

Vocabulary



Topics Include:

Overview of Language, Analyzing Word Parts,
Commonly Confused Words, Word Origins, Reference
Books, Topical Vocabulary, Synonyms and Antonyms

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INTRODUCTION



Building a good vocabulary doesn't mean memorizing long lists of difficult words. It doesn't mean spending long hours reading a dictionary, either. Your everyday activities present plenty of opportunities to increase your word power.

The benefits of having the "right" words at your command are obvious. People who can express themselves with precision and grace have a clear advantage over those who can't. They can count on themselves to speak confidently and write with self-assurance. In competitive situations at school or on the job, language skills are an enormous asset. In personal and social situations, the ability to communicate your needs, thoughts, and feelings can make your relationships stronger and your life less stressful.

The instruction in this book will give you access to hundreds of new and interesting words. As you complete each lesson, try to integrate as many words as you can into your speech and writing. While no amount of practice can promise *perfection*, practice does guarantee improvement! And remember that the best word to use is not necessarily long or fancy; it's the one that conveys the exact meaning you intend. Careful attention as you work your way through this book is a wise investment in your future as a "great communicator"!

1

VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

Vocabulary skill is based on a clear understanding of language itself. The language you use must be appropriate to the situation. Think about it. Would you dress for a job interview in the clothes you wore to clean the garage? Would you polish your shoes before going to the beach, or wear your favorite torn sweatshirt to a formal reception? Appropriate language is like appropriate clothing. It shows that you understand the requirements of different occasions and circumstances.

Two major categories of English are called *standard* and *substandard*. *Standard English* is the language of educated people—those who know and follow the conventional rules of grammar and usage.

Substandard English, which usually breaks accepted rules in the use of pronouns and certain verb forms, is associated with the uneducated.

EXAMPLES: **STANDARD:** I saw that movie. **He and I are friends.**
 SUBSTANDARD: I seen that movie. **Him and me are friends.**

A

Write **S** or **SS** to show whether each sentence below is written in *standard English* or *substandard English*.

1. _____ Dizzy Dean, once a great pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals, was famous for using substandard speech.
2. _____ Dizzy's brother Paul was also a pitcher for the Cards.
3. _____ "A teacher wrote to say that she don't like the way I talk," said Dizzy.
4. _____ "She don't want me to say that a runner *slud* into second base."
5. _____ "What does she want me to say—*slided*?"
6. _____ "Me and Paul don't like to worry about that sort of stuff," said Dizzy.



B

Rewrite the sentences in standard English.

1. I noticed you was late getting home last night.

2. Haven't you got no respect for the house rules?

3. Dad don't like you staying out after midnight.

4. If Dad catches you hisself, you'll be grounded!

There are different forms of standard English. The two most important varieties are *formal* and *informal*. Formal English is used for serious purposes: research papers, literary essays, important speeches, and essay questions on exams. Characteristics of formal English include the following:

- Sentences are very carefully constructed.
- rarely contains slang
- uses words not common in everyday speech and writing
- avoids the use of contractions

Most of the time, educated people use informal language. Whether written or spoken, their sentences sound more like conversation than like lines from a formal speech. Newspapers, magazines, novels, and business letters are written in informal English. Characteristics of informal English include the following:

- includes both long and short sentences
- uses contractions
- uses vocabulary that is clear and simple rather than elegant
- uses limited slang

C

Read each pair of words. Circle the *formal* word and underline the *informal* word.

1. kids children

5. rich prosperous

2. colleagues coworkers

6. aspirations goals

3. started originated

7. balance moderation

4. propose suggest

8. assert say

2

MATCHING WORDS TO THE OCCASION

Long, difficult words are not necessarily the *best* words for all occasions. Effective communicators understand the difference between simple, everyday speech and what is called the “King’s English.”

A

Which kind of English is appropriate in each situation below?

Write *formal* or *informal* on the lines.

1. a thank you note for a gift:

2. a letter to the PTA:

3. a legal document:

4. a classroom discussion:

5. an academic journal article:

6. a newspaper article:

B

Practice writing sentences in both formal and informal English. If the sentence is written in formal English, rewrite it in informal English. If the language is informal, rewrite it in formal language. As an example, the first sentence has been done for you.

1. Van’s lame suggestion was probably a put-on.

Van’s unworkable suggestion was likely meant as a joke.

2. An overly intensive study schedule may adversely affect your social aspirations.

3. Great Britain’s royals packed the room at the uppercrust charity bash.

4. Persistent procrastination before studying is a self-indulgence students can ill afford.

PARTS OF SPEECH

3

All words are classified as one of eight *parts of speech*: adjective, adverb, conjunction, interjection, noun, preposition, pronoun, or verb.

Nouns, pronouns, and verbs are the most important parts of speech. Why? Because you need a noun or a pronoun, along with a verb, to make a sentence.

Nouns are words that name people, places, and things.

EXAMPLES: *Vanessa street government engine honesty*

Pronouns are words used in place of nouns.

EXAMPLES: *she I you its them their our mine*

Verbs are words that express action or being in the past, present, or future.

EXAMPLES: *walk, walked, will walk am, was, have been*

A

Circle the word that is the part of speech listed in *boldface*.

1. **noun** why often boulder us
2. **verb** shook rotten quickly therefore
3. **pronoun** cape believed me wished

Adjectives add to the meaning of nouns or pronouns by telling *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many*.

EXAMPLES: *that pencil red car three boys*

Adverbs add to the meaning of verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs by telling *how*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *to what degree*.

EXAMPLES: *cried loudly almost dark very happy
arrived early come here still waiting*

B

In each sentence, underline the *adjective* and circle the *adverb*.

1. Six hens clucked softly.
2. The hog is very fat.
3. That cow eats lazily.
4. Never tease wild animals.
5. Tiny mice scurry quickly.
6. Those birds fly high.

4

USING PARTS OF SPEECH

A

Use words from the box to complete the sentences.

proverbs	never	clever	some	saves	strange	you
stitches	always	dense	nine	wastes	old	them
remember	kindly	their	me	we	explain	it

- An _____ (ADJECTIVE) proverb advises that “a stitch in time _____ (VERB) nine.”
- I may be _____ (ADJECTIVE), but I’ve _____ (ADVERB) been sure about what that saying means.
- Do _____ (PRONOUN) understand _____ (PRONOUN)?
- Does the “stitch in time” save _____ (ADJECTIVE) minutes or nine more _____ (NOUN)?
- Will you _____ (ADVERB) _____ (VERB) it to _____ (PRONOUN)?

B

Give your own examples of each part of speech.

- nouns _____
- verbs _____
- pronouns _____
- adjectives _____
- adverbs _____

C

Read what four famous writers had to say about the importance of words. Then identify the called-for parts of speech in each quotation. Write the words on the lines.

1. *Words form the thread upon which we hang our experiences.*
—Aldous Huxley

two verbs _____

two pronouns _____

2. *One's vocabulary needs constant fertilization or it will die.*
—Evelyn Waugh

two nouns _____

two verbs _____

one adjective _____

3. *The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—'tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.*
—Mark Twain

three adjectives _____

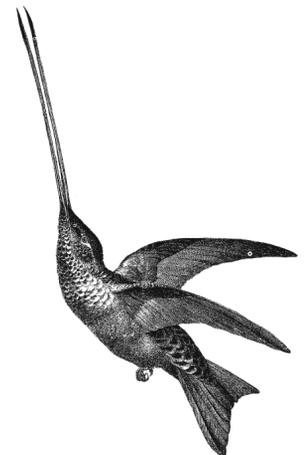
five nouns _____

one adverb _____

4. *Words are the hummingbirds of the imagination.*
—Elbert Hubbard

three nouns _____

one verb _____



1**UNIT REVIEW**

A Rewrite *only* the sentences that are written in substandard English. If the sentence is written in standard English, write *correct*.

1. Ms. Haworth never makes no mistakes in grammar.

2. Leticia and Esther are our two best debaters.

3. I and Collette was chosen to be co-captains.

4. Marty run into Kevin at the dance last night.

5. Andrew's scholarship was the result of hard work.

B Write *I* or *F* next to each phrase to show whether it is an example of *formal* or *informal* English.

1. _____ fortuitous circumstances

4. _____ a crying shame

2. _____ a lucky break

5. _____ a favorable omen

3. _____ inevitable consequences

6. _____ couldn't care less

C Write *noun*, *pronoun*, *verb*, *adjective*, or *adverb* to identify the words in each group. Hint: You will write one part of speech twice.

1. slowly, well, somewhat:

4. exploded, does, thinks:

2. wheat, Idaho, community:

5. eleven, bald, dangerous:

3. us, you, themselves:

6. loyalty, conscience, vapor:
