



Test Ninjas

VOCABULARY STUDY SERIES

ACT VOCABULARY

ACT Vocabulary: Hard Words

99 focused words in Hard Words

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UNIQUE WORDS

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CATEGORIES

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EXAM FOCUS



About this study guide

This vocabulary guide was prepared and published by Test Ninjas as an independent study resource. It is designed to help students build the precise word knowledge needed for demanding academic reading and reasoning.

How to use this guide

Study in short, repeated sessions. Read each definition, say the word aloud, and use the example to understand how the word functions in context. Return to unfamiliar words until you can explain them without looking at the definition.

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001 **abate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to become less intense or to reduce in amount.

The winds finally **abated** after midnight, allowing emergency crews to approach the damaged coastline.

MEMORY CUE: As a storm abates, its intensity gauge moves downward.

002 **abhor** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to regard with disgust and hatred; to loathe.

The reformer **abhorred** corruption and refused gifts that might compromise her independent judgment, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: To abhor something is to recoil from it with deep disgust and hatred.

003 **abjure** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to formally renounce or give up (a belief, claim, or cause), often under oath.

To join the peace council, former fighters had to **abjure** violence publicly, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: Abjure a belief by formally tearing up its oath and renouncing it.

004 **acquiesce** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to accept or agree to something reluctantly but without protesting.

After much debate, she finally **acquiesced** to her parents' wishes, shaping whether the group could reach a decision acceptable to everyone involved.

MEMORY CUE: Acquiesce by reluctantly lowering resistance and agreeing without protest.

005 **acumen** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

the ability to make good judgments and quick decisions, typically in a particular domain; keen insight.

Her financial **acumen** helped the struggling company reduce debt without dismissing experienced employees, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: Acumen is a sharp mental blade that cuts quickly to a good judgment.

006 **altruistic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

unselfishly concerned for the welfare of others; selfless.

The donor's **altruistic** decision benefited strangers and brought him no publicity or reward, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: An altruistic hand gives to others without placing a reward in its own palm.

007 **amalgamate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to combine or unite to form one structure or organization.

The university will **amalgamate** three small departments into one interdisciplinary research center, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: Amalgamate separate pieces by melting them into one unified structure.

008 **arcane** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

understood by few; mysterious or secret.

The **arcane** rituals of the ancient society remained a mystery, shaping how easily the relevant information could be perceived and interpreted.

MEMORY CUE: An arcane book opens only for the few who know its secret key.

009 **belie** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to give a false impression of; to disguise or contradict.

The restaurant's plain exterior **belied** the remarkably elegant dining room hidden inside, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: A calm mask can belie the turmoil underneath by giving a false impression.

010 **bellicose** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

demonstrating aggression and willingness to fight; warlike in manner.

The diplomat's **bellicose** speech threatened retaliation and made peaceful negotiations increasingly difficult, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: A bellicose figure approaches with armor and a clear willingness to fight.

011 **belligerent** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

hostile and aggressive; eager to fight.

A **belligerent** spectator shouted at officials and attempted to provoke rival fans, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: A belligerent person raises fists and eagerly starts a conflict.

012 **bombastic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

high-sounding or pompous in speech or writing, but with little meaning; inflated.

The candidate's **bombastic** promises sounded impressive but offered no realistic plan for implementation, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: Bombastic language inflates a small idea inside a huge pompous balloon.

013 **cacophony** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

a harsh, discordant mixture of sounds.

A **cacophony** of alarms, engines, and shouting filled the crowded emergency room, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: A cacophony is a crashing mixture of horns, alarms, and discordant noise.

014 **capitulate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to surrender or stop resisting an opponent or demand.

The rebels finally **capitulated**, revealing which choices contributed most directly to the eventual result.

MEMORY CUE: Capitulate by dropping the shield and accepting surrender.

015 **capricious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

given to sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behavior; unpredictable.

The **capricious** weather ruined their plans, revealing an attitude that strongly influenced how the other people responded.

MEMORY CUE: A capricious mood vane changes direction suddenly without explanation.

016 **caustic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

1) able to burn or corrode organic tissue; 2) severely critical or sarcastic in a bitter way.

Her **caustic** review mocked the performers instead of offering useful criticism of the production.

MEMORY CUE: Caustic acid burns a surface; caustic words burn through bitter criticism.

017 **chicanery** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

the use of trickery or deceit to achieve a purpose (usually political, financial, or legal).

Auditors uncovered financial **chicanery** involving false invoices and payments to nonexistent suppliers, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: Chicanery uses marked cards and hidden tricks to achieve its purpose.

018 **circumspect** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

wary and unwilling to take risks; cautious and considering all circumstances.

Because the evidence remained incomplete, the investigator was **circumspect** about announcing any conclusion, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: A circumspect traveler looks around every side before taking a risk.

019 **cogent** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

(of an argument or case) clear, logical, and convincing.

She presented a **cogent** argument for reform, showing how the choice of language shaped the response of the intended audience.

MEMORY CUE: A cogent argument builds a clear logical bridge to a convincing conclusion.

020 **concomitant** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

naturally accompanying or associated; occurring with something else.

Rapid industrial growth brought **concomitant** increases in traffic, pollution, and demand for housing, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: A concomitant shadow naturally travels beside the event it accompanies.

021 **conundrum** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

a confusing and difficult problem or question; a riddle.

The council faced a **conundrum**: raising fares would hurt riders, but current funding was inadequate.

MEMORY CUE: A conundrum locks a difficult question inside a confusing puzzle box.

022 **debilitate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to make someone or something weak or feeble.

The untreated infection can **debilitate** patients, leaving them too weak to perform ordinary tasks.

MEMORY CUE: A debilitating force drains the body's strength battery.

023 **delineate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to describe or portray something precisely; to outline or define.

The agreement clearly **delineates** which repairs belong to tenants and which remain the owner's responsibility.

MEMORY CUE: Delineate by drawing a precise outline and defining every boundary.

024 **desiccate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to dry out thoroughly; to remove moisture from.

Weeks of intense heat **desiccated** the unprotected soil until deep cracks appeared, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: Desiccate a leaf until all moisture leaves and it becomes dry and brittle.

025 **diatribe** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

a forceful and bitter verbal attack against someone or something.

What began as a policy discussion became a bitter **diatribe** against everyone who disagreed.

MEMORY CUE: A diatribe is a long, forceful stream of bitter verbal attack.

026 **disingenuous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

not candid or sincere; pretending to know less than one actually does; not genuine.

His **disingenuous** response fooled no one, shaping whether the audience considered the account reliable and worthy of confidence.

MEMORY CUE: A disingenuous person hides insincerity behind a falsely innocent mask.

027 **disparate** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

essentially different in kind; not allowing comparison.

The **disparate** groups struggled to agree, helping the audience distinguish superficial likeness from meaningful similarity.

MEMORY CUE: Disparate objects are so different in kind that one scale cannot compare them.

028 **dogmatic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

stubbornly opinionated; inclined to lay down principles as undeniably true, without consideration of evidence or others' opinions.

The **dogmatic** instructor dismissed alternative interpretations without considering their evidence, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: A dogmatic speaker bolts one opinion to the podium and ignores all contrary evidence.

029 **ebullient** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

cheerful and full of energy; bubbling with enthusiasm.

Her **ebullient** personality lifted everyone's spirits, shaping the mood of the group as the events continued to unfold.

MEMORY CUE: Ebullient enthusiasm bubbles over with cheerful energy.

030 **effervescent** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

1) (of a liquid) giving off bubbles; fizzy. 2) (of a person) vivacious and enthusiastic.

Her **effervescent** charm delighted everyone, shaping the mood of the group as the events continued to unfold.

MEMORY CUE: Effervescent liquid fizzes with bubbles; an effervescent person bubbles with enthusiasm.

031 **effusive** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

expressing feelings of gratitude, pleasure, or approval in a very open and enthusiastic way.

The director offered **effusive** praise, enthusiastically thanking every performer and crew member by name.

MEMORY CUE: Effusive gratitude pours openly from an overflowing emotional cup.

032 **egregious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

outstandingly bad; shocking.

The newspaper corrected an **egregious** error that had falsely accused an innocent resident, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: An egregious error flashes an alarm because it is shockingly bad.

033 **eloquent** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

fluent or persuasive in speaking or writing; clearly expressing something.

The **eloquent** orator moved the audience to tears, influencing how the audience interpreted the wording and intent of the message.

MEMORY CUE: Eloquent language flows clearly and persuasively toward the audience.

034 **enigmatic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious.

The **enigmatic** smile revealed nothing, shaping how easily the relevant information could be perceived and interpreted.

MEMORY CUE: An enigmatic message remains behind a mysterious question-mark lock.

035 **exacerbate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to make a problem, bad situation, or negative feeling worse.

The drought **exacerbated** the food shortage crisis, showing how substantially the original situation changed over the course of events.

MEMORY CUE: Exacerbate a crack by making it wider and worse.

036 **facetious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

treating serious issues with deliberately inappropriate humor; flippant.

Her **facetious** comment about sleeping through the emergency meeting was clearly not a serious proposal.

MEMORY CUE: A facetious grin puts a joke hat on a serious issue at the wrong time.

037 **fastidious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

very attentive to detail; hard to please; excessively concerned about cleanliness or precision.

The **fastidious** chef inspected every dish, making the level of organization apparent to everyone involved in the effort.

MEMORY CUE: A fastidious inspector finds one speck and demands exact cleanliness.

038 **fervent** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

having or displaying a passionate intensity.

She made a **fervent** plea for justice, revealing how strongly the experience affected the people involved in the situation.

MEMORY CUE: A fervent conviction burns with passionate intensity.

039 **furtive** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

attempting to avoid notice or attention, typically because of guilt; secretive.

His **furtive** behavior aroused suspicion, giving observers evidence for deciding whether the claim could be trusted.

MEMORY CUE: A furtive figure sneaks beneath cover and glances back to avoid notice.

040 **garrulous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

excessively talkative, especially about trivial matters.

The **garrulous** neighbor talked for hours about nothing, influencing how the audience interpreted the wording and intent of the message.

MEMORY CUE: A garrulous speaker fills an endless ribbon with trivial talk.

041 **glib** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

fluent and voluble but insincere and shallow (often describing speech).

The spokesperson's **glib** assurances sounded polished but failed to address the safety concerns, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: Glib speech glides smoothly over a shallow surface while sincerity stays absent.

042 **gregarious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

(of a person) fond of company; sociable.

The **gregarious** host made every guest feel welcome, showing how personal conduct affected the outcome of the broader situation.

MEMORY CUE: A gregarious person happily joins the center of every gathering.

043 **histrionic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

overly dramatic or theatrical in behavior or speech.

His **histrionic** reaction to a minor schedule change included shouting, pacing, and dramatic sighs.

MEMORY CUE: A histrionic reaction fills the stage with exaggerated gestures and theatrical tears.

044 **hubris** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

excessive pride or self-confidence (often leading to a downfall).

The captain's **hubris** led him to ignore storm warnings and overestimate the ship's strength.

MEMORY CUE: Hubris builds an enormous self-confidence tower that eventually tips into downfall.

045 **impasse** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

a situation in which progress is impossible, especially because of a disagreement; a deadlock.

Negotiations reached an **impasse** when neither side would alter its position on wages, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: An impasse is a solid wall where opposing routes can make no progress.

046 **imprudent** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

not showing care for the consequences of an action; unwise or rash.

Spending the entire reserve before repairing the roof would be an **imprudent** choice, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: An imprudent person runs past the consequences sign without checking the danger.

047 **incessant** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

(of something regarded as unpleasant) continuing without pause; ceaseless.

The **incessant** noise kept everyone awake, clarifying whether the condition or event was brief, repeated, or long-lasting.

MEMORY CUE: An incessant alarm continues without a single pause.

048 **ineffable** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

too great or extreme to be expressed in words; indescribable.

Standing beneath the northern lights produced an **ineffable** sense of wonder beyond ordinary description.

MEMORY CUE: An ineffable wonder is so great that every word falls short of describing it.

049 **inimical** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

tending to obstruct or harm; unfriendly or hostile.

The proposed cuts are **inimical** to the program's goal of expanding public access, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: An inimical force blocks the path while sending hostile harm.

050 **innuendo** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

an indirect or subtle (and usually derogatory) hint or remark.

Through **innuendo** rather than direct accusation, the columnist suggested that the official had accepted bribes.

MEMORY CUE: An innuendo is a hidden, often insulting arrow beneath an indirect remark.

051 **insidious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

proceeding in a gradual, subtle way, but with harmful effects.

The pest caused **insidious** damage that remained invisible until several mature trees suddenly collapsed.

MEMORY CUE: Insidious harm spreads slowly beneath the surface before anyone notices.

052 **interminable** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

endless or seemingly endless (often used hyperbolically).

The **interminable** meeting continued for hours without producing a single clear decision, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: An interminable road seems to continue forever without an end.

053 **intransigent** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

unwilling or refusing to change one's views or to agree; uncompromising.

The **intransigent** negotiator rejected every compromise and refused to reconsider any demand, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: An intransigent negotiator bolts their position down and refuses every compromise.

054 **jocular** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

fond of or characterized by joking; humorous or playful.

His **jocular** manner put people at ease, shaping the mood of the group as the events continued to unfold.

MEMORY CUE: A jocular person keeps playful jokes ready for the conversation.

055 **juxtapose** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to place two or more things side by side, especially for comparison or contrast.

The exhibit **juxtaposes** ancient tools with modern devices to reveal surprising similarities in design.

MEMORY CUE: Juxtapose contrasting objects by placing them directly side by side.

056 **knell** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

the sound of a bell (especially when rung solemnly for a death or funeral); an omen of death or failure.

The factory's closure sounded the **knell** for several nearby businesses that depended on its workers.

MEMORY CUE: A solemn bell's knell sounds like an omen of death or failure.

057 **lachrymose** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

tearful or inclined to weep; causing tears or sorrow.

The **lachrymose** drama subjected audiences to three hours of relentless sorrow and tearful farewells.

MEMORY CUE: A lachrymose face seems to carry a constant stream of tears.

058 **laconic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

using very few words; terse or concise (often sounding rude or mysterious).

His **laconic** reply revealed nothing about his true feelings, influencing how the audience interpreted the wording and intent of the message.

MEMORY CUE: A laconic reply uses only a few clipped words.

059 **languish** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to lose or lack vitality; to grow weak or feeble; to suffer from being in an unpleasant situation.

Without funding or leadership, the promising restoration project **languished** for years, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: A languishing plant droops, loses vitality, and remains trapped in poor conditions.

060 **maladroit** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

clumsy; not skillful; awkward in movement or behavior.

His **maladroit** attempt to apologize offended the guests more than the original mistake, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: A maladroit worker clumsily drops every tool during the task.

061 **malaise** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

a general feeling of discomfort, illness, or unease whose exact cause is hard to identify.

A general **malaise** spread through the office as rumors of layoffs continued, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: Malaise is a gray cloud of unexplained discomfort and unease around the body.

062 **mawkish** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

overly sentimental to the point of being sickening or silly.

The film's **mawkish** ending used sentimental music and exaggerated speeches to force an emotional response.

MEMORY CUE: A mawkish scene pours so much syrupy sentiment that it becomes sickening.

063 **mercurial** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

subject to sudden or unpredictable changes of mood or mind; volatile.

The **mercurial** director praised the design in the morning and rejected it that afternoon.

MEMORY CUE: A mercurial mood moves like liquid mercury, changing direction suddenly.

064 **mollify** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to appease or soothe the anger or anxiety of someone; to calm someone down.

The airline offered refunds and hotel rooms to **mollify** passengers stranded overnight, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: Mollify an angry person by lowering the heat with calm reassurance.

065 **nebulous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

unclear, vague, or ill-defined; hazy.

The **nebulous** plan lacked specifics, giving observers more context for judging what could be seen or understood.

MEMORY CUE: A nebulous idea is a hazy cloud without clear boundaries.

066 **nefarious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

wicked or criminal (typically describing an action or activity).

The detective uncovered a **nefarious** scheme to steal donations intended for disaster victims, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: A nefarious plan travels a dark path marked wicked and criminal.

067 **nonplussed** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

so surprised and confused that one is unsure how to react; bewildered.

Nonplussed by the contradictory instructions, the applicants stood silently and waited for clarification, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: A nonplussed person freezes between surprise and confusion, unsure how to react.

068 **obfuscate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to make something unclear or difficult to understand; to confuse.

The politician tried to **obfuscate** the issue with technical jargon, giving observers more context for judging what could be seen or understood.

MEMORY CUE: Obfuscate a simple message by covering it in layers of confusing fog.

069 **obsequious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

overly eager to please or obey all instructions; excessively submissive and flattering.

The **obsequious** assistant praised every suggestion from the executive, however impractical it seemed, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: An obsequious servant bows excessively while flattering every command.

070 **opaque** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

not able to be seen through; not transparent; also used metaphorically to mean not clear or hard to understand.

The **opaque** glass provided privacy while still allowing light through, making its degree of transparency or comprehensibility clearer from the surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: An opaque wall blocks sight and makes the meaning equally hard to see.

071 **ostensible** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

stated or appearing to be true, but not necessarily so; apparent.

The **ostensible** purpose of the meeting was budgeting, though everyone expected a leadership announcement.

MEMORY CUE: An ostensible truth wears an outward TRUE label that may hide a different reality.

072 **parsimonious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

extremely unwilling to spend money or use resources; stingy or frugal to a fault.

The **parsimonious** landlord refused repairs, giving observers a clearer picture of the economic conditions surrounding the situation.

MEMORY CUE: A parsimonious hand locks one tiny coin away rather than spending it.

073 **pedantic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

overly concerned with minor details or rules; tending to show off one's learning.

The **pedantic** reviewer focused on minor formatting rules while ignoring the report's central findings.

MEMORY CUE: A pedantic speaker magnifies tiny rules while displaying a pile of learning.

074 **pernicious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

having a harmful effect, especially in a gradual or subtle way.

The **pernicious** influence corrupted youth, showing how principles influenced the choice made under challenging circumstances.

MEMORY CUE: Pernicious poison causes harmful damage slowly and subtly.

075 **portentous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

1) indicating something significant or calamitous about to happen; ominous. 2) done in a pompously or overly solemn manner to impress.

Dark clouds and a sudden silence gave the afternoon sky a **portentous** quality, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: Portentous clouds warn of calamity while a pompous voice announces them too solemnly.

076 **precipitous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

dangerously high or steep; also sudden and dramatic.

The **precipitous** decline alarmed investors, making the rate of progress noticeable to everyone monitoring the process.

MEMORY CUE: A precipitous path drops down a dangerously steep cliff in a sudden plunge.

077 **quell** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to put an end to (a rebellion or other disorder), typically by the use of force; to subdue or silence; to calm.

Police were called to **quell** the disturbance, revealing whether the action enabled or restricted progress toward the intended goal.

MEMORY CUE: Quell disorder by pressing it down until the noise and resistance stop.

078 **quixotic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

exceedingly idealistic; unrealistic and impractical.

Their **quixotic** campaign sought to eliminate all urban traffic without changing transportation policy, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: A quixotic knight charges an impossible windmill for an idealistic dream.

079 recondite *adjective · Hard***HARD WORDS**

(of a subject or knowledge) little known; abstruse; difficult for the average person to understand.

The **recondite** references went over most readers' heads, helping the group recognize which parts of the problem required the greatest effort.

MEMORY CUE: Recondite knowledge sits in a locked specialist book few people understand.

080 reprehensible *adjective · Hard***HARD WORDS**

deserving of condemnation or disapproval; blameworthy.

The committee condemned the **reprehensible** decision to conceal safety risks from employees, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: A reprehensible act stands beneath a strong CONDEMNED stamp.

081 reticent *adjective · Hard***HARD WORDS**

not revealing one's thoughts or feelings readily; reserved or introverted.

He was **reticent** about discussing his past, showing how the choice of language shaped the response of the intended audience.

MEMORY CUE: A reticent person keeps thoughts behind a zipped mouth.

082 salient *adjective · Hard***HARD WORDS**

most noticeable or important; standing out prominently.

The **salient** points were highlighted, helping the group judge how the detail related to the larger issue.

MEMORY CUE: A salient point rises above the rest as the most noticeable and important.

083 sanguine *adjective · Hard***HARD WORDS**

optimistic or positive, especially in a bad or difficult situation.

Despite the setbacks, she remained **sanguine** about the project's success, revealing how strongly the experience affected the people involved in the situation.

MEMORY CUE: A sanguine person holds a bright sun above a difficult storm.

084 sedulous *adjective · Hard***HARD WORDS**

showing dedication and diligence; hard-working.

Through **sedulous** research, the historian verified dates that earlier scholars had merely assumed, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: A sedulous worker carefully persists through every task.

085 **solicitous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

showing interest or concern (often too much); attentive in an anxious or worried way.

The **solicitous** host repeatedly checked whether every guest was warm, comfortable, and well fed.

MEMORY CUE: A solicitous helper watches anxiously and offers attentive concern.

086 **soliloquy** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

an act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when by oneself, especially by a character in a play.

In her final **soliloquy**, the character reveals fears that she has hidden from everyone else.

MEMORY CUE: A soliloquy places one actor alone onstage speaking private thoughts aloud.

087 **stoic** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

enduring pain or hardship without showing one's feelings or complaining.

She remained **stoic** throughout the ordeal, revealing how strongly the experience affected the people involved in the situation.

MEMORY CUE: A stoic face remains calm while enduring pain without complaint.

088 **sumptuous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

splendid and expensive-looking; luxurious.

The **sumptuous** feast included delicacies, illustrating the resources available to the people affected by the decision.

MEMORY CUE: A sumptuous feast appears splendid, expensive, and luxurious.

089 **supercilious** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

behaving or looking as though one thinks one is superior to others; arrogantly disdainful.

The **supercilious** clerk treated inexperienced customers as though their questions were beneath consideration, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: A supercilious person looks arrogantly down from a high throne.

090 **taciturn** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

reserved or uncommunicative in speech; saying little.

The **taciturn** man rarely spoke in meetings, showing how the choice of language shaped the response of the intended audience.

MEMORY CUE: A taciturn speaker keeps nearly every word locked away.

091 **tenuous** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

very weak or slight (especially of a link, argument, or relationship); lacking strength or substance.

The connection between the two events was **tenuous** at best, making the degree of certainty clear from the surrounding circumstances and available evidence.

MEMORY CUE: A tenuous argument hangs from one weak, fraying thread.

092 **trepidation** *noun · Hard*

HARD WORDS

a feeling of fear or agitation about something that may happen; apprehension.

With considerable **trepidation**, Elena opened the message that would determine her scholarship application, illustrating the term precisely enough to distinguish it from a weaker synonym.

MEMORY CUE: Trepidation makes the body tremble while imagining what may happen.

093 **vacillate** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to waver between different opinions or actions; to be indecisive.

She **vacillated** between accepting and rejecting the offer, making the degree of certainty clear from the surrounding circumstances and available evidence.

MEMORY CUE: Vacillate like a pointer swinging between two choices.

094 **vehement** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

showing strong feeling; forceful, passionate, or intense.

Residents expressed **vehement** opposition, speaking forcefully against the highway expansion at the hearing, making the advanced word understandable through its consequences and surrounding details.

MEMORY CUE: A vehement speaker pounds the podium with forceful passion.

095 **wane** *verb · Hard*

HARD WORDS

to decrease in vigor, power, or extent; to become weaker or smaller.

Public interest in the scandal began to **wane**, giving observers a clearer basis for judging its extent or relation to the larger whole.

MEMORY CUE: As the moon wanes, its visible strength and size decrease.

096 **wistful** *adjective · Hard*

HARD WORDS

having or showing a feeling of vague or regretful longing.

He gave the abandoned playground a **wistful** glance and remembered afternoons spent there as a child.

MEMORY CUE: A wistful person gazes toward a faded memory with regretful longing.

097 xenophobia *noun · Hard***HARD WORDS**

dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries (or strangers in general).

Community leaders challenged **xenophobia** by organizing events where newcomers and longtime residents shared traditions.

MEMORY CUE: Xenophobia builds a wall of prejudice against people seen as foreign or strange.

098 zealous *adjective · Hard***HARD WORDS**

having or showing great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or objective.

The **zealous** advocate fought tirelessly for the cause, revealing an attitude that strongly influenced how the other people responded.

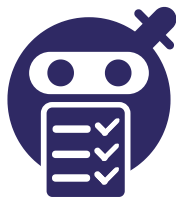
MEMORY CUE: A zealous supporter pursues the cause with a bright flame of energy.

099 zephyr *noun · Hard***HARD WORDS**

a soft, gentle breeze.

A gentle **zephyr** moved through the open windows and stirred the curtains, providing concrete clues from which a careful reader can infer the unfamiliar term.

MEMORY CUE: A zephyr is a soft breeze that barely stirs a curtain.



ACT VOCABULARY

Keep building your edge.

Vocabulary grows through repeated exposure and deliberate use.
Revisit this list, write with the words, and practice recognizing their
meaning in context.

More focused practice at test-ninjas.com