



Test Ninjas

VOCABULARY STUDY SERIES

GRE VOCABULARY

GRE Vocabulary: Language & Expression

83 focused words in Language & Expression

83

UNIQUE WORDS

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CATEGORIES

GRE

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 abridged *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Shortened or condensed while retaining the essential content

The **abridged** edition of the novel omits several subplots but preserves the central narrative arc.

MEMORY CUE: An abridged bridge is shortened, yet still connects the essential points.

002 accentuates *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Makes more noticeable or prominent; emphasizes

The stark lighting in the gallery **accentuates** the rough texture of the sculptor's bronze figures.

MEMORY CUE: A bright accent mark accentuates the detail you should notice.

003 account for *verb phrase*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To provide an explanation or justification for

Researchers struggled to **account for** the sudden decline in the bird population along the eastern seaboard.

MEMORY CUE: To account for missing money, explain where every dollar went.

004 admit of *verb phrase*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To allow for; to be open to the possibility of

The evidence is so overwhelming that it does not **admit of** any alternative explanation.

MEMORY CUE: A locked conclusion does not admit of, or allow, another possibility.

005 allusion *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

An indirect or passing reference to something

The poet's **allusion** to the myth of Icarus underscores the novel's theme of overreaching ambition.

MEMORY CUE: An allusion points sideways toward an idea without naming it directly.

006 allusive *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Containing or characterized by indirect references

Her **allusive** prose rewards careful readers who recognize echoes of Shakespeare, Milton, and the King James Bible.

MEMORY CUE: Allusive writing hides indirect references for attentive readers to recognize.

007 ambiguous *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Open to more than one interpretation; having a double meaning; unclear

The contract language was deliberately **ambiguous**, allowing both parties to claim compliance.

MEMORY CUE: An ambiguous road sign points both left and right, leaving more than one possible meaning.

008 analogous *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Comparable in certain respects; similar or equivalent in function

The structure of an atom was once considered **analogous** to a miniature solar system, though this model has since been refined.

MEMORY CUE: Analogous objects stand on a comparison bridge because certain features correspond.

009 anodyne *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Not likely to provoke dissent or offense; inoffensive, often deliberately so

The politician's **anodyne** remarks failed to address the substantive concerns of voters.

MEMORY CUE: An anodyne remark is verbal beige: safe, bland, and inoffensive.

010 articulate *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To express clearly and effectively

The witness was able to **articulate** the sequence of events with remarkable precision despite the trauma she had endured.

MEMORY CUE: An articulate speaker turns complex thoughts into clear, well-shaped words.

011 banal *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

So lacking in originality as to be obvious and boring; trite

The critic dismissed the film's dialogue as **banal** and predictable.

MEMORY CUE: A banal idea is so overused that it produces a bored yawn.

012 bombastic *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

High-sounding but with little meaning; inflated and pretentious in language

The senator's **bombastic** speeches impressed few of his more thoughtful colleagues.

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

013 cacophony *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

A harsh, discordant mixture of sounds

The **cacophony** of car horns, construction, and shouting vendors defined the city soundscape.

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

014 coherent *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Logically consistent; forming a unified, intelligible whole

The defense attorney failed to present a **coherent** alternative theory that could account for all the evidence.

MEMORY CUE: A coherent argument links each logical step into one clear, unbroken chain.

015 coinages *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Newly invented words or phrases; linguistic creations

Shakespeare's **coinages**—words like 'assassination' and 'lonely'—have become so common that their origin surprises most people.

MEMORY CUE: Coinages mint brand-new words as a treasury mints new coins.

016 connotation *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

An idea or feeling that a word invokes in addition to its literal meaning

The word 'regime' carries a negative **connotation** that 'administration' does not, even when describing the same government.

MEMORY CUE: Connotation is the emotional luggage a word carries beyond its definition.

017 connote *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To imply or suggest in addition to the literal meaning

In literary criticism, the color red can **connote** passion, danger, or revolution depending on context.

MEMORY CUE: A white flag denotes cloth but connotes surrender and peace.

018 convoluted *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Extremely complex and difficult to follow; intricately twisted

The tax code has become so **convoluted** that even accountants specializing in it disagree on basic interpretations.

MEMORY CUE: A convoluted path coils into complex loops that are difficult to follow.

019 crisp *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

(Of writing or description) Clear, concise, and to the point

The journalist's **crisp** prose conveyed complex policy debates in language any reader could follow.

MEMORY CUE: Crisp prose snaps cleanly into clear, concise sentences.

020 declarative *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

In the form of a declaration; relating to factual information or explicit memory

The opening paragraph makes a bold, **declarative** statement that the rest of the essay spends two hundred pages defending.

MEMORY CUE: A declarative statement plants a clear factual flag instead of asking.

021 denotation *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The literal, dictionary definition of a word (as opposed to connotation)

The **denotation** of 'home' is simply a dwelling, but its connotation encompasses warmth, safety, and belonging.

MEMORY CUE: Denotation is a word's plain dictionary label, stripped of associations.

022 diagrammatic *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Resembling a diagram; schematic and simplified rather than realistic

The architect's **diagrammatic** sketches captured the building's spatial logic more effectively than the detailed blueprints.

MEMORY CUE: A diagrammatic drawing simplifies reality into labeled lines and shapes.

023 didactic *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Intended to teach or instruct, often excessively moralistic

The novel's **didactic** tone undermines its literary merit, as characters exist only to deliver moral lessons.

MEMORY CUE: A didactic story points a teaching finger at its audience.

024 didacticism *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The practice of conveying instruction and moral teaching, often excessively

The playwright rejected **didacticism** in favor of presenting moral ambiguity and letting audiences draw their own conclusions.

MEMORY CUE: Didacticism turns art into an insistent classroom for moral instruction.

025 **diffuse** *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Spread out over a large area; not concentrated; lacking clarity

The essay's argument is so **diffuse** that the reader loses track of the central thesis by the third paragraph.

MEMORY CUE: Diffuse light spreads broadly instead of concentrating in one beam.

026 **digressions** *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Temporary departures from the main subject in speech or writing

The lecturer's frequent **digressions** into personal anecdotes, while entertaining, left little time for the scheduled material.

MEMORY CUE: Digressions are side roads that temporarily leave the main subject.

027 **distinctively** *adverb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

In a way that is characteristic and distinguishing; uniquely

The architect's use of curved glass facades made her buildings **distinctively** recognizable across the city skyline.

MEMORY CUE: A distinctively striped tail uniquely distinguishes one animal from others.

028 **elaborate** *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To develop or present in further detail; to add more information

The professor asked the student to **elaborate** on her thesis, which he found provocative but insufficiently supported.

MEMORY CUE: To elaborate, unfold a simple point into richer supporting detail.

029 **elaboration** *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The process of developing something in further detail

The theory requires further **elaboration** before it can be tested against the full range of available data.

MEMORY CUE: Elaboration adds branches of detail to a bare central idea.

030 **elicit** *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To evoke or draw out a response, answer, or fact

The prosecutor's carefully worded questions were designed to **elicit** a confession.

MEMORY CUE: A skillful question draws a hidden response out into the open.

031 elucidate *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To make something clear; to explain or shed light on

The professor's examples helped **elucidate** the complex theorem for the students.

MEMORY CUE: Elucidate by switching on a light that makes the explanation clear.

032 enliven *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To make something more entertaining, interesting, or lively

Personal anecdotes can **enliven** an otherwise dry academic lecture and help students retain key concepts.

MEMORY CUE: Bright stories enliven a dull lecture by giving it life.

033 euphemism *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

A mild or indirect word substituted for one considered too harsh or blunt

Calling layoffs a 'workforce restructuring' is a common corporate **euphemism**.

MEMORY CUE: A euphemism wraps a harsh fact in softer, indirect language.

034 evoke *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To bring or recall to the conscious mind; to call forth

The composer's use of minor keys and sparse orchestration was designed to **evoke** a sense of solitude and longing.

MEMORY CUE: A familiar scent can evoke a memory, calling it into consciousness.

035 explicit *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for doubt

The contract makes **explicit** that either party may terminate the agreement with thirty days' written notice.

MEMORY CUE: An explicit instruction labels every detail clearly and leaves nothing hidden.

036 extemporaneous *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Spoken or done without preparation; impromptu

Her **extemporaneous** remarks at the press conference proved more compelling than her prepared statement.

MEMORY CUE: An extemporaneous speech leaves the mouth without a prepared script.

037 facetious *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Treating serious issues with deliberately inappropriate humor; flippant

His **facetious** remarks during the meeting were not appreciated by the board members.

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

038 felicitous *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Well chosen or suited to the circumstances; apt and pleasing

The ambassador's **felicitous** choice of words defused what could have been a diplomatic incident.

MEMORY CUE: A felicitous phrase fits its moment with pleasing, well-chosen precision.

039 florid *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Excessively elaborate or ornate; having a red or flushed complexion

The senator's **florid** oratory impressed audiences in the nineteenth century but reads as overwrought to modern ears.

MEMORY CUE: Florid can mean a flushed red face or writing covered in excessive decoration.

040 garrulous *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Excessively talkative, especially on trivial matters

The **garrulous** neighbor could turn a simple greeting into a thirty-minute conversation.

MEMORY CUE: A garrulous person fills an endless speech ribbon with trivial chatter.

041 grandiloquent *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Pompous or extravagant in language, style, or manner

The **grandiloquent** prose style of the Victorian novelist felt overwrought to modern readers.

MEMORY CUE: Grandiloquent speech puts ordinary ideas into pompous, oversized verbal robes.

042 hackneyed *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Lacking originality through overuse; trite; clichéd

The speech relied on **hackneyed** phrases about 'innovation' and 'synergy' that left the audience thoroughly bored.

MEMORY CUE: A hackneyed phrase comes from a worn stamp used far too many times.

043 harangue *noun/verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

A lengthy and aggressive speech; to lecture someone aggressively

The manager's **harangue** about punctuality lasted twenty minutes and demoralized the entire staff.

MEMORY CUE: A harangue is an aggressive lecture stretched into a lengthy speech.

044 immediacy *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The quality of being vivid, direct, and without intervening medium

The war correspondent's dispatches had an **immediacy** that transported readers directly to the front lines.

MEMORY CUE: Immediacy removes distance so an experience feels vivid, direct, and present.

045 impenetrability *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The quality of being impossible to understand or get through

The legal document's **impenetrability** frustrated homeowners who simply wanted to understand their mortgage terms.

MEMORY CUE: Impenetrability is a wall neither bodies nor understanding can get through.

046 implicit *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Implied though not plainly expressed; understood but not directly stated

There was an **implicit** understanding among the staff that disagreeing publicly with the director could end one's career.

MEMORY CUE: An implicit message travels beneath the words instead of being directly stated.

047 ineffable *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words; unspeakable

The **ineffable** beauty of the aurora borealis left the travelers speechless.

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

048 insipid *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Lacking flavor; lacking vigor or interest; dull

The **insipid** dialogue made the film unwatchable despite its impressive visual effects.

MEMORY CUE: Insipid soup and insipid conversation are equally lacking in flavor.

049 intelligible *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Able to be understood; comprehensible

The translator's challenge was to render the poet's dense symbolism **intelligible** to readers in a different cultural context.

MEMORY CUE: An intelligible message passes through a clear doorway into understanding.

050 intimations *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Indirect suggestions or hints of something

The first chapter offers only **intimations** of the tragedy to come, hinting at secrets that unravel slowly.

MEMORY CUE: Intimations whisper indirect hints instead of making open declarations.

051 laconic *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Using very few words; brief and concise to the point of seeming rude or mysterious

The **laconic** general was famous for his terse battle orders.

MEMORY CUE: A laconic speaker answers with only two carefully chosen words.

052 limpid *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Clear, transparent; (of language) easily understood

Her **limpid** prose style made complex scientific ideas accessible to readers with no technical background.

MEMORY CUE: Limpid water and limpid prose are both clear enough to see through.

053 loquacious *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Tending to talk a great deal; talkative

The **loquacious** tour guide provided far more information than the visitors could absorb.

MEMORY CUE: A loquacious speaker unrolls a very long ribbon of talk.

054 lucid *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Expressed clearly; easy to understand; bright or luminous

The professor was praised for her **lucid** explanations of otherwise impenetrable theories.

MEMORY CUE: A lucid explanation shines like a clear lamp with no fog around it.

055 lurid *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Presented in vividly shocking or sensational terms; gruesome

The tabloid published **lurid** accounts of the scandal, embellishing every detail for maximum sensational effect.

MEMORY CUE: Lurid headlines glow with vividly shocking, sensational details.

056 metaphorical *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Figurative; using one thing to represent another symbolically

The author's use of the garden as a **metaphorical** stand-in for civilization pervades the entire novel.

MEMORY CUE: A metaphorical bridge connects unlike ideas symbolically rather than physically.

057 paraphrase *verb/noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To express the meaning of something using different words; a rewording

Students were asked to **paraphrase** the passage in their own words to demonstrate genuine comprehension.

MEMORY CUE: To paraphrase, carry the same meaning into different words.

058 patent accessibility *noun phrase*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Quality of being obviously and easily understood or reached

The **patent accessibility** of her writing allowed readers without scientific training to grasp the significance of the research.

MEMORY CUE: Patent accessibility means the path is plainly open and obviously easy.

059 pellucidity *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The quality of being clear in meaning, expression, or style; translucency

The essayist was praised for the **pellucidity** of her arguments, which made even abstract philosophy feel concrete.

MEMORY CUE: Pellucidity makes expression transparent, as clear as light through glass.

060 pithy *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Concise and forceful in expression

The editor demanded **pithy** headlines that could capture a story's essence in five words or fewer.

MEMORY CUE: A pithy sentence packs dense meaning into a tiny verbal seed.

061 platitude *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

A remark that has been used too often to be interesting or thoughtful; a cliché

The graduation speech was filled with **platitudes** that failed to inspire the audience.

MEMORY CUE: A platitude is a once-useful thought flattened by endless repetition.

062 ploddingly *adverb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

In a slow, heavy, laborious manner; without inspiration

The biography recounts the subject's life **ploddingly**, year by year, without ever pausing to reflect on larger themes.

MEMORY CUE: Ploddingly means moving like heavy boots through mud: slow and laborious.

063 prolixity *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The use of an excess of words; long-windedness; verbosity

The professor's **prolixity** was legendary—a question that required a one-sentence answer would elicit a twenty-minute lecture.

MEMORY CUE: Prolixity keeps talking long after fewer words would have sufficed.

064 prosaic *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Lacking poetic beauty or imagination; commonplace; dull and ordinary

The truth behind the legend turned out to be disappointingly **prosaic**—a simple accounting error, not a grand conspiracy.

MEMORY CUE: A prosaic passage walks the plain prose road without poetic color.

065 radicals *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Root or base elements of a word from which derivatives are formed

Understanding Latin and Greek **radicals** can help students decode the meanings of unfamiliar English words.

MEMORY CUE: Word radicals are root elements from which related forms grow.

066 rambling *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

(Of writing or speech) lengthy and confused; disorganized

The witness's **rambling** testimony, full of tangents and contradictions, tested the patience of both the judge and the jury.

MEMORY CUE: A rambling speech wanders down many side roads without clear direction.

067 rhetoric *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Persuasive or grandiloquent language; discourse aimed at influencing opinion

The candidate's soaring **rhetoric** inspired millions, though critics wondered whether the policies could match the promises.

MEMORY CUE: Rhetoric arranges language deliberately to persuade and influence an audience.

068 rhetorical *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Relating to or concerned with the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing

The author's use of **rhetorical** questions forces the reader to confront uncomfortable truths about complicity.

MEMORY CUE: Rhetorical skill shapes language into an effective instrument of persuasion.

069 semantic *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Relating to meaning in language

The dispute was largely **semantic**, with both parties agreeing on the substance but disagreeing about the terminology.

MEMORY CUE: Semantic questions concern what words and sentences mean.

070 strident *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Loud and harsh; presenting a point of view in an excessively forceful way

The **strident** tone of the editorial alienated readers who might otherwise have agreed.

MEMORY CUE: A strident voice turns an opinion into a loud, harsh demand.

071 syntactical *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Relating to the arrangement of words and phrases in sentences

The poet's unusual **syntactical** choices—inverted clauses, fragmented sentences—force readers to slow down and pay attention.

MEMORY CUE: Syntactical rules govern how words arrange themselves into sentences.

072 tacit *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Understood or implied without being stated; unspoken

There was a **tacit** agreement among the committee members to avoid discussing the controversial topic.

MEMORY CUE: A tacit agreement is understood through silence rather than spoken words.

073 tangential *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Diverging from a previous course; only marginally relevant

The professor's **tangential** remarks, while entertaining, distracted from the main lecture topic.

MEMORY CUE: A tangential remark leaves the main subject along a side road.

074 terse *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Sparing in the use of words; abrupt and concise

The general's **terse** battlefield dispatches—sometimes only three words long—became legendary for their economy of expression.

MEMORY CUE: A terse reply is short, clipped, and sharp at the edges.

075 trite *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Lacking originality or freshness; overused and consequently dull

The commencement speech was full of **trite** advice about 'following your dreams' that the graduates had heard a hundred times before.

MEMORY CUE: A trite phrase comes from a stamp that has printed the same words too many times.

076 underscore *verb*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

To emphasize; to underline the importance of something

The rising number of extreme weather events only serves to **underscore** the urgency of addressing climate change.

MEMORY CUE: An underscore literally draws a line beneath an important point to emphasize it.

077 unequivocal *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Leaving no doubt; unambiguous; clear and decisive

The court's ruling was **unequivocal**: the statute was unconstitutional.

MEMORY CUE: An unequivocal arrow points only one way and leaves no room for doubt.

078 vapid *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Offering nothing that is stimulating or challenging; dull and uninspiring

The **vapid** television programming was criticized for failing to engage viewers intellectually.

MEMORY CUE: Vapid conversation is flat air offering nothing stimulating or substantial.

079 verbatim *adverb/adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

In exactly the same words; word for word

The court stenographer recorded the testimony **verbatim**, capturing every word and hesitation.

MEMORY CUE: Verbatim repetition copies the exact words, word for word.

080 verbose *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Using more words than needed; wordy

The report was so **verbose** that the committee requested a five-page summary of its three-hundred-page findings.

MEMORY CUE: A verbose speaker uses an enormous scroll for a small message.

081 vocal *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Expressing opinions or feelings freely or loudly

The most **vocal** opponents of the policy were community leaders who had seen similar measures fail in the past.

MEMORY CUE: A vocal supporter freely and loudly expresses an opinion.

082 vociferous *adjective*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

Vehement or clamorous; expressing opinions or feelings loudly and forcefully

Vociferous protests outside city hall continued for a second week, drawing national media coverage.

MEMORY CUE: A vociferous crowd voices its demands loudly and forcefully.

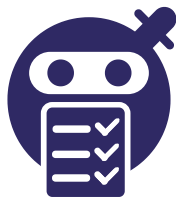
083 volubility *noun*

LANGUAGE & EXPRESSION

The quality of talking or writing fluently and at great length; producing a great deal of speech or writing

The professor's **volubility** was both a gift and a hazard—her lectures were fascinating but frequently ran over time.

MEMORY CUE: Volubility sends fluent words pouring out in great quantity.



GRE VOCABULARY

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