Vocabulary in context: wisdom and discernment...

A vocabulary-in-context question is answered by the sentence, not by a memorized...



Lesson `grev.vocab.V22`

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The idea

A vocabulary-in-context question is answered by the sentence, not by a memorized gloss. The sentence almost always plants a clue — a defining phrase, an example, a contrast, or a consequence — that pins down which meaning the writer intends.

What clue in the sentence fixes the intended meaning of the word, and what plain paraphrase does that clue predict?

Predict a paraphrase from the clue before reading the options. Then match, discarding opposites, wrong-nuance near-synonyms, wrong dictionary senses, and sound-alikes.

Watch every step

The plan was so asinine that even its own author laughed when he reread it the next morning.

As used in the sentence, 'asinine' most nearly means

- **A.** utterly stupid
- **B.** brilliantly clever ✗ *opposite-meaning*
- **C.** mildly silly ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*
- **D.** of or like a donkey ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*
- **E.** acidic or caustic ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why **A** — "utterly stupid." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

Now a harder one

Her speech was vacuous, full of applause lines but empty of a single concrete idea.

As used in the sentence, 'vacuous' most nearly means

A. rich with substance ✗ *opposite-meaning*

B. empty of meaning

C. boringly dull ✗ *near-synonym-wrong-nuance*

D. forming a vacuum or empty space ✗ *wrong-dictionary-sense*

E. casually vacationing ✗ *sound-alike-or-association*

Why **B** — "empty of meaning." Choose the option closest to your predicted paraphrase.

The method, in one line

Vocabulary in context: wisdom and discernment against folly

Predict a paraphrase from the clue before reading the options. Then match, discarding opposites, wrong-nuance near-synonyms, wrong dictionary senses, and sound-alikes.

Could my choice replace the word and preserve the sentence's logic? Have I resisted the opposite, the almost-right synonym, and the alternate sense the context rules out?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ opposite-meaning
Selects a meaning roughly opposite to the one the clue requires.

⚠ near-synonym-wrong-nuance
Selects a meaning in the right general family but with the wrong precise nuance for this sentence.

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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Watch the walk-through