



**Test Ninjas**

VOCABULARY STUDY SERIES

GMAT VOCABULARY

# GMAT Vocabulary: Society, Culture, Markets & Institutions

60 focused words in Society, Culture, Markets & Institutions

**60**

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 activism** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change

Her **activism** on behalf of migrant workers earned her both admiration and fierce political opposition.

**MEMORY CUE:** Activism means becoming active, organized, and vocal for social change.

**002 adaptations** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Modified versions of something adjusted for a new purpose

Film **adaptations** of classic novels rarely satisfy readers who cherish the original prose.

**MEMORY CUE:** Adaptations are altered versions fitted to survive a new setting.

**003 aesthetics** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty

The **aesthetics** of Japanese garden design emphasize simplicity, asymmetry, and the beauty of natural materials.

**MEMORY CUE:** Aesthetics asks what makes an object or style feel beautiful.

**004 agrarian** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Relating to cultivated land or the cultivation of land; agricultural

The country's **agrarian** economy left it vulnerable to droughts that devastated crop yields.

**MEMORY CUE:** An agrarian society centers its life on agricultural fields and farms.

**005 alienated** *adjective/verb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Estranged; made to feel isolated or withdrawn from

The artist's uncompromising vision **alienated** mainstream audiences but earned devoted followers among critics.

**MEMORY CUE:** An alienated person feels like an outsider on a distant planet.

**006 apostle** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A vigorous and pioneering advocate of a particular cause or idea

She became an **apostle** of sustainable architecture, lecturing worldwide on carbon-neutral building design.

**MEMORY CUE:** An apostle carries a cause outward as its devoted pioneering advocate.

**007 arbitrage** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The practice of profiting from a price difference for the same or closely related assets in different markets.

Traders used **arbitrage** to buy the commodity cheaply in one market and sell it immediately elsewhere.

**MEMORY CUE:** Arbitrage crosses a price bridge: buy on the low side and sell on the high side.

**008 archaic** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Very old or old-fashioned; belonging to an earlier period

The **archaic** language of the legal code made it nearly incomprehensible to modern readers.

**MEMORY CUE:** An archaic custom belongs in an archive of very old practices.

**009 aria** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A self-contained piece for one voice, usually in an opera

The soprano's **aria** in the second act brought the audience to tears with its haunting simplicity.

**MEMORY CUE:** Picture one opera singer holding the stage alone during an aria.

**010 authoritarian** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Favoring or enforcing strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom

The **authoritarian** regime suppressed dissent through censorship, surveillance, and the imprisonment of political opponents.

**MEMORY CUE:** An authoritarian ruler demands strict obedience from a high command chair.

**011 banished** *verb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Sent away from a place as an official punishment; expelled

The dissident was **banished** from the country and spent twenty years in exile before the regime fell.

**MEMORY CUE:** A banished person is sent beyond the border as punishment.

**012 bowed to** *verb phrase*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Yielded or submitted to

The company **bowed to** public pressure and withdrew the controversial advertisement within hours of its release.

**MEMORY CUE:** Someone who bowed to pressure lowered resistance and finally yielded.

**013 bureaucracy** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A system of government or administration marked by excessive red tape and rigid procedures

The grant application required navigating a labyrinth of **bureaucracy** that discouraged all but the most determined researchers.

**MEMORY CUE:** Bureaucracy resembles a maze built from forms, desks, and rigid procedures.

**014 capital** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Money or productive resources used to create goods, services, or future income.

The startup raised enough **capital** to purchase equipment and operate until customer revenue became dependable.

**MEMORY CUE:** Capital is the seed money and equipment planted now to grow future production and income.

**015 chevron** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A V-shaped or zigzag pattern used as decoration or insignia

The mosaic floor featured a repeating **chevron** pattern that archaeologists traced to second-century Roman workshops.

**MEMORY CUE:** A chevron looks like a pointed V stitched onto a uniform.

**016 clerical** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Relating to the clergy or religious officials

The **clerical** hierarchy resisted the reforms, viewing them as a threat to the church's traditional authority.

**MEMORY CUE:** Clerical robes identify matters connected with clergy and religious officials.

**017 collage** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A composition made by combining diverse elements

The filmmaker's work is a **collage** of documentary footage, animation, and staged reenactments.

**MEMORY CUE:** A collage joins diverse scraps into one unified composition.

**018 communal** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Shared by all members of a community; for common use

The **communal** gardens provided fresh produce and, more importantly, a gathering place for the neighborhood.

**MEMORY CUE:** A communal table belongs to and serves the whole community.

**019 conspicuous** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Standing out so as to be clearly visible; attracting notice

The artist's **conspicuous** absence from the gallery opening fueled speculation about a rift with the curator.

**MEMORY CUE:** A conspicuous red umbrella stands out in a gray crowd.

**020 cosmopolitan** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Familiar with and at ease in many different countries and cultures

The **cosmopolitan** city attracted artists, entrepreneurs, and scholars from every continent.

**MEMORY CUE:** A cosmopolitan traveler feels comfortably at home among many world cultures.

**021 dictate** *verb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

To determine or control; to prescribe authoritatively

Economic realities, rather than ideological preferences, often **dictate** the policies a government can pursue.

**MEMORY CUE:** A dictator's commanding voice dictates what others must write or do.

**022 disregard** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Lack of attention to or concern for something

The company's blatant **disregard** for environmental regulations resulted in a record-setting fine from federal authorities.

**MEMORY CUE:** Disregard turns its eyes away and pays no attention or concern.

**023 diversification** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The strategy of spreading activity or investment across different areas to reduce concentrated risk.

Geographic **diversification** protected the company when demand weakened sharply in its largest regional market.

**MEMORY CUE:** Diversification puts eggs into several baskets so one dropped basket cannot destroy everything.

**024 elasticity** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The degree to which demand or supply changes in response to a change in price or another factor.

Demand showed little **elasticity** because customers continued buying the medicine after its price increased.

**MEMORY CUE:** An elastic demand curve stretches a lot when price gives it a small pull.

**025 electorate** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

All the people in a country or area who are entitled to vote in an election

The **electorate** was deeply polarized, with no single issue capable of uniting voters across party lines.

**MEMORY CUE:** The electorate is the entire body of people entitled to vote.

**026 eminence** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Fame or recognized superiority within a particular sphere; high rank or distinction

The historian achieved such **eminence** in the field that her interpretations shaped an entire generation of scholarship.

**MEMORY CUE:** Eminence places recognized excellence high above others in its field.

**027 endemic** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Native to or restricted to a certain place; regularly found among particular people or in a certain area

Corruption was **endemic** in the regime, permeating every level of government.

**MEMORY CUE:** An endemic species is at home only in its restricted native region.

**028 entails** *verb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Involves (something) as a necessary or inevitable part or consequence

Rebuilding the city's infrastructure **entails** not just financial investment but also years of careful urban planning.

**MEMORY CUE:** A responsibility entails every necessary consequence bundled inside it.

**029 entrenched** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Firmly established and difficult to change

**Entrenched** interests in the energy sector have repeatedly blocked legislation aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

**MEMORY CUE:** An entrenched habit has dug defenses so deep that change is difficult.

**030 epitome** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A person or thing that is a perfect example of a particular quality or type

The museum is considered the **epitome** of modern architectural design.

**MEMORY CUE:** The epitome wears a sash reading "perfect example of this quality."

**031 equitable** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Fair and impartial; just

The mediator proposed an **equitable** division of resources that gave each community access to clean water.

**MEMORY CUE:** An equitable decision divides benefits with fair and impartial judgment.

**032 ethos** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The characteristic spirit, attitudes, or guiding beliefs of a community, era, or movement

The company's **ethos** of innovation encourages employees to experiment freely, even at the risk of occasional failure.

**MEMORY CUE:** Ethos is the shared spirit and guiding character of a community.

**033 flyers** *noun (plural)*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Short for flying buttresses; the arched supports on the exterior of a Gothic building

The **flyers** of Notre-Dame transfer the weight of the vault across open space to massive outer piers.

**MEMORY CUE:** Gothic flyers are flying buttresses arching outward to support a wall.

**034 inscription** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A written or carved text; here, the artist's written claim

The **inscription** on the ancient stele recorded a peace treaty between two rival city-states.

**MEMORY CUE:** An inscription presses written words permanently into stone or another surface.

**035 justifies** *verb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Shows or proves to be right or reasonable

The evidence presented so far barely **justifies** the sweeping conclusions the authors draw in their final chapter.

**MEMORY CUE:** Evidence justifies a decision by showing it is reasonable and right.

**036 lax** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Not sufficiently strict or careful; negligent

The agency's **lax** oversight of the industry allowed unsafe products to reach consumers for years before a recall was issued.

**MEMORY CUE:** A lax safety rope hangs too loose because standards are not strict enough.

**037 liquidity** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The ease with which an asset can become cash without losing much value.

The firm maintained **liquidity** by holding cash reserves that could cover unexpected bills without selling property.

**MEMORY CUE:** Liquid assets flow quickly into cash; high liquidity means little gets stuck.

**038 maverick** *noun/adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

An independent-minded person; unorthodox or independent in thought and action

The **maverick** scientist challenged the establishment with her unconventional theories.

**MEMORY CUE:** A maverick leaves the herd and follows an independent path.

**039 monopoly** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A market condition in which one seller controls the supply of a product or service.

The regulator feared that the acquisition would create a **monopoly** with power to raise prices freely.

**MEMORY CUE:** MONO means one: one seller alone controls the board in a monopoly.

**040 negligent** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Failing to take proper care in doing something; careless

The hospital was found **negligent** for failing to follow established protocols during the surgical procedure.

**MEMORY CUE:** A negligent caretaker walks past a warning and leaves needed care undone.

**041 oligopoly** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A market dominated by a small number of powerful sellers.

In the airline **oligopoly**, a few large carriers watch and respond closely to one another's fares.

**MEMORY CUE:** OLIGO means few: only a few giant players occupy the oligopoly board.

**042 orthodoxy** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Authorized or generally accepted beliefs, doctrines, or practices

Challenging the prevailing **orthodoxy** in any scientific field requires not just evidence but considerable courage.

**MEMORY CUE:** Orthodoxy is the fenced field of generally accepted doctrine and practice.

**043 philanthropic** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Seeking to promote the welfare of others; generous and benevolent

The billionaire's **philanthropic** efforts focused on improving access to education in rural areas.

**MEMORY CUE:** A philanthropic hand gives generously to promote other people's welfare.

**046 pristine** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

In its original condition; unspoiled; immaculately clean

The **pristine** wilderness area remained untouched by commercial development.

**MEMORY CUE:** A pristine object remains sealed in its original, unspoiled condition.

**044 populous** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Having a large population; densely inhabited

The most **populous** cities in the developing world face urgent challenges in providing clean water and sanitation.

**MEMORY CUE:** A populous city contains a dense and numerous population.

**047 proprietary** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Relating to an owner; protected as intellectual/trade property

The company's **proprietary** algorithm gave it a significant competitive advantage in processing financial data.

**MEMORY CUE:** Proprietary information belongs to an owner and remains legally protected.

**045 portfolio** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The complete collection of investments, products, or projects held by a person or organization.

The fund reduced risk by building a **portfolio** containing bonds and shares from several industries.

**MEMORY CUE:** A portfolio is one carrying case holding many different investments or projects together.

**048 provocative** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Causing annoyance, anger, or strong reaction deliberately; stimulating debate

The scholar's **provocative** reinterpretation of the Civil War challenged narratives that had been accepted for generations.

**MEMORY CUE:** A provocative action deliberately presses a button for a strong reaction.

**049 prudent** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Acting with or showing care and thought for the future; wise and careful

It would be **prudent** to save a portion of the windfall rather than spending it all immediately.

**MEMORY CUE:** A prudent traveler checks tomorrow's weather and consequences before leaving.

**050 relentlessly** *adverb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

In an unceasingly intense or harsh manner; without letting up

The prosecutor **relentlessly** cross-examined the witness, exposing inconsistency after inconsistency in his account.

**MEMORY CUE:** Relentlessly means the pressure never relents or lets up.

**051 renounce** *verb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

To formally declare one's abandonment of a claim, right, or possession

The prince **renounced** his claim to the throne in order to marry a commoner.

**MEMORY CUE:** Renounce a claim by tearing up its ownership paper in a formal declaration.

**052 repression** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The action or process of suppressing or restraining a thought, feeling, or desire

The government's **repression** of free speech drove intellectual life underground, where it flourished in secret salons.

**MEMORY CUE:** Repression pushes an unwanted thought or feeling down beneath awareness.

**053 sanction** *noun/verb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Official permission or approval; a penalty for disobeying a law (note: can mean either approval or penalty)

The international community imposed economic **sanctions** on the regime to pressure it into compliance.

**MEMORY CUE:** An official green seal grants sanction and permission.

**054 securely** *adverb*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

With certainty; in a way that is firmly established and beyond doubt

The archaeological record **securely** establishes that the settlement existed long before European contact.

**MEMORY CUE:** A conclusion established securely is fastened firmly beyond reasonable doubt.

**055 subordinate** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Lower in rank or position; secondary in importance

The general insisted that military objectives must never be **subordinate** to political considerations during active operations.

**MEMORY CUE:** A subordinate position occupies a lower rung beneath a superior.

**056 subsidy** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Financial assistance, often from a government, intended to support an activity or reduce its cost.

The renewable-energy **subsidy** lowered installation costs and encouraged more households to purchase solar panels.

**MEMORY CUE:** A subsidy is a supporting hand sliding money beneath an activity to help hold it up.

**057 suffrage** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The right to vote in political elections

The long struggle for women's **suffrage** culminated in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

**MEMORY CUE:** Suffrage gives citizens the political right to cast a vote.

**058 tariff** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

A tax imposed by a government on goods entering or leaving a country.

The new **tariff** made imported steel more expensive for domestic manufacturers that relied on foreign suppliers.

**MEMORY CUE:** At the border, a tariff is a tax gate that imported goods must pay to pass.

**059 thrift** *noun*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

The quality of using money and other resources carefully and not wastefully

The family's **thrift** during the Depression years instilled habits of saving that persisted for generations.

**MEMORY CUE:** Thrift stretches resources by using money carefully and avoiding waste.

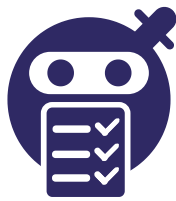
**060 ubiquitous** *adjective*

## SOCIETY, CULTURE, MARKETS &amp; INSTITUTIONS

Present, appearing, or found everywhere

Smartphones have become so **ubiquitous** that their absence is more noticeable than their presence.

**MEMORY CUE:** The same symbol appearing on every wall and street is ubiquitous.



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.

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