GRE Vocabulary

In Practice

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The Ultimate Guide to SAT® Grammar & Workbook

The Critical Reader: The Complete Guide to SAT® Reading

(with Larry Krieger) SAT® Vocabulary: A New Approach

The Complete Guide to ACT® English

The Complete Guide to ACT® Reading

The Complete GMAT® Sentence Correction Guide

Table of Contents

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Introduction

Just as I was wrapping the first draft of this book, I had a couple of chance encounters that made me reconsider some of my assumptions about how students go about prepping for the revised GRE®. The first encounter occurred in, of all places, a clothing store. The clerk was young man in his early 20s; he was unusually outgoing and friendly, and he seemed determined to strike up a conversation. We exchanged pleasantries, and he asked me what I did for work. To my surprise, when I mentioned that I wrote test-prep books, his face lit up. "Ever write anything for the GRE?" he asked. Needles to say, that got my attention. As it turned out, he was planning to apply for his master's in Engineering. I told him about my almost-finished manuscript of this book. In turn, he told me about the vocabulary app he was using. I hadn't done much research on GRE apps, so I asked him whether the one he was using had been updated for the post-2012 test – that is, whether it was just designed to teach vocabulary, or whether it also covered the various types of applications. At this, he looked a bit confused, so I explained the ways in which vocabulary was tested on the current GRE as opposed to the pre-2012 version. What followed was a lively conversation about the state of standardized testing, and the attempts of various testing organizations to make their exams more "relevant." He struck me as very bright and curious, so I was surprised that he was unaware of the changes that had been made to the test. At the time, I assumed his situation was merely an anomaly.

Several weeks later, however, I had yet another encounter with a prospective graduate student, this one applying for Nursing. She had already taken the test, but like the previous student I had talked to, she had prepared for the vocabulary section by using an app to learn vocabulary. Although she had found the study process enjoyable, her verbal score had been middling.

Given that those two separate conversations had occurred by chance, at separate times, and with complete strangers, I started to wonder how many other students were studying for the GRE in a way that did not fully prepare them for the demands of the test. Ironically, it was only then, *after* I had finished writing hundreds of practice GRE vocabulary question, that I became fully aware of the need for a book devoted to strategy and practice, as opposed to a traditional vocabulary book with long lists of words and definitions.

Let me be clear: I am in no way denying the importance of studying vocabulary. If vocabulary is not your strong suit, or if you are not a native English speaker, then you may in fact need to spend a significant amount of time learning new words. The problem is that just memorizing dozens, or hundreds, or even thousands of definitions is probably not sufficient to ace to the fill-in-the-blank vocabulary portion of the current test. A colleague of mine used to describe the Math section of the pre-2016 SAT as a "math-flavored test," and I think it's equally appropriate to describe the GRE as a vocabulary-flavored one. (It's no coincidence that ETS produced both tests.)

So although a strong knowledge of challenging vocabulary is still necessary to excel on the GRE, the words themselves are only half the story. Text Completions and Sentence Equivalences are essentially miniature logic puzzles designed to test how well you can apply your vocabulary knowledge. The focus is much less on how many esoteric definitions you have learned (and, to be fair, some of the words on the old GRE were pretty esoteric) than on how well you can identify key information – that is, definitions and relationships between ideas – and use it to draw logical inferences. *As a result, the most challenging questions may sometimes not contain particularly difficult words at all.* To be properly prepared for these questions, you must become comfortable with a wide range of strategies, including reading forwards and backwards; navigating double negatives; distinguishing between positive/negative ideas and positive/negative words; identifying subtle context cues in the absence of clear transitions; working through blanks out of order; and resisting the tendency to make assumptions based on incomplete information. These are hardly things that can be learned from conventional vocabulary books.

The other reason that learning to work with Text Completions and Sentence Equivalences is so potentially valuable is that many sentences/passages essentially function as condensed versions of the types of arguments you will encounter on the passage-based reading: scholar x holds one view, whereas most other scholars hold an opposing view; scientist x went against the conventional wisdom and no one believed her, but now her views are becoming mainstream; new research shows that a once-controversial theory may in fact be correct, so people are beginning to take it seriously. Learning to identify the underlying structure and characteristics of these common argument "templates" can help you decipher longer, more complex passages more effectively elsewhere on the GRE. Not coincidentally, these correspond to the types of arguments you are likely to encounter on a regular basis in graduate school, regardless of your field of study. In that regard, it seems fair to call the GRE a relevant test.

~Erica Meltzer

Part 1

Question Types and Strategies

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In this section:

- Introduction to vocabulary question types
- General rules for working through questions
- Key transitional words and phrases
- Playing positive and negative
- Using prefixes and roots
- Guided practice questions
- High-frequency word lists

Overview of GRE Vocabulary Questions

There are two types of GRE fill-in-the blank vocabulary questions: Text Completions and Sentence Equivalences.

1) Text completions

Text Completions range from single sentences to short paragraphs and contain one, two, or three blanks. Answers can consist of either single words or short phrases.

When a sentence contains only one blank, you will be given five answer choices. When a sentence contains two or three blanks, you will be given six or nine choices respectively – three options for each blank.

While all of the answers must work together to produce a logical sentence or paragraph, each individual answer can be selected independently.

> The city of Genoa (i) _____ rapidly after its defeat at the battle of Chioggia in 1380, eventually losing its (ii) _____ and falling under foreign rule.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
(A) thrived	(D) autonomy
(B) declined	(E) uniqueness
(C) persevered	(F) urbanity

In the sentence above, choice (B), *declined*, is the only word consistent with the idea of defeat, so (B) is the logical answer for Blank (i). The selection of (B) does not, however, influence the letter of the correct answer for Blank (ii). (D), (E), and (F) must be considered separately.

For Blank (ii), the phrase *falling under foreign rule* indicates that Genoa was no longer independent, so the correct answer must mean something like independence. That is the definition of *autonomy*, so (D) is correct.

2) Sentence Equivalences

Sentence Equivalences consist of a single sentence with one blank and are accompanied by six answer choices. These questions ask you to identify two words that fit logically in the blank and that produce the same meaning when plugged into the sentence.

Although the correct words are usually synonyms, they can also have markedly different meanings. In case of the latter, you must make sure to focus on the overall meaning that results when the words are plugged in; you cannot focus on the independent meaning of the words themselves. It's a subtle distinction, and it can take a bit of wrangling to wrap your head around, so let's look at a sample of each scenario.

> Mostly known for his depictions of bustling London streets, Dickens was equally inspired by the far more _____ mountains of the Swiss countryside.
>
> [A] expansive
> [B] tranquil
> [C] lucid
> [D] serene
> [E] provincial
> [F] uncouth

The sentence sets up a contrast between the *bustling London streets* and *the far more _____ mountains of the Swiss countryside*. Logically, the blank must be filled with words indicating that the Swiss mountains were the opposite of the bustling city – something like calm or peaceful. *Tranquil* and *serene* are a close pair of synonyms meaning just that, so [B] and [D] are correct. Straightforward, right?

Now, however, consider this version of the question.

> Mostly known for his depictions of bustling London streets, Dickens was equally inspired by the far more _____ mountains of the Swiss countryside.
>
> [A] expansive
> [B] tranquil
> [C] lucid
> [D] bucolic
> [E] provincial
> [F] uncouth

This time, the answer choices include one option meaning calm/peaceful, but there is no longer a synonym for that word. As a result, the focus must shift to which other option creates the same basic meaning when it is plugged into the sentence. In this case, that word is *bucolic*, which means rustic, or related to country living. Although it does not have the exact same meaning as *tranquil*, it accurately conveys the idea that the Swiss mountains were the opposite of the bustling city. *Expansive* (large), *lucid* (clear), *provincial* (small-minded), and *uncouth* (rude, unrefined) all do not fit.

How to Work Through Vocabulary Questions

Although text completions and sentence equivalences do require slightly different approaches, there are nevertheless some basic strategies that apply to both question types and that you can use to reduce your chances of overlooking crucial information or making careless errors.

Note that these steps are useful even if you are a champion reader with a stellar vocabulary. To reiterate: GRE vocabulary questions, particularly two- and three-blank text completions, are also designed to test logical reasoning skills; as a result, sentences/passages can sometimes be quite confusing. It is likely that you will encounter questions in which you understand every single word but cannot seem to wrap your head around what the sentence or passage is actually *saying*. Working systematically ensures you do not inadvertently overlook key information, especially as questions become more challenging and you grow more fatigued. It also ensures you do not become overly dependent on the answer choices, which can sometimes mislead you.

To be clear, you will not always need to follow these steps strictly. When you are able to identify correct answers immediately and securely, there is absolutely no reason to spend time working meticulously through each aspect of the question. But that said, it is advisable to practice working through the steps even on easier questions, simply to get yourself into the habit of doing so. If you are accustomed to working by instinct and are suddenly confronted with a question you cannot answer that way, you are likely to freeze, or guess, or read the question repeatedly without really grasping what it's saying or how to begin answering it. If, on the other hand, you have already internalized a clear process for working through dense material, you are much less likely to fall into these sorts of traps on the actual exam.

1) Read the entire sentence or passage, from start to finish

This may sound like a very obvious piece of advice, but it's not nearly as obvious as you might imagine. It is very tempting to jump to plug in words as you read through the sentence, and in many cases you will in fact be given sufficient information to perform that step accurately.

In some instances, however, you may simply not have enough information to judge the meaning of a given word. Sometimes, a particular assumption may initially seem reasonable but will then be contradicted by information later on. If you've already started thinking in a particular direction, it is usually very difficult to stop and re-work through the question from scratch.

Moreover, without the full context, you are likely to overlook correct answers because you are trying to ascribe an inaccurate meaning to the sentence or passage. When you take the time to understand everything upfront, these errors typically decrease.

2) Identify key words or phrases

Sentences will always contain built-in clues to either the definition of the blank(s), or to the relationship between them. It is important that you identify these clues before plugging in your own words or consulting the answer choices.

Note that as questions become more challenging, key words and phrases tend to become less obvious. While easy questions often contain clear transitions such as *because* and *although*, which clearly indicate relationships between parts of the sentence, hard questions may sometimes contain no transition words at all. Instead, you will need to infer meanings and relationships based on a variety of subtler clues.

3) Plug in your own words, and jot them down

If one of the words you plugged in, or a close synonym, appears as an answer choice, you can pick that option confidently and ignore the other answers. Make sure to refer back to your notes, though! You do not want to spend time working carefully through a question, only to get sidetracked by plausible-sounding wrong answer.

Note that when a text completion contains multiple blanks, it may be easier to start with the second or third blank and work backwards. In some cases, you may not have enough information to answer the first blank upfront and will have no choice but to work from one or both of the later blanks.

Ideally, you should spend **no more than a couple of seconds** on this step. It doesn't matter if you scribble down an approximate definition or a very simple word. The point is to save time by getting a general idea of what belongs in the blanks, not to come up with the exact answers. If nothing comes to mind, jump to Step 4.

4) Play positive/negative

If you can't think up your own word, try to determine whether the words in the blanks are positive or negative. **If a blank is positive, draw a (+), e.g. B1+; if it's negative, draw a (–), e.g. B2 –. Do <u>not</u> rely on your memory.**

Working this way simplifies the process and prevents you from getting tangled up in nuances and connotations before it is necessary to do so.

Important: If you are unsure whether an answer could fit, keep it. Correct answers may involve words that sound odd to you, or that you would not think to use on your own. Likewise, you should never choose a word only because you know what it means, or eliminate a word because you do not know what it means (or sort of have a vague idea of what it maybe might kind of mean). Your knowledge of a word and your liking of how it sounds in context have zero bearing on whether that word is right or wrong. Zero.

5) Check the answers, in order

Unless you spot the correct answer immediately, in which case you can simply choose it and move on, you should initially consider the choices in order. Working this way keeps you thinking logically and systematically, whereas skipping around increases the chances that you'll miss important information.

If you are unsure of the meaning of a word, try to use roots to determine its meaning or "charge" – that is, whether it is positive or negative. (For a discussion of roots, see p. 21.)

6) Reread the question with the words plugged in

Even if you're certain about your answers, you should take the time to confirm that the words you chose truly do make sense in context of the entire sentence or paragraph. In complicated questions, it is all too easy to become confused and select a word that does not really fit. Plugging your choices back into the sentence or paragraph allows you to notice problems you didn't notice the first time around. In addition, you should double-check that your answers to Sentence Equivalences are, if not exact synonyms, at least somewhat close in meaning to one another.

And remember: what you don't know might not matter.

One of the challenges of GRE vocabulary questions is that despite their relative compactness, they can contain a considerable amount of information – some of which is relevant to the answer(s) and some of which is not. It is of course true that in some cases, you will need to know the definitions of challenging words within the sentence or passage itself in order to answer the question. Other times, however, the question may provide sufficient information for you to make very reasonable assumptions, even if you do not know the exact definition of every word.

For example:

> Scott Turow's courtroom thrillers are famed for their **visceral** appeal:
> their thrilling and suspenseful plots often _____ intense emotions.

If you don't know what *visceral* means, your first reaction upon reading the sentence might be to pause and turn the word over in your mind, searching for a definition and worrying that you are missing an important piece of information.

While this is an understandable reaction, it is also one that will cost you precious time and prevent you from focusing on what you do know. In this case, the phrase *thrilling and suspenseful plots* is more than enough to tell you that the blank must be filled with a word meaning something like provoke or stimulate. The meaning of *visceral* is irrelevant.

In the following pages, we're going to look at a variety of strategies for further breaking down questions and working through them as effectively as possible.

Using Transition Words to Predict Meanings

Whenever you read a sentence or passage, you should always be on the lookout for **transition words**: words that indicate logical relationships between parts of a sentence.

Transitions fall into three main categories: continuers, cause-and-effect words, and contradictors.

1) Continuers are words that indicate an idea is continuing in the direction it began.

Common examples include *and*, *also*, *in addition*, *furthermore*, *moreover*, and *likewise*.

When continuers appear, the correct answer will most likely express the same idea as another key word or phrase in the sentence/passage. In some cases, it may be a synonym for the key word or phrase, while in others it may be a more extreme form.

For example:

> One of the (i) _____ types of grain, sorghum can withstand harsh
> conditions and is especially important in regions where <u>soil is poor</u> **and**
> resources are (ii) _____.

Let's just focus on the second blank. The fact that the continuer *and* links the blank to the phrase *soil is poor* tells us that the correct word must be consistent with the idea of harsh conditions and poor soil. We might plug in something like *scarce*.

2) Cause, effect, and **explanation** words indicate that someone or something is causing a particular result, or explain why an action is occurring.

Common examples includes *so*, *therefore*, *thus*, *hence*, *because*, *as a result*, and *consequently*.

In addition, **colons** and **dashes** are also commonly used to signal explanations.

For example:

> The first astronauts were required to undergo <u>mental</u> evaluation before their
> flight **because** the _____ danger inherent in space travel was judged
> to be as important as the physiological one.

The transition *because* indicates that the blank must be filled with a word related to the idea of mental evaluation – it must mean something like *psychological*.

3) Contradictors introduce opposing or contradictory information.

Common examples include *but*, *yet*, *however*, *nevertheless*, *although*, and *despite*.

When these words appear, you need to look for **antonyms** for other key words in the sentence, or for words that contrast with other key words in the sentence.

For example:

> **Although** the southern part of Tunisia is covered by the <u>Sahara Desert</u>, the remaining areas of the country contain exceptionally _____ soil and hundreds of miles of coastline.

The contradictor *although* indicates that the two parts of the sentence contain opposite ideas, and *Sahara Desert* tells us that the word in the blank must mean the opposite of dry or barren. We might plug in *healthy* or *good*.

The chart on the following page provides an extensive list of the key transitional words and phrases you are likely to encounter in both Text Completions and Sentence Equivalences.

Common Transitional Words and Phrases

Continuers	Cause-and-Effect	Contradictors
Add Information	Accordingly	Alternately
Also	As a result	Alternatively
And	As such	(Al)though
Furthermore	Because	But
In addition	Consequently	Despite
Moreover	Hence	Even so
	Since	Even though
Give Example	So	For all*
For example	Therefore	However
For instance	Thus	In contrast
		In spite of
Define		Instead
That is		Meanwhile
		Nevertheless
Emphasize		On the contrary
Even		On the other hand
In fact		Otherwise
Indeed		Rather
Not only…but also		Still
		Whereas
Compare		While
Just as		Yet
Likewise		
Similarly		

*Note that *for all* is one of the most commonly misunderstood transitional phrases. It means despite.

You should also be aware that the phrase *all but* means essentially, not everything except.

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure involves the repetition of a particular grammatical structure within a sentence or series of sentences, and is typically used to indicate that particular elements are of equal importance.

When vocabulary questions involve parallelism, the structure of the sentence indicates the definitions of the words in the blanks.

For example:

> The new translation is both (i) _____ and (ii) _____: it captures the clarity of the original without sacrificing any of its subtlety or complexity.

The colon indicates that the second half of the sentence explains the first half. The two blanks linked by *and* in the first half of the sentence must mirror the two ideas in the second half. Blank (i) = clarity, Blank (ii) = subtlety and complexity.

Alternately, the sentence could be phrased in this way:

> Because it captures the clarity of the original without sacrificing any of its subtlety or complexity, the new translation has been praised not only for its (i) _____ but also for its (ii) _____.

In this case, the structure is reversed, but the logic is the same. Because the first half of the sentence presents the ideas of clarity and subtlety, in that order, the two blanks in the second half must follow the same structure.

Double Negatives

One common point of confusion in determining blanks' charge involves double negatives. When a negative word, e.g. *impossible*, is paired with an additional negation, e.g. *not*, a **positive idea** is created. For example, not impossible = possible.

In such cases you must be able to keep track of the distinction between the charge of the words themselves and the idea that they convey.

For example:

> Although the logistical challenges and colossal amounts of capital involved in introducing cleaner forms of energy can make such transitions slow and difficult to implement, these factors are **<u>unlikely to preclude</u>** next-generation technologies from playing a _____ role in the United States economy before 2050.

The first half of the sentence indicates that using clean energy is very difficult and expensive. That's a negative idea.

Now, the contradictor *although* indicates that the second half of the sentence must contain a positive idea. That is extremely important to keep in mind because the information immediately before the blank contains a double negative: **un**likely to preclude.

Preclude = prevent, so *unlikely to preclude* = unlikely to prevent.

In other words, the sentence is talking about a situation that IS likely to occur: clean energy will probably play an in important role in the US economy by the year 2050. Blank (i) must thus be filled with a positive word meaning something like important. Although the words used to indicate that meaning are negative, the idea itself is positive.

Second Meanings

One other factor you should keep in mind as you look at answer choices is that you are likely to encounter a variety of common words used in their second or third meaning, e.g. *bent* used to mean inclination, or *table* to mean discontinue.

While these words may or may not be correct when they appear as answer choices, you should not be too quick to discount them. If a word seems too simple to appear on the GRE, chances are it's being used in an alternate definition.

Remember that the goal of the GRE is not primarily to test complicated and obscure vocabulary. On the contrary, ETS deliberately aims to test a variety of types of words. Not all of those words conform to the stereotype of what constitutes a "GRE word," and some of them are unlikely to be found on most traditional vocabulary lists.

For an extensive list of common second meanings, see p. 70.

Using Roots to Make Educated Guesses

In some cases, a familiarity with roots can allow you to make educated guesses about the meanings of words and quickly identify answers likely to be correct. In fact, learning how to take words apart in order to make reasonable assumptions about their meanings is just as important as learning a lot of vocabulary words. If you've simply memorized dozens of definitions, you'll have no way of figuring out whether an unfamiliar word fits or not and will be much less certain about the answer you choose. Knowing how the components of a word can reveal its meaning gives you much more flexibility and control, which in turn can boost your confidence.

If you've studied a Romance language to a high level, you will be at a significant advantage because many of the words on the GRE have Latin and Greek roots. English words that would be considered fairly esoteric by most Americans are often similar to extremely common French and Spanish and Italian words. For example, people generally don't go around saying *arboreal* in English, but if you know that *arbre*, *arbòl*, or *albero* means tree, you can probably figure out that *arboreal* has something to do with trees.

Likewise, the definition of a word like *concatenation* is essentially the sum of its parts: the prefix CON- means with, and *catena* means chain in Italian. So *concatenation* literally means with a chain. And indeed, a concatenation is a series of linked things or events.

The charts beginning on p. 58 provide an extensive list of common roots that you are likely to encounter on the GRE.

Let's look at an example:

> Because he has authored numerous books that draw upon a wide range of fields, including many that he has never formally studied, Jared Diamond has earned a reputation as _____.

| (A) an autodidact |
| (B) a pedant |
| (C) a polymath |
| (D) an iconoclast |
| (E) a pioneer |

It's relatively easy to figure out that the word in the blank goes along with the idea of doing a lot of different things: Diamond has written books in a <u>wide range of fields</u>, including <u>many</u> that he has never formally studied.

If you know that the root POLY- means many, you can make a very educated guess that (C) is correct, even if you do not know the meanings of the other answers. The question is essentially testing your ability to make a reasonable assumption based on an understanding of how words are constructed.

One more:

> In his paintings, Edvard Munch (i) _____ outside influences with his own original visions, blurring the line between originality and (ii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
(A) synthesized	(D) verisimilitude
(B) defiled	(E) iconoclasm
(C) acclimated	(F) mimesis

The key phrase *blurring the line* indicates that Munch's work integrated or blended outside works with his own original visions, so Blank (i) must be a synonym for one of those terms. That points directly to (A).
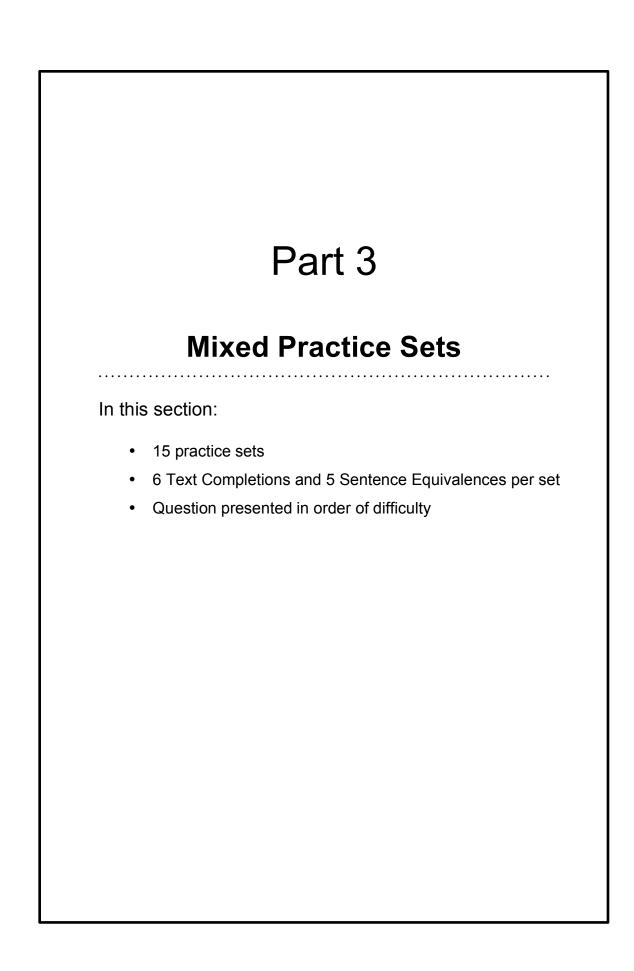
For Blank (ii), however, things are less straightforward. The correct word must mean the opposite of originality, something like copying, but the answers are more challenging. This is where roots are useful.

VER- means truth, which is exactly the opposite of what you want. *Iconoclasm* (attacking accepted norms) may be associated with artists, but it does not fit in context. This answer plays on associative interference, a phenomenon in which the mind creates an unsupported connection between two loosely related ideas. *Mimesis*, however, contains the root MIM-, which is like *mimic* or *mime*. That fits, so (F) is correct.

One potential **difficulty** that can arise when working with roots involves linguistic "drift:" words that have evolved to mean something different from what their components would suggest.

For every straightforward relationship between a word and its subparts, e.g. *implacable* (unforgiving, unappeasable: IM-, not + PLAC-, peace), there is a word whose definition is more than the sum of its components, e.g. *obdurate* (stubborn: OB-, against + DUR-, hard). Furthermore, two roots may be written identically but have different meanings, e.g. PED- can mean either child or foot.

Roots thus tend to be more reliable for playing positive/negative than for determining actual meanings. For example, the jump from *obdurate* to *stubborn* might be too large, but the prefix OB- clearly points to a negative word. Sometimes, just knowing a word's charge may be enough to get you to the answer.

Part 3

Mixed Practice Sets

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In this section:

- 15 practice sets
- 6 Text Completions and 5 Sentence Equivalences per set
- Question presented in order of difficulty

Set 1

1. In the past, maps often reflected the diverse perspectives of their creators, but the use of computers and satellites to ensure accuracy has in recent years rendered them increasingly _____.

(A) complex
(B) sleek
(C) uniform
(D) colorful
(E) eclectic

2. In spite of his role as the head of an international fashion empire, Christian Fabré leads _____ existence, subsisting on only the most basic necessities.

(A) a serene
(B) an eccentric
(C) a staid
(D) an ostentatious
(E) an ascetic

3. The scientist's work, once widely praised for its precision and attention to detail, is now being (i) _____ in some quarters as the (ii) _____ of shoddiness.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
(A) ransacked	(D) bane
(B) pilloried	(E) epitome
(C) extolled	(F) antithesis

4. Accused of (i) _____ by members of the opposing party, the candidate refused to   admit to any form of wrongdoing and in fact protested that she had always been entirely (ii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
(A) punctiliousness	(D) terse
(B) waffling	(E) thorough
(C) obfuscation	(F) frank

5. To be accepted as a (i) _____, a theory must seem superior to its competitors, but it need not, and in fact never does, (ii) _____ all the facts with which it could possibly be (iii) _____.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
(A) conviction	(D) abide by	(G) subsumed
(B) paradigm	(E) account for	(H) confronted
(C) consequence	(F) relate to	(J) entertained

6. Economists say years of economic mismanagement have (i) _____ the nation's food supply. Sugar fields in the country's agricultural center remain (ii) _____ for lack of fertilizers, and unused machinery decays in shuttered factories. Staples including corn and rice, once exported, must now be imported, arriving in quantities that persistently (iii) _____ what is needed.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
(A) confounded	(D) overrun	(G) measure up to
(B) girded	(E) unwieldy	(H) double down on
(C) devastated	(F) fallow	(J) fall short of

7. The association between meditation and mindfulness naturally leads the two terms to be frequently _____ when in fact they are distinct.

[A] conflated
[B] divulged
[C] explained
[D] defined
[E] confused
[F] qualified

8. Recent studies suggest that many cases of cancer are preventable, but this revelation has inflamed as much as it has _____ people's fears.

[A] stoked
[B] assuaged
[C] revealed
[D] alleviated
[E] compelled
[F] aggravated

9. Because antibiotics are only used for a short time, there is little market incentive for pharmaceutical companies to develop new ones; the market value of a brand-new antibiotic is just $50 million, _____ sum for a company, considering the research and development costs incurred by the creation of such treatments.

[A] a staggering
[B] an unfathomable
[C] a manageable
[D] an impressive
[E] a meager
[F] a paltry

10. Citrus greening, thought to be caused by the bacterium *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*, is capable of _____ entire groves in only a few months and has become a scourge for orange growers throughout much of southeastern United States.

[A] obliterating
[B] anchoring
[C] fortifying
[D] decimating
[E] penetrating
[F] surrounding

11. Saul Bellow's early novels were perspicacious if rarely _____: they reflected his keen sense of observation but were entirely lacking in economy of expression.

[A] lucid
[B] prolix
[C] succinct
[D] inane
[E] facetious
[F] laconic

Explanations: Set 1

1. C

The sentence sets up a contrast between the *diverse perspectives* represented by maps in the past, and the increasingly _____ quality of maps today. Logically, the blank must be filled with a word meaning the opposite of diverse. Only *uniform* (alike, standardized) fits that requirement exactly, making (C) the answer. *Eclectic* is a synonym for *diverse*, and none of the other choices makes sense in context.

2. E

The key phrase is *subsisting on only the most basic necessities*, which indicates that Fabré leads an extraordinarily plain lifestyle, despite his position. The blank must therefore be filled with a word meaning something similar to plain or basic. *Staid* (conventional) clearly does not fit, and *ostentatious* (showy) means exactly the opposite of the required word. Although a lifestyle that does not include many possessions could be very *serene*, it would not necessarily have this quality. While *eccentric* could justifiably be used to describe the head of an international fashion empire who spurns all luxuries, the most direct match for the clue is *ascetic*, which means practicing extreme self-denial. (E) is thus correct.

3. B, E

The statement that the scientist's work was *once widely praised for its attention to detail* implies that this is no longer the case, and that the work is now characterized by its *shoddiness* (poor quality). Blank (i) should therefore be filled with a negative word meaning attacked or criticized. *Ransacked* (plundered) is negative but can only refer to a physical action and cannot refer to criticism. *Extolled* (praised) is positive and clearly does not fit. That leaves *pilloried* (ridiculed, derided), which logically describes the reaction against a scientist accused of doing shoddy work. (B) is thus the answer to Blank (i).

The meaning of Blank (ii) is less clear, but the correct word must indicate an association between the scientist's work and shoddiness. *Bane* (cause of distress) does not fit; the sentence is saying that the work *is* shoddy, not that it ruins shoddiness. And *Antithesis* (opposite) implies that the scientist's work is not shoddy. However, work that was the *epitome* (essence) of shoddiness would draw criticism. (E) is thus the answer to Blank (ii).

4. C, F

The fact that the politician was *accused* of something, and that she would not *admit to any form of wrongdoing* indicates that Blank (i) must be filled with a negative word. *Punctiliousness* (meticulousness) is not a notably negative quality in a politician, so this answer can be eliminated. *Waffling* (wavering, being indecisive) is a plausible answer, but there is no option for Blank (ii) that means decisive. *Obfuscation* (covering up) fits and is the only option that has a direct opposite for Blank (ii): someone accused of presenting the issues in an unclear/confusing way would logically protest by claiming that she had been clear and direct, i.e. *frank*. (C) is thus the answer to Blank (i), and (F) is the answer to Blank (ii).

5. B, E, H

The fact that *a theory must seem superior to its competitors* is presented as a condition for Blank (i), indicating that the blank must be filled with a positive word meaning something like fact. It would not make sense to say that a theory must outdo its competitors in order to be accepted as a *conviction* or a *consequence*; however, a theory that was clearly superior to rival theories would logically be accepted as a *paradigm* (model). (B) is thus the answer to Blank (i).

The sentence does not provide any direct information about the definitions of Blanks (ii) and (iii), although the contradictor *but* does indicate that the second half of the sentence will convey an idea that contrasts with the idea in the first half of the sentence. Since the first half of the sentence focuses on what a theory must do right to be accepted (be better than other theories), the second half must discuss what it does not need to do nearly as well. Given that context, *account for* and *confronted* create the most logical meaning when plugged into the sentence: although a theory must provide the most convincing explanation for a phenomenon in order to be accepted as a standard model, it need not be perfect or absolutely comprehensive – that is, a theory need not take into consideration (*account for*) every fact that is related to it, or that could *confront* it. (E) is thus the answer to Blank (ii), and (H) is the answer to Blank (iii).

6. C, F, J

If the country has been mismanaged economically for years, then presumably the nation's food supply has declined. *Confounded* (confused) makes no sense, and *girded* (supported) means exactly the opposite of the required word. *Devastated* (utterly ruined) describes a result that years of economic mismanagement would logically have on the food supply, making (C) the answer to Blank (i).

For Blank (ii), if the country's food supplies have been destroyed, then the sugar fields must be empty or unproductive. A lack of fertilizers would not make the fields *overrun* or *unwieldy* (cumbersome, difficult to manage), but it would make them *fallow* (neglected).
Blank (iii) must be filled with a word reinforcing the idea that the country's food supply is lacking. Imports of staple items that *measure up to* or *double down on* (become more persistent in) what is needed would not lead to a food shortage, but ones that *persistently fall short* would indeed have that effect. (J) is thus the answer to Blank (iii).

7. A, E

The key phrase *when in fact they are distinct* sets up a contrast between that statement and the blank, implying that the terms *meditation* and *mindfulness* are frequently believed to mean the same thing. In other words, the terms are *confused* for one another, or *conflated* (combined into one). Although these two words are not exact synonyms, both convey the idea that the two words are considered interchangeable. None of the other answers creates a logical meaning that corresponds to the clues in the sentence. [A] and [E] are thus correct.

8. B, D

The construction *inflamed as much as it has _____* implies that the blank must be filled with words meaning the opposite of inflamed – something like calmed or soothed. *Assuaged* and *alleviated* both fit that definition, making [B] and [D] correct. *Stoked* (incited) and *aggravated* have similar meanings in this context, but both convey the opposite of the required definition. The remaining answers all do not make sense.

9. E, F

To say that there is *little market incentive for drug companies to develop new [drugs]* is another way of saying that new drugs don't make drug companies much money. Even though a $50 million market value might seem large, the key word *just* implies that this figure is actually quite small. The blank must therefore be filled with words similar to small. *Staggering*, *unfathomable*, and *impressive* would all more logically be used to describe a very large sum, so these words can be eliminated. *Manageable* does not fit because a sum that is *manageable* is one that can be afforded, and here the focus is on how much new antibiotics are worth to drug companies, not how much they can afford to pay. This word also has a more positive connotation than what is required here. In contrast, an antibiotic whose worth was *meager* or *paltry* (scanty, insignificant) would not be of very much value to a drug company at all. [E] and [F] are thus correct.

10. A, D

The fact that citrus greening is caused by a *bacterium* and has become a *scourge* (pest, affliction) suggests that is very bad for orange growers indeed. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the blank should be filled with negative words. *Anchoring* makes no sense, and the definition of *fortifying* (strengthening) is the opposite of what is required. *Penetrating* and *surrounding* could both plausibly fit, but neither of these words has a close synonym among the other choices. The correct answers, *obliterating* and *decimating*, refer to the act of destroying something thoroughly. Logically, citrus greening would be considered a scourge if it thoroughly destroyed citrus groves, making [A] and [D] correct.

11. C, F

Watch out for the negative – the blank must be filled with words describing a quality that Bellow's novels *rarely* possessed. The key information comes after the colon, with the two pieces of information running parallel to the two descriptors before the colon: *perspicacious* (perceptive) = keen sense of observation, and the blank = *entirely lacking in economy of expression*. *Economy of expression* means not using a lot of words (*economy* = thrift), so to say that a book lacks economy of expression is a fancy way of saying that it is wordy. The sentence, however, asks for words indicating what Bellow's works are NOT – that is, the opposite of wordy. The opposite of wordy is concise, i.e. *succinct* or *laconic*. *Prolix* means wordy, and the other answers do not make sense in context.