

ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY

FOR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS

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MARGARET ANN HALLER

**AN ARCO BOOK
DISTRIBUTED BY PRENTICE HALL TRADE
NEW YORK**

Second Edition

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An Arco Book
Distributed by Prentice Hall Trade
A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
Gulf + Western Building
One Gulf + Western Plaza
New York, New York 10023

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Manufactured in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Haller, Margaret A.
Essential vocabulary for college-bound students.

"An Arco book."

Includes index.

1. Vocabulary. I. Title.

PE1449.H24 1987 428.1 87-17439

ISBN 0-13-289356-8

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Whether you are speaking or writing, vocabulary is the key to successful communication. And never before has it been so important for a college-bound student. A strong vocabulary will make a difference on how well you do on your required college entrance exam and where you finish in your graduating class. Don't waste time. Begin increasing your word power with this invaluable revised edition—expanded by 10 lessons to include more of the words necessary to compete on a college level. It's the quick, easy, enjoyable way to build the vocabulary you need. You'll discover:

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to help you increase your vocabulary for college quickly and enjoyably. It is designed for you to use on your own and at your own speed. Each of the sixty lesson-chapters defines and illustrates nine to fifteen words and provides a number of exercises to help you practice the new words and fix them in your memory. The six review tests show how various authors have actually used the vocabulary you have learned. Each lesson can be completed easily in one sitting. You will probably find that one lesson is enough to absorb at one time. Pace yourself and you'll learn more effectively.

At the back of the book, following the lessons and answer keys, you will find glossaries of additional terms that you are especially likely to encounter in introductory college courses in the humanities (the arts, languages and literature, and the social sciences). In all, this book covers over a thousand words and phrases that the college-bound student ought to know.

Some of the lesson-exercises will ask you to look things up for yourself. For this you will need a good desk dictionary, one with a pronunciation key and an etymology (word history) for each entry. There are several good, reasonably priced desk dictionaries on the market, including *Webster's New World Dictionary*, the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (New College Edition)*, and the *Random House College Dictionary*. A good dictionary is indispensable for college work. If you don't already have one, invest in one now and begin to make a habit of using it.

You have probably heard that the best way to increase your vocabulary is to read—to read a lot and to read many different kinds of writing. It is true that nearly all of the words we know we have learned unconsciously, simply by hearing and seeing them used again and again. By learning words in context, we learn not only what they mean but how they are used. Even if we can't define them precisely, we are likely to feel confident about using them ourselves. This does not mean, however, that you can't increase your vocabulary by conscious effort. This book will guide you in doing just that. It will give you a feeling for how unfamiliar words are used by illustrating them in sentences. It will help you form a habit of learning new words, of analyzing them and associating them with words you already know, and of consulting the dictionary. You will then find that your subsequent reading will reinforce what you have learned and make these new terms part of your permanent vocabulary.

LESSON 1

One way to remember a new word is to associate it in your mind with another word you already know. Often an unfamiliar word will be related to familiar terms through a common root. This is where knowing the etymology (origin) of a word comes in handy. For instance, you already know *verb*, the name of one kind of word, and *verbal*, “expressed in words.” Both come from the Latin root *verbum*, meaning “word.” The same root gives us a word you may not know, **verbatim**—word for word, expressed in precisely the same words. *The lawyer requested the defendant to repeat his comments verbatim.*

Once you realize that an English word containing *verb* always has something to do with words, it becomes easy to remember the meaning of *verbatim*.

Another example: The common word *line* can help you fix in your mind less common words in the same word family, such as:

delineate—to outline, sketch out, depict, describe. *The artist quickly delineated the general contours of the figure.*

rectilinear—having straight lines, forming a straight line. *The rectilinear paths create long vistas from one end of the garden to the other.*

lineage—direct line of descent from an ancestor. *Only one local family can trace its lineage back to the first European settlers.*

The Latin base *clud* or *clus* means “shut” or “close.” Among the many English words deriving from this root are *include*, *exclude*, and *conclusion*, as well as:

recluse—person who deliberately shuts himself away from the world, one who leads a solitary life. *The man had become a recluse, rarely going out and refusing invitations from his former associates.*

preclude—to shut out as a possibility, make impossible. *Losing all our savings at the track will preclude our taking a vacation this year.*

seclude—to shut away from others or from observation, make isolated or private. *The cabin was in a secluded spot, out of sight of the road.*

Duc or *duct* is a Latin stem meaning “to lead.” It is at the root of many familiar terms, including *deduct*, *produce*, *conduct*, and *reduce*. It also gives us:

abduct—(lead away) to kidnap, steal a person. *The heiress was abducted from her home and held for ransom.*

traduce—(lead across) to expose to public scorn, defame, slander. *He had traduced his former partner by spreading lies that he was a crook.* The Latin ancestor of *traduce* meant “to lead as a spectacle, to display publicly as a disgraceful object.”

conducive—leading to, helping, tending to promote. *Mother found the waterbed conducive to a restful sleep.*

Answers to the following exercises are on page 198.

EXERCISE I Synonyms. Circle the letter of the word or phrase closest in meaning to the given word.

1. delineate: a) lead up to b) straighten up c) draw an outline d) scheme
2. preclude: a) make impossible b) open c) make likely d) come before
3. conducive: a) attentive b) leading to c) without curves d) prophetic
4. abduction: a) investigation b) ransom note c) subtraction d) kidnapping
5. seclude: a) silence b) shut off from view c) apprehend d) leave out
6. rectilinear: a) righteous b) vertical c) circular d) in a straight line
7. traduce: a) publicly deny b) publicly defame c) defend openly d) hide away
8. lineage: a) grandchildren b) drawings c) line of descent d) yardage
9. verbatim: a) verbose b) word for word c) in sign language d) like a proverb
10. recluse: a) one who lives in willing isolation b) prisoner c) patient d) alienist

EXERCISE II Circle the letter of the best choice to complete each sentence.

1. If going out to eat precludes your seeing a movie, a) you will see the movie b) you will probably be late for dinner c) you won't be able to do both d) you will do neither
2. A rectilinear sketch is drawn a) all with straight lines b) larger than life c) sloppily d) with arabesques
3. To repeat a conversation verbatim, a person must have a) a loud voice b) typing skills c) an excellent memory d) hypnotic powers
4. Traducing a friend is a kind of a) retreat from intimacy b) loyalty c) testimonial d) betrayal
5. To abduct a child is to take him or her away a) illegally b) on short notice c) to private school d) by court order
6. An environment conducive to physical well-being is a) chronic b) luxurious c) healthful d) noxious
7. A secluded meeting is held in a) a public forum b) a private spot c) an emergency d) a classroom
8. In delineating a problem, one a) blames others for it b) makes it harder to understand c) resolves it d) indicates its nature and scope
9. A racehorse's lineage includes his a) inoculations b) sire and dam c) owner d) record of earnings
10. A recluse likes to live a) in seclusion b) exclusively c) in abduction d) by traducing society

EXERCISE III Antonyms. Draw a line connecting each word with the word or phrase most nearly its *opposite*.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. seclude | curved |
| 2. recluse | in paraphrase |
| 3. preclude | social butterfly |
| 4. traduce | make inevitable |
| 5. verbatim | preventive |
| 6. conducive | uphold the honor of |
| 7. rectilinear | expose to view |

Using Roots

The root meaning, or etymology, of a word is hardly ever precisely the same as its meaning in current usage. Knowing where a word comes from doesn't tell you exactly what the word means now or how to use it. For example, you might figure out that *deduct* comes from *de* (away) and *duct* (lead). But how do you learn that one can deduct a number from a total, or an expense from a taxable income, but not a cow from a barn? The quickest way is to look up the precise definition of *deduct* in a good dictionary. The surest way—and this is probably the way you learned *deduct*—is to read it and hear it over and over again in context.

What good, then, is knowing etymologies? Once you've learned a word, roots can help you fix it in your memory. The familiar root, which connects the new word to words you already know, can be a clue to remind you of what the word means.

LESSON 2

Vocal, “having to do with the voice,” comes from *vox*, the Latin word for “voice.” There's a related verb in Latin—*vocare*, “to call.” *Vox* and *vocare* have given rise to lots of English words. Knowing that the *voc* root means “voice” or “call” will make it easier to remember the meanings of:

vocation—a calling, a career or lifework, especially one to which a person feels dedicated. *Like many others, he had chosen medicine as his vocation out of a desire to help people and to receive a lot of recognition.*

avocation—hobby, work done for pleasure and interest rather than profit. *By profession she's an engineer, but her avocation is flying.*

vociferous—making a noisy outcry, shouting. *The class was vociferous in its objection to the surprise quiz.*

irrevocable—not able to be called back or undone. *The decision was irrevocable: there was no turning back once the letter was mailed. Irrevocable* is formed from the verb *revoke*, “to call back.”

evocative—calling forth, tending to remind, suggestive. *To me nothing is more evocative of spring than the scent of fresh lilacs.* The adjective comes from the verb *evoke*, “to call up as a mental image.”

equivocate—to mislead, especially to tell the truth in such a way that it is misunderstood. *The government equivocated in reporting that unemployment had declined; the number of people looking for work had declined, but only because many job seekers had given up looking.* The adjective for something deliberately ambiguous, for something that equivocates, is *equivocal*.

Another Latin word, *similis*, is already familiar to you through the English word *similar*. *Similis* means “like.” It is the root of a whole family of English words, including:

similitude—state of being similar, likeness, image or counterpart. *The three types of zebra may not be as closely related as their apparent similitude has led naturalists to assume.*

verisimilitude—appearance of truth. *The set designer reconstructed the presidential car with great verisimilitude.*

assimilate—to absorb and make part of something larger, become like and be incorporated into an entity or system. *In time, each generation of immigrants becomes assimilated into the American population.*

facsimile—an exact copy. *To be certain of the original punctuation, the editor studied a facsimile of the author’s manuscript.*

simile—a verbal comparison using *like* or *as*. *“My love is like a red, red rose” is a classic simile.*

Answers to the following exercises are on page 198.

EXERCISE I Synonyms. Draw a line connecting each word with the word or phrase that means most nearly the same.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. assimilating | summoning up |
| 2. simile | appearance of accuracy |
| 3. irrevocable | kind of comparison |
| 4. equivocating | clamorous |
| 5. avocation | line of work |
| 6. similitude | resemblance |
| 7. facsimile | perfect reproduction |
| 8. evocative | making like something else |
| 9. vociferous | hobby |
| 10. verisimilitude | deliberately misleading |
| 11. vocation | impossible to call back |

EXERCISE II Choose the best word to complete each sentence. Write it in the blank.

1. For most people, sports are a(n) _____; very few can make a living as athletes.

similitude	avocation
vocation	facsimile

2. The _____ of the portrait is striking; one feels convinced that this is how the man really looked.

assimilation	simile
verisimilitude	avocation

3. A photocopy is a(n) _____ of an original page.
 facsimile vocation
 avocation assimilation
4. The proverb "There's no use crying over spilled milk" means that the past is
 _____.
 equivocal facsimile
 irrevocable vociferous
5. An organism grows by _____ nutrients.
 assimilating evoking
 revoking equivocating
6. He looked on teaching not merely as a job but as a _____ to
 which he could happily devote his life.
 facsimile similitude
 verisimilitude vocation
7. An effective stage set need not be elaborate; it need only be _____
 of the appropriate mood.
 vociferous evocative
 an avocation a similitude
8. "She eats like a pig" is an example of a(n) _____.
 vocation verisimilitude
 evocation simile
9. Not wanting to admit that he hadn't read the book, he made a(n)
 _____ response.
 assimilated vociferous
 equivocal irrevocable
10. A family resemblance often includes a _____ of manners and
 speech.
 similitude verisimilitude
 vocation simile
11. The shouting of the hecklers broke out again in a(n) _____ din.
 irrevocable equivocal
 vociferous evocative

EXERCISE III Circle the letter of the best choice to complete each sentence.

- A picture is evocative of the countryside if it a) is a photograph
 b) reminds you of being in the country c) is by Van Gogh d) is a
 cityscape
- Equivocating is a way of a) hedging b) deliberating c) doodling
 d) intimidating
- A vociferous crowd is not a) riotous b) riled up c) enthusiastic
 d) quiet
- While a vocation provides a living, an avocation is pursued a) relentlessly
 b) under duress c) for pleasure d) for tax purposes

5. A similitude to the truth is called a) a simile b) an aversion c) a lie d) a verisimilitude
6. A student assimilates information by a) talking b) asking questions c) buying books d) studying
7. A facsimile reproduces an original text a) in every detail b) in a condensed version c) with annotations d) in paraphrase
8. A simile is a figure of speech that a) insults people b) makes a comparison c) copies something exactly d) is rarely used
9. If a mistake is not irrevocable, it a) can be analyzed b) is fatal c) can be corrected d) is noticeable

LESSON 3

A **figure of speech** is a way of speaking that is out of the ordinary or nonliteral. A **simile**, defined in Lesson 2, is one kind of figure. If I say that my aunt was coming down the street like a ship under full sail, I probably mean that she was moving fast, bearing down on me, and looking large and awesome. You, as a listener, understand that saying my aunt looked like a ship was a figure of speech.

A **metaphor** is another figure of speech. Like a simile, a metaphor makes a comparison, but it does so without using *like* or *as*. If I tell you that as a child Angela was an ugly duckling, I am using a metaphor. I do not mean that Angela was formerly an unattractive young duck, complete with feathers and webbed feet. As a listener, you understand what I mean—that Angela was awkward or odd-looking as a child but that she grew up to be beautiful, like the ugly duckling who grew into a swan. You know that this is figurative, not literal, language.

We use figurative language all the time without thinking about it. For instance, budgets are “slashed,” issues are “sidestepped,” costs “skyrocket,” and eaters “pig out.” Many words have taken on permanent figurative meanings in addition to their literal ones. You should know both the literal and figurative uses of the following words:

caustic—biting, burning, stinging. *The surface of the wood had been marred by some caustic chemical. Her caustic comments hurt the other girl's feelings.*

abrasive—scraping or rubbing; annoyingly harsh or jarring. *Sandpaper has an abrasive surface. The high-pitched whine of the machinery was abrasive to my nerves.* The adjective *abrasive* comes from the verb *abrade*, “to scrape, wear away by rubbing.” *Abrade* is used only in the literal sense: *sandpaper abrades wood.*

volatile—tending to evaporate quickly, turning to vapor easily; very changeable or fickle. *A volatile liquid must be stored at low temperatures. A volatile temper is quickly aroused and quickly soothed.*

rabid—having rabies, violent, maddened; fanatically devoted to a belief or cause.

Bitten by an infected squirrel, the dog turned rabid. The man's rabid devotees looked on him as a holy prophet.

myopic—nearsighted; shortsighted. *His myopic vision made the distant lamps appear as huge globes of colored light. Their failure to make long-term plans was myopic.* The noun for "nearsightedness" is *myopia*.

insular—pertaining to an island; narrow-minded or prejudiced as a result of cultural isolation. *Puerto Rico is an insular commonwealth. She made the insular assumption that people of other cultures were somehow wrongheaded or misled.*

scabrous—rough to the touch, scabby; rough or impolite, especially concerning sex, improper. *The heat had made the varnish bubble up, giving the desk a scabrous surface. The comedian's scabrous jokes made some members of the audience blush.*

profound—very deep; intellectually or emotionally deep, thorough. *They descended into a profound and narrow ravine. Socrates is our archetype of a profound thinker.*

Answers to the following exercises are on page 198.

EXERCISE I Synonyms. Circle the letter of the word or phrase closest in meaning to the given word. The meaning may be literal or figurative.

1. abrasive: a) blatant b) grubby c) blithering d) grating
2. myopic: a) not looking ahead b) blind c) wearing glasses d) unpredictable
3. scabrous: a) sprightly b) risqué c) cadaverous d) unhealthy
4. profound: a) irreligious b) circumspect c) deep d) submerged
5. caustic: a) dissatisfied b) burning c) scouring d) causal
6. insular: a) tropical b) of an island c) using insulin d) padded
7. rabid: a) raving b) racist c) vagrant d) irritated
8. volatile: a) piquant b) unstable c) rushed d) charming

EXERCISE II Circle the letter of the best choice to complete each sentence.

1. Myopia can be rectified by a) censorship b) corrective lenses c) psychoanalysis d) travel
2. A volatile substance will a) remain solid at high temperatures b) be viscous c) be inert d) quickly turn from liquid to gas
3. An insular territory is a) peninsular b) autonomous c) surrounded by water d) uncivilized
4. A scabrous surface is characteristic of a) a wound b) the sea c) silk d) felt
5. A rabid devotion is a) listless b) excessive c) estimable d) wary of commitment

6. Evidence of abrasion by glaciers is found in a) underground springs
b) river deltas c) scratches on rocks d) prehistoric legends
7. An example of a caustic substance is a) pumice b) pewter c) lye
d) mineral water
8. A profound insight is not a) trivial b) of lasting importance c) a sign of
intelligence d) an intellectual act
9. Figurative language is not a) common in everyday speech b) proper
c) intelligible d) intended to be taken literally
10. A metaphor is a kind of a) falsehood b) implied comparison c) mistake
in grammar d) shortsighted error

EXERCISE III Fill in the blanks from the list of words below.

myopic	caustic
rabid	insular
abrasive	volatile
profound	scabrous

1. His flippant put-downs and cutting sarcasm gave him a reputation
for _____ wit.
2. Foaming at the mouth, the _____ animal had to be shot.
3. The proposal to build a new school is _____ because it does not
take into account projected shifts in population over the next ten years.
4. Even her supporters admitted that she had a(n) _____ personal-
ity; her tactless and opinionated manner undoubtedly cost her some votes.
5. With no firsthand experience of the world beyond their own village, they
were _____ in their views and somewhat mistrustful of
outsiders.
6. His _____ stories embarrassed acquaintances who weren't
accustomed to ribald conversation.
7. The woman felt that her grief was too _____ to be expressed in
words.
8. The patient's mood was extremely _____ — he was overjoyed
one moment and plunged into gloom the next.

LESSON 4

As we saw in Lesson 3, words are frequently used in more than one way, but the ways are usually related. Over centuries of use, words have been stretched to fit looser or more figurative contexts. But while they are applied more loosely or more figuratively, they may still retain their older meanings. You should be aware of the range of meanings for the following words:

gall—to chafe, irritate the skin by rubbing; to annoy, vex, or humiliate. *The ill-fitting saddle galled the horse's back. It galled the children to hear the praise lavished on their worthless and obnoxious cousin.*

espouse—to marry; to adopt as a cause, advocate or devote oneself to a cause or belief. *Henry VIII is often best remembered for having espoused six wives and for having beheaded two of them. A hopeless romantic, she loved to espouse lost causes.* You can see the relation of *espouse* to *spouse*. The figurative use is now more common than the literal meaning “to marry.”

apprehend—to catch or catch on, to seize physically or grasp mentally. *Police apprehended the suspect. I could not apprehend what he was trying to tell me.* The Latin verb *prehendere*, the source of our *apprehend*, was also used by the Romans in the double sense of physical and mental grasping. The same root gives us *prehensile*, “able to grasp,” as the tail of a monkey, which wraps around branches¹. The noun *apprehension* means three things: 1) a catching, 2) understanding, 3) fear or dread.

breach—a breaking, an opening or gap; a failure to keep the terms of a promise or law. *Troops poured in through a breach in the fortified wall. When they failed to deliver the goods, they were guilty of a breach of contract.* *Breach* isn't from Latin; it originates from the same Old English word that gave us *break*.

provincial—of a province, rustic, of the country; narrow-minded or unsophisticated in outlook. *The mayor of the town was engaged in a feud with the provincial government.* An opposite of *provincial* used in one sense is *urban* and in another sense the opposite of *provincial* is

urbane—suave, smoothly well-mannered, and sophisticated. *The man's urbane conversation gave others the impression that he had traveled widely.* Both *urban* and *urbane* come from the Latin root *urbs*, “city.” It was traditionally assumed that polished and sophisticated manners could only be learned in the city.

consonance—a sounding together, harmony, agreement. *Their consonance of opinion in all matters made for a peaceful household.* *Sonare* in Latin is “to sound.” *Consonance* literally means “sounding with,” but is used more generally to refer to any kind of harmonious agreement.

confluence—a flowing together; a crowd or throng. *Cairo, Illinois is located at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. There was a large confluence of shoppers waiting for the store to open.* *Fluere* in Latin means “to flow.” The same root gives us *influence*, literally a “flowing in.”