

Advanced vocabulary



Advanced Vocabulary – 1 | ambiguity | A sentence/expression can be ambiguous if it has two possible meanings, and it is not clear what the | |(adj = ambiguous) | writer/speaker wants to say | | Although she said she was committed to the scheme, there was some ambiguity in her voice. | | Christians are not ambiguous about life after death: they believe in it as an article of faith. | recidivist | Someone who keeps repeating the same crime, who keeps relapsing into bad old habits of behaviour – usually| |(usually used as noun) | criminal. | | Norman Stanley Fletcher was a habitual criminal, whom the judge described as a recidivist, because he could not or would not alter his | | behaviour. | | platitude | A saying or proverb which may once have been wise but has become worn out by repeating; an easy truth; a | | (usually used as noun) | truism; a cliché. | ‘The grass is always greener’ has become something of a platitude in our times, and can deter people for aspiring to better things – better the | | devil you know, and all those clichés. | | coerce | To force someone to do something, to compel, often by physical strength, but not necessarily so. | |(noun = coercion) | | Reluctant students occasionally need coercing to produce their best work! | posthumous | About what happens after death. | |(adjective only) | | The Christian faith is not just about eternal life and such posthumous benefits. | | The valiant soldier lost his life in the conflict and was awarded the VC posthumously. | | benevolent | Kind, generous; from Latin ‘bene’ = well; ‘volens’ = wishing. Very close to benign.

The opposite of | |(noun = benevolence) | malevolent and malign. | | The benevolent fund made grants to people who had lost their savings in the war. | | mundane | Ordinary, dull, everyday, not exciting. Similar to banal

(used mainly of comments) and to trite (dull | |(just use the adjective) | words which we have all heard before) | | We all need something to lift our eyes from mundane things, to the higher meaning of life. | euphoria | A state of excitement, an emotional high – the mental equivalent of ecstasy, which is the physical state | |(adj = euphoric) | | | The euphoria of the cup final triumph stayed with the team for a long long time. | utopia | From Sir Thomas More's book of the same name = paradise, the ideal country. From the Greek meaning 'no | |(just use the noun) | place' | | They assumed that they would never create utopia on this earth in this time, however hard they worked for it. | despot | A tyrant, an absolute ruler, a dictator | |(adjective = despotic) | | | Having ruled for so long with no one to check them, they had become despots, living examples of the truth that power corrupts, and absolute | | power corrupts absolutely. | ambivalence | Being in two minds about something – 'ambi' is the prefix from Latin meaning 'both' and any word with | |(adj = ambivalent) | 'valence' is in is to do with values. | | Quakers are pacifists, and they have never been ambivalent about their opposition to war. | fatuous | Silly, pointless, a waste of time, stupid | |(just use as adjective) | | | O what made fatuous sunbeams toil to break earth's sleep at all? (Wilfred Owen) | Advanced Vocabulary – 2 paradox | Something which appears to be a contradiction | |(adj = paradoxical) | | | Although paradoxical, sometimes it is necessary to go backwards in order to make progress. | | oxymoron | Two words right next to each other which are opposites but used to describe the same thing | |(ignore the adjective! | | | Losing in love is a bitter sweet thing. | | Parting is such sweet sorrow. | | trait | A characteristic, a quality which distinguishes one person from another | | (noun) | | | If kindness were only the dominant trait in humankind, how

different might we be? | ad hoc | Latin expression – literally to the thing , used in English to say that we are making it up as we go | | | along, unplanned, random | | The rather ad hoc methods seemed to get results but left everyone feeling disorganised. | exemplary | Adjective meaning the best, worth using as an exemplar (close to example but stronger) | |(noun = exemplar) | | Many of your reports were exemplary and could well be used to help younger students to see what they would have to do to succeed | facade | The front elevation of a building, now used metaphorically for an outward appearance hiding a very | |(noun) | different inside reality (like veneer) | | Beneath a facade of wealth, some aristocrats lived in no little poverty. | | protagonist | The main character, actor in a drama, or in a situation, eg in politics. Sometimes plural to denote the | |(noun) | two main opponents in a contest. | It seems that Brown and Cameron may be the protagonists in the next General election. | | In a play such as ‘ Hamlet’, the audience is chiefly interested in the protagonist’s thoughts. | | antecedent | Something that comes before something else; precedent = an earlier event which sets the pattern for how | |(noun) | such things happen in future | | There was no antecedent to his surprising behaviour, which came out of a blue sky. | If we allow someone to wear pink, we shall be setting a precedent that many may wish to follow. | | eulogy | A Greek word meaning a speech in praise of someone. At the presentation of the Nobel prizes, the winners | | (noun) | get this done to them. | | The Peace prize winner received a deservedly impressive eulogy. | garrulous | Talkative, outgoing, gregarious, chatty, hard to keep this person quiet | |(adjective) | | | The group’s discussion was dominated by one garrulous individual. | | panacea | The universal cure, the one remedy for all ills, the one solution to all problems. |

(noun) | | | In 1945, it was hoped that the United Nations organisation would be the panacea for the troubles of the world, putting all to right. | | antagonism | Hostility towards someone, often personal, opposition, often physically threatening; the expression of | |(adj = antagonistic) | these feelings. | Over a few weeks, their antagonism became overt and very critical. | Advanced Vocabulary – 3 | enigma | A puzzle, something that will need to be thought out; the adjective often used of people who are | |(adj = enigmatic) | complicated and hard to read | | The complex case gave detectives a difficult enigma to solve. | Advances in science have made moral issues even more enigmatic for many. | | per se | Through itself, for its own sake, just because it is | | All creativity, per se, is important to human society | curt | Short, abrupt, terse to the point of being rude | |(adjective) | | He found her curt remarks very off-putting and unnecessarily critical | robust | Physically strong and healthy, holding up well, resilient | |(adjective) | | They presented a robust defence of the argument from intelligent design | perennial | Describing something that keeps on going for good, for ever | | (adjective or noun) | As a noun, used of plants that come back year after year | | Suffering on a universal scale presents a perennial problem to those who argue the goodness of an omnipotent divinity. | omnipotent | From the Latin ‘all powerful’, with the Saxon equivalent almighty | |(adjective) | The more difficult omniscient means all-knowing | | Modern humanistic thought does not welcome the idea of an omnipotent deity | | deity | A god, a divinity, a being to be worshipped, from the Latin deus, and fairly close to the Greek ????? |(noun) |(theos) = god | | Mercy is a thought for humans as well as for any deity on high. | | purgatory | A kind of limbo in between heaven and hell, a posthumous anteroom for waiting and serving time, purging | |

(noun) | self of the sins that keep us from heaven, in Roman Catholic theology.

A place of suffering. | | He could bear the pains of purgatory, but not this unknowing, this grey nothing of the world. | | formulaic | One of those words where the adjective is more powerful but harder than the noun – formula is used of | |(noun = formula) | ideas or writing which does not have many ideas but is written following a formula | | Her short stories were interesting, but rather formulaic in plot. | placid | Calm, easy going, even tempered, not easily angered or upset, a more positive word than passive, which | | (adjective) | would be someone who tolerated too much | | Philosophers rarely pass their time in placid mood | | reproach | To tell someone off, to draw to their attention a moral failing and wish them to do better. |(verb or noun) | | | Her words of reproach cut him to the heart and made him vow to do better in the future. | | surreal | A recent adjective, coming from the Surrealist movement in art, which claims to represented the | |(adjective) | subconscious mind – hence unreal, weird | | The nightmarish painting seemed surreal. | Their situation felt surreal, more in keeping with a crazy film than their usual ordinary world. | Advanced Vocabulary – 4 | contrite (adj) | Sorry, remorseful, admitting to having done | | contrition (noun) | | | Although he claimed to be contrite, it took a long while for him to amend his lifestyle. | imperative | From ‘ empire’ and belonging to words such as imperial, it means vital, on order, must do | |(adj and noun) | | | It was imperative that they abandon ship at once. | | anathema | Something that is so abhorrent and awful it seems to have been cursed.

NB it is used without the articles. | |(noun) | | | They had such a strong conscience that it was anathema to them to break a promise that they had made. | | initiate | Belongs to words such as initial, initiative – to begin, the take the first steps, to be the one to get | |(verb) | things underway. | The peace process in Northern Ireland was initiated by ordinary people, exhausted by years of sectarian violence | | passive (adj) | The opposite of active, in the sense that such a person would let things happen to them, and not take | |(noun = passivity) | actions to sort things out | | How could we have sat back passively and allowed the Slave Trade to happen? | existentialism | A movement in early 20th century philosophy which focussed on human beings taking action, doing things to | |(noun) | prove their being. | | There was no existentialist doubt to prevent their fighting for votes for women | pragmatic | Real world, get things done, never mind the rights and wrongs, just sort it out ‘on the ground’ | |(adj) | | | To be pragmatic is to be realistic, to worry more about actions than principles | | literal | Actual and precisely true – the thing that really happened.

Often misused by sports commentators for | |(adj) | effect | | They had been standing on their heads for literally half an hour. | | unique | The only one of its kind. I know that you know what it means – but note that it is not used with an | |(adj) | intensifier – it cannot be quite or really unique | | The very last quagga, a unique animal, died in the 19th century. | flaw | A fault or blemish | |(noun) | | | Shakespeare’s tragic heroes are often thought to have a fatal flaw in their character, such as jealousy, which leads to their tragic end. | | rudimentary | Basic, fundamental | |(adj) | | She was a fine mathematician and her work was free from rudimentary mistakes. | |

metaphorical | The opposite of literal – to be able to see one thing in terms of, compared to something else | |(adj) | | | To see the world as a global village is helpful metaphorically to our understanding of how we should see the planet as one community |

Advanced Vocabulary – 5 | astute (adj) | Having a sharp mind, with fine understanding of people, situations, arguments | | Although Hal appeared shallow, his depth of understanding revealed an astute thinker. s | fickle | Changeable, capricious, especially being quick to change side, feelings, not sticking to one person or | |(adj) | argument | | The voters seemed fickle, not supporting one party for more than a few months before swapping sides. | | statutory (adj) | Something that has to be obeyed, followed, because it has the force of the law behind it.

Similar in | |(from noun = statute) | meaning to mandatory. | | Schools have a statutory duty to consider the health and well being of all staff and students. | | forte | Pronounced for-tay, it is based on the Italian/Latin for ‘ strong’, as in musical notation, and it means | |(noun) | what someone is particularly good at. | Playing goalkeeper was Martin’s forte, the position he was made for! | | verbose (adj) | Wordy, never using one word where ten would do just as well, not concise and not to the point. | |(noun = verbosity) | | | Anyone who speaks in public has to be careful not to become verbose, but to keep the point succinctly. | unorthodox | Not conventional, not doing things in the expected way, rather unusual. | |(adj) | | | Her approach to refereeing was not usual, but rather unorthodox – but it certainly allowed the game to flow | idiosyncrasy (noun) | A person’s very own way of doing things, an unusual trait, an eccentricity | |(adj = idiosyncratic) | | | In fact, her unorthodox

approach was so unusual as to be virtually idiosyncratic! | hyperbole | Pronounced hyperbolly – an exaggeration, especially if done for impact in writing | |(noun) | | There were hundreds of reasons for this, but the hyperbole was wasted on the lawyer, who only needed one convincing one. | laconic | Using very few words – in fact, almost taciturn in approach – the opposite of verbose | |(adj) | | The wisest philosopher is usually laconic – few words are best. | tacit | Unspoken, unsaid, known by intuition rather than by declared agreement | |(adjective) | | They had a tacit understanding that they would never let each other down. | acquiesce | To give in, give way, give up – to agree to something tacitly. | |(verb) | Someone who was passive would be acquiescent too. | They had little choice but to acquiesce to the demoralising terms of the treaty. | reminiscence | Looking back, with fondness, reflecting on the past, nostalgia setting in for what has happened before | |(noun) | | They shared many a good reminiscence of their grand days in college thirty years ago. | Advanced Vocabulary – 6 | arduous (adj) | Difficult, tiring, something that is hard work to accomplish, requiring much effort. | The Three Peaks Race presents a series of arduous ascents for any fell-runner. | allusion | An indirect hint, a mention in passing – but so that the reader is meant to recognise what you are | |(noun) | referring to. | | ‘The Chair she sat in’ in Eliot’s The Wasteland is an allusion to ‘The barge she sat in’ from ‘Antony and Cleopatra’ | backbencher | An MP who does not have an official post in government or opposition and sits on the benches at the back – | |(noun) | and can say what they like! | Two angry backbenchers asked the Prime Minister a series of very awkward questions. | cryptic | Mysterious, coded, obscure and unclear in meaning. A cryptic crossword is one where the clues are anagrams | |(adj) | or puzzles. | | She had left a series

of cunning and cryptic clues to her whereabouts. | | crux | The most important or difficult point, often in an argument, the heart of the matter. | (noun) | | | The crux of the issue about the Olympics is: will the stadium be ready in time? | | faction | A small group within a larger one, sharing the same ideas, and often with its own agenda at odds with the | |(noun) | rest of the group | | There was a rebellious faction determined to find a new leader. | fallacy | A mistaken belief, an untruth, a false or misleading argument | | (noun) | | | The idea that any one person is never wrong is clearly a fallacy. | homespun | Simple, plain, unsophisticated, homemade – as opposed to being mass produced (from the wool/cotton weaving| |(adj) | industries) | | We must make do with our ordinary homespun ideas until we find something wiser. | | inhibition | A feeling that restrains you, and that stops you from acting in a more outgoing and careless manner. |(noun) | | | People who are drunk tend to lose their inhibitions and later regret what they have done. | | insinuate | To suggest or hint at something bad, indirectly, especially when giving the idea that someone is not so | |(verb) | good as they seem to be. | | Many defenders insinuated that the well-known centre forward fell over too easily. | orchestrate | To organise something so that all the parts needed (as in an orchestra) work well together – so an | |(verb) | elaborate bit of organising | | The students organised their Prom by orchestrating each person's role very carefully. | | panache | Impressive skill and confidence – a flourish, outwardly and very noticeable. |(noun) | | | The virtuoso played the difficult solo with real panache. | | vindicate | To clear someone of blame, exonerate, to show someone or something to be in the right. | |(verb) | | | The new evidence vindicated the lawyer's argument that her client was innocent. |