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19 SAT Sentence Completion No Problems
Questions, Answers, Detailed Explanations, Vocabulary

1. Doug was both _____ and _____: he possessed penetrating acuity and discernment and was also extremely humble.
- (A) diligent . . . supercilious
 - (B) perspicacious . . . unpretentious
 - (C) obtuse . . . penitent
 - (D) sagacious . . . imposing
 - (E) apologetic . . . unassuming

Answer: B

Explanation: Remember a colon sign is like an equal sign in the English language. We're looking for synonyms for words such as acuity and humble. B is the best fit.

Vocabulary:

Diligent: hard working

Supercilious: arrogant

Perspicacious: showing discernment

Unpretentious: not a show-off

Obtuse: slow-witted

Penitent: feeling sorrow for sins

Sagacious: shrewd

Imposing: impressive

Apologetic: expressing regret for a wrong

Unassuming: not pretentious

2. "Hawaii" refers both to the group of islands known as the Hawaiian islands and to the largest island in that _____.
- A) flora
 - B) sierra
 - C) archipelago
 - D) flotilla
 - E) savanna

Answer: C

Explanation: You don't have to be a Hawaii resident to get this medium sentence completion correct. We're looking for a word that is synonymous to 'group of islands'. There is only one choice that means just that; the other four choices may be words found in environmental settings, but that's not good enough!

Vocabulary:

flora: all the plant life in a particular region or period

sierra: a range of mountains

archipelago: a group of many islands in a large body of water (Hawaii is an archipelago)

flotilla: a small fleet of naval ships

savanna: (not to be mistaken for Savannah the city on the southeastern coast of Georgia!) the noun savanna is a flat grassland of tropical or subtropical regions

3. Male ostriches are extremely _____: they can be perceived by the human eye at a distance of 900 meters.
- A) swift
 - B) aggressive
 - C) cumbersome
 - D) conspicuous
 - E) raucous

Answer: D

Explanation: Look for key clues in the sentence to help you determine the best fit vocabulary word in the blank. In this sentence the fundamental clue comes after the colon sign. We're looking for a word that means "seen from great distances". We know that large, enormous, voluminous objects are seen from 900 meters away. But "large" "enormous" and "voluminous" are not found in the answer choices. Ostriches are large, flightless birds from Africa. But they are also very distinctive in their appearance with a long neck and legs. So let's find a word that explains how something can stand out easily from great distances. Conspicuous works perfectly here. The other four answer choices are far off and far away from what we're looking for!

Vocabulary:

Swift: moving with great speed

Aggressive: easily provoked to fight

Cumbersome: awkward to handle due to bulk

Conspicuous: very noticeable

Raucous: harsh or boisterous

4. The man's colleagues characterized him as _____ because he had an irritable, quarrelsome disposition.
- A) tyrannical
 - B) disingenuous
 - C) sanctimonious
 - D) cantankerous
 - E) morose

Answer: D

Explanation: Let's use logic to predict the word that belongs in the missing blank. The word "because" is a huge clue. This sentence tries to explain that since this man is so irritable, and quarrelsome, his co-workers label him a certain way. What would you call someone who is always ill-tempered? Because this is a level 4 out of 5 sentence completion question, you may find a few answer choices that come close to the definition of one who is quarrelsome and ill-tempered. Just remember, finding a close match on the SAT is not good enough. We're looking for an exact DNA match! The words "tyrannical" and "cantankerous" appear to be the two best choices. However, "tyrannical" describes someone who is bossy. The word "cantankerous" perfectly describes this difficult, cranky, hard to get along with man.

Vocabulary:

tyrannical: characterized by or favoring absolute obedience to authority

disingenuous: insincere or calculating

sanctimonious: of or practicing hypocrisy

cantankerous: ill-tempered and quarrelsome

morose: sullenly unhappy

5. The _____ between the mayor's idealistic speeches and his reprehensible conduct led his constituents to _____ his claim to be a true reformer.
- A) tension . . . endorse
 - B) discrepancy . . . disparage
 - C) contradiction . . . vindicate
 - D) resemblance . . . mimic
 - E) parallelism . . . undermine

Answer: B

Explanation: Does this sound like your mayor? Well, the mayor of this town developed a reputation for being inconsistent. His reprehensible (worthy of or deserving blame or shame) actions have overwhelmed his likeable, positive qualities. Mayor X promised reform (changes to improve social or economic conditions), but since he messed up one too many times, his constituents (members of a group represented by an elected official) think he's full of Oscar Mayer deli meat.

Vocabulary:

tension: mental, emotional, or nervous strain

endorse: to give approval of or support to

discrepancy: the condition of being unlike or dissimilar; difference

disparage: to speak of as small or unimportant

contradiction: inconsistency; discrepancy

vindicate: to show to be just, right, or valid

resemblance: the quality or state of being alike

mimic: to copy or imitate closely

parallelism: similarity in aspect, course, or tendency; resemblance

undermine: To wear away and weaken the support of

6. Whether substances are medicines or poisons often depends on dosage, for substances that are _____ in small doses can be _____ in large.

- A) useless . . . effective
- B) mild . . . benign
- C) curative . . . toxic
- D) harmful . . . fatal
- E) beneficial . . . miraculous

Answer: C

Explanation: Use logic to predict the missing words. The first part of the sentence explains that substances (such as Tylenol PM, Advil, Pepsid) will become harmful if you don't take the recommended amount. The second part of the sentence asks us to continue this idea. If you take small doses of medicine, is this necessarily a bad thing? NO. But if you take too much medicine, you could overdose. Go for a positive word in the first blank, and a negative word for the second. And remember to eat your vitamins!

Vocabulary:

benign: harmless

endorse: to give approval of or support to

curative: serving or tending to cure

toxic: poisonous

beneficial: advantageous

7. Though the conferees did not voice support for the resolution explicitly, they conveyed _____ approval by applauding.

- A) demographic
- B) temporal
- C) filial
- D) tacit
- E) prescient

Answer: D

Explanation: Look for clues in the sentence to help you determine the missing word. Because “though” is a contrasting link, we know there will be a disparity between the first part and sentence part of the sentence. Just to clear up any ambiguities, the conferees (participants in a conference) had indeed accepted the resolution. However, the conferees didn’t clearly and fully express their liking of the resolution (stated in the first part of the sentence). Why the conferees didn’t articulate their support, or show outgoingness toward the resolution? Maybe the conferees didn’t eat their Wheaties that morning? Who knows! But all we have to do is find a word in the second part of the sentence that means the opposite of something explicit or direct. If you use the word “tacit” (not spoken, implied) then you’re in great shape. If you use any other word but tacit, then make sure to eat your Wheaties today.

Vocabulary:

Demographic: a portion of a population

Temporal: of, relating to, or limited by time

Filial: having or assuming the relationship of child or offspring to parent.

Tacit: not spoken; implied by or inferred from actions or statements:

Prescient: perceiving the significance of events before they occur.

8. Although many people in contemporary times choose to speak explicitly, the tradition of _____ is still very much alive.

- A) garrulousness
- B) exaggeration
- C) excoriation
- D) oration
- E) euphemism

Answer: E

Explanation: Let's break this sentence in half. Because part of the second half of the sentence is missing, we'll focus on the meaning and clues in the first half of the sentence. The first part of the sentence tells us that people in today's world are up-front and direct in the way they interact with one another. Also found in the first part of the sentence is a contrasting link "although". This contrasting link will basically "twist the arm" of the sentence and provide a contrast in meaning from one half to the other. So if the first part of the sentence essentially means "explicit and direct speech", the second part of the sentence essentially means "implicit and indirect speech". Now look at the answer choices and eliminate answer choices that are far from the definition "indirect and subtle". See, you did it. And you thought you were as sharp as a marble.

Vocabulary:

Explicitly: fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied

Garrulousness: wordy and rambling talk

Exaggeration: the act of making something more noticeable than usual

Excoriation: the act of condemning or denouncing

Oration: a formal speech, especially one given on a ceremonial occasion

Euphemism: the act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive

9. Unprecedented turmoil in the usually thriving nation has made the formerly _____ investors leery of any further involvement.

- a) pessimistic
- b) cautious
- c) clandestine
- d) reticent
- e) sanguine

Answer: E

Explanation: There is a cause and effect relationship in this sentence. Because this usually happy-go-lucky, prosperous nation is now hurting, the once happy consumers are now reluctant to buy stocks and spend money. Look for the clues that tell you what to fill in the blank; the word (formerly) is a huge clue because it tells you to compare how investors felt in the past versus how they feel in the present. If you know that they are presently feeling leery, then you are looking for a word in the blank that contrasts with leery such as confident or cheerful. Choice E is the only positive word of the bunch and the rest of the answers do not have a very sanguine outlook.

Vocabulary:

unprecedented: having no previous example

turmoil: a state of extreme confusion or agitation

thriving: prospering

leery: suspicious or distrustful;

pessimistic: hopeless

clandestine: kept or done in secret

reticent: silent

sanguine: cheerful and confident

10. The author monotonously catalogues the _____ points of fashion history, while omitting the details that might _____ the reader's interest.
- A) vital . . . acquire
 - B) trivial . . . enhance
 - C) salient . . . offend
 - D) undisputed . . . limit
 - E) essential . . . rescind

Answer: B

Explanation: This author decided to add uninteresting and unimportant facts and details about the fashion history, instead of laying down the interesting, important and entertaining facts and details. We know what direction this sentence will travel because the word 'monotonously' is used to describe how the author includes the points about fashion history. If you start one blank at a time, it only makes sense that the author would monotonously include trivial points, while leaving out the good details that might enhance or spark the reader's interest. B is a perfect fit for this sentence.

Vocabulary:

vital: life-sustaining

trivial: of little significance or value

salient: most important

rescind: to make void

monotonously: tediously repetitious or lacking in variety

11. Although it is not _____, Clara Rodriguez' book on Puerto Rican life is especially useful because the supply of books on the subject is so _____.
- A) intense . . vast
 - B) obsolete . . outdated
 - C) ostentatious. . varied
 - D) comprehensive . . meager
 - E) contemporary . . plentiful

Answer D:

Explanation: The contrasting link "although" is a big clue in this sentence because it tells you that this sentence will have a change in direction. The words that we are looking for cannot be similar in meaning and make sense. So get rid of choice A, B, C and E. The only choice that works in this sentence is answer D because the word comprehensive, a positive word, contrasts perfectly with the negative word, meager. Did Clara Rodriguez write her masterpiece? No. But still, it's useful to know that a Puerto Rican native and not John Grisham wrote this novel.

Vocabulary:

obsolete: no longer in use

ostentatious: intended to attract notice and impress others

comprehensive: so large in scope or content as to include much

meager: deficient in quantity

12. Fenster schemed and plotted for weeks and these _____ were rewarded when Griswold was fired and Fenster was promoted.

- A) circumlocutions
- B) affiliations
- C) gibberings
- D) machinations
- E) renunciations

Answer: D

Explanation: Try to use logic to predict the missing word first. Because Fenster plotted deviously for weeks, we know to look for a word synonymous with Fenster's bad actions; something like (contrived plans) or (devious schemes) works well in the blank. Now go to the answer choices and eliminate anything off target. Gibberings and Circumlocutions basically cancel one another out. Affiliations is too positive a word. Fenster wasn't given the job for rejecting anything, so the word Renunciations wouldn't work. That leaves us with Machinations, a perfect word to describe how Fenster blindsided Griswold and stole his job.

Vocabulary:

Circumlocution: a roundabout expression

Gibbering: foolish talk

Machination: the act of plotting

Renunciation: rejecting or disowning or disclaiming as invalid

13. Because his paintings represented the Midwest of the mid-1800's as a serene and settled landscape, Robert Duncanson _____ Easterners hesitant about moving westward that relocation was indeed _____.

- A) convinced ... ridiculous
- B) contradicted ... necessary
- C) reminded ... rash
- D) assured ... safe
- E) persuaded ... risky

Answer D:

Explanation: The key clue in this sentence is the cause-effect link (because). Robert Duncanson did not paint the dark images of say a Goya or Dali. Instead, Duncanson painted the Midwest as nice place filled with sunny skies and lush vegetation. And naturally he was able to persuade Easterners to move out there! If you go right to the answer choices for the second blank, only two answer choices have a positive type of word. And the word assured goes perfectly in the first blank, because assure the people is just what Duncanson was able to do with his art.

Vocabulary:

Serene: calm, tranquil

Contradict: to be contrary to; be inconsistent with

14. Samantha's distinguishing trait is her _____: she gives liberally to those less fortunate than herself.

- A) amicability
- B) inexorableness
- C) frivolity
- D) venerability
- E) munificence

Answer E:

Explanation: Your main clue in this sentence is the colon, a definition clue that acts like an equal sign. The blank and the portion of the sentence before the colon will be directly related to the information they give us after the colon. So if we know that Samantha helps the needy, then we need to find a synonym for the word generous or giving. Munificence means giving, so go with choice E.

Vocabulary:

Amicability: friendly

Inexorableness: inflexibility

Frivolity: light-heartedness

Venerability: commanding respect

15. The _____ student _____ at the idea that he had to give a speech in class.

- A) timid, recoiled
- B) frail, rejoiced
- C) fragile, reveled
- D) insolent, relapsed
- E) bold, repined

Answer A:

Explanation: There are only two directions you can take in this sentence. Either a brave student would enjoy the idea of public speaking, or a shy student would dread the idea of public speaking. Choice E starts off promising, but then has the bold student repining or complaining about public speaking. Choice A starts and ends in both a negative direction; a timid (shy) person would recoil (draw back, retreat) from the idea of speaking in public.

Vocabulary:

Reveled: took great pleasure and delight

Insolent: arrogant

Repined: complained or yearned after something

16. Rosita Peru, who rose to become the highest-ranking female in the television industry, was _____ recruited: Spanish language program producers courted her persistently.

- A) indiscriminately
- B) enigmatically
- C) vicariously
- D) rancorously
- E) assiduously

Answer E:

Explanation: The colon acts as an equal sign in this sentence. So if we're missing some information in the first part of the sentence, we can definitely look for our main clue on the other side of the colon. In this case, we know that the Spanish language station really wanted Rosita to work for them. They begged, sent her flowers, and therefore we can deduce that she was heavily and persistently recruited. Choice B and C are negative words, so get rid of those. And only choice E means anything close to persistently and unceasingly.

Vocabulary:

Indiscriminately: randomly

Enigmatically: mysteriously

Vicariously: indirectly

Rancorously: hatefully

17. _____ even when offstage, the famous comic, known as much for his quips as his glamorous lifestyle, ironically told the interviewer he lived a very _____ life.

- A) Facetious, mundane
- B) Greedy, pompous
- C) Asinine, whimsical
- D) Arrogant, commonplace
- E) Humorous, sonorous

Answer A:

Explanation: The famous comic is known for his quips, so we need a word in the first blank that says that he is as funny offstage as he is onstage; that leaves us with either choice A or E. In the second part of the sentence, the word ironically indicates a shift from the first blank. So if we know that the comic was a wild and crazy guy, he ironically lives a pretty quiet and boring life.

Vocabulary:

Facetious: joking

Mundane: ordinary

Pompous: self-important

Asinine: stupid

Whimsical: unusual, playful

Sonorous: having sound

18. Equipped with a large air hockey table, billiards, foosball, and other amusements, the recreation room provides myriad ways for children to _____ themselves.

- A) divulge
- B) retract
- C) divert
- D) disavow
- E) bemuse

Answer C:

Explanation: It is always a good strategy to figure out first what word works best in the blank BEFORE looking at the answers. Look at the clues in the sentence, such as amusements and recreation, to figure out the best word for the blank. It is clear that the children find many ways to entertain or enjoy themselves, so the word divert is the perfect fit here.

Vocabulary:

Myriad: a vast number

Divulge: to make known

Retract: to take something back

Disavow: to declare untrue

Bemuse: to confuse

19. New York designer Anna Sui creates eclectic clothes that represent an _____ of playful, 1970's funky styles fused with an edgy, urban sensibility.

- A) induction
- B) amalgam
- C) immersion
- D) occlusion
- E) estrangement

Answer B:

Explanation: In this sentence, the comma is used to continue the idea that Anna Sui adds such a broad range of style to her clothing line. Before going directly to the answer choices, try to predict the type of word that belongs in the missing blank. Because this sentence mentions that Anna Sui has a "playful style mixed with 1970's funk, and urban sensibility", we're looking for a synonym for the word "mixture". You can eliminate (A) and (E), because someone may get "inducted" into the hall of fame, or persistent quarrels may " estrange" two friends. If you've been to the dentist lately, you may remember that the filling in your mouth is an alloy (metallic combination) of mercury and silver; we also call these types of alloy mixtures, amalgams. For more information about amalgams, call your dentist today.

Vocabulary:

induction: The act or process of formally admitting a person to membership or office

amalgam: A combination of diverse elements; a mixture

immersion: Total occupation of the attention or of the mind; absorption

occlusion: Closure or blockage

estrangement: A destruction of affections; alienation

eclectic: Selecting individual elements from a variety of sources, systems, or styles