

Commonly Overused Words

Citing Sources and
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Glossary

When you write, use the most precise word for your meaning, not the word that comes to mind first. Consult this thesaurus to find alternatives for some commonly overused words. Consult a full-length thesaurus to find alternatives to words that do not appear here. Keep in mind that the choices offered in a thesaurus do not all mean exactly the same thing. Review all the options, and choose the one that best expresses your meaning.

about approximately, nearly, almost, approaching, close to

absolutely unconditionally, perfectly, completely, ideally, purely

activity action, movement, operation, labor, exertion, enterprise, project, pursuit, endeavor, job, assignment, pastime, scheme, task

add attach, affix, join, unite, append, increase, amplify

affect adjust, influence, transform, moderate, incline, motivate, prompt

amazing overwhelming, astonishing, startling, unexpected, stunning, dazzling, remarkable

awesome impressive, stupendous, fabulous, astonishing, outstanding

bad defective, inadequate, poor, unsatisfactory, disagreeable, offensive, repulsive, corrupt, wicked, naughty, harmful, injurious, unfavorable

basic essential, necessary, indispensable, vital, fundamental, elementary

beautiful attractive, appealing, alluring, exquisite, gorgeous, handsome, stunning

begin commence, found, initiate, introduce, launch, originate

better preferable, superior, worthier

big enormous, extensive, huge, immense, massive

good satisfactory, serviceable, functional, competent, virtuous, striking

great tremendous, superior, remarkable, eminent, proficient, expert

happy pleased, joyous, elated, jubilant, cheerful, delighted

hard arduous, formidable, complex, complicated, rigorous, harsh

help assist, aid, support, sustain, serve

hurt injure, harm, damage, wound, impair

important significant, substantial, weighty, meaningful, critical, vital, notable

interesting absorbing, appealing, entertaining, fascinating, thought-provoking

job task, work, business, undertaking, occupation, vocation, chore, duty, assignment

keep retain, control, possess

kind type, variety, sort, form

know comprehend, understand, realize, perceive, discern

like (adj) similar, equivalent, parallel

like (verb) enjoy, relish, appreciate

main primary, foremost, dominant

make build, construct, produce, assemble, fashion, manufacture

mean plan, intend, suggest, propose,

boring commonplace, monotonous, tedious, tiresome

bring accompany, cause, convey, create, conduct, deliver, produce

cause origin, stimulus, inspiration, motive

certain unquestionable, incontrovertible, unmistakable, indubitable, assured, confident

change alter, transform, vary, replace, diversify

choose select, elect, nominate, prefer, identify

decent respectable, adequate, fair, suitable

definitely unquestionably, clearly, precisely, positively, inescapably

easy effortless, natural, comfortable, undemanding, pleasant, relaxed

effective powerful, successful

emphasize underscore, feature, accentuate

end limit, boundary, finish, conclusion, finale, resolution

energy vitality, vigor, force, dynamism

enjoy savor, relish, revel, benefit

entire complete, inclusive, unbroken, integral

excellent superior, remarkable, splendid, unsurpassed, superb, magnificent

exciting thrilling, stirring, rousing, dramatic

far distant, remote

fast swift, quick, fleet, hasty, instant, accelerated

fill occupy, suffuse, pervade, saturate, inflate, stock

finish complete, conclude, cease, achieve, exhaust, deplete, consume

funny comical, ludicrous, amusing, droll, entertaining, bizarre, unusual, uncommon

get obtain, receive, acquire, procure, achieve

give bestow, donate, supply, deliver, distribute, impart

indicate

more supplementary, additional, replenishment

new recent, modern, current, novel

next subsequently, thereafter, successively

nice pleasant, satisfying, gracious, charming

old aged, mature, experienced, used, worn, former, previous

open unobstructed, accessible

part section, portion, segment, detail, element, component

perfect flawless, faultless, ideal, consummate

plan scheme, design, system, plot

pleasant agreeable, gratifying, refreshing, welcome

prove demonstrate, confirm, validate, verify, corroborate

quick brisk, prompt, responsive, rapid, nimble, hasty

really truly, genuinely, extremely, undeniably

regular standard, routine, customary, habitual

see regard, behold, witness, gaze, realize, notice

small diminutive, miniature, minor, insignificant, slight, trivial

sometimes occasionally, intermittently, sporadically, periodically

take grasp, capture, choose, select, tolerate, endure

terrific extraordinary, magnificent, marvelous

think conceive, imagine, ponder, reflect, contemplate

try attempt, endeavor, venture, test

use employ, operate, utilize

very unusually, extremely, deeply, exceedingly, profoundly

want desire, crave, yearn, long

24 SENTENCE PATTERNS AND ONE SAMPLE EACH:

1 USE SPECIFIC NOUNS AND VERBS IN A NOUN VERB SENTENCE

Fire belched from the dragon's mouth.

2 USE SPECIFIC NOUNS AND VERBS IN A NOUN VERB NOUN SENTENCE

The car crusher devoured the wrecked cars.

3 INTERROGATIVE – ASK A QUESTION

What steps do good writers follow to produce a good work?

4 OPEN WITH AN ADVERB

Noisily, the mosquitoes buzzed around our heads.

5 OPEN WITH A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

During the day the robber hid in a dingy basement apartment.

6 USE AN APPOSITIVE

Claude Monet, a French Impressionist, painted many outdoor scenes.

7 OPEN WITH AN ADVERB CLAUSE

Because Renoir painted many oils of clowns, people often recognize his work.

8 CLOSE WITH AN ADVERB CLAUSE

Hulk Hogan will run for President of the United States after he retires from wrestling.

9 USE PARALLEL STRUCTURE IN WORDS

Mom bought chips, soda, and pickles for the picnic.

10 USE PARALLEL STRUCTURE IN PHRASES and CLAUSES

Fabio drew her to him, whispered in her ear, and asked for change for the soda machine.

11 OPEN WITH AN ADJECTIVE

Angry, the child threw the toy across the room.

12 OPEN WITH AN ADJECTIVE PHRASE

Afloat with confidence, the homecoming queen tripped on the steps.

13 OPEN WITH A PRESENT INFINITIVE

To prevent a mess, the chef covered the counter with wax paper.

14 OPEN WITH A PRESENT PARTICIPLE

Gazing at the ballerinas, Degas planned his next painting.

15 OPEN WITH A PAST PARTICIPLE

Known as a landscape painter, Monet gave a shimmering quality to his artwork.

16 OPEN WITH A PERFECT PARTICIPLE

Having kissed her father's forehead, the teenager snatched the car keys and headed outside.

17 USE A RESTRICTIVE ADJECTIVE CLAUSE

This morning the technician tossed the computer that never worked into the dumpster.

18 USE A NON-RESTRICTIVE ADJECTIVE CLAUSE

Our art class studied the paintings of Seurat, who developed a technique called pointillism.

19 COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION

The right tackle must stop the quarter back, or we will lose this game.

20 COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH A SEMI-COLON

Zeus blasted a lightning bolt from the sky; Io had made him angry.

21 COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH A CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB

Van Gogh suffered from severe mental problems; nevertheless, his still-lives and landscapes hang in the world's greatest museums.

22 COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH AN ELLIPTICAL EXPRESSION

Darby played a musical number by Bach; Joan, one by Mozart.

23 USE A PARANTHETICAL EXPRESSION BETWEEN SUBJECT AND VERB

Gauguin, inspired by the island of Tahiti, used bold colors while painting.

24 OPEN WITH A PARALLEL STRUCTURE FOLLOWED BY A CLOSING STATEMENT

Chocolate, good books, and motorcycles – all of these bring a smile to our teacher's face.