinary tastes were simply too parochial; "After all," she quipped on her blog, "the considered Chef Boyardee ethnic food."
parsimonious	extremely frugal; miserly.	adjective	Katie is so parsimonious that she only buys a pair of socks if all of her other socks have holes in them.
pedantic	marked by a narrow focus on or display of learning	adjective	
pedestrian	lacking imagination.	adjective	White Nan was always engaged in philosophical speculation, her brother was occupied with far more pedestrian concerns: how to earn a salary and run a household. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
pejorative	expressing disapproval (usu.	adjective	refers to a term). Most psychologists object to the pejorative term "shrink", believing that they expand the human mind, not limit it. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
perfidy	an act of deliberate betrayal; a breach of a trust.	noun	The lowest circles in Dante's Inferno were for those who had practiced perfidy, and among these, the very lowest was for those, such as Judas, who had been treacherous to one of their benefactors.
pernicious	exceedingly harmful; working or spreading in a hidden and insidious	adjective	
petulant	easily irritated or annoyed.	adjective	When Ed first met Ruth, he didn't realize she was so petulant, but now that they are three months into their relationship, Ed feels a day doesn't go by in which she isn't whining about some minor issue.
placate	cause to be more favorably inclined; gain the good will of.	verb	I was able to placate the angry mob of students by promising to bring cookies on Monday.
platitude	a trite or obvious remark.	noun	The professor argued that many statements regarded as wise in previous times, such as the Golden Rule, are now regarded as mere platitudes.
poignant	emotionally touching.	adjective	After the Montagues and Capulets discover the dead bodies of Romeo and Juliet, in the play's most poignant moment, the two griefstricken families agree to end their feud once and for all. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
polemic	a strong verbal or written attack on someone or something.	noun	The professor launched into a polemic, claiming that Freudian theory was a pack of lies that absolutely destroyed European literary theory. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
posit	assume as fact.	verb	Initially, Einstein posited a repulsive force to balance Gravity, but then rejected that idea as a blunder.

pragmatic	guided by practical experience and observation rather than	adjective	Rather than make a philosophical appeal to the Congressmen, the Speaker decided to take a far more pragmatic approach, making small side-deals that would add votes to his bill.
precipitous	done with very great haste and without due deliberation.	adjective	He was expecting a precipitous rise in the value of a "hot" tech stock, so he was disappointed when it only inched up a dollar or two each day.
preclude	keep from happening or arising; make impossible.	verb	The manager specified that all other gates be locked, to preclude the possibility of persons without tickets entering the arena undetected.
precoxious	characterized by or characteristic of exceptionally early development	adjective	Though only seven years old, she was a precocious chess prodigy, able to beat players twice her age.
predilection	a strong liking.	noun	Monte had a predilection for the fine things in life: Cuban cigars, 200 dollar bottles of wine, and trips to the French Riviera.
prescience	the power to foresee the future.	noun	Baxter's warnings about investing in technology stocks seemed like an act of prescience after the whole market declined significantly.
prevaricate	to speak in an evasive way.	verb	The cynic quipped, "There is not much variance in politicians; they all seem to prevaricate".
prodigal	rashly or wastefully extravagant.	adjective	Successful professional athletes who do not fall prey to prodigality seem to be the exception--most live decadent lives.
prodigious	so great in size or force or extent as to elicit awe.	adjective	After the relatively small homerun totals in the "dead ball" era, Babe Ruth's homerun totals were truly prodigious: every year, he set a new all-time record.
profligate	spending money recklessly or wastefully.	adjective	
profligate	someone who spends money recklessly or wastefully.	noun	Most lottery winners go from being conservative, frugal types to outright profligates who blow millions on fast cars, lavish homes, and giant yachts.
prolific	intellectually productive.	adjective	Schubert was the most prolific composer, producing hundreds of hours of music before he died at the age of 31.
propitious	presenting favorable circumstances; likely to result in or show	adjective	
provincial	characteristic of a limited perspective; not fashionable or	adjective	
pundit	someone who has been admitted to membership in a scholastic	noun	Steven Pinker's credentials are unquestioned as a pundit: he has taught at MIT and Stanford, teaches at Harvard, and has published a number of influential books on cognition, language, and psychology.
qualify	to be legally competent or capable.	adjective	If James had made more than \$50,000 last year, then he wouldn't have qualified for the low-income scholarship.
qualify	to make less severe; to limit (a statement).	verb	Chris qualified his love for San Francisco, adding that he didn't like the weather as much as the weather in Los Angeles.
querulous	habitually complaining.	adjective	The querulous old woman was beginning to wear down even the happier members of the staff with her ceaseless complaining.
quodidian	found in the ordinary course of events.	adjective	Phil gets so involved thinking about Aristotle's arguments that he totally forgets quodidian concerns, such as exercising and eating regularly.
ravenous	extremely hungry; devouring or craving food in great quantities	adjective	John didn't eat much at all during the week he had the flu, so now that he is regaining his health, it's not surprising that he has a ravenous appetite.
rebuke	criticize severely or angrily; censure.	verb	The police chief rebuked the two officers whose irresponsible decisions almost led to the deaths of seven innocent bystanders.
reconcile	make (one thing) compatible with (another).	verb	Peggy was unable to reconcile her kind friend Jane with the cruel and merciless character Jane played on television.
reconcile	difficult to penetrate; incomprehensible to one of ordinary	adjective	I found Ulysses reconcile and never finished the book, waiting instead to read it with someone else so we could penetrate its meaning together.
refractory	stubbornly resistant to authority or control.	adjective	Used to studious high school students, Martha was unprepared for the refractory Kindergarteners who neither sat still nor listened to a single word she said. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
refute	prove to be false or incorrect.	verb	No one could refute his theories or propositions, and that is why he was esteemed by all his colleagues in the philosophy department.
reproach	to express criticism towards.	verb	At first, Sarah was going to yell at the boy, but she didn't want to reproach him for telling the truth about the situation.
repudiate	reject as untrue or unfounded.	verb	Many in the public believed the rumors of a UFO crash outside town, so the chief of police did everything he could to repudiate the rumors.
rescind	cancel officially.	verb	The man's driver's license was rescinded after his tenth car accident, which meant he would never be allowed to legally drive again.
restive	restless.	adjective	The crowd grew restive as the comedian's opening jokes fell flat.
resurgent	rising again as to new life and vigor.	adjective	The team sank to fourth place in June, but is now resurgent and about to win the division.
reticent	reluctant to draw attention to yourself; temperamentally disinclined	adjective	
reverent	feeling or showing profound respect or veneration.	adjective	The professor could speak objectively about the other composers, but he always lectured about Brahms with a particularly reverent air, unable to offer a single criticism of his compositions.
rudimentary	being in the earliest stages of development; being or involving	adjective	I would love to be able to present a fully polished proposal to the board, but right now, our plans for the product are still in the most rudimentary stages.
rustic	characteristic of rural life; awkwardly simple and provincial.	adjective	The vacation cabin had no electricity and no indoor plumbing, but despite these inconveniences, Nigel adored its rustic charm.
sanction	give authority or permission to.	verb	The authorities have sanctioned the use of the wilderness reserve for public use: many expect to see hikers and campers enjoying the park in the coming months.
sanction	a legal penalty for a forbidden action.	noun	International sanctions have been placed on certain shipping lanes that were thought to be involved in human trafficking.
scrupulous	characterized by extreme care and great effort.	adjective	Because of his scrupulous nature, Mary put him in charge of numbering and cataloging the entire collection of rare stamps.
scrupulous	having a sense of right and wrong; principled.	adjective	Everyone trusted what he said and followed his example because he was scrupulous and honest.
soporific	inducing mental lethargy; sleep inducing.	adjective	Although the professor is brilliant, his bland monotone gives his lectures a soporific effect.
specious	based on pretense; deceptively pleasing Almost every image	adjective	
specious	plausible but false.	adjective	He made a career out of specious arguments and fictional lab results, but lost his job and reputation when his lies were exposed by an article in The New York Times.
sporadic	recurring in scattered and irregular or unpredictable instances	adjective	The signals were at first sporadic, but now we detect a clear, consistent pattern of electromagnetic radiation emanating from deep space.
spurious	plausible but false.	adjective	When listening to a politician speak, it is hard to distinguish the spurious claims from the authentic ones.
staunch	firm and dependable especially in loyalty.	adjective	No longer a staunch supporter of the movement, Todd now will openly question whether its goals are worthwhile.
stringent	demanding strict attention to rules and procedures.	adjective	Most of the students disliked the teacher because of his stringent homework policy, but many students would later thank him for demanding so much from them.
subsume	contain or include.	verb	The rogue wave quickly subsumed the pier and boardwalk, destroying everything in its path.
subsume	consider (an instance of something) as part of a general rule	verb	Don Quixote of La Mancha subsumes all other modern novels, demonstrating modern literary devices, and predating even the idea of a postmodern, metanarrative.
subversive	in opposition to a civil authority or government.	adjective	The ruling political party has begun a campaign to shut down subversive websites that it deems as a threat to "national safety".
sullen	showing a brooding ill humor.	adjective	Herbert took board games too seriously, often appearing sullen after losing.
superfluous	showing a brooding ill humor.	adjective	How can we hope to stay open if we don't eliminate all superfluous spending, like catered meetings and free acupuncture Tuesday?
superfluous	more than is needed, desired, or required Everything in this	adjective	
supplant	take the place or move into the position of.	verb	For many, a cell phone has supplanted a traditional phone; in fact, most 20-somethings don't even have a traditional phone anymore.
sympathant	a person who tries to please someone in order to gain a	noun	
taciturn	habitually reserved and uncommunicative.	adjective	While the CEO enthusiastically shares his plans and agenda with all who will listen, the CFO is far more taciturn, rarely revealing his perspective.
tantamount	being essentially equal to something.	adjective	In many situations, remaining silent is tantamount to admitting guilt, so speak to prove your innocence.
temperance	the trait of avoiding excesses.	noun	Welles wasn't known for his temperance--he usually ate enough for two and drank enough for three.
tempered	moderated in effect.	adjective	The wide-eyed optimism of her youth was now tempered after she had worked many years in the criminal justice system.
tenacious	stubbornly unyielding.	adjective	Even the most tenacious advocates for gun ownership must admit some of the dangers that firearms present.
timorous	timid by nature or revealing fear and nervousness.	adjective	Since this was her first time debating on stage and before an audience, D's voice was timorous and quiet for the first 10 minutes.
torpor	inactivity resulting from lethargy and lack of vigor or energy.	noun	After work, I was expecting my colleagues to be enthusiastic about the outing, but I found them in a state of complete torpor.
tortuous	marked by repeated turns and bends; not straightforward.	adjective	Because the logic behind McMahon's side of the debate was so tortuous, his audience came out either completely confused or, worse, feeling they'd been tricked.
tractable	readily reacting to suggestions and influences; easily managed	adjective	Compared to middle school students, who have an untamed wildness about them, high school students are somewhat more tractable.
transient	lasting a very short time.	adjective	The unpredictable and transient nature of deja vu makes it a very difficult phenomenon to study properly.
travesty	an absurd presentation of something; a mockery.	noun	What I expected to be an intelligent, nuanced historical documentary turned out to be a poorly-produced travesty of the form.
treacherous	tending to betray.	adjective	Even though Jesse James was an outlaw, his killer, Robert Ford, is remembered more for his treacherous actions than for eliminating a criminal and murder.
treacherous	dangerously unstable and unpredictable.	adjective	The bridge built from twine and vine is treacherous to walk across, and so I think I will stay put right here.
trite	repeated too often; overfamiliar through overuse.	adjective	Many style guides recommend not using idioms in writing because these trite expressions are uninteresting and show a lack of imagination on the part of the writer.
truncate	reduce the length of something.	verb	The soccer game was truncated when the monsoon rain began to fall.
undermine	to weaken (usually paired with an abstract term).	adjective	The student undermined the teacher's authority by questioning the teacher's judgment on numerous occasions.
underscore	give extra weight to (a communication).	verb	While the hiking instructor agreed that carrying a first aid kit could be a good idea under certain circumstances, he underscored the importance of carrying enough water.
unequivocal	admitting of no doubt or misunderstanding; having only one	adjective	The President's first statement on the subject was vague and open to competing interpretations, so when he spoke to Congress about the same subject later, he was careful to make his position completely unequivocal.
unscrupulous	without scruples or principles.	adjective	In the courtroom, the lawyer was unscrupulous, using every manner of deceit and manipulation to secure a victory for himself.
upbraid	to reproach; to scold.	verb	Bob took a risk walking into the "Students Barbershop"--in the end he had to upbraid the apparently drunk barber for giving him an uneven bowl cut.
vacillate	be undecided about something; waver between conflicting	verb	Some students vacillate between schools when deciding which to attend, while others focus only on one school. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
vehement	marked by extreme intensity of emotions or convictions.	adjective	While the other employees responded to the bad news in a measured way, Andrew responded in a vehement manner, tipping over his desk and shouting at the top of his lungs.
venality	the condition of being susceptible to bribes or corruption.	noun	Even some of the most sacrosanct sporting events are not immune to venality, as many of the officials have received substantial bribes to make biased calls.
venerate	to respect deeply.	verb	The professor, despite his soporific lectures, was venerated amongst his colleagues, publishing more papers yearly than all of his peers combined.
veracious	truthful.	adjective	While we elect our leaders in the hope that every word they speak will be veracious, history has shown that such a hope is naive.
villify	spread negative information about.	verb	Todd was noble after the divorce, choosing to say only complimentary things about Barbara, but Barbara did not hesitate to vilify Todd.
vindicate	to clear of accusation, blame, suspicion, or doubt with support	verb	



compound	make more intense, stronger, or more marked.	verb	Her headache was compounded by the construction crew outside, which had six jackhammers going at the same time. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
conductive	making a situation or outcome more likely to happen.	adjective	Studying in a quiet room is conducive to learning; studying in a noisy environment makes learning more difficult.
conniving	taking part in immoral and unethical plots.	verb	The queen was so conniving that, with the help of the prince, she tried to overthrow the king.
consecrate	to make holy or set apart for a high purpose.	verb	At the church of Notre Dame in France, the new High Altar was consecrated in 1182.
constraint	something that limits or restricts.	noun	He found pop music a constraint on his ability to learn and preferred to listen to classical musical while studying.
consummate	having or revealing supreme mastery or skill.	adjective	Tyler was the consummate musician: he was able to play the guitar, harmonica, and the drum at the same time. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
consummate	to make perfect and complete in every respect.	verb	The restoration of the ancient church was only consummated after a twenty years of labor. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
contemptuous	scornful, looking down at others with a sneering attitude.	adjective	Always on the forefront of fashion, Vanessa looked contemptuously at anyone wearing dated clothing.
contrite	to be remorseful.	adjective	Though he stole his little sister's licorice stick with malevolent glee, Chucky soon became contrite when his sister wouldn't stop crying.
conundrum	a difficult problem.	noun	Computers have helped solve some of the mathematical conundrums which have puzzled man for many centuries.
convivial	describing a lively atmosphere.	adjective	The wedding reception was convivial; friends who hadn't seen each other for ages drank and ate together before heading to the dance floor.
convoluted	highly complex or intricate.	adjective	Instead of solving the math problem in three simple steps, Kumar used a convoluted solution requiring fifteen steps.
cornucopia	an abundant supply of something good.	noun	The International Food Expo was a cornucopia of culinary delights; gourmet foods from every continent were under one roof.
corroborate	to confirm or lend support to (usually an idea or claim).	verb	Her claim that frog populations were falling precipitously in Central America was corroborated by locals, who reported that many species of frogs had seemingly vanished overnight.
cosmopolitan	comprising many cultures; global in reach and outlook	There adjective	
credence	belief in something.	noun	He placed no credence in psychics, claiming that they offered no special powers beyond the ability to make people part with their money.
creditable	deserving of praise but not that amazing.	adjective	Critics agreed the movie was creditable, but few gave it more than three out of five stars.
credulity	tendency to believe readily.	noun	Virginia's wide-eyed credulity as a five-year old was replaced by suspicion after she learned that Santa Claus didn't really exist.
cumbersome	difficult to handle or use especially because of size or weight	adjective	Only ten years ago, being an avid reader and a traveler meant carrying a cumbersome backpack stuffed with books—these days we need only an e-reader.
dearth	a lack or shortage.	noun	I am surprised by the dearth of fast food chains; this is America and I assumed they were on every street.
debate	reduce the quality or value of something.	verb	The third-rate script so debased the film that not even the flawless acting could save it from being a flop.
debunk	expose as false ideas and claims, especially while ridiculing	verb	Richard Dawkins tries to debunk religious belief, but his ridicule tends to push people away from his points rather than convince them.
decimation	destroying or killing a large part of the population.	noun	The decimation after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is incomprehensible.
degrade	reduce in worth or character, usually verbally.	verb	Jesse had mockingly pointed out all of Nancy's faults in front of their friends, publicly degrading the poor girl.
delegate	give an assignment to (a person).	verb	Since the senior manager had to go on many international business trips, she was forced to delegate many of her responsibilities to two lower-level managers. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
deliberate	think about carefully; weigh the pros and cons of an issue.	verb	Emergency situations such as this call for immediate action and leave no room to deliberate over options. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
demean	to insult; to cause someone to lose dignity or respect.	verb	At first the soccer players bantered back and forth, but as soon as one of the players became demeaning, calling the other's mother a water buffalo, the ref whipped out a red card.
demure	to be modest and shy.	adjective	The portrait of her in a simple white blouse was sweet and demure.
deride	treat or speak of with contempt.	verb	The nun derided the students for trying to sneak insects and worms into the classroom.
derisive	abusing vocally; expressing contempt or ridicule.	adjective	I was surprised by her derisive tone: usually, she is sweet, soft spoken, and congenial.
derogative	expressed as worthless or in negative terms.	adjective	Never before have we seen a debate between two political candidates that was so derogative and filthy.
desecrate	to willfully violate or destroy a sacred place.	verb	After desecrating the pharaoh's tomb, the archaeologist soon fell victim to a horrible illness.
desist	poor enough to need help from others.	adjective	Jean Valjean, is at first destitute, but through the grace of a priest, he makes something of his life.
desist	completely wanting or lacking (usually "desist of")	Now th adjective	
deter	turn away from by persuasion.	verb	His mother tried to deter him from joining the army, but he was too intoxicated with the idea of war to listen.
deter	try to prevent; show opposition to.	verb	The government's primary job should involve deterring paths to war, not finding ways to start them.
detrimental	(sometimes followed by "to") causing harm or injury.	adjective	Many know that smoking is detrimental to your health, but processed sugar in large quantities is equally bad.
devolve	pass on or delegate to another.	verb	The company was full of managers known for devolving tasks to lower management, but never doing much work themselves.
devolve	grow worse (usually "devolve into").	verb	The dialogue between the two academics devolved into a downright bitter argument.
diabolical	to be extremely wicked like the devil.	adjective	The conspirators, willing to dispatch anyone who stood in their way, hatched a diabolical plan to take over the city.
differentiate	be a distinctive feature, attribute, or trait (sometimes in a way)	verb	Mozart's long melodic lines differentiate his compositions from other works of late 18th century music.
differentiate	evolve so as to lead to a new species or develop in a way	m verb	Animals on Madagascar differentiated from other similar animal species due to many years of isolation on the island.
dilapidated	in terrible condition.	adjective	The main house has been restored but the gazebo is still dilapidated and unuseable.
diligent	characterized by care and perseverance in carrying out task	adjective	Michael was a diligent gardener, never leaving a leaf on the ground and regularly watering each plant.
discord	lack of agreement or harmony.	noun	Despite all their talented players, the team was filled with discord—some players refused to talk to others—and lost most of their games.
discreet	careful to protect one's speech or actions in order to avoid o	adjective	The professor thought that he was discreet, subtly wiping the stain off of his shirt, but as soon as he stepped off the podium a member of the audience pointed out the large ketchup stain.
discriminate	recognize or perceive the difference.	verb	Sarah couldn't discriminate between a good wine and a bad wine, so she avoided wine tastings. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
disenfranchise	deprive of voting rights.	verb	The U.S. Constitution disenfranchised women until 1920 when they were given the right to vote.
disheartened	made less hopeful or enthusiastic.	adjective	After the visiting team scored nine times, the home team's fans were disheartened, some leaving the game early.
disparate	two things are fundamentally different.	adjective	With the advent of machines capable of looking inside the brain, fields as disparate as religion and biology have been brought together by scientists trying to understand what happens in the brain when people have a religious experience.
dispatch	the property of being prompt and efficient.	noun	She finished her thesis with dispatch, amazing her advisors who couldn't believe she hadn't written 60 scholarly pages so quickly. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
dispatch	dispose of rapidly and without delay and efficiently.	verb	As soon as the angry peasants stormed the castle, they caught the king and swiftly dispatched him. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
docile	easily handled or managed; willing to be taught or led or su	adjective	
dog	to pursue relentlessly; to hound.	verb	Throughout his life, he was dogged by insecurities that inhibited personal growth. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
dupe	to trick or swindle.	verb	Once again a get-rich-fast Internet scheme had duped Harold into submitting a \$5,000 check to a sham operation.
dupe	a person who is easily tricked or swindled.	noun	The charlatan mistook the crowd for a bunch of dupes, but the crowd was quickly on to him and derided his bald-faced attempt to bilk them.
eccentric	highly unconventional or usual (usually describes a person).	adjective	Mozart was well-known for his eccentricities, often speaking words backward to confuse those around him.
egotist	a conceited and self-centered person.	noun	An egotist, Natasha had few friends because of her inability to talk about anything except her dream of becoming the next American Idol.
eke	To live off meager resources, to scrape by.	verb	Stranded in a cabin over the winter, Terry was able to eke out an existence on canned food.
elaborate	marked by complexity and richness of detail.	adjective	Thomas, on returning from Morocco, replaced his dirty gray carpet with an elaborate one he'd brought back with him.
elaborate	explain in more detail.	verb	Most high school physics teachers find themselves elaborating the same point over and over again, since many concepts confuse students.
elude	escape understanding.	verb	Even a basic understanding of physics can elude most high schools students.
elusive	difficult to capture or difficult to remember.	adjective	Many first time skydivers say that describing the act of falling from the sky is elusive.
embellish	make more attractive by adding ornament, colour, etc.	verb	: make more beautiful McCartney would write relatively straightforward lyrics, and Lennon would embellish them with puns and poetic images.
embroider	involved in argument or contention.	adjective	These days we are never short of a D.C. politician embroidered in scandal—a welcome phenomenon for those who, having barely finished feasting on the sordid details of one imbroglia, can sink their teeth into a fresh one.
empathetic	showing understanding and ready comprehension of other	adjective	Most discrimination and hatred is based on a lack of empathetic awareness of people that have the same aspirations and fears.
emulate	strive to equal or match, especially by imitating; compete w	verb	To really become fluent in a new language, emulate the speech patterns and intonation of people who speak the language.
endemic	native, originating where it is found.	adjective	Irish cuisine makes great use of potatoes, but ironically, the potato is not endemic to Ireland.
enmity	a state of deep-seated ill-will.	noun	Charles rude remark toward Sarah yesterday was due to his illness, not due to any real enmity toward Sarah.
entice	get someone to do something through (often false or exag	verb	Harold enticed his wife, Maude, to go on a vacation to Hawaii, with promises of luau on the beach and all-you-can-eat seafood buffets.
enumerate	determine the number or amount of.	verb	The survey enumerates the number of happy workers and the number of unhappy workers.
enumerate	specify individually, one by one.	verb	I sat and listened as she enumerated all of the things she did not like about the past three months.
err	to make an error.	verb	He erred in thinking that "indigent" and "indignant" were synonyms.
errant	to be wandering; not sticking to a circumscribed path.	adjective	Unlike his peers, who spent their hours studying in the library, Matthew preferred errant walks through the university campus.
erratic	unpredictable; strange and unconventional.	adjective	It came as no surprise to pundits that the President's attempt at re-election floundered; even during his term, support for his policies was erratic, with an approval rating jumping anywhere from 30 to 60 percent.
euphoria	a feeling of great (usually exaggerated) elation.	noun	The euphoria of winning her first gold medal in the 100 meter dash overwhelmed Shelly-Ann Fraser and she wept tears of immense joy.
evasive	avoiding or escaping from difficulty or danger or commitm	adjective	His responses were clearly evasive; he obviously did not want to take on any responsibility or any new work.
evasive	deliberately vague or ambiguous.	adjective	Every time I call the bank, I receive the same evasive answers about our mortgage and never get a clear response.
evenhanded	without partiality.	adjective	Teachers often have trouble being evenhanded to all of their varied students.
exasperate	to irritate intensely.	verb	As a child, I exasperated my mother with strings of never-ending questions.

excruciating	extremely painful.	adjective	After the boulder rolled a couple of feet, pinning my friend's arm, he experienced excruciating pain.
exemplify	be characteristic of.	verb	Lincoln exemplified the best of not only America, but also the potential greatness that exists within each person.
exemplify	clarify by giving an example of.	verb	Please present some case studies that exemplify the results that you claim in your paper.
exhort	to strongly urge on; encourage.	verb	Nelson's parents exhorted him to study medicine, urging him to choose a respectable profession; intransigent, Nelson left home to become a graffiti artist.
extenuating	making less guilty or more forgivable.	adjective	The jury was hardly moved by the man's plea that his loneliness was an extenuating factor in his crime of dognapping a prized pooch.
facetious	cleverly amusing in tone.	adjective	Facetious behavior will not be tolerated during sex education class; it's time for all of you to treat these matters like mature adults.
fawn	try to gain favor by extreme flattery.	verb	The media fawned over the handsome new CEO, praising his impeccable sense of style instead of asking more pointed questions. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
ferret	to search for something persistently.	verb	Ever the resourceful lexicographer, Fenton was able to ferret out the word origin of highly obscure words. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
fete	to celebrate a person.	verb	After World War II, war heroes were feted at first but quickly forgotten.
fickle	liable to sudden unpredictable change, esp.	adjective	in affections or attachments. She was so fickle in her politics, it was hard to pinpoint her beliefs; one week she would embrace a side, and the next week she would denounce it.
fragle	achieve something by means of trickery or devious methods	verb	Steven was able to fragle one of the last seats on the train by convincing the conductor that his torn stub was actually a valid ticket.
fledgling	young and inexperienced; describing any new participant in	adjective	
fleece	to deceive.	verb	Many people have been fleeced by Internet scams and never received their money back. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
flounder	behave awkwardly; have difficulties.	verb	Sylvia has excelled at advanced calculus, but ironically, when she has deal with taxes, she flounders.
flush	to be in abundance.	adjective	The exam's passage is flush with difficult words, words that you may have learned only yesterday.
foible	a behavioral attribute that is distinctive and peculiar to an in	noun	When their new roommate sat staring at an oak tree for an hour, Marcia thought it indicated a mental problem, but Jeff assured her it was a harmless foible.
foolhardy	marked by defiant disregard for danger or consequences.	adjective	The police regularly face dangerous situations, so for a police officer not to wear his bullet-proof vest is foolhardy.
forthright	characterized by directness in manner or speech; without su	adjective	I did not expect the insurance agent to give us any straight answers, but I was pleased surprised by how forthright he was.
futile	producing no result or effect; unproductive of success.	adjective	I thought I could repair the car myself, but after two days of work with no success, I have to admit that my efforts were futile.
genial	agreeable, conducive to comfort.	adjective	Betty is a genial young woman: everyone she meets is put at ease by her elegance and grace.
genteel	marked by refinement in taste and manners.	adjective	A live string quartet would provide a more genteel air to the wedding than would a folk singer.
glean	collect information bit by bit.	verb	Herb has given us no formal statement about his background, but from various hints, I have gleaned that he grew up in difficult circumstances.
glib	(of a person) speaking with ease but without sincerity I have	adjective	
goad	urge on with unpleasant comments.	verb	Doug did not want to enter the race, but Jim, through a steady stream of taunts, goaded him into signing up for it.
grovel	show submission or fear.	verb	Every time Susan comes to the office, Frank grovels as if she were about to fire.
guffaw	laugh boisterously.	verb	Whenever the jester fell to the ground in mock pain, the king guffawed, exposing his yellow, fang-like teeth.
hamper	prevent the progress or free movement of.	verb	As the rain water began to collect in pools on the highway, it began to hamper the flow of traffic. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
hamstrung	made ineffective or powerless.	verb	The FBI has made so many restriction on the local police that they are absolutely hamstrung, unable to accomplish anything.
heyday	the pinnacle or top of a time period or career.	noun	During the heyday of Prohibition, bootlegging had become such a lucrative business that many who had been opposed to the 18th Amendment began to fear it would be repealed.
hodgepodge	a confusing mixture or jumble.	noun	Those in attendance represented a hodgepodge of the city's denizens: chimney sweepers could be seen sitting elbow to elbow with stockbrokers.
hound	to pursue relentlessly.	verb	An implacable foe of corruption, Eliot Ness hounded out graft in all forms—he even helped nab Al Capone. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
humdrum	dull and lacking excitement.	adjective	Having grown up in a humdrum suburb, Jacob relished life in New York City after moving.
illicit	contrary to or forbidden by law.	adjective	Though Al Capone was engaged in many illicit activities, he was finally arrested for income tax evasion, a relatively minor offense.
immaterial	not relevant.	adjective	The judge found the defendant's comments immaterial to the trial, and summarily dismissed him from the witness stand.
impeccable	without fault or error.	adjective	He was impeccably dressed in the latest fashion without a single crease or stain.
impede	be a hindrance or obstacle to.	verb	Since the police sergeant had to train the pair of new hires, progress in his own case was impeded.
impending	close in time; about to occur.	adjective	The impending doom of our world has been a discussed and debated for 2000 years—maybe even longer.
impermeable	does not allow fluids to pass through.	adjective	The sand bags placed on the river formed an impermeable barrier, protecting the town from flooding.
implicate	convey a meaning; imply.	verb	By saying that some of the guests were uncomfortable, the manager implicated to the hotel staff that it needed to be more diligent.
implicate	to indicate in wrongdoing, usually a crime.	verb	The crime boss was implicated for a long list of crimes, ranging from murder to disturbing the peace.
imponderable	impossible to estimate or figure out.	adjective	According to many lawmakers, the huge variety of factors affecting society make devising an efficient healthcare system an imponderable task.
impregnable	immune to attack; incapable of being tampered with.	adjective	As a child, Amy would build pillow castles and pretend they were impregnable fortresses.
inadvertent	happening by chance or unexpectedly or unintentionally.	adjective	Although Prohibition was rooted in noble ideals, the inadvertent and costly consequences of making alcohol illegal in the U.S. led its the repeal.
inarticulate	without or deprived of the use of speech or words.	adjective	Although a brilliant economist, Professor Black was completely inarticulate, a terrible lecturer.
incense	make furious.	verb	When Herb bought football tickets for a game on the day of their wedding anniversary, Jill was incensed. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
incessant	uninterrupted in time and indefinitely long continuing.	adjective	I don't mind small children in brief doses, but I think the incessant exposure that their parents have to them would quickly wear me down.
inclement	(of weather) unpleasant, stormy.	adjective	After a week of inclement weather, we finally are able to go outside and enjoy the sun.
inclement	used of persons or behavior; showing no mercy.	adjective	Marcus Aurelius, though a fair man, was inclement to Christians during his reign, persecuting them violently.
incumbent	necessary (for someone) as a duty or responsibility.	adjective	Middle managers at times make important decisions, but real responsibility for the financial well-being of the corporation is ultimately incumbent on the CEO.
indict	to formally charge or accuse of wrong-doing.	verb	The bankrobber was indicted on several major charges, including possession of a firearm.
indigenous	originating in a certain area.	adjective	The plants and animals indigenous to Australia are notably different from those indigenous to the U.S.—one look at a duckbill platypus and you know you're not dealing with an opossum.
indignant	feeling anger over a perceived injustice.	adjective	When the cyclist swerved into traffic, it forced the driver to brake and elicited an indignant shout of "Hey, punk, watch where you're going!".
industrious	characterized by hard work and perseverance.	adjective	Pete was an industrious student, completing every assignment thoroughly and on time.
inflamnable	extremely controversial, incendiary.	adjective	It only takes one person to leave an inflamnable comment on an Internet thread for that thread to blow up into pages upon pages of reader indignation.
ingenuity	the power of creative imagination.	noun	Daedalus was famous for his ingenuity; he was able to fashion his son Icarus with a pair of wings, using wax to hold them together.
inkling	a slight suggestion or vague understanding.	noun	Lynne speaks four Romance languages, but she doesn't have an inkling about how East Asian languages are structured.
insipid	dull and uninteresting.	adjective	The movie director was known for hiring beautiful actors in order to deflect attention away from the insipid scripts he would typically use.
insolvent	unable to pay one's bills; bankrupt.	adjective	With credit card bills skyrocketing, a shockingly large number of Americans are truly insolvent.
intermittent	stopping and starting at irregular intervals.	adjective	The intermittent thunder continued and the night was punctuated by cracks of lightning—a surreal sleepless night.
inundate	to flood or overwhelm.	verb	The newsroom was inundated with false reports that only made it more difficult for the newscasters to provide an objective account of the bank robbery.
irascible	quickly aroused to anger.	adjective	If Arthur's dog is not fed adequately, he becomes highly irascible, even growling at his own shadow.
irk	irritate or vex.	verb	My little sister has a way of irking and annoying me like no other person.
irresolute	uncertain how to act or proceed.	adjective	He stood irresolute at the split in the trail, not sure which route would lead back to the camp.
jargon	a characteristic language of a particular group.	noun	To those with little training in medicine, the jargon of doctors can be very difficult to understand.
jocular	characterized by jokes and good humor.	adjective	My uncle was always in a jocular mood at family gatherings, messing up people's hair and telling knock-knock jokes to anyone who would listen.
junta	an aggressive takeover by a group (usually military).	noun	As dangerous of a threat as North Korea is, some analysts believe that were a junta suddenly to gain power, it could be even more unpredictable and bellicose than the current leadership.
laborious	characterized by effort to the point of exhaustion; especially	adjective	
leery	openly distrustful and unwilling to confide.	adjective	Without checking his references and talking to previous employers, I am leery of hiring the candidate.
lethargic	lacking energy.	adjective	Nothing can make a person more lethargic than a big turkey dinner.
lucid	(of language) transparently clear; easily understandable.	adjective	Though Walters writes about physics and time travel, his writing is always lucid, so readers with little scientific training can understand difficult concepts.
macabre	suggesting the horror of death and decay; gruesome.	adjective	Edgar Allen Poe was considered the master of the macabre; his stories vividly describe the moment leading up to—and often those moments after—a grisly death.
malady	a disease or sickness.	noun	The town was struck by a malady throughout the winter that left most people sick in bed for two weeks.
malevolent	wishing or appearing to wish evil to others; arising from inter	adjective	
malleable	capable of being shaped or bent or drawn out.	adjective	The clay became malleable and easy to work with after a little water was added.
malleable	easily influenced.	adjective	My little brother is so malleable that I can convince him to sneak cookies from the cupboard for me.
malodorous	having an unpleasant smell.	adjective	Some thermally active fountains spew sulfur fumes—the air around them is sometimes so malodorous that many have to plug their noses.
martial	suggesting war or military life.	adjective	Americans tend to remember Abraham Lincoln as kindly and wise, not at all martial, despite the fact that he was involved in the fiercest war America has even fought.
maxim	a short saying expressing a general truth.	noun	Johnson initially suggests that the secret to business can be summarized in a single maxim but then requires a 300-page book to explain exactly what he means.
meander	to wander aimlessly.	verb	A casual observer might have thought that Peter was meandering through the city, but that day he was actually seeking out those places where he and his long lost love had once visited.
melancholy	a deep, long-lasting sadness.	noun	Hamlet is a figure of tremendous melancholy; he doesn't have a truly cheerful scene throughout the entire play.

melee	a wild, confusing fight or struggle.	noun	After enduring daily taunts about my name, I became enraged and pummeled the schoolyard bully and his sycophantic friends in a brutal melee.
mesmerize	to spellbind or enthral.	verb	The plot and the characters were so well developed that many viewers were mesmerized, unable to move their eyes from the screen for even a single second.
misanthrope	a hater of mankind.	noun	Hamilton had been deceived so many times in his life that he hid behind the gruff exterior of a misanthrope, lambasting perfect strangers for no apparent reason.
miscreant	a person who breaks the law.	noun	Come back you miscreant! yelled the woman who just had her purse stolen.
miser	a person who doesn't like to spend money (because they are)	noun	
misogynist	a person who dislikes women in particular.	noun	Many have accused Hemingway of being a quiet misogynist, but recently unearthed letters argue against this belief.
moment	significant and important value.	noun	Despite the initial hullabaloo, the play was of no great moment in Hampton's writing career, and within a few years the public quickly forgot his foray into theater arts. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
moot	open to argument or debate; undecided in a meaningless	adjective	Since the Board just terminated Steve as the CEO, what the finance committee might have thought of his proposed marketing plan for next year is now a moot point. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
morose	ill-tempered and not inclined to talk; gloomy.	adjective	After Stanley found out he was no longer able to go on vacation with his friends, he sat in his room morosely.
morph	To undergo dramatic change in a seamless and barely notio	verb	The earnestness of the daytime talk shows of the 1970's has morphed into something far more sensational and vulgar; today guests actually standup and threaten to take swings at one another.
muted	softened, subdued.	adjective	Helen preferred muted earth colors, such as green and brown, to the bright pinks and red her sister liked. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
obdurate	stubbornly persistent in changing an opinion or action.	adjective	No number of pleas and bribes would get him to change his obdurate attitude.
obliging	showing a cheerful willingness to do favors for others.	adjective	Even after all his success, I found him to be accommodating and obliging, sharing with me his "secret tips" on how to gain wealth and make friends.
obstinate	resistant to guidance or discipline; stubbornly persistent.	adjective	The coach suggested improvements Sarah might make on the balance beam, but she remained obstinate, unwilling to modify any of the habits that made her successful in the past.
ornate	marked by elaborate rhetoric and elaborated with decorative	adjective	The ornate Victorian and Edwardian homes spread throughout San Francisco are my favorite part of the city.
paradoxical	seemingly contradictory but nonetheless possibly true.	adjective	That light could be both a particle and a wave seems paradoxical, but nonetheless, it is true.
pastoral	relating to the countryside in a pleasant sense.	adjective	Those who imagine America's countryside as a pastoral region are often disappointed to learn that much of rural U.S. is filled with cornfields extending as far as the eye can see.
patronize	treat condescendingly.	verb	She says she genuinely wanted to help me, but instead she patronized me, constantly pointing out how I was inferior to her. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
paucity	a lack of something.	noun	There is a paucity of jobs hiring today that require menial skills, since most jobs have either been automated or outsourced.
peevish	easily irritated or annoyed.	adjective	Our office manager is peevish, so the rest of us tip-toe around him, hoping not to set off another one of his fits.
perennial	lasting an indefinitely long time; eternal; everlasting.	adjective	Even at the old-timers games, Stan Musial would get the loudest cheer: he was a perennial favorite of the fans there. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
perpetuate	cause to continue.	verb	If you do not let him do things for himself, you are merely perpetuating bad habits that will be even harder to break in the future.
perquisite	a right reserved exclusively by a particular person or group	noun	Even as the dishwasher at the French restaurant, Josh quickly learned that he had the perquisite of being able to eat terrific food for half the price diners would pay.
pertinent	having precise or logical relevance to the matter at hand.	adjective	While the salaries of the players might draw attention in the media, such monetary figures are not pertinent to the question of who plays the best on the field.
perturb	disturb in mind or cause to be worried or alarmed.	verb	Now that Henry is recovering from a major illness, he no longer lets the little trivialities, such as late mail, perturb him.
peruse	to read very carefully.	verb	Instead of perusing important documents, people all too often rush to the bottom of the page and plaster their signatures at the bottom.
pine	to yearn for.	verb	Standing forlornly by the window, she pined for her lost love. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
pinacle	the highest point.	noun	At its pinnacle, the Roman Empire extended across most of the landmass of Eurasia, a feat not paralleled to the rise of the British Empire in the 18th and 19th century.
piquant	having an agreeably pungent taste.	adjective	The chef, with a mere flick of the salt shaker, turned the bland tomato soup into a piquant meal.
pithy	concise and full of meaning.	adjective	I enjoy reading the Dao dejing for its pithy and insightful prose; it always gives me something to think about.
piteance	a small amount (of money).	noun	Vinny's uncle beamed smugly about how he'd offered his nephew fifty dollars for his Harvard tuition; even twice the amount would have been a mere pittance.
placid	not easily irritated.	adjective	Doug is normally placid, so we were all shocked to see him yelling at the television when the Mets lost the game.
plodding	(of movement) slow and laborious.	adjective	Charlie may seem to run at a plodding pace, but he is an ultramarathoner, meaning he runs distances of up to 100 miles, and can run for ten hours at a stretch.
ploy	a clever plan to turn a situation to one's advantage.	noun	Dennis arranged an elaborate ploy, involving 14 different people lying for him in different situations, so that it could appear that he was meeting Mary completely by chance at the wedding reception.
powwow	an informal meeting or discussion.	noun	Before the team leaves the field, the coach always calls for a powwow so that he can make sure all the players are mentally in the right place.
precarious	fraught with danger.	adjective	People smoke to relax and forget their cares, but ironically, in terms of health risks, smoking is far more precarious than either mountain-climbing or skydiving.
precedent	an example that is used to justify similar occurrences at a la	noun	The principal explained that even though one student had done modeling work outside of school, the outfits that student wore in those photographs in no way established a precedent for what could be worn at school dances.
preempt	take the place of or have precedence over.	verb	A governmental warning about an imminent terrorist attack would preempt ordinary network programming on television.
preemptive	done before someone else can do it.	adjective	Just as Martha was about to take the only cookie left on the table, Noah preemptively swiped it.
presumption	an assumption that is taken for granted.	noun	When Mr. Baker found out the family car was gone, he acted under the presumption that his rebellious son had taken the car, calling his son's phone and yelling at him; only later did Mr. Baker realize that Mrs. Baker had simply gone out to get her nails d.
presumption	audacious (even arrogant) behavior that you have no right t	noun	The new neighbor quickly gained a reputation for her presumption; she had invited herself to several of the neighbors homes, often stopping over at inopportune times and asking for a drink.
presumptuous	excessively forward.	adjective	Many felt that Barney was presumptuous in moving into the large office before the management even made any official announcement of his promotion.
prevail	be widespread in a particular area at a particular time; be cu	verb	
prevail	prove superior.	verb	Before the cricket match, Australia was heavily favored, but India prevailed.
pristine	Unspoiled, untouched (usu.	adjective	of nature). The glacial lake was pristine and we filled our canteens to drink deeply.
pristine	Immaculately clean and unused.	adjective	Drill sergeants are known for demanding pristine cabinets, uniforms, and beds, and often make new recruits clean and clean and clean until they meet the expected high standards.
profuse	plentiful; pouring out in abundance.	adjective	During mile 20 of the Hawaii Marathon, Dwayne was sweating so profusely that he stopped to take off his shirt, and ran the remaining six miles wearing nothing more than skimp shorts. Note:
profusion	the property of being extremely abundant.	noun	When Maria reported that she had been visited by Jesus Christ and had proof, a profusion of reporters, and journalists descended on the town.
proponent	a person who pleads for a cause or propounds an idea.	noun	Ironically, the leading proponent of Flat-Earth Theory flies all over the world in an effort to win more adherents.
provisional	under terms not final or fully worked out or agreed upon.	adjective	Until the corporate office hands down a definitive decision on use of the extra offices, we will share their use in a provisional arrangement.
pugnacious	eager to fight or argue; verbally combative.	adjective	The comedian told one flat joke after another, and when the audience started booing, he pugnaciously back at them. "Hey, you think this is easy -- why don't you buffoons give it a shot?".
quail	uneasiness about the fitness of an action.	noun	While he could articulate no clear reason why Harkner's plan would fail, he nevertheless felt qualms about committing any resources to it.
quandary	state of uncertainty or perplexity especially as requiring a ch	noun	Steve certainly is in a quandary: if he doesn't call Elaine, she will blame him for everything, but if he does call her, the evidence of where he currently is could cost him his job.
quip	a witty saying or remark.	noun	In one of the most famous quips about classical music, Mark Twain said: "Wagner's music is better than it sounds."
raffish	marked by a carefree unconventionality or disreputableness	adjective	The men found him raffish, but the women adored his smart clothes and casual attitude.
raft	a large number of something.	noun	Despite a raft of city ordinances passed by an overzealous council, noise pollution continued unabated in the megalopolis. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
rakish	marked by a carefree unconventionality or disreputableness	adjective	As soon as he arrived in the city, the rakish young man bought some drugs and headed straight for the seedy parts of town.
rankle	gnaw into; make resentful or angry.	verb	His constant whistling would rankle her, sometimes causing her to leave in a huff.
rash	marked by defiant disregard for danger or consequences; ir	adjective	criticized his actions as rash. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
redress	an act of making something right.	noun	Barry forgot his wife's birthday two years in a row, and was only able to redress his oversight by surprising his wife with a trip to Tahiti. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
relegate	assign to a lower position.	verb	When Dexter was unable to fulfill his basic duties, instead of firing him, the boss relegated him to kitchen cleanup.
remiss	to be negligent in one's duty.	adjective	Remiss in his duty to keep the school functioning efficiently, the principle was relieved of his position after only three months.
renege	fail to fulfill a promise or obligation.	verb	We will no longer work with that vendor since it has reneged on nearly every agreement.
replete	completely stocked or furnished with something.	adjective	Only weeks after the hurricane made landfall, the local supermarket shelves were replete with goods, so quick was the disaster relief response.
reprobate	a person who is disapproved of.	noun	Those old reprobates drinking all day down by the river--they are not going to amount to much.
reservation	an unstated doubt that prevents you from accepting somethi	noun	I was initially excited by the idea of a trip to Washington, D.C. but now that I have read about the high crime statistics there, I have some reservations. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
resignation	the acceptance of something unpleasant that can't be avoidn	noun	Since Jack could not think of a convincing reason why he had to miss the seminar, he attended it with a sense of resignation. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
resolve	reach a conclusion after a discussion or deliberation.	verb	After much thought, Ted resolved not to travel abroad this summer because he didn't have much money in his bank account. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
respite	a pause from doing something (as work).	noun	Every afternoon, the small company has a respite in which workers play football or board games.
retiring	to be shy, and to be inclined to retract from company.	adjective	Nelson was always the first to leave soirees--rather than mill about with "fashionable" folk, he was retiring, and preferred the solitude of his garret.
retract	pull inward or towards a center; formally reject or disavow	verb	Email is wonderfully efficient, but once something awkward or damaging has been sent, there is no way to retract it.
rile	cause annoyance in; disturb, especially by minor irritations.	verb	Dan is usually calm and balanced, but it takes only one intense glare from Sabrina to rile him.
robust	sturdy and strong in form, constitution, or construction.	adjective	Chris preferred bland and mild beers, but Bhavin preferred a beer with more robust flavor.
sanctimonious	making a show of being pious; holier-than-thou.	adjective	Even during the quiet sanctity of evening prayer, she held her chin high, a sanctimonious sneer forming on her face as she eyed those who were attending church for the first time.
sanguine	cheerful; optimistic.	adjective	With the prospect of having to learn 3,000 words during the course of the summer, Paul was anything but sanguine.
savvy	a perceptive understanding.	noun	Although a great CEO, he did not have the political savvy to win the election.
savvy	get the meaning of something.	verb	The student savvies the meaning of astrophysics with little effort.
savvy	well-informed or perceptive.	adjective	With his savvy business partner, the company was able to turn a profit within a year.
scintillating	describes someone who is brilliant and lively.	adjective	Richard Feynman was renowned for his scintillating lectures--the arcana of quantum physics was made lucid as he wrote animatedly on the chalkboard.
screed	an abusive rant (often tedious).	noun	Joey had difficulty hanging out with his former best friend Perry, who, during his entire cup of coffee, enumerated all of the government's deficiencies--only to break ranks and launch into some screed against big business.

sentimental	effusively or insincerely emotional, especially in art, music, a	adjective	I don't like romanticism for the same reason I don't like melodramatic acting and soap operas—overly sentimental.
serendipity	the instance in which an accidental, fortunate discovery is	noun	The invention of the 3M Post It Note was serendipitous, because the scientist who had come up with the idea was looking for a strong adhesive; the weak adhesive he came up with was perfect for holding a piece of paper in place but made it very easy for so.
serene	calm and peaceful.	adjective	I'd never seen him so serene; usually, he was a knot of stress and anxiety from hours of trading on the stock exchange.
slapdash	carelessly and hastily put together.	adjective	The office building had been constructed in a slapdash manner, so it did not surprise officials when, during a small earthquake, a large crack emerged on the façade of the building.
smattering	a slight or superficial understanding of a subject; a small am	noun	I know only a smattering of German, but Helen is able to read German newspapers and converse with natives.
smug	marked by excessive complacency or self-satisfaction.	adjective	When Phil was dating the model, he had a smug attitude that annoyed his buddies.
snide	expressive of contempt; derogatory or mocking in an indirec	adjective	The chairman interpreted Taylor's question about promotions as a snide remark, but in all innocence Taylor was trying to figure out the company's process.
snub	refuse to acknowledge; reject outright and bluntly.	verb	Wheeler was completely qualified for the committee, but the board snubbed him, choosing an obviously lesser qualified candidate instead.
sordid	involving ignoble actions and motives; arousing moral distas	adjective	The nightly news simply announced that the senator had had an affair, but the tabloid published all the sordid details of the interaction. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
spendthrift	one who spends money extravagantly.	noun	Taking weekly trips to Vegas, Megan was a spendthrift whose excesses eventually caught up to her.
spurn	reject with contempt.	verb	She spurned all his flattery and proposals, and so he walked off embarrassed and sad.
squander	spend thoughtlessly; waste time, money, or an opportunity.	verb	Fearing his money would be squandered by his family, he gave all of it to charity when he died.
staid	characterized by dignity and propriety.	adjective	Frank came from a staid environment, so he was shocked that his college roommate sold narcotics.
start	to suddenly move in a particular direction.	verb	All alone in the mansion, Henrietta started when she heard a sound. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
steadfast	marked by firm determination or resolution; not shakable.	adjective	A good captain needs to be steadfast, continuing to hold the wheel and stay the course even during the most violent storm.
stem	to hold back or limit the flow or growth of something.	verb	To stem the tide of applications, the prestigious Ivy requires that each applicant score at least 330 on the Revised GRE. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
stipend	a regular allowance (of money).	noun	He was hoping for a monthly allowance loan from the government, but after no such stipend was forthcoming he realized he would have to seek other means of paying for his college tuition.
stolid	having or revealing little emotion or sensibility; not easily arc	adjective	
stymie	hinder or prevent the progress or accomplishment of.	verb	The engineers found their plans stymied at every turn and were ultimately able to make almost no progress on the project.
summit	the peak or highest point.	noun	After hiking for two days, the climbers finally reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.
summit	a meeting of high-level leaders.	noun	Since climate change policy has been mired in congressional fighting, this summit should help set the goals for president's next term.
surly	inclined to anger or bad feelings with overtones of menace.	adjective	Every morning, Bhavin was a surly unhappy person, but once he ate breakfast, he became loving, laughing, and a joy to be around.
tact	consideration in dealing with others and avoiding giving offen	noun	In a tremendous display of tact, Shelly was able to maintain a strong friendship with Marcia, even though Marcia's husband, Frank, confessed to finding Shelley more attractive than Marcia.
tarnish	make dirty or spotty, as by exposure to air; also used metap	verb	Pete Rose was one of the best baseball players of his generation, but his involvement with gambling on baseball games has tarnished his image in the eyes of many.
lawdry	tastelessly showy; cheap and shoddy.	adjective	Carol expected to find New York City magical, the way so many movies had portrayed it, but she was surprised how often lawdry displays took the place of genuine elegance.
taxing	use to the limit; exhaust.	adjective	The hike to the summit of Mt. Whitney was so taxing that I could barely speak or stand up. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
telling	significant and revealing of another factor.	adjective	Her unbecoming dress was very telling when it came to her sense of fashion.
telltale	revealing.	adjective	The many telltale signs of chronic smoking include yellow teeth, and a persistent, hacking cough.
tender	offer up something formally.	verb	The government was loath to tender more money in the fear that it might set off inflation. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
thoroughgoing	very thorough; complete.	adjective	As a thoroughgoing bibliophile, one who had turned his house into a veritable library, he shocked his friends when he bought a Kindle.
thrifty	spending money wisely.	adjective	He was economical, spending his money thrifty and on items considered essential.
thwart	hinder or prevent (the efforts, plans, or desires) of.	verb	I wanted to spend a week in New York this autumn, but the high costs of travel and lodging thwarted my plans.
tirade	an angry speech.	noun	In terms of political change, a tirade oftentimes does little more than make the person speaking red in the face.
tout	advertize in strongly positive terms; show off.	verb	At the conference, the CEO touted the extraordinary success of his company's Research & Development division.
transitory	lasting a very short time.	adjective	If we lived forever and life was not transitory, do you think we would appreciate life less or more?
travail	use of physical or mental energy; hard work; agony or angui	noun	While they experienced nothing but travails in refinishing the kitchen, they completed the master bedroom in less than a weekend.
tribulation	something, especially an event, that causes difficulty and su	noun	As of 2013, nearly 1.5 million Syrians have fled their country hoping to escape the tribulations of a civil war tearing their country to pieces.
tumult	a state of chaos, noise and confusion.	noun	Riots broke out just in front of our apartment building, and the tumult continued late into the night.
uncanny	suggesting the operation of supernatural influences; surpass	adjective	Reggie has an uncanny ability to connect with animals: feral cats will readily approach him, and sometimes even wild birds will land on his finger.
uncompromising	not making concessions.	adjective	The relationship between Bart and Hilda ultimately failed because they were both so uncompromising, never wanting to change their opinions.
unconscionable	unreasonable; unscrupulous; excessive.	adjective	The lawyer's demands were so unconscionable that rather than pay an exorbitant sum or submit himself to any other inconveniences, the defendant decided to find a new lawyer.
underwrite	to support financially.	verb	The latest symphony broadcast was made possible with underwriting from the Carnegie Endowment.
unnerve	to make nervous or upset.	verb	At one time unnerved by math problems, she began avidly "Magoosh-ing", and soon became adept at even combinations and permutations questions.
unprecedented	having never been done or known before; novel.	adjective	When America first created its national parks, the idea of setting aside the most beautiful land in a country was unprecedented in the history of mankind.
unruly	(of persons) noisy and lacking in restraint or discipline; unwi	adjective	Walk in to any preschool and I am sure that you will find an unruly and chaotic scene—unless it's nap time.
unseemly	not in keeping with accepted standards of what is right or pr	adjective	
urbane	showing a high degree of refinement and the assurance that	adjective	Because of his service as an intelligence officer and his refined tastes, W. Somerset Maugham became the inspiration for the urbane and sophisticated spy James Bond.
vacuous	devoid of intelligence, matter, or significance.	adjective	To the journalist's pointed question, the senator gave a vacuous response, mixing a few of his overall campaign slogans with platitudes and completely avoiding the controversial subject of the question.
vanquish	come out better in a competition, race, or conflict.	verb	For years, Argentina would dominate in World Cup qualifying matches, only to be vanquished by one of the European countries during the late stages of the tournament.
variance	the quality of varying.	noun	The cynic quipped, "There is not much variance in politicians; they all seem to prevaricate".
veneer	covering consisting of a thin superficial layer that hides the	noun	
vicarious	felt or undergone as if one were taking part in the experie	adjective	The advent of twitter is a celebrity stalker's dream, as he or she can—through hundreds of intimate "tweets"—vicariously live the life of a famous person.
vie	compete for something.	verb	While the other teams in the division actively vie for the championship, this team seems content simply to go through the motions of playing.
vindictive	to have a very strong desire for revenge.	adjective	Though the other girl had only lightly poked fun of Vanessa's choice in attire, Vanessa was so vindictive that she waited for an entire semester to get the perfect revenge.
virago	an ill-tempered or violent woman.	noun	Poor Billy was the victim of the virago's invective—she railed at him for a good 30-minutes about how he is the scum of the earth for speaking loudly on his cellphone in public.
voracious	very hungry; approaching an activity with gusto.	adjective	Steven was a voracious reader, sometimes finishing two novels in the same day.
wanton	without check or limitation; showing no moral restraints to	adjective	Due to wanton behavior and crude language, the drunk man was thrown out of the bar and asked to never return.
wax	to gradually increase in size or intensity.	verb	Her enthusiasm for the diva's new album only waxed with each song; by the end of the album, it was her favorite CD yet. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
whimsical	determined by impulse or whim rather than by necessity or r	adjective	Adults look to kids and envy their whimsical nature at times, wishing that they could act without reason and play without limitation.
zenith	the highest point; culmination.	noun	At the zenith of his artistic career, Elvis was outselling any other artist on the charts. Advanced Words.
abjure	formally reject or give up (as a belief).	verb	While the church believed that Galileo abjured the heliocentric theory under threat of torture, he later wrote a book clearly supporting the theory.
abrogate	revoke formally.	verb	As part of the agreement between the labor union and the company, the workers abrogated their right to strike for four years in exchange for better health insurance.
adjudicate	to serve as a judge in a competition; to arrive at a judgment	verb	Only those with the most refined palates were able to adjudicate during the barbecue competition.
afford	provide with an opportunity.	verb	The summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro affords a panoramic view that encompasses both Tanzania and Kenya. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
alacrity	an eager willingness to do something.	noun	The first three weeks at his new job, Mark worked with such alacrity that upper management knew it would be giving him a promotion.
anachronism	something that is inappropriate for the given time period (usi	noun	Dressed in 15th century clothing each day, Edward was a walking anachronism.
anathema	a detested person; the source of somebody's hate.	noun	Hundreds of years ago, Galileo was anathema to the church; today the church is anathema to some on the left side of the political spectrum.
anemic	lacking energy and vigor.	adjective	After three straight shows, the lead actress gave an anemic performance the fourth night, barely speaking loudly enough for those in the back rows to hear.
anodyne	something that soothes or relieves pain.	noun	Muzak, which is played in department stores, is intended to be an anodyne, but is often so cheesy and over-the-top that customers become irritated.
anodyne	inoffensive.	adjective	Wilbur enjoyed a spicy Mexican breakfast, but Jill preferred a far more anodyne meal in the mornings.
antic	ludicrously odd.	adjective	The clown's antic act was too extreme for the youngest children, who left the room in tears. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
aplomb	great coolness and composure under strain.	noun	Nancy acted with aplomb during dangerous situations—she once calmly climbed up an oak tree to save a cat.
apogee	the highest point.	noun	The apogee of the Viennese style of music, Mozart's music continues to mesmerize audiences well into the 21st century.
apostate	a person who has abandoned a religious faith or cause.	noun	An apostate of the Republican Party, Sheldon has yet to become affiliated with any party and dubs himself an independent.
apothem	a short, pithy instructive saying.	noun	Winston Churchill is famous for many apothegms, but this might be his most famous: "It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for the others that have been tried."
apotheosis	exaltation to divine status; the highest point of development,	noun	As difficult as it is to imagine, the apotheosis of Mark Zuckerberg's career, many believe, is yet to come.
approbatory	expressing praise or approval.	adjective	Although it might not be her best work, Hunter's new novel has received generally approbatory reviews.
appropriate	to give or take something by force.	verb	The government appropriated land that was occupied by squatters, sending them scurrying for another place to live. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
appropriate	to allocate.	verb	The committee appropriated the funds to its various members. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
appurtenant	supply added support.	adjective	In hiking Mt. Everest, sherpas are appurtenant, helping climbers both carry gear and navigate treacherous paths.



discursive	(of e.	adjective	g. speech and writing) tending to depart from the main point. Many readers find it tough to read Moby Dick since the author is discursive, often cutting the action short to spend 20 pages on the history of a whale.
disingenuous	not straightforward; giving a false appearance of frankness.	adjective	Many adults think that they can lie to children, but kids are smart and know when people are disingenuous.
dispensation	an exemption from a rule or obligation.	noun	Since her father is a billionaire, she is given dispensation from many of the school's policies. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
dissemble	conceal one's true motives, usually through deceit.	verb	To get close to the senator, the assassin dissembled his intentions, convincing many people that he was a reporter for a well-known newspaper.
dissipate	squander or spend money frivolously.	verb	The recent graduates dissipated their earnings on trips to Las Vegas and cruises in Mexico.
dissipation	to disperse or scatter.	verb	Kathleen's perfume was overwhelming in the cramped apartment, but once we stepped outside the smell dissipated and we could breathe once again.
dissolution	a living full of debauchery and indulgence in sensual pleasure	noun	Many Roman emperors were known for their dissolution, indulging in unspeakable desires of the flesh. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
doleful	filled with or evoking sadness.	adjective	No event is more doleful than the passing of my mother; she was a shining star in my life, and it brings me great sadness to think that she is now gone.
dolorous	showing sorrow.	adjective	Chopin's ballades are filled with sharp changes in moods—a dolorous melody can give way to a lighthearted tempo.
doughty	brave; bold; courageous.	adjective	I enjoy films in which a doughty group comes together to battle a force of evil.
dovetail	fit together tightly, as if by means of an interlocking joint.	verb	Although Darwin's evolution and Mendel's genetics were developed in isolation from one another, they dovetail each other very well. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
duplicity	deceitfulness, pretending to want one thing but interested in	noun	A life of espionage is one of duplicity; an agent must pretend to be a totally different person than who she or he actually is.
ebullient	joyously unrestrained.	adjective	Can you blame him for his ebullient mood? He just graduated from medical school.
effervescent	marked by high spirits or excitement.	adjective	After the sales result, the manager was in an effervescent mood, letting several employees leave work early that day. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
effrontery	audacious (even arrogant) behavior that you have no right to	noun	The skateboarders acted with effrontery, skating through the church grounds and spray-painting signs warning trespassers.
elegiac	expressing sorrow.	adjective	Few can listen to the elegiac opening bars of the Moonlight sonata without feeling the urge to cry.
embryonic	in an early stage of development.	adjective	The Board of Directors is hoping to launch a new product soon, but planning for the 27 is in an embryonic stages. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
empiricism	any method that derives knowledge from experience, used in	noun	Empiricism does not always lead to knowledge; an experience or experiment may raise more questions than it answers.
enamor	attraction or feeling of love.	verb	She is completely enamored with Justin Bieber, and goes to all his concerts on the East coast.
encumber	hold back.	verb	The costume encumbered all my movements and caused me to sweat profusely.
enjoin	give instructions to or direct somebody to do something with	verb	The government agency enjoined the chemical company to clean up the hazardous dump it had created over the years.
enormity	an act of extreme wickedness.	noun	The enormity of Pol Pot's regime is hard to capture in words—within months hundreds of thousands of Cambodians lost their lives. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
enthral	hold spellbound.	verb	She was so enthralled by the movie that she never heard people screaming, "Fire! Fire!" in the neighboring theater.
epigram	a witty saying.	noun	My favorite epigram from Mark Twain is "A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn no other way."
epiphany	a sudden revelation or moment of insight.	noun	Gary one day had an epiphany that he was a people person; he promptly quit his factory job and began working as a salesman.
eponym	the name derived from a person (real or imaginary); the	noun	Alexandria, Egypt is an eponym because it is named after Alexander the Great.
equitable	fair to all parties as dictated by reason and conscience.	adjective	The equitable distribution of ice cream to a group of 5 year olds will ensure little to no fighting—at least until the ice cream is gone.
equivocate	to speak vaguely, usually with the intention to mislead or	verb	After Sharon brought the car home an hour after her curfew, she equivocated when her parents pointedly asked her where she had been.
ersatz	not real or genuine; phony.	adjective	The car dealer's ersatz laughter was immediately followed by a price quote, one that Shelley found highly inflated.
estimable	deserving of esteem and respect.	adjective	After serving thirty years, in which he selflessly served the community, Judge Harper was one of the more estimable people in town.
ethereal	characterized by lightness and insubstantiality.	adjective	Because she dances with an ethereal style, ballet critics have called her Madame Butterfly.
evanescent	tending to vanish like vapor.	adjective	The storm flashed into existence above us and lasted only a short time—an evanescent turbulence of wind and cloud.
excoriate	to criticize very harshly.	verb	Entrusted with the prototype to his company's latest smartphone, Larry, during a late night karaoke bout, let the prototype slip into the hands of a rival company—the next day Larry was excoriated, and then fired.
execrate	to curse and hiss at.	verb	Though the new sitcom did decently in the ratings, Nelson rallied against the show, saying that it was nothing more than an execrable pastiche of tired clichés and canned laughter.
exegesis	critical explanation or analysis, especially of a text.	noun	The Bible is fertile ground for exegesis—over the past five centuries there have been as many interpretations as there are pages in the Old Testament.
exemplar	something to be imitated.	noun	Len's homework is on the wall because it is an exemplar of clean, neat, and thoughtful work.
exiguity	the quality of being meager.	noun	After two months at sea, the exiguity of the ship's supplies forced them to search for fresh water and food.
exorbitant	greatly exceeding bounds of reason or moderation.	adjective	Shelley made one exorbitant purchase after another, buying new clothes and taking vacations even though she earned a limited salary.
expansive	communicative, and prone to talking in a sociable manner.	adjective	After a few sips of cognac, the octogenarian shed his irascible demeanor and became expansive, speaking fondly of the "good old days". This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
expunge	to eliminate completely.	verb	When I turned 18, all of the shoplifting and jaywalking charges were expunged from my criminal record.
expurgate	to remove objectionable material.	verb	The censor expurgated every reference to sex and drugs, converting the rapper's raunchy flow into a series of bleeps.
extrapolate	draw from specific cases for more general cases.	verb	By extrapolating from the data on the past three months, we can predict a 5% increase in traffic to our website.
facile	arrived at without due care or effort; lacking depth.	adjective	Many news shows provide facile explanations to complex politics, so I prefer to read the in-depth reporting of The New York Times.
factious	produced by, or characterized by internal dissension.	adjective	The controversial bill proved factious, as dissension even within parties resulted.
factitious	artificial; not natural.	adjective	The defendant's story was largely factitious and did not accord with eyewitness testimonies.
feckless	lazy and irresponsible.	adjective	Two years after graduation, Charlie still lived with his parents and had no job, becoming more feckless with each passing day.
fecund	intellectually productive.	adjective	The artist had entered a fecund period, producing three masterpieces in the span of two months.
fell	terribly evil.	adjective	For fans of the Harry Potter series, the fell Lord Voldemort, who terrorized poor Harry for seven lengthy installments, has finally been vanquished by the forces of good—unless, that is, JK Rowling decides to come out of retirement. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
firebrand	someone who deliberately creates trouble.	noun	Freddie is a firebrand: every time he walks into the office, he winds up at the center of heated argument.
flag	droop, sink, or settle from or as if from pressure or loss of	verb	This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
flippant	showing inappropriate levity.	adjective	Although Sam was trying to honor Mark's sense of humor, many found it quite flippant that he wore a comic nose and glasses mask to Mark's funeral.
flummox	be a mystery or bewildering to.	verb	Mary's behavior completely flummoxes me: I never have any idea what her motivations might be.
fractious	irritable and is likely to cause disruption.	adjective	We rarely invite my fractious Uncle over for dinner; he always complains about the food, and usually launches into a tirade on some touchy subject.
gaffe	a socially awkward or tactless act.	noun	In a famous gaffe, Vice President Quayle attempted to correct the spelling of a grade school student, only to find that the child was correct.
gambit	a manoeuvre or risk in a game or conversation, designed to	noun	Randy played a gambit, telling his boss that he would leave at the end of the week if he didn't get a raise.
gerrymander	to manipulate voting districts in order to favor a particular	verb	
graft	corruption, usually through bribery.	noun	In countries with rampant graft, getting a driver's license can require no more than paying an official. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
grandiloquent	puffed up with vanity.	adjective	The dictator was known for his grandiloquent speeches, puffing his chest out and using big, important-sounding words.
gumption	resourcefulness and determination.	noun	Wallace Stegner lamented the lack of gumption in the U.S. during the sixties, claiming that no young person knew the value of work.
hagiographic	excessively flattering toward someone's life or work.	adjective	Most accounts of Tiger Woods life were hagiographic, until, that is, his affairs made headlines.
hail	enthusiastically acclaim or celebrate something.	verb	Many college superstar athletes are hailed as the next big thing, but then flop at the professional level. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
halcyon	idyllically calm and peaceful; suggesting happy tranquility.	adjective	The first decade after WWI was a halcyon period in America with new-found wealth and rapidly improving technology.
hauteur	overbearing pride evidenced by a superior manner toward	noun	As soon as she won the lottery, Alice began displaying a hauteur to her friends, calling them dirty-clothed peasants behind their backs.
hector	to bully or intimidate.	verb	The boss's hectoring manner put off many employees, some of whom quit as soon as they found new jobs.
hedge	to limit or qualify a statement; to avoid making a direct	verb	When asked why he had decided to buy millions of shares at the very moment the tech companies stock soared, the CEO hedged, mentioning something vague about gut instinct. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
histrionic	to be overly theatrical.	adjective	Though she received a B- on the test, she had such a histrionic outburst that one would have thought that she'd been handed a death sentence.
hoary	ancient.	adjective	Most workout gurus are young, fit people, whereas most yoga gurus are hoary men with long white beards.
hobble	to hold back the progress of something.	verb	Bad weather has hobbled rescue efforts, making it difficult for crews to find bodies in the wreckage.
hoodwink	to deceive or trick someone.	verb	Someone tried to hoodwink Marty with an email telling him that his uncle had just passed away, and to collect the inheritance he should send his credit card information.
hubris	overbearing pride or presumption.	noun	Bill Clinton was criticized for his hubris, since he believed he could get away with anything once in the White House.
illustrious	widely known and esteemed; having or conferring glory	adjective	
imbibe	to drink or absorb as if drinking.	verb	Plato imbibed Socrates' teachings to such an extent that he was able to write volumes of work that he directly attributed, sometimes word for word, to Socrates.
imbroglio	a confusing and potentially embarrassing situation.	noun	The chef cook-off featured one gourmand who had the unfortunate distinction of mixing the wrong broths, creating an imbroglio that diners would not soon forget.
immure	to enclose, usually in walls.	verb	The modern supermarket experience makes many feel claustrophobic, as they are immured in walls upon walls of products.
impecunious	lacking money; poor.	adjective	In extremely trying times, even the moderately wealthy, after a few turns of ill-fortune, can become impecunious.
imperious	having or showing arrogant superiority to and disdain of	adjective	Children are imperious with each other before they learn that earning someone's respect is better than demanding.
impervious	not admitting of passage or capable of being affected I am	adjective	
impetuous	characterized by undue haste and lack of thought or	adjective	
importuned	beg persistently and urgently.	verb	After weeks of importuning the star to meet for a five-minute interview, the journalist finally got what she wanted.
improvident	not given careful consideration.	adjective	Marty was improvident, never putting money aside for the future but spending it on decorating the interior of his home.

impugn	attack as false or wrong.	verb	Though many initially tried to impugn Darwin's theory, in scientific circles today, the idea taken as truth.
impute	attribute (responsibility or fault) to something.	verb	He imputed his subpar performance on the test to a combination of stress and poor sleep.
inanity	total lack of meaning or ideas.	noun	Bill's poem was nothing more than a list of impressive sounding words, so there was no point in trying to take meaning from the inanity.
inchoate	only partly in existence; imperfectly formed.	adjective	Inchoate ideas about the relation of humans to other animals had been discussed since the Middle Ages but the modern theory really began with Darwin.
incontrovertible	necessarily or demonstrably true; impossible to deny or disprove.	adjective	Unless you can provide incontrovertible evidence, I will remain skeptical.
indigent	poor; having very little.	adjective	In the so-called Third World, many are indigent and only a privileged few have the resources to enjoy material luxuries.
indigent	a poor or needy person.	noun	The indigents, huddled under the overpass, tried to start a small bonfire in the hope of staying warm.
ineffable	too sacred to be uttered; defying expression or description.	adjective	While art critics can occasionally pinpoint a work's greatness, much of why a piece captures our imaginations is completely ineffable.
ineluctable	impossible to avoid or evade.	adjective	For those who smoke cigarettes for years, a major health crisis brought on by smoking is ineluctable.
inequity	injustice by virtue of not conforming with rules or standards.	noun	After decades of racial inequity, the "separate but equal" doctrine was successfully overturned.
infelicitous	inappropriate.	adjective	During the executive meeting, the marketing director continued to make infelicitous comments about the CEO's gambling habit.
inimitable	defying imitation; matchless.	adjective	Mozart's music follows a clear pattern that, anyone could imitate, but his music gives an overall sense of effortlessness that is inimitable.
insouciance	lack of concern.	noun	Surprisingly, Hank had become a high-powered CEO; his high school friends remembered him as "Hanky Panky", who shrugged off each failed class with insouciance.
insufferable	intolerable, difficult to endure.	adjective	Chester always tried to find some area in which he excelled above others; unsurprisingly, his co-workers found him insufferable and chose to exclude him from daily luncheons out.
internece	(of conflict) within a group or organization.	adjective	The guerilla group, which had become so powerful as to own the state police, was finally destroyed by an internece conflict.
intimation	an indirect suggestion.	noun	At first the hostess tried intimation, praising the benefits of cutlery; when Cecil continued eating with his hands, the hostess told him to use a fork at dinner.
inure	to make accustomed to something unpleasant.	verb	Three years of Manhattan living has inured her to the sound of wailing sirens; she could probably sleep through the apocalypse.
invective	abusive or denunciatory language.	noun	The Internet has unleashed the invectives in many of us; many people post stinging criticism on the comments section underneath newspaper articles or YouTube videos.
invidious	likely to cause resentment.	adjective	At a time when many others in the office were about to be laid off, many considered Cheryl's fine clothes that day an invidious display. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
inviolable	never to be broken, infringed, or dishonored.	adjective	Too many the grass at Wimbledon is inviolable and only greater tennis players are able to enjoy a game there.
inviolate	must be kept sacred.	adjective	While the literary critic studied most of the classics to the harshest reviews, he regarded Cervantes as inviolate, and had nothing but praise for him.
irrefutable	impossible to deny or disprove.	adjective	The existence of life on earth is irrefutable; the existence of intelligent life on earth is still hotly debated.
jaundice	to be biased against due to envy or prejudice.	adjective	Shelly was jaundiced towards Olivia; though the two had once been best friends, Olivia had become class president, prom queen, and, to make matters worse, the girlfriend of the one boy Shelly liked.
jeune	dull; lacking flavor.	adjective	Although many top chefs have secured culinary foam's popularity in haute cuisine, Waters criticizes it for being jeune and unfilling.
jeune	immature; childish.	adjective	Her boss further cemented his reputation for being jeune after throwing a fit when the water cooler wasn't refilled.
jingoist	a person who thinks that their country should be at war.	noun	In the days leading up to war, a nation typically breaks up into the two opposing camps: doves, who do their best to avoid war, and jingoists, who are not only too eager to wave national flags from their vehicles and vehemently denounce those who do not do so.
juggernaut	a force that cannot be stopped.	noun	Napoleon was considered a juggernaut until he decided to invade Russia in winter; after which, his once indomitable army was decimated by cold and famine.
kowtow	to bow or act in a subservient manner.	verb	Paul kowtowed to his boss so often the boss herself became nauseated by his sycophancy.
lacerate	deeply hurt the feelings of; distress.	verb	The teacher was fired for lacerating a student who wrote a poor essay; This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
lachrymose	showing sorrow.	adjective	Lachrymose and depressed, Alexei Alexandrovich walked two miles home in the rain after learning that his wife was having an affair.
lampoon	ridicule with satire.	verb	Mark Twain understood that lampooning a bad idea with humor was the most effective criticism.
languish	become feeble.	verb	Stranded in the wilderness for four days, the hiker languished, eating protein bars and nuts.
lascivious	lecherous; sexually perverted.	adjective	Loita is a challenging novel for many, not necessarily because of the elevated prose style but because of the depravity of the main character, Humbert Humbert, who, as an old, lascivious man, falls in love with a girl.
limpid	clarity in terms of expression.	adjective	Her limpid prose made even the most recalcitrant subjects accessible to all.
litany	any long and tedious account of something.	noun	Mr. Rogers spoke to a Senate committee and did not give a litany of reasons to keep funding the program, but instead, appealed to the basic human decency of all present.
loath	unwillingness to do something contrary to your custom (usu. of a person).	adjective	
lugubrious	excessively mournful.	adjective	At the funeral, lugubrious songs filled the small church.
machinate	engage in plotting or enter into a conspiracy; swear together	verb	
magisterial	offensively self-assured or given to exercising unwarranted authority.	adjective	Though she was only a third grade teacher, Ms. Martinet was magisterial in dealing with her class, lordng over them like a queen. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
malapropism	the confusion of a word with another word that sounds similar.	noun	Whenever I looked glum, my mother would offer to share "an amusing antidote" with me—an endearing malapropism of "anecdote" that never failed to cheer me up.
malfeasance	misconduct or wrongdoing (especially by a public official).	adjective	Not even the mayor's trademark peary-toothed grin could save him from charges of malfeasance: while in power, he'd been running an illegal gambling rink in the room behind his office.
malingering	someone shirking their duty by pretending to be sick or incapable.	noun	At one time, our country was full of hardworking respectful people, but now it seems that everyone is a malingerer with little inclination to work.
martinet	a strict disciplinarian.	noun	The job seemed perfect to Rebecca, until she found out that her boss was a total martinet; after each project the boss would come by to scrutinize—and inevitably criticize—every little detail of the work Rebecca had done.
maudlin	overly emotional and sad.	adjective	Just as those who were alive during the 70's are mortified that they once cavorted about in bellbottoms, many who were alive during the 80's are now agghast at the maudlin pop songs they used to enjoy—really, just what exactly is a total eclipse of the heart?
maunder	wander aimlessly.	verb	Max liked to maunder down by the seaside and pick up whatever sea shells he would stumble upon.
maunder	speak (about unimportant matters) rapidly and incessantly.	verb	After drinking two espressos each, the animated couple would maunder loudly, annoying the other patrons in the coffee shop.
meffiluous	smooth and sweet-sounding.	adjective	Chelsea's grandmother thought Franz Schubert's music to be the most meffiluous ever written; Chelsea demurred, and to her grandmother's chagrin, would blast Rihanna on the home stereo speakers.
mendicant	a pauper who lives by begging.	noun	Tolstoy was an aristocrat, but he strove to understand the Christianity of the Russian peasants by wandering among them as a mendicant.
meteoric	like a meteor in speed or brilliance or transience.	adjective	The early spectacular successes propelled the pitcher to meteoric stardom, but a terribly injury tragically cut short his career.
mettle	filled with courage or valor.	adjective	For its raid on the Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Seal Team Six has become, for many Americans, the embodiment of mettle.
misattribute	To erroneously attribute; to falsely ascribe; used especially of a person.	verb	I made a mistake; I misattributed "Crime and Punishment" to Leo Tolstoy when it was actually written by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.
modicum	a small or moderate or token amount.	noun	If my sister had even a modicum of sense, she wouldn't be engaged to that barbarian.
mordant	biting and caustic in thought, manner, or style.	adjective	While Phil frequently made mordant remarks about company policy overall, he always was considerably gentler in discussing any person in particular.
moribund	being on the point of death; declining rapidly losing all momentum.	adjective	
mulct	to defraud or swindle.	verb	The so-called magical diet cure simply ended up mulcting Maria out of hundreds of dollars, but did nothing for her weight.
nadir	the lowest point.	noun	For many pop music fans, the rap and alternative-rock dominated 90s were the nadir of musical expression.
nettlesome	causing irritation or annoyance.	adjective	Maria found her coworkers cell phone nettlesome, because every few minutes it would buzz to life with another text message.
noisome	having an extremely bad smell.	adjective	Each August, when the winds moved in a south easterly direction, the garbage dump would spread noisome vapors through the small town.
nonchalant	coming across as coolly uninterested.	adjective	The twenty-somethings at the coffee shop always irked Sheldon, especially the way in which they acted nonchalantly towards everything, not even caring when Sheldon once spilled his mocha on them.
objurgate	express strong disapproval of.	verb	The manager spent an hour objurgating the employee in the hopes that he would not make these mistakes again.
oblique	not straightforward; indirect.	adjective	Herbert never explicitly revealed anything negative about Tom's past, but at times he would obliquely suggest that Tom was not as innocent as he seemed. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
obstreperous	noisily and stubbornly defiant; willfully difficult to control.	adjective	When the teacher asked the obstreperous student simply to bus his tray, the student threw the entire tray on the floor, shouted an epithet, and walked out.
obtain	be valid, applicable, or true.	adjective	The custom of waiting your turn in line does not obtain in some countries, in which many people try to rush to front of the line at the same time. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
obtuse	slow to learn or understand; lacking intellectual acuity; lack of insight.	adjective	Jackson was the most obtuse member of the team; the manager's subtle ironies were always lost on him.
officious	intrusive in a meddling or offensive manner.	adjective	The professor had trouble concentrating on her new theorem, because her officious secretary would barge in frequently reminding her of some trivial detail involving departmental paperwork.
ossify	make rigid and set into a conventional pattern.	verb	Even as a young man, Bob had some bias against poor people, but during his years in social services, his bad opinions ossified into unshiftable views. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
overweening	arrogant; presumptuous.	adjective	Mark was so convinced of his basketball skills that in his overweening pride he could not fathom that his name was not on the varsity list; he walked up to the basketball coach and told her she had forgotten to add his name.
palatable	acceptable to the taste or mind.	adjective	Mickey didn't partake much in his friends' conversations, but found their presence palatable. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
palaver	speak (about unimportant matters) rapidly and incessantly.	verb	During the rain delay, many who had come to see the game palavered, probably hoping that idle chatter would make the time go by faster. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
palimpsest	something that has been changed numerous times but on which the original remains visible.	noun	The downtown was a palimpsest of the city's checkered past: a new Starbucks had opened up next to an abandoned, shuttered building, and a freshly asphalted road was inches away from a pothole large enough to swallow a small dog.
panacea	hypothetical remedy for all ills or diseases; a universal solution.	noun	While the company credit card has made most large purchases easier, it is no panacea: some smaller basic transactions still must be conducted in cash.
panegyric	a formal expression of praise.	noun	Dave asked Andrew to do just a simple toast, but Andrew launched into a full panegyric, enumerating a complete list of Dave's achievements and admirable qualities.
paragon	model of excellence or perfection of a kind; one having no equal.	noun	Even with the rise of Kobe Bryant, many still believe that Michael Jordan is the paragon for basketball players.
paragon	an ideal instance; a perfect embodiment of a concept.	noun	Some say that Athens was the paragon of democracy, but these people often forget that slaves and women were still not allowed to vote.
pariah	an outcast.	noun	The once eminent scientist, upon being found guilty of faking his data, has become a pariah in the research community.
parvenu	a person who has suddenly become wealthy, but not socially accepted.	noun	The theater was full of parvenus who each thought that they were surrounded by true aristocrats.
patent	glaringly obvious.	adjective	Since the book had been through no fewer than six proof runs, the staff was shocked to see such a patent spelling mistake remaining, right in the middle of the front cover.
pecuniary	relating to or involving money.	adjective	The defendant was found guilty and had to serve a period of community service as well as pay pecuniary damages to the client.
pellucid	transparently clear; easily understandable.	adjective	The professor had a remarkable ability make even the most difficult concepts seem pellucid.
penurious	lacking money; poor.	adjective	Truly penurious, Mary had nothing more than a jar full of pennies.

penurious	miserly.	adjective	Warren Buffett, famous multi-billionaire, still drives a cheap sedan, not because he is penurious, but because luxury cars are gaudy and impractical.
percipient	highly perceptive.	adjective	Even the most percipient editor will make an occasional error when proofreading.
peremptory	bossy and domineering.	adjective	My sister used to peremptorily tell me to do the dishes, a chore I would either do perfunctorily or avoid doing altogether.
perfunctory	done routinely and with little interest or care.	adjective	The short film examines modern perfunctory cleaning rituals such as washing dishes, doing laundry and tooth-brushing.
peripatetic	traveling by foot.	adjective	Jim always preferred a peripatetic approach to discovering a city: he felt that he could see so many more details while walking.
perspicacious	acutely insightful and wise.	adjective	Many modern observers regard Eisenhower as perspicacious, particularly in his accurate prediction of the growth of the military.
phantasmagorical	illusive; unreal.	adjective	Those suffering from malaria fall into a feverish sleep, their world a whirligig of phantasmagoria; if they recover, they are unsure of what actually took place and what was simply a product of their febrile imaginations.
philistine	smug and ignorant towards artistic and cultural values.	adjective	Jane considered Al completely philistine, because he talked almost exclusively about video games; she was entirely unaware of how well read he really was. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
pneumatic	showing little emotion.	adjective	Arnold is truly noble, remaining reserved until an issue of significance arises, but Walter is simply phlegmatic: he doesn't have the energy or inclination to care about anything.
picayune	trifling or petty (a person).	adjective	English teachers are notorious for being picayune; however, the English language is so nuanced and sophisticated that often such teachers are not being contrary but are only adhering to the rules.
pillory	ridicule or expose to public scorn.	verb	After the candidate confessed, the press of the opposing party took the opportunity to pillory him, printing editorials with the most blatantly exaggerated accusations. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
pith	the most essential part of something.	noun	When Cynthia hears a speaker presenting a complex argument, she is always able to discard the irrelevant details and extract the pith of what the speaker is trying to convey. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
plucky	marked by courage and determination.	adjective	Some scouts initially doubted Pedroia because of his short stature, but he is a plucky player, surprising everyone with his boundless energy and fierce determination.
Pollyannaish	extremely optimistic.	adjective	Even in the midst of a lousy sales quarter, Debbie remained Pollyannaish, never losing her shrill voice and wide smile, even when prospective customers hung up on her.
ponderous	weighed-down; moving slowly.	adjective	Laden with 20 kilograms of college text books, the freshman moved ponderously across the campus.
pontificate	talk in a dogmatic and pompous manner.	verb	The vice-president would often pontificate about economic theory, as if no one else in the room were qualified to speak on the topic. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
portentous	ominously prophetic.	adjective	When the captain and more than half the officers were sick on the very first night of the voyage, many of the passengers felt this was portentous, but the rest of the voyage continued without any problems.
precipitate	hasty or rash.	adjective	Instead of conducting a thorough investigation after the city hall break-in, the governor acted precipitately, accusing his staff of aiding and abetting the criminals.
precipitate	to cause to happen.	verb	The government's mishandling the hurricane's aftermath precipitated a widespread outbreak of looting and other criminal activity.
presentiment	a feeling of evil to come.	noun	On the night that Lincoln would be fatally shot, his wife had a presentiment about going to Ford's Theater, but Lincoln persuaded her that everything would be fine.
primacy	the state of being first in importance.	noun	The primacy of Apple Computers is not guaranteed, as seen in the recent lawsuits and weak growth.
probity	integrity, strong moral principles.	noun	The ideal politician would have the probity to lead, but reality gravely falls short of the ideal of morally upright leaders.
prognostication	a statement made about the future.	noun	When the Senator was asked about where the negotiations would lead, he said that any guess he could make would be an unreliable prognostication.
proximity	boring verbosity.	noun	I loved my grandfather dearly, but his proximity would put me to sleep, regardless of the topic.
promulgate	state or announce.	verb	The President wanted to promulgate the success of the treaty negotiations, but he had to wait until Congress formally approved the agreement.
propitiate	to placate or appease.	verb	The two sons, plying their angry father with cheesy neckties for Christmas, were hardly able to propitiate him – the father already had a drawer full of ones he had never worn before or ever planned to.
prosaic	dull and lacking imagination.	adjective	Unlike the talented artists in his workshop, Paul had no such bent for the visual medium, so when it was time for him to make a stained glass painting, he ended up with a prosaic mosaic.
proscribe	command against.	verb	My doctor proscribes that I not eat donuts with chocolate sauce and hamburger patties for breakfast.
proselytize	convert to another religion, philosophy, or perspective.	verb	Lisa loves her Mac but says little about it; by contrast, Jake will proselytize, interrogating anyone with an Android about why she didn't purchase an iPhone.
protean	readily taking on different roles; versatile.	adjective	Peter Sellers was truly a protean actor—in Doctor Strangelove he played three very different roles: a jingoist general, a sedate President and a deranged scientist.
provident	careful in regard to your own interests; providing carefully fo	adjective	In a move that hardly could be described as provident, Bert spend his entire savings on a luxurious cruise, knowing that other bills would come due a couple months later.
puerile	or of characteristic of a child; displaying or suggesting a lack of	adjective	Helen enjoyed blowing soap bubbles, but Jim regarded this as puerile, totally unworthy of a woman with a Ph.D.
puissant	powerful.	adjective	Over the years of service, and quite to his surprise, he became a puissant advisor to the community.
punctilious	marked by precise accordance with details.	adjective	The colonel was so punctilious about enforcing regulations that men felt compelled to polish even the soles of their shoes.
pyrrhic	describing a victory that comes at such a great cost that the	adjective	Bush's win in the 2000 election was in many ways a pyrrhic victory; the circumstances of his win alienated half of the U.S. population.
quail	draw back, as with fear or pain.	verb	Craig always claimed to be a fearless outdoorsman, but when the thunderstorm engulfed the valley, he quailed at the thought of leaving the safety of his cabin. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
quiescing	a tralior.	noun	History looks unfavorably upon quiescings; indeed they are accorded about the same fondness as Nero—he who watched his city burn down while playing the violin.
quixotic	wildly idealistic; impractical.	adjective	For every thousand startups with quixotic plans to be the next big name in e-commerce, only a handful ever become profitable.
raconteur	a person skilled in telling anecdotes.	noun	Jude is entertaining, but he is no raconteur; beyond the handful of amusing stories he has memorized, he has absolutely no spontaneous story-telling ability.
rallery	light teasing.	noun	The new recruit was not bothered by the rallery, finding most of it light-hearted and good-natured.
rapprochement	the reestablishing of cordial relations.	noun	Although Ann hoped that her mother and her aunt would have a rapprochement, each one's bitter accusations against the other made any reconciliation unlikely.
rarefied	make more subtle or refined.	verb	Jack's vulgar jokes were not so successful in the rarefied environment of college professors. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
recapitulation	a summary (think of recap).	noun	Every point of the professors lesson was so clear that the students felt his concluding recapitulation was not necessary.
recrimination	mutual accusations.	noun	The two brothers sat and cried, pointing fingers and making elaborate recriminations of the other's guilt.
recrudescence	to break out or happen again.	verb	After years of gamblers anonymous, Tony thought he'd broken his compulsive slot machine playing, but it took only one trip to the Atlantic City for a full recrudescence—he lost \$5k on the one armed bandit.
redoubtable	inspiring fear or awe.	adjective	On television basketball players don't look that tall, but when you stand in front of a seven-foot tall NBA player, he is truly redoubtable.
remonstrate	to make objections while pleading.	verb	The mothers of the kidnapped victims remonstrated to the rogue government to release their children, claiming that the detention violated human rights.
reprisal	a retaliatory action against an enemy in wartime.	noun	The Old Testament doctrine of an eye for an eye is not the kind of retaliation practiced in war; rather, an arm, a leg, and both ears are the reprisal for the smallest scratch.
ribald	humorously vulgar.	adjective	The speaker was famous for his ribald humor, but the high school principal asked him to keep the talk G-rated when he spoke to the student body.
row	an angry dispute.	noun	The Prime Minister looked very foolish after his row with the foreign dignitary was caught on video and posted on youtube. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
sagacious	having good judgement and acute insight.	adjective	Steve Jobs is surely one of the most sagacious CEOs, making Apple the most recognizable and valuable companies in the world.
sangfroid	calmness or poise in difficult situations.	noun	The hostage negotiator exhibited a sangfroid that oftentimes was more menacing than the sword at his throat, or the gun at his head.
sardonic	disdainfully or ironically humorous; scornful and mocking.	adjective	A stand-up comedian walks a fine line when making jokes about members of the audience; such fun and joking can quickly become sardonic and cutting.
sartorial	related to fashion or clothes.	adjective	Monte was astute at navigating the world of finance; sartorially, however, he was found wanting—he typically would attempt to complement his beige tie with a gray suit and white pants.
saturnine	morose or gloomy.	adjective	Deprived of sunlight, humans become saturnine; that's why in very northerly territories people are encouraged to sit under an extremely powerful lamp, lest they become morose.
schadenfreude	joy from watching the suffering of others.	noun	From his warm apartment window, Stanley reveled in schadenfreude as he laughed at the figures below, huddled together in the arctic chill.
sedulous	done diligently and carefully.	adjective	An avid numismatist, Harold sedulously amassed a collection of coins from over 100 countries—an endeavor that took over fifteen years, and to five continents. self-
effacing	reluctant to draw attention to yourself.	adjective	The most admirable teachers and respected leaders are those who are self-effacing, directing attention and praise to their students and workers.
semblance	an outward or token appearance or form that is deliberately	noun	While the banker maintained a semblance of respectability in public, those who knew him well were familiar with his many crimes.
sententious	to be moralizing, usually in a pompous sense.	adjective	The old man, casting his nose up in the air at the group of adolescents, intoned sententiously, "Youth is wasted on the young."
simulacrum	a representation of a person (especially in the form of sculpt	noun	The Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center showcases a simulacrum of all the present and approved buildings in the city of Shanghai.
simulacrum	a bad imitation.	noun	The early days of computer graphics made real people into a simulacrum that now seems comical.
sinecure	an office that involves minimal duties.	noun	The position of Research Director is a sinecure; the job entails almost no responsibilities, nor does the person in that position have to answer to anyone.
solecism	a socially awkward or tactless act.	noun	Mother Anna was always on guard against any solecism from her children and scolded them immediately if any of them talked out of place in public. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
solicitous	showing hovering attentiveness.	adjective	Our neighbors are constantly knocking on our door to make sure we are ok, and I don't know how to ask them to stop being so solicitous about our health. This word has other definitions but this is the most important one for the GRE.
solicitude	a feeling of excessive concern.	noun	I walked to his house in the rain to make sure he had enough to eat while he was sick, but he seemed not to appreciate my solicitude.
spartan	unsparing and uncompromising in discipline or judgment;	adjective	After losing everything in a fire, Tim decided to live in spartan conditions, sleeping on the floor and owning as little furniture as a possible.
splenetic	very irritable.	adjective	Ever since the car accident, Frank has been unable to walk without a cane, and so he has become splenetic and unpleasant to be around.
squelch	suppress or crush completely.	verb	After the dictator consolidated his power, he took steps to squelch all criticism, often arresting any journalist who said anything that could be interpreted as negative about his regime.
stalwart	dependable; inured to fatigue or hardships.	adjective	Despite all the criticism directed at the President during this scandal, Lisa has remained his stalwart supporter.
stultify	cause one, through routine, to lose energy and enthusiasm.	verb	As an undergraduate Mark felt stultified by classes outside his area of study; only in grad school, in which he could focus solely on literary analysis, did he regain his scholarly edge.
subterfuge	something intended to misrepresent the true nature of an ac	noun	Finally deciding to abandon all subterfuge, Arthur revealed to Cindy everything about his secret affair over the past two years.
supercilious	haughty and disdainful; looking down on others.	adjective	Nelly felt the Quiz Bowl director acted superciliously towards the underclassmen; really, she fumed, must he act so preternaturally omniscient each time he intones some obscure fact—as though everybody knows that Mt. Aconcagua is the highest peak in Sout.
surfeit	an excessive amount of something.	noun	There was no such thing as a surfeit of shopping for Nancy—she could stay at the outlet stores from opening to closing time.
surreptitious	stealthily, taking pains not to be caught or detected.	adjective	Since his mom was a light sleeper, Timmy had to tipde surreptitiously through the entire house, careful to not make the floors creak, until he at last was able to enjoy his plunder: a box of chocolate chip cookies.
sybarite	a person who indulges in luxury.	noun	Despite the fact that he'd maxed out fifteen credit cards, Max was still a sybarite at heart: when the police found him, he was at a \$1,000 an hour spa in Manhattan, getting a facial treatment.
temerity	fearless daring.	noun	No child has the temerity to go in the rundown house at the end of the street and see if it is haunted.
tempestuous	as if driven by turbulent or conflicting emotions; highly energ	adjective	Chuck and Kathy had always been stable and agreeable people on their own, but when they got involved, it was a tempestuous relationship.
tendentious	likely to lean towards a controversial view.	adjective	Because political mudslinging has become a staple of the 24-hour media cycle, most of us, despite protestations to the contrary, are tendentious on many of today's pressing issues.
transmute	change or alter in form, appearance, or nature.	verb	One of the goals of alchemy was to find the substance or process that would transmute lead into gold.

