

120 Hard SAT Vocabulary Words

Meanings, Pronunciation, Everyday Examples, Practice & Answers

WHAT THIS BOOK INCLUDES

120 advanced vocabulary words with pronunciation cues, clear meanings, and natural example sentences.

DESIGNED FOR

School learners, SAT students, ESL learners, non-native speakers, and anyone building stronger English vocabulary.

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About This Book

This book is a focused study reference for learners who want to recognize, understand, pronounce, and use difficult English vocabulary. The examples are written to make advanced words easier to connect with ordinary conversation, schoolwork, reading, and writing.

The pronunciation guide uses capital letters to show the strongest spoken stress. Read each word aloud, learn the meaning, and then say the example sentence.

A practical study pattern

- **Read:** Look at the word, pronunciation, and meaning.
- **Say:** Pronounce the word slowly, then at normal speaking speed.
- **Use:** Read the example sentence and create one of your own.
- **Review:** Revisit difficult words regularly rather than memorizing all 120 at once.

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All 120 vocabulary entries appear in five learning sections. Practice and answers are placed at the end for self-checking.

Hard SAT Vocabulary Words

24 challenging words with useful meanings for school and everyday English.

24 words | Read, pronounce, understand, and use them in context.

1. Abstemious (ab-STEE-mee-us)

Meaning: showing moderation, especially with food or drink

Example: My grandfather is abstemious and rarely eats desserts.

2. Acquiesce (ak-wee-ESS)

Meaning: to accept something without arguing or resisting

Example: I did not agree with the plan, but I eventually acquiesced.

3. Adroit (uh-DROYT)

Meaning: skillful and clever in handling a situation

Example: She was adroit at answering difficult questions without getting nervous.

4. Alacrity (uh-LAK-ri-tee)

Meaning: cheerful speed or eagerness to do something

Example: He accepted the extra task with surprising alacrity.

5. Ameliorate (uh-MEEL-yuh-rayt)

Meaning: to make a bad situation better

Example: A short break helped ameliorate my stress.

6. Anachronistic (uh-NAK-ruh-NIS-tik)

Meaning: belonging to a different time period or appearing out of place in modern times

Example: Using a typewriter in that modern office seemed anachronistic.

7. Antipathy (an-TIP-uh-thee)

Meaning: a strong feeling of dislike

Example: He has an obvious antipathy toward dishonest behavior.

8. Apocryphal (uh-POK-ri-fuhl)

Meaning: probably untrue, although often repeated as if it were true

Example: The story about his secret meeting may be apocryphal.

9. Assuage (uh-SWAYJ)

Meaning: to reduce worry, pain, fear, or discomfort

Example: A phone call from home helped assuage her anxiety.

10. Austere (aw-STEER)

Meaning: plain, strict, or lacking comfort or decoration

Example: The room looked austere, with only a desk and chair.

11. Avarice (AV-uh-riss)

Meaning: extreme greed for wealth or possessions

Example: His avarice made him unwilling to share anything.

12. Bellicose (BEL-ih-kohs)

Meaning: aggressive and eager to fight or argue

Example: His bellicose tone quickly turned a calm discussion into an argument.

13. Bombastic (bom-BAS-tik)

Meaning: using language that sounds important but may have little meaning

Example: The speech sounded bombastic rather than sincere.

14. Capricious (kuh-PRISH-us)

Meaning: changing suddenly and unpredictably

Example: Her capricious mood made it hard to know what she would do next.

15. Circumspect (SUR-kum-spekt)

Meaning: careful to avoid mistakes or problems

Example: Be circumspect when sharing personal information online.

16. Conciliatory (kun-SIL-ee-uh-tor-ee)

Meaning: intended to reduce disagreement or restore peace

Example: He made a conciliatory comment after the argument.

17. Conundrum (kuh-NUN-drum)

Meaning: a confusing and difficult problem

Example: Choosing between the two offers created a real conundrum.

18. Credulous (KREJ-uh-lus)

Meaning: too willing to believe something without enough evidence

Example: A credulous reader might believe every dramatic story online.

19. Deference (DEF-er-ens)

Meaning: respectful acceptance of another person's authority or opinion

Example: Out of deference to my teacher, I waited before speaking.

20. Deride (dih-RYDE)

Meaning: to mock or make fun of someone or something

Example: It is unfair to deride someone for making a small mistake.

21. Desultory (DES-ul-tor-ee)

Meaning: lacking a clear plan, purpose, or energy

Example: We had a desultory conversation while waiting for the bus.

22. Diffident (DIF-ih-dent)

Meaning: shy because of a lack of confidence

Example: He was diffident at first but became more comfortable later.

23. Dilatory (DIL-uh-tor-ee)

Meaning: causing delay or intentionally taking too long

Example: His dilatory response delayed the entire project.

24. Disabuse (dis-uh-BYOOZ)

Meaning: to correct someone's mistaken belief

Example: I had to disabuse him of the idea that success happens overnight.

SAT Difficult Words

24 precise words with clear examples that show how the meanings work in context.

24 words | Read, pronounce, understand, and use them in context.

25. Ebullient (ih-BUL-yunt)

Meaning: extremely cheerful, energetic, and enthusiastic

Example: Her ebullient personality made everyone feel welcome.

26. Eclectic (ih-KLEK-tik)

Meaning: made from a wide variety of different sources or styles

Example: His music taste is eclectic, ranging from jazz to electronic music.

27. Efface (ih-FAYS)

Meaning: to erase or remove something completely

Example: Time can efface even strong memories.

28. Enervate (EN-er-vayt)

Meaning: to make someone feel weak or drained of energy

Example: The long meeting completely enervated me.

29. Equanimity (ee-kwuh-NIM-uh-tee)

Meaning: calmness and emotional control during difficulty

Example: She handled the criticism with impressive equanimity.

30. Equivocate (ih-KWIV-uh-kayt)

Meaning: to avoid giving a clear answer

Example: Stop trying to equivocate and tell me what actually happened.

31. Esoteric (es-uh-TAIR-ik)

Meaning: understood by only a small group with specialized knowledge

Example: The professor used an esoteric term that most students had never heard.

32. Exacerbate (ig-ZAS-er-bayt)

Meaning: to make a problem worse

Example: Ignoring the leak will only exacerbate the damage.

33. Exculpate (EK-skulp-ayt)

Meaning: to show that someone was not responsible for wrongdoing

Example: The new evidence may exculpate him from the accusation.

34. Fastidious (fa-STID-ee-us)

Meaning: very careful about details, cleanliness, or correctness

Example: She is fastidious about keeping her notes organized.

35. Felicitous (fuh-LIS-ih-tus)

Meaning: especially suitable, well chosen, or appropriate

Example: His felicitous choice of words made the message sound warm and respectful.

36. Fortuitous (for-TOO-ih-tus)

Meaning: happening by chance, often producing a useful result

Example: A fortuitous meeting helped me discover a new opportunity.

37. Gregarious (gri-GAIR-ee-us)

Meaning: friendly, sociable, and comfortable around people

Example: My gregarious cousin can start a conversation with almost anyone.

38. Hackneyed (HAK-need)

Meaning: overused and no longer interesting or original

Example: The movie relied on a hackneyed plot.

39. Iconoclast (eye-KON-uh-klast)

Meaning: someone who challenges widely accepted ideas or traditions

Example: As an iconoclast, she questioned methods everyone else accepted.

40. Implacable (im-PLAK-uh-bul)

Meaning: impossible to calm, satisfy, or persuade

Example: The coach faced an implacable critic who refused to soften his position.

41. Incongruous (in-KONG-groo-us)

Meaning: noticeably out of place or inconsistent with its surroundings

Example: His casual clothes looked incongruous at the formal event.

42. Indefatigable (in-di-FAT-ih-guh-bul)

Meaning: able to continue working without becoming tired

Example: Her indefatigable effort kept the team moving forward.

43. Inept (ih-NEPT)

Meaning: lacking skill or ability

Example: I felt inept when I tried to fix the complicated machine.

44. Innocuous (ih-NOK-yoo-us)

Meaning: harmless or unlikely to cause trouble

Example: What looked like an innocuous comment caused a long discussion.

45. Insipid (in-SIP-id)

Meaning: lacking flavor, energy, or excitement

Example: The conversation became insipid after everyone ran out of ideas.

46. Intrepid (in-TREP-id)

Meaning: brave and willing to face difficult situations

Example: The intrepid traveler continued despite the heavy rain.

47. Inveterate (in-VET-er-it)

Meaning: having a long-established habit or tendency

Example: He is an inveterate procrastinator who always starts late.

48. Judicious (joo-DISH-us)

Meaning: showing good judgment and careful thinking

Example: She made a judicious decision after considering every option.

Hard SAT Words

24 words for describing decisions, behavior, arguments, uncertainty, and practical situations.

24 words | Read, pronounce, understand, and use them in context.

49. Laconic (luh-KON-ik)

Meaning: using very few words

Example: His laconic reply was simply, "I agree."

50. Magnanimous (mag-NAN-uh-mus)

Meaning: generous and forgiving, especially toward someone who has made a mistake

Example: She was magnanimous after her opponent apologized.

51. Mendacious (men-DAY-shus)

Meaning: dishonest or untruthful

Example: The article was criticized for making mendacious claims.

52. Meticulous (muh-TIK-yuh-lus)

Meaning: extremely careful about details

Example: He is meticulous when checking important documents.

53. Nebulous (NEB-yuh-lus)

Meaning: unclear, vague, or difficult to understand

Example: Our weekend plan is still nebulous.

54. Obdurate (OB-dyoor-it)

Meaning: stubborn and unwilling to change

Example: He remained obdurate even after hearing the evidence.

55. Onerous (OH-ner-us)

Meaning: difficult, burdensome, or requiring a lot of effort

Example: The paperwork became an onerous task.

56. Ostensible (ah-STEN-suh-bul)

Meaning: appearing or claiming to be true, although the actual situation may differ

Example: His ostensible reason for leaving was traffic.

57. Parsimonious (par-suh-MOH-nee-us)

Meaning: extremely unwilling to spend or give money

Example: His parsimonious habits made group outings difficult.

58. Pedantic (puh-DAN-tik)

Meaning: overly concerned with minor rules or details

Example: His pedantic correction distracted everyone from the main point.

59. Perfidious (per-FID-ee-us)

Meaning: deceitful and disloyal

Example: The employee's perfidious behavior damaged the team's trust.

60. Placate (PLAY-kayt)

Meaning: to calm an angry or upset person

Example: I tried to placate the customer by offering a replacement.

61. Pragmatic (prag-MAT-ik)

Meaning: focused on practical results rather than ideals

Example: We need a pragmatic solution that works with our budget.

62. Precocious (prih-KOH-shus)

Meaning: unusually advanced or mature for one's age

Example: The precocious child could discuss difficult topics with surprising confidence.

63. Profligate (PROF-li-git)

Meaning: recklessly wasteful, especially with money or resources

Example: His profligate spending left him with almost no savings.

64. Querulous (KWER-yuh-lus)

Meaning: often complaining in an annoyed way

Example: His querulous tone made the conversation unpleasant.

65. Reticent (RET-ih-sent)

Meaning: unwilling to speak openly about something

Example: She was reticent about discussing her personal plans.

66. Sagacious (suh-GAY-shus)

Meaning: wise and able to make good judgments

Example: My grandfather is sagacious and rarely gives careless advice.

67. Salient (SAY-lee-ent)

Meaning: most noticeable, important, or relevant

Example: The salient point is that we need more time.

68. Sanguine (SANG-gwin)

Meaning: optimistic and confident about the future

Example: Despite the setback, she remained sanguine about the outcome.

69. Scrupulous (SKROO-pyuh-lus)

Meaning: extremely careful, honest, and attentive to rules or details

Example: He is scrupulous about reporting every expense accurately.

70. Spurious (SPYOOR-ee-us)

Meaning: false, misleading, or not genuine

Example: The website was spreading spurious health claims.

71. Taciturn (TAS-ih-turn)

Meaning: quiet and not likely to speak much

Example: My usually taciturn neighbor surprised me by talking for an hour.

72. Tenacious (tuh-NAY-shus)

Meaning: determined and unwilling to give up

Example: Her tenacious attitude helped her finish the difficult project.

Hardest SAT Words

24 challenging words with pronunciation, spelling, and meaning differences worth noticing.

24 words | Read, pronounce, understand, and use them in context.

73. Tirade (TY-rayd)

Meaning: a long, angry speech or criticism

Example: My manager went on a tirade about missed deadlines.

74. Trenchant (TREN-chunt)

Meaning: sharp, forceful, and effective, especially in criticism

Example: She made a trenchant observation about the problem.

75. Ubiquitous (yoo-BIK-wi-tus)

Meaning: present or found almost everywhere

Example: Smartphones have become ubiquitous in modern life.

76. Vacillate (VAS-uh-layt)

Meaning: to keep changing your decision or opinion

Example: I tend to vacillate when I have too many choices.

77. Vehement (VEE-uh-ment)

Meaning: showing very strong feelings or forceful opposition

Example: She gave a vehement response to the accusation.

78. Venerate (VEN-uh-rayt)

Meaning: to deeply respect or honor someone

Example: Many people venerate the teacher who inspired them.

79. Vitriolic (vit-ree-OL-ik)

Meaning: filled with harsh, bitter, or hateful criticism

Example: The online discussion became increasingly vitriolic.

80. Wanton (WON-tun)

Meaning: deliberate, reckless, or without concern for consequences

Example: The wanton destruction of public property shocked the community.

81. Wary (WAIR-ee)

Meaning: cautious because of possible danger or problems

Example: Be wary of messages asking for your password.

82. Winsome (WIN-sum)

Meaning: attractive or charming in a pleasant, natural way

Example: Her winsome smile made everyone feel comfortable.

83. Zealous (ZEL-us)

Meaning: extremely enthusiastic or devoted

Example: He is a zealous supporter of community projects.

84. Ephemeral (ih-FEM-er-ul)

Meaning: lasting for a very short time

Example: Internet trends can be surprisingly ephemeral.

85. Enigma (uh-NIG-muh)

Meaning: a person, thing, or situation that is difficult to understand

Example: His sudden decision remains an enigma to his friends.

86. Erudite (ER-yoo-dyte)

Meaning: highly educated and knowledgeable

Example: The speaker was erudite but explained difficult ideas clearly.

87. Equivocal (ih-KWIV-uh-kul)

Meaning: unclear or open to more than one interpretation

Example: Her equivocal answer left us unsure about her plans.

88. Recalcitrant (ri-KAL-si-trunt)

Meaning: stubbornly resistant to authority or control

Example: The recalcitrant student refused to follow the classroom rules.

89. Supercilious (soo-per-SIL-ee-us)

Meaning: behaving as though you are better or more important than others

Example: His supercilious attitude annoyed the entire group.

90. Intransigent (in-TRAN-si-junt)

Meaning: unwilling to change an opinion or agreement

Example: The two sides remained intransigent during the negotiation.

91. Retrospective (ret-ruh-SPEK-tiv)

Meaning: looking back on past events

Example: The documentary offered a retrospective look at her career.

92. Prosaic (proh-ZAY-ik)

Meaning: ordinary, dull, or lacking imagination

Example: The trip sounded exciting at first but turned out to be rather prosaic.

93. Contemptuous (kun-TEMP-choo-us)

Meaning: showing strong disrespect or a feeling that someone is beneath consideration

Example: His contemptuous reply ended the conversation.

94. Diffuse (dih-FYOOS)

Meaning: spread widely or made less concentrated

Example: Open the window to diffuse the strong smell.

95. Mutable (MYOO-tuh-bul)

Meaning: likely to change

Example: Public opinion is mutable and can shift quickly.

96. Immutable (ih-MYOO-tuh-bul)

Meaning: unable to be changed

Example: The deadline is immutable because the system closes automatically.

Difficult SAT Words with Meanings

24 words for ideas, communication, personalities, appearance, and complex situations.

24 words | Read, pronounce, understand, and use them in context.

97. Arcane (ar-KAYN)

Meaning: known or understood by very few people

Example: The software has some arcane settings that new users rarely understand.

98. Boorish (BOOR-ish)

Meaning: rude, insensitive, or badly mannered

Example: His boorish behavior embarrassed everyone at dinner.

99. Clandestine (klan-DES-tin)

Meaning: secret and deliberately hidden

Example: They held a clandestine meeting after work.

100. Dogmatic (dog-MAT-ik)

Meaning: insisting that your beliefs are unquestionably correct

Example: He becomes dogmatic whenever someone challenges his opinion.

101. Emulous (EM-yuh-lus)

Meaning: eager to equal or surpass another person

Example: The young athlete was emulous of her older sister's success.

102. Florid (FLOR-id)

Meaning: excessively elaborate, decorative, or complicated in style

Example: His florid explanation made a short message much harder to understand.

103. Furtive (FUR-tiv)

Meaning: secretive and trying not to be noticed

Example: He gave a furtive glance at the clock during the meeting.

104. Idiosyncratic (id-ee-oh-SING-kruh-tik)

Meaning: unusual in a way that is particular to one person or thing

Example: Her idiosyncratic study method works perfectly for her.

105. Languid (LANG-gwid)

Meaning: lacking energy or moving slowly

Example: After the long flight, I felt languid all afternoon.

106. Mercurial (mer-KYOOR-ee-ul)

Meaning: changing mood or behavior quickly and unpredictably

Example: His mercurial personality makes him difficult to read.

107. Nonchalant (NON-shuh-lahnt)

Meaning: appearing calm and unconcerned

Example: She looked nonchalant even though she was nervous inside.

108. Opaque (oh-PAYK)

Meaning: difficult to understand or explain

Example: The company's pricing system is so opaque that customers struggle to compare plans.

109. Ostentatious (os-ten-TAY-shus)

Meaning: designed to attract attention through excessive display

Example: His ostentatious watch attracted everyone's attention.

110. Portentous (por-TEN-tus)

Meaning: suggesting that something important or serious may happen

Example: The dark clouds gave the afternoon a portentous feeling.

111. Prolific (proh-LIF-ik)

Meaning: producing a large amount of work or something

Example: She is a prolific writer who publishes several articles each month.

112. Resolute (REZ-uh-loot)

Meaning: very determined and firm in purpose

Example: He remained resolute even when the task became difficult.

113. Surreptitious (sur-ep-TISH-us)

Meaning: done secretly to avoid being noticed

Example: He took a surreptitious look at his phone during the lecture.

114. Tenuous (TEN-yoo-us)

Meaning: weak, slight, or not strongly supported

Example: There is only a tenuous connection between the two events.

115. Vociferous (voh-SIF-er-us)

Meaning: expressing opinions or objections very loudly and forcefully

Example: A few vociferous customers demanded a refund.

116. Volatile (VOL-uh-tul)

Meaning: likely to change suddenly or become dangerous or unstable

Example: The situation became volatile after the argument.

117. Inscrutable (in-SKROO-tuh-bul)

Meaning: difficult to understand, interpret, or read

Example: His inscrutable expression made it impossible to know what he thought.

118. Labyrinthine (lab-uh-RIN-thyn)

Meaning: extremely complicated, confusing, or full of twists

Example: The website has a labyrinthine menu system.

119. Recondite (REK-un-dyte)

Meaning: difficult to understand because it concerns specialized knowledge

Example: The article discusses a recondite subject that requires background knowledge.

120. Succinct (suk-SINKT)

Meaning: expressed clearly in very few words

Example: Please give me a succinct explanation before the meeting begins.

Vocabulary Practice

Complete each sentence with the most suitable word from the 120-word list. Use the answer key on the following pages to check your work.

1. The manager tried to _____ the angry customer before the meeting continued.
2. Her answer was so _____ that nobody knew what she really meant.
3. The scientist's explanation was too _____ for most readers.
4. He remained _____ and refused to change his decision.
5. The unexpected introduction led to a _____ opportunity.
6. Please be _____ when clicking unknown links online.
7. The politician's speech sounded _____ and full of exaggerated language.
8. She is extremely _____ about checking every detail.
9. The long journey began to _____ him.
10. The new evidence may _____ the accused person.
11. My friend gave a _____ answer and explained the issue in one sentence.
12. His _____ attitude made him seem as though everyone else was inferior.
13. The two groups were _____ and would not compromise.
14. The website's pricing system is completely _____.
15. Her mood can be very _____, changing within minutes.
16. He gave a _____ glance at the document before hiding it.
17. The company faced an _____ amount of paperwork.
18. She remained _____ about her chances of success.
19. His _____ behavior caused unnecessary conflict.
20. The student's _____ effort helped her finish the project.

Practice Answers

1. Placate
2. Equivocal
3. Esoteric
4. Obdurate
5. Fortuitous
6. Wary
7. Bombastic
8. Fastidious
9. Enervate
10. Exculpate
11. Succinct
12. Supercilious
13. Intransigent
14. Opaque
15. Mercurial
16. Furtive
17. Onerous
18. Sanguine
19. Bellicose
20. Tenacious

Quick Review Checklist

Use this page after each study session to check whether you can actively use the vocabulary, not just recognize it.

- ☐ I can pronounce the word without looking at the pronunciation cue.
- ☐ I can explain the meaning in my own words.
- ☐ I can recognize the word when I read it in a sentence.
- ☐ I can create my own sentence using the word correctly.
- ☐ I can tell the difference between the word and a commonly confused synonym when needed.

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