



Test Ninjas

VOCABULARY STUDY SERIES

GRE VOCABULARY

GRE Vocabulary: Praise, Criticism & Judgment

52 focused words in Praise, Criticism & Judgment

52

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 accolade *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

An award or privilege granted as a special honor or acknowledgment of merit

The researcher received the highest **accolade** in her field for groundbreaking work in genetics.

MEMORY CUE: An accolade is applause made tangible as a medal or honor.

002 acerbic *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Sharp and forthright in speech or manner; biting; caustic

The critic's **acerbic** review of the opera spared neither the director's vision nor the lead soprano's performance.

MEMORY CUE: Acerbic words feel acidic: sharp enough to sting the listener.

003 admonished *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Warned or reprimanded firmly; urged earnestly

The judge **admonished** the attorney for repeatedly interrupting opposing counsel during cross-examination.

MEMORY CUE: An admonished student hears a firm warning meant to correct behavior.

004 appeasing *verb (present participle)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Pacifying or placating by acceding to demands; bringing peace to

Appeasing the rival faction only emboldened them to make more extreme demands in subsequent negotiations.

MEMORY CUE: Appeasing an angry person means offering peace until hostility settles.

005 approbation *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Approval or praise; official sanction

The young artist sought the **approbation** of the established critics.

MEMORY CUE: Approbation sounds like approval because it is official praise or approval.

006 assuage *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To make an unpleasant feeling less intense; to satisfy or relieve

Nothing could **assuage** his guilt over the error that had cost the company millions.

MEMORY CUE: Assuage a burning worry by pouring soothing relief over it.

007 calumny *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

The making of false and defamatory statements about someone; slander

The candidate accused her opponent of spreading **calumny** to damage her reputation.

MEMORY CUE: Calumny is a calculated falsehood thrown to stain someone's reputation.

008 castigate *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To reprimand someone severely; to criticize harshly

The editorial **castigated** the government for its slow response to the crisis.

MEMORY CUE: A severe verbal lash represents castigating someone with harsh reprimand.

009 caustic *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Sarcastic in a scathing and bitter way; capable of burning or corroding

Her **caustic** review of the novel left its author devastated.

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

010 censure *verb/noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To express severe disapproval of, especially in a formal statement

The ethics committee voted to **censure** the senator for violating campaign finance rules.

MEMORY CUE: Formal severe disapproval arrives as a red CENSURED stamp.

011 compelling *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Evoking interest or attention in a powerfully irresistible way

The documentary presents a **compelling** case that systemic reforms are needed in the criminal justice system.

MEMORY CUE: A compelling idea is a magnet for attention: it pulls the audience in and convinces them.

012 complimentary *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Expressing praise and admiration

The review was almost entirely **complimentary**, praising the author's prose, structure, and depth of research.

MEMORY CUE: Complimentary words deliver a compliment filled with praise.

013 concession *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Something conceded or acknowledged, especially in an argument, while maintaining the overall position

The author's **concession** that her earlier model was flawed lent credibility to her revised theory.

MEMORY CUE: A concession yields one point without surrendering the entire argument.

014 concessive *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Relating to or making a concession; acknowledging a point while maintaining the main argument

The essay's **concessive** opening paragraph acknowledges the strengths of the opposing view before systematically dismantling it.

MEMORY CUE: A concessive sentence says "although," granting a point before maintaining its claim.

015 condone *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To accept or allow behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive

The university refused to **condone** the use of artificial intelligence to produce student essays.

MEMORY CUE: To condone wrongdoing is to let it pass as acceptable.

016 conviction *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

A firmly held belief or opinion

She argued with such **conviction** that even her skeptics found themselves reconsidering long-held assumptions.

MEMORY CUE: A conviction is a belief held firmly enough to withstand pressure.

017 deferential *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Showing deference; respectful and yielding to the judgment of another

The junior diplomat's **deferential** manner during the negotiations concealed a sharp tactical mind.

MEMORY CUE: A deferential speaker bows respectfully to someone else's authority or judgment.

018 denounce *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To publicly declare to be wrong or evil; to condemn openly

Human rights organizations **denounced** the government's use of force against peaceful demonstrators.

MEMORY CUE: Denounce wrongdoing by declaring it publicly beneath a loud WRONG sign.

019 deprecate *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To express disapproval of; to belittle

She tended to **deprecate** her own achievements, attributing her success to luck.

MEMORY CUE: A downward red thumb expresses deprecation and disapproval.

020 deride *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To express contempt for; to ridicule or mock

Critics **derided** the proposal as impractical and hopelessly idealistic.

MEMORY CUE: Derision points and laughs in order to express contempt.

021 diatribe *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

A forceful and bitter verbal attack against someone or something

The columnist launched a **diatribe** against the proposed legislation.

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

022 disapprobation *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Strong disapproval, typically on moral grounds

The community expressed its **disapprobation** of the proposal by attending the town hall meeting in record numbers.

MEMORY CUE: Disapprobation delivers a stern moral thumbs-down against wrongful conduct.

023 disdain *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

The feeling that someone or something is unworthy of consideration; contempt

The aristocrat made no effort to conceal her **disdain** for what she considered the vulgarity of commercial art.

MEMORY CUE: Disdain turns up its nose and throws away the respect medal.

024 disparaged *verb (past tense)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Regarded or represented as being of little worth; belittled

The architect's contemporaries **disparaged** his designs as impractical, but today his buildings are celebrated as visionary.

MEMORY CUE: A disparaged achievement is talked down as though worth very little.

025 encomium *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

A speech or piece of writing that praises someone or something highly

The biography reads more like an **encomium** than a balanced account of the leader's life.

MEMORY CUE: An encomium is praise expanded into an entire speech or essay.

026 endorsement *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

The act of approving, supporting, or sustaining

The scientist's **endorsement** of the new vaccine carried enormous weight with a skeptical public.

MEMORY CUE: An endorsement adds a public stamp of approval and support.

027 excoriating *verb (present participle)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Criticizing severely; censuring harshly

The editorial delivered an **excoriating** critique of the government's failure to prepare for the pandemic.

MEMORY CUE: An excoriating review verbally strips the target with severe criticism.

028 exemplary *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Serving as a desirable model; representing the best of its kind

The school's **exemplary** test scores attracted national attention and prompted other districts to study its methods.

MEMORY CUE: An exemplary model stands on the standard's highest pedestal for others to copy.

029 extol *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To praise enthusiastically

The review **extolled** the novel's innovative structure and richly drawn characters.

MEMORY CUE: To extol is to lift someone high on a tower of enthusiastic praise.

030 extolled *verb (past tense)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Praised enthusiastically and at length

The poet was **extolled** by contemporaries as the voice of a generation, though later critics were less generous.

MEMORY CUE: The tribute extolled the hero with lengthy, enthusiastic praise.

031 goaded *verb (past tense)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Provoked or annoyed to stimulate some action or reaction

Goaded by the opposition's taunts, the usually composed minister made an intemperate remark she later regretted.

MEMORY CUE: A pointed goad provoked the reluctant animal into action.

032 gratuitous *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Uncalled for; lacking good reason; unwarranted

The reviewer criticized the film for its **gratuitous** violence, which added nothing to the plot.

MEMORY CUE: A gratuitous insult arrives uncalled for and without good reason.

033 hedged *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Qualified or limited with conditions or restrictions; cautiously stated

The scientist's **hedged** conclusions—full of qualifiers and caveats—reflected the genuine uncertainty of the data.

MEMORY CUE: A hedged claim builds cautious qualifications around its risky central statement.

034 invective *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Insulting, abusive, or highly critical language

The debate devolved into personal **invective** rather than substantive policy discussion.

MEMORY CUE: Invective throws verbal stones made of insults and abusive criticism.

035 lambasting *verb (present participle)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Criticizing harshly; attacking verbally with great force

The editorial spent three columns **lambasting** the governor's record on education, sparing no detail.

MEMORY CUE: Lambasting pounds a target with forceful, harsh verbal criticism.

036 laud *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To praise highly; to extol

Critics were quick to **laud** the director's bold visual style, though some found the screenplay lacking.

MEMORY CUE: Laud an achievement by lifting it high on a tower of praise.

037 laudable *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Deserving praise and commendation

While the goals of the initiative are **laudable**, the execution has been deeply flawed.

MEMORY CUE: A laudable achievement deserves a raised trophy of praise.

038 mollify *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To appease the anger or anxiety of someone; to calm or soothe

The company offered full refunds in an attempt to **mollify** dissatisfied customers.

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

039 mollifying *verb (present participle)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Appeasing the anger or anxiety of; soothing

The CEO's **mollifying** tone during the press conference did little to calm shareholders who had lost millions.

MEMORY CUE: A mollifying apology smooths hard anger into a calmer surface.

040 opprobrium *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Harsh criticism or censure; public disgrace arising from shameful conduct

The politician faced widespread **opprobrium** after the scandal became public.

MEMORY CUE: Opprobrium is public shame delivered through harsh collective condemnation.

041 palatable *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Acceptable or satisfactory; pleasant to taste

The committee revised the proposal to make it more **palatable** to the opposition.

MEMORY CUE: A palatable proposal is easy enough for the mind or palate to accept.

042 propitiate *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To win or regain the favor of someone by doing something that pleases them

The company offered generous severance packages to **propitiate** the laid-off workers.

MEMORY CUE: To propitiate an angry person, offer something pleasing to regain favor.

043 rebuke *verb/noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To express sharp disapproval or criticism of someone

The supervisor's public **rebuke** of the employee was considered unnecessarily harsh.

MEMORY CUE: A rebuke is a sharp verbal red mark of disapproval.

044 revered *verb (past tense)*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Felt deep respect or admiration for

The philosopher was **revered** by students and colleagues alike for both his intellectual brilliance and his personal integrity.

MEMORY CUE: A revered teacher is held high in deep respect and admiration.

045 reverence *noun*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Deep respect and admiration

The **reverence** with which the community regarded the ancient forest made the logging proposal especially controversial.

MEMORY CUE: Reverence bows quietly before someone or something held in deep respect.

046 sardonic *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Grimly mocking or cynical; disdainfully humorous

His **sardonic** commentary on the proceedings amused some but offended many.

MEMORY CUE: A sardonic smile bends humor into grim, disdainful mockery.

047 scathing *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Witheringly harsh; severely critical

The peer reviewer's **scathing** critique of the manuscript identified fundamental flaws in the study's experimental design.

MEMORY CUE: A scathing review feels hot enough to wither its target.

048 unsparing *adjective*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

Mercilessly severe; showing no mercy or restraint

The autobiography is **unsparing** in its self-criticism, offering no excuses for the mistakes the author made.

MEMORY CUE: Unsparing criticism holds nothing back and shows no mercy.

049 venerate *verb*

PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT

To regard with great respect; to revere

The community **venerated** the founder, preserving her home as a historic landmark.

MEMORY CUE: Venerate a figure by bowing before a pedestal of great respect.

050 vilify *verb***PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT**

To speak or write about in an abusively disparaging manner; to defame

The press campaign sought to **vilify** the opposition candidate with unsubstantiated accusations.

MEMORY CUE: Vilify someone by covering their name with abusive, degrading words.

051 vitriolic *adjective***PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT**

Filled with bitter criticism or malice; caustic and hostile

The **vitriolic** exchange between the two candidates dominated the evening news.

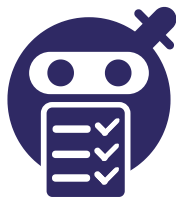
MEMORY CUE: Vitriolic criticism burns like acid with bitter hostility.

052 withering *adjective***PRAISE, CRITICISM & JUDGMENT**

Devastating; intended to make someone feel mortified or humiliated; intensely destructive

The critic delivered a **withering** assessment of the novel, calling it the most self-indulgent book of the year.

MEMORY CUE: A withering rebuke makes confidence shrivel under devastating force.



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