



ambiguous
dissident
embellish
fritter
inadvertent

inane
juxtapose
lethargy
sporadic
subsidize

Ten Words in Context

In the space provided, write the letter of the meaning closest to that of each **boldfaced** word. Use the context of the sentences to help you figure out each word's meaning.

1 **ambiguous**
(ăm-bīg'yōō-əs)
-adjective

___ *Ambiguous* means

- The portrait known as the “Mona Lisa” is famous for the woman’s **ambiguous** expression. Is she smiling or not?
- Omar left an **ambiguous** message on my answering machine: “Meet me at twelve o’clock.” I couldn’t tell whether he meant noon or midnight.

A. unclear. B. unintentional. C. unpleasant.

2 **dissident**
(dīs'ə-dənt)
-noun

___ *Dissident* means

- Some **dissidents** in the Catholic church favor such changes as allowing women to be priests and allowing priests to marry.
- In a dictatorship, **dissidents** are not tolerated. People who speak out against the government may be imprisoned or even executed.

A. a rebel. B. a dishonest person. C. a foolish person.

3 **embellish**
(ĕm-bĕl'īsh)
-verb

___ *Embellish* means

- Lauren **embellished** the door of her room with postcards from her friends and photos of her cats.
- The cover of the biology textbook was **embellished** with a pattern of colorful seashells.

A. to hide. B. to decorate. C. to damage.

4 **fritter**
(frit'ər)
-verb

___ *Fritter away* means

- I thought my little sister would **fritter** away her entire allowance on M&M’s, but instead of wasting her money, she put it in her piggy bank.
- Vince **fritters** away both his time and his money playing game after game in video arcades.

A. to earn. B. to count. C. to waste.

5 **inadvertent**
(in'ăd-vŭr'tnt)
-adjective

___ *Inadvertent* means

- Alexander Fleming’s discovery of penicillin was **inadvertent**. He forgot to cover a dish of bacteria, and some mold got into it. The next day, Fleming found that the mold had killed the bacteria.
- The final draft of Nancy’s paper was shorter than the previous version, but this was **inadvertent**. She had accidentally deleted an entire page without realizing it.

A. not required. B. not finished. C. not intended.

6 **inane**
(in-ān')
-adjective

___ *Inane* means

- The conversation at the party was **inane**, consisting mainly of foolish comments about whose clothes were the most “awesome.”
- Television programming is often so **inane** that TV has been described as “bubble gum for the mind.”

A. silly. B. interesting. C. shocking.

7 juxtapose
(jŭks'tə-pōz')
-verb

— *Juxtapose* means

- The photograph dramatically **juxtaposed** white birch trees and a dark gray sky.
 - Dottie spread her new dress out on her bed and then **juxtaposed** all her scarves and jackets to it to see which combination would look best.
- A. to cover up. B. to put side by side. C. to replace.

8 lethargy
(lēth'ər-jē)
-noun

— *Lethargy* means

- Although Wendy seemed to recover from the flu, her **lethargy** persisted. She felt exhausted for weeks.
 - With the hot weather, **lethargy** descended upon the class. The students had trouble staying awake, and even the instructor gazed dreamily out the window.
- A. weariness. B. hopelessness. C. foolishness.

9 sporadic
(spə-rād'ĭk)
-adjective

— *Sporadic* means

- It rained continuously until noon. After that, there were only **sporadic** showers.
 - Dave makes **sporadic** attempts to give up smoking, but his occasional efforts have been halfhearted.
- A. steady. B. irregular. C. long.

10 subsidize
(sŭb'sə-dīz)
-verb

— *Subsidize* means

- During college, many students are **subsidized** by their parents, while others rely on grants or loans.
 - Public television is **subsidized** by various grants and by individual and community donations.
- A. to pay for. B. to advertise. C. to criticize.

Matching Words with Definitions

Following are definitions of the ten words. Clearly write or print each word next to its definition. The sentences above and on the previous page will help you decide on the meaning of each word.

1. _____ To place close together, especially in order to compare or contrast
2. _____ A great lack of energy; inactivity due to laziness; sluggishness
3. _____ Able to be interpreted in more than one way; not clear
4. _____ Without sense or meaning; foolish
5. _____ A person opposed to established ideas or beliefs, especially in politics or religion
6. _____ To decorate; beautify by adding details
7. _____ To support financially; provide a grant or contribution
8. _____ To spend or waste a little at a time
9. _____ Unintentional; accidental
10. _____ Happening now and then; occasional

CAUTION: Do not go any further until you are sure the above answers are correct. Then you can use the definitions to help you in the following practices. Your goal is eventually to know the words well enough so that you don't need to check the definitions at all.