



CHAPTER  
22

colloquial  
crass  
discerning  
hyperbole  
incisive

judicious  
prerogative  
tacit  
tactless  
whet

### 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 **colloquial**  
(kə-lō'kwē-əl)  
-adjective

*Colloquial* means

- I enjoyed the lecturer's easygoing, **colloquial** style. He made the topic more interesting than a stiff, formal speaker could have done.
  - Dorian has two entirely different ways of talking: he uses **colloquial**, slangy words with his friends, but conventional, precise language at work.
- a. deceptive.                      b. unclear.                      c. informal.

2 **crass**  
(krās)  
-adjective

*Crass* means

- "My boss made a **crass** remark about my figure," said Annette, "but I'm not sure that's sexual harassment. He says crude things to everyone, so maybe it's just that no one ever taught him any manners."
  - The candidate lost the election after making a stupid joke about his opponent's weight. We were amazed at the damage one **crass** comment can do.
- a. humorless.                      b. tasteless.                      c. meaningless.

3 **discerning**  
(dī-sūr'nīng)  
-adjective

*Discerning* means

- "That's a very **discerning** comment," the professor said to Carmela. "Congratulations—you've been using your powers of observation."
  - Mothers are the most **discerning** people on earth, as you'll agree if you've ever tried to hide anything from yours.
- a. observant.                      b. nasty.                      c. bragging.

4 **hyperbole**  
(hī-pūr'bā-lē)  
-noun

*Hyperbole* means

- "My entire *life* will be *ruined* if you won't let me borrow your dress!" said my roommate, causing me to laugh at her **hyperbole**.
  - Marcella is a very dramatic person who uses a lot of **hyperbole** to express herself: a restaurant is never just "good"—it's "the most fabulous food in the universe"; her boyfriend isn't just "good-looking"—he's "divine beyond belief."
- a. overstatement.                      b. compliment.                      c. accuracy.

5 **incisive**  
(īn-sī'siv)  
-adjective

*Incisive* means

- Professor Martin is a great teacher whose lectures are always clear, **incisive**, and to the point.
  - The actor Peter Falk played a TV detective named Columbo who acted vague and befuddled, but whose mind was actually brilliantly **incisive**.
- a. silly.                      b. hesitant.                      c. keen.

6 **judicious**  
(jōō-dīsh'əs)  
-adjective

*Judicious* means

- Merle's decisions are **judicious**: he never does anything without careful thought.
  - Lilian's choice of a husband was not **judicious**. She married a man she had known for only a week, who turned out to be abusive and a heavy drinker.
- a. predictable.                      b. prudent.                      c. exaggerated.

7 **prerogative**  
(pri-rōg'ə-tīv)  
-noun

*Prerogative means*

- Just because you told the salesman you might buy the car doesn't mean you must buy it. You have the **prerogative** of changing your mind.
- A person suspected of a crime has the **prerogative** of refusing to answer questions unless his or her lawyer is present.
  - a. a choice.
  - b. a duty.
  - c. a belief.

8 **tacit**  
(tās'it)  
-adjective

*Tacit means*

- Rosemary and her boyfriend aren't officially engaged, but they have a **tacit** understanding that they'll be getting married sooner or later.
- Most families seem to have a **tacit** agreement about who sits where at the dining table. Everyone always takes the same place, although the seating has never been discussed.
  - a. unusual.
  - b. unstated.
  - c. insensitive.

9 **tactless**  
(tākt'līs)  
-adjective

*Tactless means*

- "If you don't want to eat the spinach quiche," Richard told his kids, "just say, 'No, thanks.' It's **tactless** to say, 'No, it's yucky.'"
- There's an old joke about a guest who gets a rotten egg at breakfast. Not wanting to be **tactless**, he assures his host, "Parts of it are excellent."
  - a. long-winded.
  - b. insensitive.
  - c. intelligent.

10 **whet**  
(wēt)  
-verb

*Whet means*

- The opening scene of a play or movie must capture the spectators' attention immediately, to **whet** their interest in the story that is about to unfold.
- At newspaper stands in New York, the headlines are usually hidden from view. In London, however, headlines are boldly displayed. I wonder which system **whets** people's curiosity more.
  - a. to arouse.
  - b. to account for.
  - c. to distract.

### 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.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Having keen insight; perceptive; clear-eyed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Penetrating; clear and sharp; pointed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coarse; vulgar
- \_\_\_\_\_ Related to informal speech or writing; conversational
- \_\_\_\_\_ Showing good judgment; wise and careful
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lacking skill or sensitivity in dealing with others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Understood although not spoken
- \_\_\_\_\_ To excite or stimulate (the mind or appetite)
- \_\_\_\_\_ A special right or privilege
- \_\_\_\_\_ Obvious exaggeration, usually for effect or emphasis

**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. colloquial	b. crass	c. discerning	d. hyperbole	e. incisive
f. judicious	g. prerogative	h. tacit	i. tactless	j. whet

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I can spend a long time reading the dictionary. Looking up one word \_\_\_\_\_ my curiosity about another, and the time passes without my noticing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The play seemed very realistic: the stage set looked just like an ordinary apartment, and the dialogue was \_\_\_\_\_—the characters used ordinary, commonplace words and phrases.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. True, Aunt Myra can be irritating, but to call her “the most annoying person in the solar system” is \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The TV journalist is famous for her \_\_\_\_\_ questioning. Her sharp, pointed questions quickly reveal her subjects’ real thoughts and feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Before Uncle Trevor came to visit, we brought down from the attic the hideous painting he had given us and hung it up again. He’s a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ man and would have noticed immediately if it was missing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Lon took his parents to a nightclub for their anniversary, but they didn’t like the comedian’s \_\_\_\_\_ routine, with its four-letter words and off-color jokes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The salesclerk seemed to make a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ assumption that I had a lot of money to spend on a coat. She lost interest when I said that I was on a tight budget.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. It was rather \_\_\_\_\_ of Jon to brag about his great new job in front of Stan, who had just lost his.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Schools used to hold “Sadie Hawkins Day” dances, to which girls had the \_\_\_\_\_ of inviting boys. But these days, girls don’t need a special day to exercise that right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Dropping out of school is seldom a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ decision, but many young people drop out anyway.

*NOTE:* Now check your answers to these questions by turning to page 177. 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. Lidia is not a very \_\_\_\_\_ woman. She never noticed when her own husband shaved off his beard, or when her son lost fifty pounds—and that’s fact, not \_\_\_\_\_!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3–4. Our instructor’s comments on our papers are so \_\_\_\_\_ that they’re nearly sharp enough to draw blood. It’s his \_\_\_\_\_ to criticize, but I wish he would do it more gently.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5-6. In writing a paper, it is \_\_\_\_\_ to avoid \_\_\_\_\_ language. Although these casual phrases are fine for everyday conversation, they are often considered out of place in a student essay.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7-8. The speaker intended to \_\_\_\_\_ his audience's interest by opening with a deliberately \_\_\_\_\_ remark. But his egregious<sup>o</sup> vulgarity shocked and angered his listeners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9-10. There was a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ agreement in the office never to mention the boss's speech impediment. But one day a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ visitor blurted out, "What a terrible stutter!"

### ➤ Final Check: Figures of Speech

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.

Authors often use figures of speech, and a(n) (1) \_\_\_\_\_ reader should be able to perceive and analyze these expressions. But figurative language is not the (2) \_\_\_\_\_ of only professional writers; fledgling<sup>o</sup> student writers are entitled to use it too. Here are a few examples.

(3) \_\_\_\_\_, or exaggeration, is a common figure of speech, as in "The lecturer never used a word with fewer than ten syllables." Meiosis, or understatement, is its opposite—when you get an A+ on a paper and say, "Not too bad." Simile and metaphor are very well-known. In a simile, you state a comparison: "Jane is as thin as a toothpick." In a metaphor, however, the comparison is not stated but (4) \_\_\_\_\_: "Jane is a toothpick."

We all use euphemism to avoid sounding (5) \_\_\_\_\_ or unfeeling: "Jane had a nervous breakdown" seems more sympathetic than "Jane went nuts." Dysphemism is the opposite of euphemism: it means being harsher than necessary, often for a humorous effect, as when you call a child "the little monster." Dysphemism appears in many (6) \_\_\_\_\_ and slang expressions, such as "bad" (meaning *good*) and "crazy" (meaning *wonderful*). Another type of dysphemism is deliberately using a vulgar, (7) \_\_\_\_\_ expression—such as an obscenity in a formal setting—to jolt and shock the audience.

Thoughtful, (8) \_\_\_\_\_ use of figures of speech can improve your writing. But don't pepper your papers with them, and don't expect them to work miracles: they won't turn a flabby, desultory<sup>o</sup> paper into a sharp, (9) \_\_\_\_\_ one, and they won't make a dull, plodding paper effervescent<sup>o</sup>. There are many other figurative expressions. If this brief review (10) \_\_\_\_\_s your appetite for more, try looking up *oxymoron*, *onomatopoeia*, and *paronomasia*.

Scores Sentence Check 2 \_\_\_\_\_% Final Check \_\_\_\_\_%

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