

Synonyms and antonyms
11 plus example questions



Synonyms: practice question 1

Select the two words, one from each set, that are the closest in meaning.

inverted, curved, kink | rounded, obtuse, sphere



Synonyms: practice question 2

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

police, illegal, prison | criminal, cell, shackle



Synonyms: practice question 3

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

huge, minute, oppressive | **tiny, understandable, lampshade**



Synonyms: practice question 4

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

friendly, generous, loving | **amiable, moral, selfish**



Synonyms: practice question 5

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

muscles, compel, lie | **betray, force, initiate**



Antonyms: practice question 1

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

noteworthy, vain, feral | **modestly, coherent, inconsequential**



Antonyms: practice question 2

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

maverick, powerful, rebelling | inept, conformist, lurid



Antonyms: practice question 3

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

imply, uncommunicative, novice | talkative, inhibit, ply



Antonyms: practice question 4

Select the two words, one from each group, that have opposite meanings.

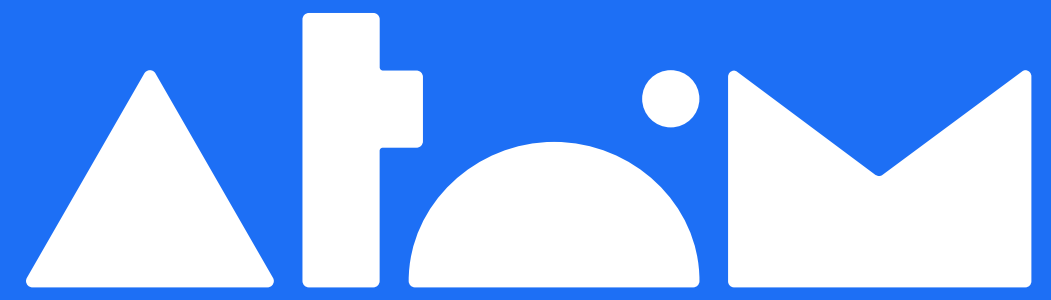
commence, abort, alive | **conclusion, terminate, death**



Antonyms: practice question 5

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

cheery, mixed, grief | divide, depress, joy



Answers and explanations

Synonyms: practice question 1

Select the two words, one from each set, that are the closest in meaning.

inverted, curved, kink | rounded, obtuse, sphere

Explanation

'Curved' and 'rounded' are both **adjectives** that describe something without straight borders.

'Kink' is a red herring! It is a **noun** that refers to a twist or curve in a straight object. Besides, it can't be a synonym of 'curved' or 'rounded' since it is **not of the same word class**.

The same goes for 'sphere' which is also a **noun**. A better synonym for 'curved' would be 'spherical'.

Synonyms: practice question 2

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

police, illegal, prison | criminal, cell, shackle

Explanation

'Illegal' and 'criminal' can both be used as **adjectives** that describe something as against the law.

You might have thought 'prison' and 'cell' were **synonyms** but they do not have the same meaning – a 'cell' is a small room *inside* a 'prison'.

When faced with answer options like these that are linked by a theme (in this case: crime and punishment), watch out for the subtle differences between some of the words to help you find the right answer.

Remember, synonyms must always belong to the same **word class**. 'Illegal' and 'criminal' are the only **adjectives** available, which is a good clue!

Synonyms: practice question 3

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

huge, minute, oppressive | tiny, understandable, lampshade

Explanation

'Minute' and 'tiny' are both **adjectives** that mean 'very small'.

'Minute' is an example of a **homonym**; a word that has the same spelling and pronunciation to a word with a different meaning!

When used as a **noun**, 'minute' refers to a unit of time. Since no other answer options are related to time in any way, we can safely assume that here, 'minute' must be being used as an **adjective**, and is synonymous with 'tiny'.

Synonyms: practice question 4

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

friendly, generous, loving | amiable, moral, selfish

Explanation

'Friendly' and 'amiable' are both **adjectives** that describe someone that is pleasant and good-natured.

Although an 'amiable' person might also be 'loving', the two words have slightly different meanings, so they are **not synonyms**. 'Amiable' has more to do with being 'friendly' than being 'loving'.

'Generous' and 'selfish' are **antonyms**; they are opposites!

Synonyms: practice question 5

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

muscles, compel, lie | betray, force, initiate

Explanation

'Compel' and 'force' are both **verbs** that mean 'to make someone do something'.

You may have felt *compelled* to link 'lie' and 'betray' together but these aren't close enough in meaning to be **synonyms**! 'Lie' means 'to give false information' while 'betray' means 'to give information to an enemy'.

The **verb** 'lie' can also mean 'to lay down horizontally in a resting position'.

'Initiate' means to make something start. However, it doesn't imply using pressure, so is not as close in meaning to 'compel' as 'force' is!

Antonyms: practice question 1

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

noteworthy, vain, feral | modestly, coherent, inconsequential

Explanation

The **adjectives** 'noteworthy' and 'inconsequential' are antonyms.

'Noteworthy' describes something important, whereas 'inconsequential' describes something of little or no importance: 'the appearance of the book was inconsequential when compared to its contents, which were extremely noteworthy'.

You may have initially considered 'vain' and 'modestly' to be antonyms but they are **not of the same word class**, 'modestly' is an adverb while 'vain' is an adjective. Words that are **antonyms** are of the same word class.

Antonyms: practice question 2

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

maverick, powerful, rebelling | inept, conformist, lurid

Explanation

The **nouns** 'maverick' and 'conformist' are antonyms.

A 'maverick' refers to an unorthodox or nonconformist person, whereas a 'conformist' refers to someone who follows established rules: 'she's a maverick and does what she likes, whereas he always plays by the rules: he's such a conformist'.

You might have thought that 'rebelling' and 'conformist' could be **antonyms** but they are not of the same word class: 'rebelling' is a **verb** whereas 'conformist' is a **noun**. Words that are antonyms are of the same word class.

Antonyms: practice question 3

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

imply, uncommunicative, novice | talkative, inhibit, ply

Explanation

The **adjectives** 'uncommunicative' and 'talkative' are antonyms.

'Uncommunicative' describes someone who is quiet whereas 'talkative' describes someone who is quite the opposite: 'Alison is rather uncommunicative, she barely says anything at all, but Kevin is so talkative – he's a real chatterbox.'

You might have thought that the **verbs** 'ply' and 'imply' could be **antonyms** since 'imply' contains the prefix 'im-' which is usually attached to words with negative connotations. However, there is no relation between these two words. 'Ply' means to work with a tool while 'imply' means to suggest something.

Antonyms: practice question 4

Select the two words, one from each group, that have opposite meanings.

commence, abort, alive | conclusion, terminate, death

Explanation

The **verbs** 'commence' and 'terminate' are antonyms.

'Commence' means to 'begin' something whereas 'terminate' means to 'end' something.

Antonyms need to be of the same word class, such as a verb or an adjective. 'Alive' and 'death' are not antonyms because they are **not from the same word class**. 'Alive' is an **adjective** whereas 'death' is a **noun**.

A and E are the only answer options that are antonyms. 'Abort' and 'terminate' are both verbs, but they are **synonyms**; they are **similar** in meaning!

Antonyms: practice question 5

Select the two words, one from each set, that have opposite meanings.

cheery, mixed, grief | divide, depress, joy

Explanation

'Grief' and 'joy' are opposing **nouns**.

'Grief' refers to sadness whereas 'joy' refers to happiness: 'grief is common after the death of a relative but a wedding brings great joy to a family'.

Antonyms are words with opposite meanings. Words that are antonyms of each other will be the same type of word, such as a verb or an adjective. In this case they are both **nouns**.

You may have noticed that 'depress' and 'cheery' have opposite meanings, but since they are **not of the same word class**, they are not antonyms. 'Depress' is a verb, while 'cheery' is an adjective! If 'depress' became an **adjective** (i.e. 'depressed' or 'depressing') then these two would be antonyms!

