

CHAPTER
18

aberration	formidable
composure	inscrutable
congenital	precocious
elusive	trepidation
extol	virulent

Ten Words in Context

In the space provided, write the letter of the meaning closest to that of each **boldfaced** word. Use the context of the sentences to help you figure out each word's meaning.

1 **aberration**
(äb'ə-rä'shən)
-noun

Aberration means

- Yes, we had a poor meal at Antonio's Restaurant, but that was an **aberration**. Generally the food there is excellent.
- We have seen many **aberrations** in the weather this year. For instance, it snowed in June, and it reached 70 degrees on Christmas Day.
 - a. something abnormal.
 - b. something typical.
 - c. something impossible.

2 **composure**
(kəm-pō'zhər)
-noun

Composure means

- When I served as a juror, I was impressed by the foreman's **composure** as he announced our verdict. Afterward, though, he said to me, "I may have looked calm, but I was shaking inside."
- Grandma's **composure** was legendary. When her house was flooded, the Red Cross arrived to find her perched in an upstairs window, calmly knitting. "Why fuss?" she said. "I knew you'd get here sooner or later."
 - a. understanding.
 - b. cool-headedness.
 - c. selfishness.

3 **congenital**
(kən-jěn'ī-tl)
-adjective

Congenital means

- Scientists are not sure whether alcoholism is a **congenital** tendency existing from birth or a learned pattern of behavior.
- You may think that for a dog, barking is **congenital**. But sometimes puppies don't start barking on their own, and their owners must train them to do it.
 - a. unusual.
 - b. inborn.
 - c. insufficient.

4 **elusive**
(ī-lōō'siv)
-adjective

Elusive means

- Marta tried to follow the lecture, but the ideas seemed **elusive**. "The point escaped me," she admitted later.
- There was a faint, **elusive** scent in the air. Was it flowers? Or someone's perfume? We couldn't put a name to it.
 - a. difficult to capture.
 - b. horrible.
 - c. common.

5 **extol**
(īk-stōl')
-verb

Extol means

- Advertisements all **extol** the product they are selling, saying that it is the best of its type.
- The review of this movie **extols** it as one of the best films of the year.
 - a. to glorify.
 - b. to combine.
 - c. to complete.

6 **formidable**
(fôr'mī-də-bəl)
-adjective

Formidable means

- The movers stood on the sidewalk, considering the **formidable** task of getting a grand piano up a long, narrow flight of stairs.
- When Joe and Maria learned they were having triplets, they wondered how they could handle such a **formidable** responsibility.
 - a. formless.
 - b. previous.
 - c. difficult.

- 7 **inscrutable**
(ĩn-skrōō'tā-bəl)
-adjective
- Inscrutable* means
- When the artist Vincent van Gogh cut off his ear, his motive seemed completely **inscrutable**. One possible solution to the puzzle is that he may have been poisoned by lead in his paints, leading to brain damage.
 - "How can I write a paper on the meaning of this poem when I don't understand it myself?" Kiri moaned. "It's completely **inscrutable** to me."
- a. looked at closely. b. mysterious. c. clear.
- 8 **precocious**
(prĩ-kō'shəs)
-adjective
- Precocious* means
- *Matilda* is an amusing book by Roald Dahl about a **precocious** little girl who reads a whole library of books before she begins first grade.
 - Ms. Wolf is quite excited about one of her piano students, a **precocious** boy who not only plays very well but is already composing his own music.
- a. prejudiced. b. advanced for one's age. c. tending to misbehave.
- 9 **trepidation**
(trĩp'ĩ-dā'shən)
-noun
- Trepidation* means
- "It is with some **trepidation** that I put my plan before you," the consultant told the board of directors nervously, "since it involves moving the company to Siberia."
 - "Yes," Grandpa remembered, "I experienced some **trepidation** on my wedding day. In fact, you could say I was scared to death."
- a. enthusiasm. b. boredom. c. anxiety.
- 10 **virulent**
(vĩr'yə-lənt)
-adjective
- Virulent* means
- The mayor bitterly protested the newspaper's **virulent** attacks on her administration: "I demand an end to these attempts to poison the public's mind against me."
 - Lung cancer is one of the most **virulent** forms of cancer, but though it is deadly, it is also highly preventable. Quitting smoking reduces your risk dramatically.
- a. constant. b. inconsistent. c. destructive.

Matching Words with Definitions

Following are definitions of the ten words. Clearly write or print each word next to its definition. The sentences above and on the previous page will help you decide on the meaning of each word.

- _____ Calmness of mind or manner; self-possession
- _____ Very challenging; demanding
- _____ An oddity
- _____ To praise highly; exalt
- _____ Tending to escape; hard to catch hold of or identify
- _____ Alarm or dread
- _____ Very injurious; lethal; deadly
- _____ Showing unusually early maturity or ability
- _____ Difficult to interpret or understand; puzzling
- _____ Existing from birth

CAUTION: Do not go any further until you are sure the above answers are correct. Then you can use the definitions to help you in the following practices. Your goal is eventually to know the words well enough so that you don't need to check the definitions at all.

➤ Sentence Check 1

Using the answer line, complete each item below with the correct word from the box. Use each word once.

a. aberration	b. composure	c. congenital	d. elusive	e. extol
f. formidable	g. inscrutable	h. precocious	i. trepidation	j. virulent

- _____ 1. Our grandson's good nature is ____: he's been smiling since the day he was born.
- _____ 2. Heidi adores her new job. She ____s everything about it, from her relationship with her boss to the great coffee in the lunchroom.
- _____ 3. Wendy's friends vowed to maintain their ____ at her funeral, no matter how much they might break down later in private.
- _____ 4. As the great detective peered through his magnifying glass at the fingerprint, his expression was _____. No one could tell what he might be thinking.
- _____ 5. Bob had a terrifying experience during the blackout—he was stuck in an elevator for seven hours. Now he never enters an elevator without _____.
- _____ 6. One of Mrs. Thompson's first-graders is so ____ that she is reading at a high-school level and actually helps teach the other children.
- _____ 7. After an hour of angry, ____ criticism from the audience, the company president stalked out of the stockholders' meeting. "I quit," he said. "Let someone else take all this abuse."
- _____ 8. Jermain was trying to write a song, but the melody remained _____. Bits of it drifted into his mind but floated away before he could write them down.
- _____ 9. Keeping up with housework, raising children, holding a job, and maintaining friendships is a(n) ____ task, yet many people somehow manage to do it all.
- _____ 10. Chicken eggs with two yolks are a(n) _____, but although they are unusual, you do find one from time to time.

NOTE: Now check your answers to these questions by turning to page 176. Going over the answers carefully will help you prepare for the next two practices, for which answers are not given.

➤ Sentence Check 2

Using the answer lines, complete each item below with **two** words from the box. Use each word once.

- _____ 1-2. People who ____ the wonders of modern medicine are sure to mention the victory over smallpox. This _____, deadly disease has been completely wiped out.
- _____ 3-4. Walking to the front of the class to give her speech, Cyndi felt such _____ that she could hardly keep her _____. She wanted to scream with terror and run away.

- _____ 5-6. Glenn has only one arm, and people assume that he must have lost the other in an accident. But in fact this _____ is _____: he was born that way.
- _____ 7-8. Parents are not always cognizant^o of the fact that having a very bright child can be a(n) _____ challenge. _____ kids need special nurturing to develop their talents.
- _____ 9-10. In a well-written murder mystery, the solution to the crime should be _____, not easy to pinpoint. At the same time, the characters mustn't be completely _____—the author should give some hints about their inner secrets and possible motives.

➤ Final Check: Math Anxiety

Here is a final opportunity for you to strengthen your knowledge of the ten words. First read the following selection carefully. Then fill in each blank with a word from the box at the top of the previous page. (Context clues will help you figure out which word goes in which blank.) Use each word once.

No one ever talks about “history anxiety” or even “chemistry anxiety,” but “math anxiety” is common and widespread. It’s amazing how many otherwise intelligent, capable people will tell you that they approach mathematics with fear and trembling. As a mathematician, I’m puzzled by their (1) _____. But I don’t think math anxiety is (2) _____—people aren’t born with a fear of math. I think it gets passed on like a(n) (3) _____ disease: one person catches it from another.

Picture a typical scene. A kid says to Dad or Mom, “Please help me with my homework?” Dad (Mom) says “Sure” but then sees that the homework is a math problem, turns pale with terror, and loses his (her) (4) _____. “Math? Don’t ask me to help with that. I can’t do math. I always hated math.” The kid gets the message: Mom (Dad) “can’t do math,” so it must be fearsome stuff. In fact, it must be a totally opaque^o, (5) _____ mystery. If a child happens to like math and isn’t terrified by it, that’s considered a(n) (6) _____, almost freakish. What is this kid, a(n) (7) _____ genius or something?

In fact, though, math is not all that (8) _____: it’s no harder to handle than other subjects, and it’s less challenging than some. Allow me to (9) _____ the virtues of a math course. One, no labs. Two, no 500-word papers on the worst teacher you ever had. Three, no dreary hours in the library taking voluminous^o notes on the Corn Laws. Four, in math—unlike history or sociology—the answers to questions are usually quite straightforward, even if they seem (10) _____ at first. They tend to be either right or wrong. True, a math course requires brainwork, but I hope you don’t consider that a hindrance^o. Muster your courage and give it a try. You too can overcome math anxiety!

Scores Sentence Check 2 _____% Final Check _____%

Enter your scores above and in the vocabulary performance chart on the inside back cover of the book