



**Test Ninjas**

VOCABULARY STUDY SERIES

GMAT VOCABULARY

# GMAT Vocabulary: Character, Leadership & Organizations

55 focused words in Character, Leadership & Organizations

**55**

UNIQUE WORDS

**1**

CATEGORIES

**GMAT**

EXAM FOCUS



# About this study guide

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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 aloof** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Not friendly or forthcoming; cool and distant; detached

The professor remained **aloof** during department meetings, contributing only when directly addressed.

**MEMORY CUE:** An aloof person stands behind a distant closed gate while others gather.

**002 apathy** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern

The administration mistook the public's **apathy** for approval and was blindsided by the backlash that followed.

**MEMORY CUE:** Apathy shrugs without interest, energy, enthusiasm, or concern.

**003 apprehensive** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Anxious or fearful that something bad or unpleasant will happen

The crew grew **apprehensive** as storm clouds gathered on the horizon with no harbor in sight.

**MEMORY CUE:** An apprehensive person watches tomorrow's calendar beneath an anxiety cloud.

**004 arrogance** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

An exaggerated sense of one's own importance or abilities; overbearing pride

The general's **arrogance** blinded him to the tactical advantages his opponents possessed in the rugged terrain.

**MEMORY CUE:** Arrogance inflates a person's importance until everyone else looks small.

**005 astute** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Having an ability to accurately assess situations and turn them to one's advantage; shrewd

The **astute** investor recognized the market trend months before her competitors.

**MEMORY CUE:** An astute observer spots the crucial clue and makes a sharp judgment.

**006 audit** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

An independent, systematic examination of records, controls, or financial statements.

The external **audit** tested invoices and account balances before the company released its annual statements.

**MEMORY CUE:** An audit shines an independent flashlight through the records to check whether they hold up.

**007 austere** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Severe or strict in manner, attitude, or appearance; having no comforts or luxuries

The monastery's **austere** stone walls and bare furnishings reflected the monks' commitment to simplicity.

**MEMORY CUE:** An austere room has bare stone walls, strict lines, and no comfort.

**008 austerity** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Severity or strictness of manner or attitude; extreme plainness and simplicity of style; conditions of reduced spending

Years of government **austerity** left hospitals underfunded and schools struggling to retain qualified teachers.

**MEMORY CUE:** Austerity removes comforts and spending until only strict necessities remain.

**009 belligerent** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Hostile and aggressive; eager to fight

The ambassador's **belligerent** tone during the summit alarmed delegates who had come expecting constructive dialogue.

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

**010 benign** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Gentle, kindly; not harmful in effect

What initially appeared to be a **benign** policy shift turned out to have far-reaching economic consequences.

**MEMORY CUE:** A benign presence offers a gentle hand that causes no harm.

**011 civility** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech

Even in the heat of the debate, both candidates maintained a level of **civility** that impressed the moderators.

**MEMORY CUE:** Civility keeps speech formally polite even during sharp disagreement.

**012 complacency** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

A feeling of smug self-satisfaction with oneself or one's situation, unaware of potential dangers

The team's early success bred **complacency**, and by midseason their performance had deteriorated sharply.

**MEMORY CUE:** Complacency naps smugly while an unnoticed danger approaches.

**013 consummate** *adjective/verb*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Showing a high degree of skill and flair; complete in every detail

A **consummate** professional, she handled the crisis with poise and efficiency.

**MEMORY CUE:** A consummate performer completes every detail with exceptional mastery.

**014 cynical** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Believing that people are motivated purely by self-interest; distrustful of human sincerity

The columnist took a **cynical** view of the politician's sudden interest in education reform during an election year.

**MEMORY CUE:** A cynical observer assumes a generous act hides selfish motives.

**015 cynicism** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

A distrustful and contemptuous attitude toward the motives of others

Years of broken promises had bred a deep **cynicism** among voters who once believed in the democratic process.

**MEMORY CUE:** Cynicism wears dark glasses that make every motive look selfish.

**016 demeanor** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Outward behavior or bearing

The witness's calm **demeanor** under cross-examination impressed the jury more than any single piece of evidence.

**MEMORY CUE:** Demeanor is the outward manner others see you carrying.

**017 detached** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Separate; aloof and objective; not involved emotionally

The journalist maintained a **detached** perspective, reporting the facts without editorializing about either side.

**MEMORY CUE:** A detached observer stands apart, separate and emotionally uninvolved.

**018 detachment** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

The state of being objective, aloof, or emotionally uninvolved

Scientific **detachment** is essential when evaluating data, especially when the results challenge one's own hypothesis.

**MEMORY CUE:** Detachment unhooks emotion so judgment can remain objective and aloof.

019 **disgruntled** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Angry or dissatisfied; discontented

**Disgruntled** employees leaked internal documents that revealed unsafe working conditions at the plant.

**MEMORY CUE:** A disgruntled worker wears an angry frown beside an empty satisfaction gauge.

020 **disposition** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

A person's inherent qualities of mind and character; temperament

The child's cheerful **disposition** endeared her to teachers and classmates alike.

**MEMORY CUE:** Disposition is the inner tilt of a person's characteristic temperament.

021 **eccentric** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Unconventional and slightly strange; deviating from the norm

The **eccentric** mathematician lived in near-total seclusion, communicating with colleagues only through handwritten letters.

**MEMORY CUE:** An eccentric orbit circles away from the conventional center.

022 **ecstatic** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Feeling or expressing overwhelming happiness or joyful excitement

The team was **ecstatic** when the probe successfully landed on the asteroid after a seven-year journey.

**MEMORY CUE:** An ecstatic figure bursts upward with overwhelming happiness.

023 **elated** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Ecstatically happy; in high spirits

The researchers were **elated** when the clinical trial produced results that exceeded even their most optimistic projections.

**MEMORY CUE:** An elated person floats upward beneath balloons of ecstatic happiness.

024 **fervent** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Having or displaying a passionate intensity

The **fervent** supporters lined up hours before the rally to secure front-row positions.

**MEMORY CUE:** A fervent belief burns with a steady flame of passionate intensity.

**025 fiduciary** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Requiring a person entrusted with another's interests or assets to act loyally and carefully.

The trustee's **fiduciary** duty required her to favor the beneficiaries rather than her own financial interests.

**MEMORY CUE:** A fiduciary guards someone else's treasure chest under a duty of trust.

**026 finesse** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Impressive delicacy and skill; subtle handling of a situation

The conductor led the orchestra with a **finesse** that brought out subtleties in the score no one had noticed before.

**MEMORY CUE:** Finesse handles a delicate problem with subtle skill instead of force.

**027 frivolous** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Not having any serious purpose or value; trivial

The judge dismissed the lawsuit as **frivolous**, noting that the plaintiff had no legal standing to bring the claim.

**MEMORY CUE:** A frivolous lawsuit has little serious purpose or value.

**028 governance** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

The system of rules, oversight, and decision-making through which an organization is directed.

Stronger **governance** required independent directors to review transactions involving the chief executive's family members.

**MEMORY CUE:** Governance is the steering wheel, rulebook, and dashboard used to direct an organization.

**029 gracious** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Courteous, kind, and pleasant; showing grace and good manners

The host was unfailingly **gracious**, making even the most reserved guests feel welcome at the reception.

**MEMORY CUE:** A gracious host makes kindness, courtesy, and good manners feel effortless.

**030 hoarding** *noun/verb*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

The practice of accumulating and storing a supply of something, often secretly

Panic buying led to the **hoarding** of essential supplies, leaving store shelves empty for weeks.

**MEMORY CUE:** Hoarding piles supplies into a hidden heap instead of using or sharing.

**031 indifferent** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Having no particular interest or concern; apathetic

The committee appeared **indifferent** to the concerns raised by residents who would be most affected by the rezoning.

**MEMORY CUE:** An indifferent person shows no movement on the interest or concern gauge.

**032 institutional** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Relating to an established organization, system, or enduring pattern of practice.

The consultant argued that the delays reflected **institutional** habits rather than one manager's poor decisions.

**MEMORY CUE:** An institutional pattern is built into the organization's walls, not tied to one individual.

**033 intrepid** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Fearless; adventurous and brave

The **intrepid** journalist traveled to the conflict zone to report firsthand on the situation.

**MEMORY CUE:** An intrepid explorer walks fearlessly into an unknown adventure.

**034 malignant** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Disposed to cause harm or suffering; virulently harmful

The **malignant** influence of propaganda warped public opinion and silenced legitimate dissent.

**MEMORY CUE:** A malignant force grows aggressively and is disposed to cause harm.

**035 menacing** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Suggesting the presence of danger; threatening

The **menacing** tone of the ultimatum left little doubt that military action would follow if demands were not met.

**MEMORY CUE:** A menacing shadow suggests danger is approaching.

**036 meticulous** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Showing great attention to detail; very careful and precise

The restorer's **meticulous** attention to detail preserved the painting's original colors beneath centuries of grime.

**MEMORY CUE:** A meticulous inspector checks every tiny detail with a precision lens.

**037 mundane** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Lacking interest or excitement; dull; of this earthly world rather than heavenly

The biographer refused to gloss over the **mundane** details of the artist's life, finding in them clues to her creative process.

**MEMORY CUE:** A mundane routine rolls through the same dull, everyday motions.

**038 nausea** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

A feeling of sickness with an inclination to vomit

The side effects of the treatment included **nausea**, dizziness, and fatigue that persisted for several days.

**MEMORY CUE:** Nausea turns the stomach toward the urge to vomit.

**039 nefarious** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Wicked, villainous, or criminal in nature

The investigation uncovered the **nefarious** scheme to defraud thousands of elderly investors.

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

**040 oblivious** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Not aware of or not concerned about what is happening around one

The tourists were **oblivious** to the historical significance of the ruins they were casually photographing.

**MEMORY CUE:** An oblivious person ignores the parade passing directly behind them.

**041 penchant** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

A strong or habitual liking for something or tendency to do something

The director had a **penchant** for casting unknown actors in leading roles.

**MEMORY CUE:** A penchant is a strong habitual leaning toward a favorite activity.

**042 placid** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Not easily upset or excited; calm and peaceful

The village's **placid** exterior concealed long-simmering tensions between old residents and recent arrivals.

**MEMORY CUE:** A placid pond remains calm and peaceful without a ripple.

**043 propensity** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

An inclination or natural tendency to behave in a particular way

His **propensity** for exaggeration made his colleagues skeptical of his claims.

**MEMORY CUE:** A propensity is an inner slope naturally tilting behavior one way.

**046 resolute** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering

The captain remained **resolute** in her decision to stay the course, even as the storm intensified around the ship.

**MEMORY CUE:** A resolute person anchors both feet and points firmly toward the chosen goal.

**044 reluctance** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Unwillingness or disinclination to do something

Her **reluctance** to publish the findings stemmed not from doubt about their accuracy but from concern about their implications.

**MEMORY CUE:** Reluctance pulls backward when action asks you to move forward.

**047 rigidity** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

The quality of being unyielding, stiff, or inflexible

The **rigidity** of the curriculum left teachers no room to adapt lessons to the needs of individual students.

**MEMORY CUE:** Rigidity keeps a structure or opinion stiff, unyielding, and inflexible.

**045 resilience** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

The capacity to recover quickly or withstand difficulty

The community's **resilience** in the face of repeated natural disasters became a model studied by disaster preparedness agencies.

**MEMORY CUE:** Resilience is a spring that bends under pressure and quickly returns to shape.

**048 self-absorption** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Preoccupation with one's own thoughts, feelings, or interests

The memoirist was accused of **self-absorption**, though defenders argued that introspection was the genre's defining feature.

**MEMORY CUE:** Self-absorption turns every mental mirror toward one's own concerns.

049 **stakeholder** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

A person or group affected by, interested in, or able to influence an organization's actions.

Each **stakeholder**, including employees and nearby residents, was invited to comment on the factory expansion.

**MEMORY CUE:** A stakeholder holds a stake in the outcome even without holding company stock.

050 **temperance** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Moderation or self-restraint, especially in drinking alcohol; the movement advocating abstinence from alcohol

The **temperance** movement of the early twentieth century ultimately led to the passage of Prohibition in the United States.

**MEMORY CUE:** Temperance keeps appetite within moderate limits through self-restraint.

051 **tenacity** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

The quality of being very determined; persistence and resolve

Her **tenacity** in pursuing the investigation eventually led to a breakthrough.

**MEMORY CUE:** Tenacity grips a goal and refuses to release it.

052 **tranquil** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Free from disturbance; calm; peaceful

The **tranquil** surface of the mountain lake reflected the snow-capped peaks with mirror-like clarity.

**MEMORY CUE:** A tranquil lake has an unbroken surface beneath a quiet sky.

053 **wary** *adjective*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Feeling or showing caution about possible dangers or problems

Investors remained **wary** of the market's sudden rally, suspecting it might be a temporary correction rather than a genuine recovery.

**MEMORY CUE:** A wary traveler checks every step for possible danger.

054 **zeal** *noun*

## CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP &amp; ORGANIZATIONS

Great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or objective

The reformer's **zeal** for social justice inspired a generation of activists who continued her work long after her death.

**MEMORY CUE:** Zeal fuels energetic enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause.

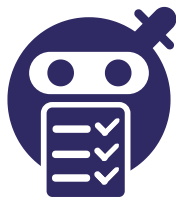
**055 zealous** *adjective*

**CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONS**

Having or showing zeal; great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause

The prosecutor's **zealous** pursuit of the case raised questions about whether the investigation had been conducted impartially.

**MEMORY CUE:** A zealous supporter guards the cause with a bright flame of devotion.



GMAT VOCABULARY

# Keep building your edge.

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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](https://test-ninjas.com)**