Sentence Equivalence: synonymous pairs

Sentence Equivalence gives you one sentence with a single blank and asks. . .



Lesson `grev.se.E1`

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The idea

Sentence Equivalence gives you one sentence with a single blank and asks for the TWO words that complete it so as to produce two sentences alike in meaning. That double requirement is the whole trick: each of the two words must fit the sentence's logic, AND the two words must mean nearly the same thing, so that swapping one for the other leaves the sentence saying the same thing.

What meaning does the blank need — and which pair supplies TWO words that both fit AND mean the same thing?

Predict the needed meaning from the clue. Apply two tests to each pair: do both words fit, and are the two genuine synonyms? Only the pair passing both survives.

Watch every step

Signal: 'spared no one' and 'winced at the sharpness' mean bitingly harsh, so the pair must be two synonyms for cutting.

The critic's ___ wit spared no one; even her admirers winced at the sharpness of her reviews.

A. verdant and lush ✗ *synonyms-but-unfit*

B. acerbic and genial ✗ *one-word-fits*

✓ **C.** caustic and mordant

D. gentle and benign ✗ *opposite-charge-pair*

E. trenchant and playful ✗ *pair-not-synonymous*

Why C — "caustic and mordant." Choose the single pair that both fits the sentence and is truly synonymous.

Now a harder one

Signal: 'a single misstep meant a fatal fall' means fearlessly bold, so the pair must be two synonyms for daring.

Only the most ___ of the explorers volunteered to cross the ridge in winter, when a single misstep meant a fatal fall.

A. valiant and timorous ✗ *one-word-fits*

B. timid and craven ✗ *opposite-charge-pair*

C. daring and experienced ✗ *pair-not-synonymous*

D. opaque and murky ✗ *synonyms-but-unfit*

E. audacious and intrepid

Why E — "audacious and intrepid." Choose the single pair that both fits the sentence and is truly synonymous.

The method, in one line

Sentence Equivalence: synonymous pairs

Predict the needed meaning from the clue. Apply two tests to each pair: do both words fit, and are the two genuine synonyms? Only the pair passing both survives.

Would swapping the pair's two words leave the sentence's meaning unchanged? Have I rejected pairs that fit-but-aren't-synonyms, that are synonyms-but-don't-fit, that fit only halfway, or that reverse the charge?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ pair-not-synonymous

Selects a pair whose two words each fit the sentence but do not mean the same thing, so the two completed sentences would differ in meaning — violating equivalence.

⚠ synonyms-but-unfit

Selects a pair of genuine synonyms that does not fit the sentence's logic, satisfying equivalence but not fit.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

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