

Vocabulary Booster, Volume I

ABASH (v.) to make embarrassed or ashamed

A bashful person is easily abashed.

ABORIGINAL (adj.) original

The aboriginal people of Australia are known as Aborigines.

ABRIDGE (v.) to shorten something, especially a literary or artistic work

A bridge can abridge the distance between two points.

ABSTAIN (v.) to hold back from, refuse to participate in, refrain from

Abby did not want to stain her new shoes, so she abstained from running through the muddy field.

ACRIMONIOUS (adj.) bitter, vengeful

A criminal made an acrimonious attack on the judge who had sentenced him to a lengthy prison sentence.

ACRID (adj.) bitter, pungent

Acid often has an acrid odor.

ACUTE (adj.) sharp, perceptive

Because pigeons have a very accurate sense of direction, we can say their sense of direction is acute

ADEPT (adj.) skillful

Chameleons are adept at adapting to their surroundings.

ADHERE (v.) to stick to

Adhesive tape will help a poster adhere to the wall.

ADORN (v.) to decorate

She adorned the Christmas tree by adding ornaments to it.

ADROIT (adj.) skillful, adept

People in Detroit are adroit at building cars.

ADULATION (n.) praise, respect, admiration

Many young children look on their parents with a certain amount of adulation.

AESTHETIC (adj.) pertaining to a sense of beauty

Figure skating is both athletic and aesthetic.

AFFABLE (adj.) friendly, personable, easy to get along with

Affable people are able to laugh with you, not at you.

AGRARIAN (adj.) having to do with agriculture
Many vegetarians are very interested in agrarian policy.

ALOOF (adj.) shy, reserved, removed, tending to remain apart
When I feel aloof, I go up alone to the roof.

ALTRUISTIC (adj.) unselfish, generous, concerned about the well-being of others
Mrs. Gore thinks her husband Al is truly altruistic and deserves to be the president.

AMEND (v.) to change, revise, fix
If you want to mend the constitution, you must amend it with an amendment.

AMIABLE (adj.) friendly, personable
Amy is able to be friends with almost anyone because she is so amiable.

ALLURE (n.) pull, attraction
A fishing lure is designed to have a certain allure for fish.

AMASS (v.) to gather, accumulate
Arnold Schwarzenegger has amassed a mass of massive muscles.

AMBIDEXTROUS (adj.) able to use both hands equally well
Dexter is ambidextrous, and he can throw the ball either lefty or righty with great dexterity.

AMPLE (adj.) sufficient, enough, more than enough
That large amplifier should provide ample sound for the concert tonight.

ANARCHY (n.) breakdown or lack of rule or government, chaos
If the monarchy ever falls in Britain, some wonder whether anarchy will result.

ANATHEMA (n.) a curse, something hated
Asthma is regarded as anathema by aspiring athletes.

ANNUL (v.) to make null and void
To annul a marriage is to make it null and void.

ANOINT (v.) to officially approve, consecrate
In the days of old, kings and queens were often anointed with a special ointment on their foreheads.

ANTAGONIST (n.) a person with a determined opposition or hatred toward someone
The antagonist of a novel is usually a source of agony for the hero, who is known as the protagonist.

ANTIQUATED (adj.) old- fashioned, antique-like
All antiques are, by definition, antiquated.

APPEASE (v.) to soothe, calm, put at ease
An apple can appease an angry teacher.

APPRISE (v.) to notify, inform
Publishers' Clearing House will apprise you if you win a prize in their sweepstakes.

ARDUOUS (adj.) hard, difficult, exhausting
A task that is arduous is hard for us.

ASCERTAIN (v.) to uncover and verify, to make certain
If a detective wants to be as certain as possible about a case, he must accurately ascertain what happened.

ASCETIC (adj.) self-denying, devoted to simple and austere living
Many marathon runners are, by nature, both athletic and ascetic.

BOORISH (adj.) offensive, rude
I believe that fans who do nothing but boo are boorish.

BRAZEN (adj.) brash, extremely bold
It would be very brazen of that raisin to try to pass for a prune.

BREVITY (n.) shortness, the quality of being brief
When you abbreviate something, you give it brevity.

BUCOLIC (adj.) of or pertaining to the countryside, pastoral
Broccoli and cauliflower both grow well in bucolic settings.

BUREAUCRACY (n.) a large institution with many complex regulations
The Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI, is one of the largest bureaucracies in our democracy.

CANDOR (n.) honesty, straight talk
Because that manager always speaks with candor, he can leave the door to his office open at all times.

CARDINAL (adj.) main, most important
Bird lovers believe that it would be a cardinal sin to shoot a cardinal.

CELIBATE (adj.) remaining pure, refraining from sexual intercourse
Those who wish to live a celibate life will likely never celebrate their day of marriage.

CHAGRIN (n.) shame, embarrassment

The Grinch's grin of satisfaction changed to one of chagrin when he realized that the people of Whoville still planned to celebrate Christmas despite his efforts to stop them.

CHASTE (adj.) pure

In the middle ages, European women often were forced to wear chastity belts to ensure that they remained chaste while their husbands were off at war.

CLANDESTINE (adj.) secretive, hidden

Scottish clans often met clandestinely to plan their destiny against their English foes.

COMPRISE (v.) to consist of, include

The winners at the Olympics get prizes that are comprised of gold, silver, or bronze.

CONDESCEND (v.) to lower oneself; to patronize

Connie, a true gourmet, would never condescend to eat at a fast-food restaurant.

CONFIDANT (n.) a person with who one can share a secret

You can always confide in your confidant, who will surely keep matters confidential.

CONGENIAL (adj.) pleasant, friendly

Barbara Eden, in the Classic TV sitcom "I Dream of Jeannie," was a most congenial genie.

CONSECRATE (v.) to make sacred

It was a sacred day when the bishop consecrated the new cathedral.

CONTRITE (adj.) apologetic, begging forgiveness

Those who are contrite about their sins often perform acts of contrition.

COSMOPOLITAN (adj.) worldly, having wide interests

Many women who read Cosmopolitan magazine hope that they will become more cosmopolitan in their outlook on life.

COUP (n.) a personal victory acquired in a single stroke, major accomplishment

The rooster considered it quite a coup when he managed to fly the coop.

CULPABLE (adj.) guilty

The culprit who robbed the bank is culpable of the crime.

DELETERIOUS (adj.) harmful

Drinking enough coffee to make you delirious is probably deleterious to your health.

DESPONDENT (adj.) downhearted, dejected

The correspondent was despondent and in despair when the editor refused to run her story.

DIRGE (n.) music for a funeral procession
I get the urge to cry whenever I hear a dirge

DISCLOSE (v.) to open, admit, reveal
Because the chef did not want to disclose the recipe for his secret sauce, he kept his mouth closed on the subject.

DISSIDENT (n.) one who opposes
Most dissidents tend to dissent from the official viewpoint.

DISTRAUGHT (adj.) overcome by grief or despair
The thief was distraught when he was caught.

DOGMATIC (adj.) tending to hold very tightly to a belief or opinion
My dog is dogmatic in his refusal to let go of his bone.

EBB (v.) to lessen, recede
When Deb saw her latest report card sprinkled with D's, her spirit started to ebb.

ECLECTIC (adj.) diverse and wide-ranging in taste or choice
He likes to collect art of all different kinds, so his collection is quite eclectic.

ECCENTRIC (adj.) odd, unusual, strange (as applied to personal behavior)
One who displays eccentric behavior might be somewhat uncentered.

ELEGY (adj.) poem or song expressing grief
The organist played a mournful yet elegant elegy at the funeral mass.

EMBARGO (n.) ban on commerce or trade
Because of the Cuban embargo, the cargo of rum could not get through.

EMBELLISH (v.) to decorate, make more attractive
Some people like to embellish their frankfurters with relish.

EMINENT (adj.) well-known, having high standing
Eminem has become an eminent rap star seemingly overnight.

EMPATHY (n.) ability to identify with the feelings of another
Sympathy is usually a characteristic of those who have empathy.

ENIGMA (n.) a puzzle, mystery
To Winston Churchill, the Soviet Union was an enigma whose behavior was very enigmatic.

ENMITY (n.) mutual hatred, intense dislike
Some people have only enmity for their enemies.

ENTAIL (v.) to require
Winning at "pin the tail on the donkey" entails both concentration and luck.

EPITOME (n.) perfect example or embodiment
To me, Michael Jordan was the epitome of skill and grace on the basketball court.

ERRATIC (adj.) unpredictable, varied
Because Rick got either A's or F's on his tests, his teacher rated his performance as quite erratic.

ERRONEOUS (adj.) incorrect, mistaken
An error is, by definition, erroneous.

ESOTERIC (adj.) hard to understand, known only to a select few
Eric did so terribly on the vocabulary section, mainly because it was filled with rather esoteric words.

EULOGY (n.) words of praise (most commonly given at a funeral)
It is usually the job of the clergy to give the eulogy at a funeral.

EXACERBATE (v.) to make worse
When a coach berates his players' performance after a tough loss, he often just exacerbates the situation.

EXPUNGE (v.) to remove, cancel
The waitress expunged the spilled milk with a sponge.

EXTRICATE (v.) to remove from a difficult position, extract
One of Houdini's favorite tricks was to extricate himself from chains.

FAÇADE (n.) face, superficial appearance that is often false
Even though the runner-up in the Miss America pageant tried to put a smile on her face, I know it was just a façade.

FALLACIOUS (adj.) false, misleading
Something that is fallacious is always false.

FALLIBLE (adj.) open to error
Those who are fallible are likely, at times, to have a fall.

FASTIDIOUS (adj.) paying close attention to details
"Fast Eddie" is fastidious about keeping his car in tip-top shape.

FATALIST (n.) one who believes that life is largely predetermined and shaped by fate
A fatalist believes more heavily in fate than in free will, and thus lives life in a fatalistic fashion.

FEIGN (v.) to fake, pretend
Elaine feigned a pain in her stomach to get out of gym class.

FRACTIOUS (adj.) tending to misbehave, rowdy, unruly
Frank fractured several ribs in the fractious meeting with the rival gang.

FRENETIC (adj.) marked by frenzy
Frenzied energy is both frenetic and kinetic.

FRUGAL (adj.) interested in conserving money, thrifty, economical
Fred, who was quite frugal, bought a second-hand bugle.

GARISH (adj.) excessively bright, gaudy
Some guys cherish garish ties.

GENIAL (adj.) cheerful, friendly, kind
The genial genie granted me three wishes.

HACKNEYED (adj.) overused, unoriginal, trite
A hack writer tends to use hackneyed phrases.

HARBINGER (n.) a forerunner
Many think of the robin as a bringer, or harbinger, of spring.

HEDONIST (n.) a person who person who pursues pleasure above all else
Hedonists only pay heed to their own desires.

IMPECCABLE (adj.) faultless, perfect
Body builders are usually known for their impeccable pecs.

IMPERIOUS (adj.) arrogant, haughty
Many emperors of imperial Rome were known for their imperious behavior.

IMPLICIT (adj.) implied
Something that is implied is implicit, not explicit.

IMPUDENCE (n.) rudeness, brashness, impertinence
After he hit me with his banana, I thought that chimp had a lot of impudence.

IMPUNITY (n.) freedom from punishment
Because he had been granted immunity by the prosecutor, the cooperating witness gave the details of his life of crime with impunity.

INANE (adj.) stupid, pointless, absurd
Because he seemingly lacks a brain, most of the things that man says are both insane and inane.

INDIGENT (adj.) poor, lacking money
That poor gent is very indigent.

INNATE (adj.) natural, inborn
It is a fact of nature that birds are born with an innate ability to fly.

INDOLENT (adj.) lazy
John decided that, for Lent, he would give up being indolent.

INFAMOUS (adj.) famous for bad deeds, notorious
December 7, 1941, the day of the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor, is a day that will, according to Franklin D. Roosevelt, live in infamy.

INSIPID (adj.) dull, boring, lifeless
Juan Valdez will not sip insipid coffee.

INSURGENT (n. / adj.) rebel / rebellious
The insurgents surged toward the capital in an attempt to overthrow it.

INSURRECTION (n.) rebellion, uprising
After the fraudulent election, there was a general insurrection by the population.

INTEGRAL (adj.) essential, necessary
Integrity is an integral quality of a good leader.

INTROSPECTIVE (adj.) inward-looking
Most introverts are quite introspective.

JADED (adj.) world-weary, suffering from an excess of luxury, not easily impressed
Some of the ancient emperors of China, whose palaces were filled with precious jade, probably became quite jaded.

JUDICIOUS (adj.) wise, marked by good judgment
The judicial branch of our government is run by judicious judges.

LUCID (adj.) clear
Lucy wrote lucid prose while sitting at a translucent glass table.

LUDICROUS (adj.) laughable
Lou's latest problem is both ridiculous and ludicrous.

MAGNANIMOUS (adj.) great in spirit, extremely generous
Andrew Carnegie had a magnificent career and a magnanimous spirit.

MAGNATE (adj.) a person of power or influence
Max started a magnet company and, through hard work, eventually became a magnet magnate.

MALEVOLENT (adj.) evil
Because he was a very maladjusted and malicious man, the Joker became one of Batman's most malevolent enemies.

MELANCHOLY (adj. / n.) sad, depressed / sadness, depression
When his melons and cauliflower were killed by an early frost the farmer became quite melancholy.

MERCENARY (adj.) pertaining to acquiring money and financial gain
Most merchants are quite mercenary.

MERCURIAL (adj.) rapidly shifting, whimsical
Just as the mercury in a thermometer rises quickly or falls due to changes in temperature, so, too, do some people have emotions that are quite mercurial.

MISANTHROPE (n.) one who hates people and humanity in general
An anthropologist who is also a misanthrope could, perhaps, be called a "misanthropologist."

MORBID (adj.) pertaining to death
It is hard to resist morbid thoughts when walking through a mortuary.

MUNDANE (adj.) dull, boring, commonplace, extremely ordinary
Most people find Monday to be a very mundane day.

MUSE (v. / n.) to ponder, to inspire / source of inspiration
A museum is a good place to muse about art.

NARCISSIST (n.) one who is extremely self-centered
According to the Greek myth of Echo and Narcissus, Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection in a pond and was then turned into a flower, can be said to be the first true narcissist.

NEMESIS (adj.) enemy, foe
Eminem is considered a nemesis by most folk singers.

NOTORIETY (n.) being famous for a bad reason, being notorious
The notorious L.A. riots of the early 1990's have gone down in notoriety.

NUANCE (n.) subtle or slight difference or variation

Andy was very interested in ants, and he could distinguish between the old ants and the new ants in his ant farm based on various nuances in their shapes and actions.

OBLIVIOUS (adj.) unaware

Because Bob sleeps on the job, it is obvious that he is oblivious to his responsibilities.

OBSOLETE (adj.) out of date, no longer useful

Because my costly new workboots have extremely durable soles, I believe that they will never become obsolete.

OMNIPOTENT (adj.) all-powerful

Because the great white shark is more potent than any other shark, it can be considered omnipotent.

OMNISCIENT (adj.) all-knowing

The Wizard of Oz liked to consider himself both omniscient and omnipotent.

OMNIVOROUS (adj.) eating all kinds of foods

While a lion is carnivorous and an antelope is herbivorous, a bear, like a human being, is omnivorous.

ORNATE (adj.) highly decorative

Most ornaments are naturally ornate.

ORTHODOX (adj.) traditional, conservative

Because Don was a very orthodox orthodontist, he generally recommended braces for people who wanted to straighten their teeth.

OSTENTATIOUS (adj.) showy

Some Arab sheiks used to live in large, colorful tents that were very ostentatious.

OSTRACIZE (v.) to shun, cut out from the group

Because Oswald the ostrich decided to date a stork, some of the other ostriches decided to ostracize him from their group.

OVERT (adj.) open

The CIA tends to specialize in covert activities, not overt ones.

PALPABLE (adj.) able to be touched, tangible

I know that my heart is palpable, as I can detect its palpitations; my soul, however, is impalpable.

PARAGON (n.) model of perfection

Paris is a paragon of a city.

PASTORAL (adj.) of the countryside; pertaining to a pastor
The pastor at the church in New York City was transferred to a more pastoral setting in Vermont.

PATHOLOGICAL (adj.) pertaining to disease
Sociopaths and psychopaths both suffer from pathological disorders.

PERSPICACIOUS (adj.) having insight, astute
Someone with a very keen perspective on matters can be considered perspicacious.

PERTINENT (adj.) apt, suitable, related to the point at hand
Percy is known for his pertinent remarks on just about any subject.

PINNACLE (n.) highest point
For most bowlers, getting a strike and knocking down all ten pins is the pinnacle of success.

PIOUS (adj.) holy, venerable
Because he gave a pie to us when we were starving, we considered him to be a very pious man.

PITHY (adj.) short, concise, to the point
Pete Smith is a rather pithy name.

PLACATE (v.) to calm, soothe
After I broke her favorite plate, it was very difficult to placate Kate.

PLAUSIBLE (adj.) believable
Although I didn't go to the concert myself, it is extremely plausible that Carlos Santana received a lot of applause at the end of his guitar solo.

PRAGMATIC (adj.) practical, sensible
Most people think it is more practical and pragmatic to drive an automatic car.

PRECARIOUS (adj.) difficult, unsafe, potentially troublesome
Carey used great care to get out of the precarious situation.

PRETENTIOUS (adj.) acting in a superior or conceited manner
Pretentious people like to pretend that they are better than everyone else.

PRISTINE (adj.) beautiful, unspoiled
Christine loves to hike in pristine regions of the Rockies.

PROLIFERATION (adj.) abundance
There is always a proliferation of life in the spring.

PROPHETIC (adj.) of or pertaining to a prophet; able to foresee the future
In the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah issued many dark and prophetic warnings to his people.

PROPONENT (n.) a supporter, someone in favor of something
Al Gore, who proposed tougher gun laws, is a proponent of gun control, and therefore an opponent of the NRA.

PROPRIETY (n.) moral correctness
People who are concerned with propriety always try to do the proper thing, the appropriate thing, lest they be accused of impropriety.

PROSAIC (adj.) dull, unimaginative
Renaissance poets considered it rather prosaic to write a love letter in prose; for them, only verse was suitable in such matters.

PROWESS (n.) skill, strength
A pro golfer like Tiger Woods can wow us with his prowess and power.

PUNDIT (n.) learned person, scholar, sage; prognosticator
George W. Bush wanted to punch the pundit who, in writing his newspaper column, punned that Bush was merely a "bush league" politician.

QUANDRY (n.) a state of uncertainty or perplexity, dilemma
John is in a quandary over his laundry, and he would really like to know why he is always missing a sock at the end of the cycle.

QUINTESSENTIAL (adj.) having the pure essence of something
Because Cindy Crawford has all the essentials for being a supermodel, she could be called a quintessential supermodel.

QUIXOTIC (adj.) pertaining to Don Quixote; idealistic in a doomed and impractical way
Don Quixote, who gave his name to this word, was the original quixotic adventurer.

RAZE (v.) to knock down, destroy, level
It is possible to raze a wooden building with a blaze.

REBUTTAL (n.) a formal response in an argument or debate
The defense attorney got ready to butt heads with the prosecutor by preparing a rebuttal.

RECLUSE (n.) a person who shuns society, a hermit
A recluse closes himself off from the world.

REDUNDANT (adj.) extra, unnecessary
If you have done something already, it would be redundant to redo it.

REFUTE (v.) to dispute, argue

To refute a call by the referee is usually futile and useless.

REGAL (adj.) royal

The makers of Chivas Regal, whose symbol is a crown, believe it is a drink fit for a member of the royal family.

REITERATE (v.) to repeat, say again

Because I didn't hear it clearly the first time, the front desk clerk reiterated the rate for a night's lodging at the hotel.

REMINISCE (v.) to think over and discuss the past

Because many people miss "the good ol' days," they like to reminisce about them with their friends.

RENOWN (n.) fame

Ronald McDonald is a clown of great renown.

REQUISITE (adj.) required

Something that is requested and required is, by definition, requisite.

RESPLENDENT (adj.) glorious, radiant, beautiful

A peacock's tail is both splendid and resplendent.

RETICENT (adj.) quiet

A person who is shy, retiring, and disinclined to put in his or her "two cents" on a topic could be considered reticent.

RETRIBUTION (n.) revenge, punishment

When the Gallic tribes refused to pay tribute to their emperor, the Romans sacked and destroyed their villages in retribution.

RETROACTIVE (adj.) active to a point in the past

The popular "retro" fashions of today are, by definition, retroactive.

REVERE (v.) to respect, admire

Americans tend to revere Paul Revere and his midnight ride with due reverence.

RUE (v.) to regret

Ruth rued the day that her man went away.

RUSTIC (adj.) of or pertaining to the countryside

The rusty old car in the front yard marred the otherwise picture-perfect rustic scene.

SAGACIOUS (adj.) sage-like, wise

A sagacious chef might use a dash of sage to spice up a dish.

SACRILEGIOUS (adj.) unholy, profane

Because the Spanish viewed the religious sites of the Aztecs as both pagan and sacrilegious, they decided to raze them and build churches in their place.

SACROSANCT (adj.) sacred, holy

The cathedral at Lourdes in France is regarded by many Catholics as a sacred and sacrosanct sanctuary.

SCRUPULOUS (adj.) attentive to details, honest in dealings, conscientious

The carpenter was scrupulous about screwing in each screw very tightly.

SERVILE (adj.) like a servant

Some servants are quite servile.

SKEPTICAL (adj.) tending to doubt

A skeptic is a skeptical person who indulges in skepticism.

SPORADIC (adj.) occurring at irregular intervals

Because Sam's effort in school is sporadic, his grades tend to be erratic.

STOIC (adj.) impassive, unmoved by extremes of emotion

If you stow your emotions deep inside you and always remain outwardly calm, you are, by definition, stoic.

SUBJUGATE (v.) to dominate, put under control

The monarchs of medieval Europe, bolstered by the concept of the divine right of kings, tended to subjugate their subjects.

SUBLIME (adj.) supreme, perfect

The key lime pie at the Key West Diner is close to sublime.

SUCCINCT (adj.) concise, terse, pithy

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is both distinct and succinct

SUPERFICIAL (adj.) on the surface, lacking depth

After his battle with Lex Luthor, Superman was not seriously wounded, but merely had some superficial wounds on his face.

TANGIBLE (adj.) able to be touched, solid

A tangerine is tangible, whereas a dream is intangible.

TERSE (adj.) short, to the point, succinct

A Japanese "haiku" is actually a very terse verse.

TRANSIENT (adj.) fleeting, transitory

Transient people are often in transit from one place to another.

TREPIDATION (n.) fear

Intrepid people lack trepidation.

UNRULY (adj.) disobedient

Some parents often enact tough rules in order to better control their unruly children.

VICARIOUS (adj.) experienced in an indirect or second-hand way

Novels and movies carry us to vicarious adventures.

VIRTUOSO (n.) a skilled expert

By virtue of his skill on the basketball court, Michael Jordan is considered a virtuoso of the game.

WILY (adj.) tricky, clever, cunning

Wile E. Coyote is the apt name of the wily coyote on the roadrunner cartoon series.

ZEAL (n.) enthusiasm, zest

I saw a seal perform with zeal at SeaWorld.

ZENITH (n.) highest point, peak

The profitability of television manufacturer Zenith Corporation reached its zenith in the 1960s, after which point it began to suffer from foreign competition.