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HOW TO TEST YOUR PRESENT VOCABULARY

Once—as a child—you were an expert, an accomplished virtuoso, at learning new words.

Today, by comparison, you are a rank and bumbling amateur.

Does this statement sound insulting?

It may be—but if you are the average adult, it is a statement that is, unfortunately, only too true.

Educational testing indicates that children of ten who have grown up in families in which English is the native language have recognition vocabularies of over twenty thousand words—

And that these same ten-year-olds have been learning new words at a rate of many hundreds a year since the age of four.

In astonishing contrast, studies show that adults who are no longer attending school increase their vocabularies at a pace *slower than twenty-five to fifty words annually.*

How do you assess your own vocabulary?

Is it quantitatively healthy?

Rich in over-all range?

Responsive to any situation in which you may find yourself?

Truly indicative of your intellectual potential?

More important, is it still growing at the same rapid clip as when

you were a child?

Or, as with most adults, has your rate of increase dropped drastically since you left school? And if so, do you now feel that your vocabulary is somewhat limited, your verbal skills not as sharp as you would like them to be?

Let us check it out.

I challenge you to a series of tests that will measure your vocabulary range, as well as your verbal speed and responsiveness.

A TEST OF VOCABULARY RANGE

Here are sixty brief phrases, each containing one italicized word; it is up to you to check the closest definition of each such word. To keep your score valid, refrain, as far as possible, from wild guessing. The key will be found at the end of the test.

1. *disheveled* appearance:
(a) untidy; (b) fierce, (c) foolish, (d) peculiar, (e) unhappy
2. a *baffling* problem:
(a) difficult, (b) simple, (c) puzzling, (d) long, (e) new
3. *lenient* parent:
(a) tall, (b) not strict, (c) wise, (d) foolish, (e) severe
4. *repulsive* personality:
(a) disgusting, (b) attractive, (c) normal, (d) confused, (e) conceited
5. *audacious* attempt:
(a) useless, (b) bold, (c) foolish, (d) crazy, (e) necessary
6. *parry* a blow:
(a) ward off, (b) fear, (c) expect, (d) invite, (e) ignore
7. *prevalent* disease:
(a) dangerous, (b) catching, (c) childhood, (d) fatal, (e) widespread
8. *ominous* report:
(a) loud, (b) threatening, (c) untrue, (d) serious, (e) unpleasant
9. an *incredible* story:
(a) true, (b) interesting, (c) well-known, (d) unbelievable, (e) unknown
10. an *ophthalmologist*:
(a) eye doctor, (b) skin doctor, (c) foot doctor, (d) heart doctor, (e) cancer specialist
11. will *supersede* the old law:

- (a) enforce, (b) specify penalties for, (c) take the place of, (d) repeal, (e) continue
12. an *anonymous* donor:
(a) generous, (b) stingy, (c) well-known, (d) one whose name is not known, (e) reluctant
13. performed an *autopsy*: (a) examination of living tissue, (b) examination of a corpse to determine the cause of death, (c) process in the manufacture of optical lenses, (d) operation to cure an organic disease, (e) series of questions to determine the causes of delinquent behavior
14. an *indefatigable* worker:
(a) well-paid, (b) tired, (c) skillful, (d) tireless, (e) pleasant
15. a confirmed *atheist*:
(a) bachelor, (b) disbeliever in God, (c) believer in religion, (d) believer in science, (e) priest
16. endless *loquacity*:
(a) misery, (b) fantasy, (c) repetitiousness, (d) ill health, (e) talkativeness
17. a *glib* talker:
(a) smooth, (b) awkward, (c) loud, (d) friendly, (e) boring
18. an *incorrigible* optimist:
(a) happy, (b) beyond correction or reform, (c) foolish, (d) hopeful, (e) unreasonable
19. an *ocular* problem:
(a) unexpected, (b) insoluble, (c) visual, (d) continual, (e) imaginary
20. a notorious *demagogue*:
(a) rabble-rouser, (b) gambler, (c) perpetrator of financial frauds, (d) liar, (e) spendthrift
21. a *naïve* attitude:
(a) unwise, (b) hostile, (c) unsophisticated, (d) friendly, (e) contemptuous
22. living in *affluence*:
(a) difficult circumstances, (b) countrified surroundings, (c) fear,

- (d) wealth, (e) poverty
23. in *retrospect*:
(a) view of the past, (b) artistic balance, (c) anticipation, (d) admiration, (e) second thoughts
24. a *gourmet*:
(a) seasoned traveler, (b) greedy eater, (c) vegetarian, (d) connoisseur of good food, (e) skillful chef
25. to *simulate* interest:
(a) pretend, (b) feel, (c) lose, (d) stir up, (e) ask for
26. a *magnanimous* action:
(a) puzzling, (b) generous, (c) foolish, (d) unnecessary, (e) wise
27. a *clandestine* meeting:
(a) prearranged, (b) hurried, (c) important, (d) secret, (e) public
28. the *apathetic* citizens:
(a) made up of separate ethnic groups, (b) keenly vigilant of their rights, (c) politically conservative, (d) indifferent, uninterested, uninvolved, (e) terrified
29. to *placate* his son:
(a) please, (b) help, (c) find a job for, (d) make arrangements for, (e) change a feeling of hostility to one of friendliness
30. to *vacillate* continually:
(a) avoid, (b) swing back and forth in indecision, (c) inject, (d) treat, (e) scold
31. a *nostalgic* feeling:
(a) nauseated, (b) homesick, (c) sharp, (d) painful, (e) delighted
32. feel *antipathy*:
(a) bashfulness, (b) stage fright, (c) friendliness, (d) hostility, (e) suspense
33. be more *circumspect*:
(a) restrained, (b) confident, (c) cautious, (d) honest, (e) intelligent
34. an *intrepid* fighter for human rights:
(a) fearless, (b) eloquent, (c) popular, (d) experienced, (e) famous

35. *diaphanous* material:
(a) strong, (b) sheer and gauzy, (c) colorful, (d) expensive, (e) synthetic
36. a *taciturn* host:
(a) stingy, (b) generous, (c) disinclined to conversation, (d) charming, (e) gloomy
37. to *malign* his friend:
(a) accuse, (b) help, (c) disbelieve, (d) slander, (e) introduce
38. a *congenital* deformity:
(a) hereditary, (b) crippling, (c) slight, (d) incurable, (e) occurring at or during birth
39. a definite *neurosis*:
(a) plan, (b) emotional disturbance, (c) physical disease, (d) feeling of fear, (e) allergic reaction
40. made an *unequivocal* statement:
(a) hard to understand, (b) lengthy, (c) politically motivated, (d) clear and forthright, (e) supporting
41. *vicarious* enjoyment:
(a) complete, (b) unspoiled, (c) occurring from a feeling of identification with another, (d) long-continuing, (e) temporary
42. *psychogenic* ailment:
(a) incurable, (b) contagious, (c) originating in the mind, (d) intestinal, (e) imaginary
43. an *anachronous* attitude:
(a) unexplainable, (b) unreasonable, (c) belonging to a different time, (d) out of place, (e) unusual
44. her *iconoclastic* phase:
(a) artistic, (b) sneering at tradition, (c) troubled, (d) difficult, (e) religious
45. a *tyro*:
(a) dominating personality, (b) beginner, (c) accomplished musician, (d) dabbler, (e) serious student
46. a *laconic* reply:
(a) immediate, (b) assured, (c) terse and meaningful, (d)

unintelligible, (e) angry

47. *semantic* confusion:

(a) relating to the meaning of words, (b) pertaining to money,
(c) having to do with the emotions, (d) relating to mathematics,
(e) caused by inner turmoil

48. *cavalier* treatment:

(a) courteous, (b) haughty and highhanded, (c) negligent, (d)
affectionate, (e) expensive

49. an *anomalous* situation:

(a) dangerous, (b) intriguing, (c) unusual, (d) pleasant (e)
unhappy

50. *posthumous* child:

(a) cranky, (b) brilliant, (c) physically weak, (d) illegitimate, (e)
born after the death of the father

51. feels *enervated*:

(a) full of ambition, (b) full of strength, (c) completely
exhausted, (d) troubled, (e) full of renewed energy

52. shows *perspicacity*:

(a) sincerity, (b) mental keenness, (c) love, (d) faithfulness, (e)
longing

53. an unpopular *martinet*:

(a) candidate, (b) supervisor, (c) strict disciplinarian, (d)
military leader, (e) discourteous snob

54. *gregarious* person:

(a) outwardly calm, (b) very sociable, (c) completely
untrustworthy, (d) vicious, (e) self-effacing and timid

55. generally *phlegmatic*:

(a) smug, self-satisfied, (b) easily pleased, (c) nervous, high-
strung, (d) emotionally unresponsive, (e) lacking in social graces

56. an *inveterate* gambler:

(a) impoverished, (b) successful, (c) habitual, (d) occasional, (e)
superstitious

57. an *egregious* error:

(a) outstandingly bad, (b) slight, (c) irreparable, (d)

unnecessary, (e) deliberate

58. *cacophony* of a large city:

(a) political administration, (b) crowded living conditions, (c) cultural advantages, (d) unpleasant noises, harsh sounds, (e) busy traffic

59. a *prurient* adolescent:

(a) tall and gangling, (b) sexually longing, (c) clumsy, awkward, (d) sexually attractive, (e) soft-spoken

60. *uxorious* husband:

(a) henpecked, (b) suspicious, (c) guilty of infidelity, (d) fondly and foolishly doting on his wife, (e) tightfisted, penny-pinching

KEY: 1-a, 2-c, 3-b, 4-a, 5-b, 6-a, 7-e, 8-b, 9-d, 10-a, 11-c, 12-d,
13-b, 14-d, 15-b, 16-e, 17-a, 18-b, 19-c, 20-a, 21-c, 22-d,
23-a, 24-d, 25-a, 26-b, 27-d, 28-d, 29-e, 30-b, 31-b, 32-d,
33-c, 34-a, 35-b, 36-c, 37-d, 38-e, 39-b, 40-d, 41-c, 42-c,
43-c, 44-b, 45-b, 46-c, 47-a, 48-b, 49-c, 50-e, 51-c, 52-b,
53-c, 54-b, 55-d, 56-c, 57-a, 58-d, 59-b, 60-d

Your score (one point for each correct choice): _____

The Meaning of Your Score:

0-11: below average
12-35: average
36-48: above average
49-54: excellent
55-60: superior

A TEST OF VERBAL SPEED

PART 1

This is a timed test.

In no more than three minutes (time yourself, or have someone time you), decide whether the word in column B is the *same* (or *approximately the same*) in meaning as the word in column A; *opposite* (or *approximately opposite*) in meaning; or whether the two words are merely *different*.

Circle S for *same*, O for *opposite*, and D for *different*.

You will not have time to dawdle or think too long, so go as fast as you can.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B			
1. sweet	sour	S	O	D
2. crazy	insane	S	O	D
3. stout	fat	S	O	D
4. big	angry	S	O	D
5. danger	peril	S	O	D
6. help	hinder	S	O	D
7. splendid	magnificent	S	O	D
8. love	hate	S	O	D
9. stand	rise	S	O	D
10. furious	violent	S	O	D
11. tree	apple	S	O	D

12. doubtful	certain	S	O	D
13. handsome	ugly	S	O	D
14. begin	start	S	O	D
15. strange	familiar	S	O	D
16. male	female	S	O	D
17. powerful	weak	S	O	D
18. beyond	under	S	O	D
19. live	die	S	O	D
20. go	get	S	O	D
21. return	replace	S	O	D
22. growl	weep	S	O	D
23. open	close	S	O	D
24. nest	home	S	O	D
25. chair	table	S	O	D
26. want	desire	S	O	D
27. can	container	S	O	D
28. idle	working	S	O	D
29. rich	luxurious	S	O	D
30. building	structure	S	O	D

PART 2

This is also a timed test.

In no more than three minutes (again, time yourself or have

someone time you), write down as many *different* words as you can think of that start with the letter *D*.

Do *not* use various forms of a word, such as *do*, *doing*, *does*, *done*, *doer*, etc.

Space is provided for 125 words. You are not expected to reach that number, but write as fast as you can and see how many blanks you can fill in before your time is up.

KEY: Part 1: 1–O, 2–S, 3–S, 4–D, 5–S, 6–O, 7–S, 8–O, 9–S, 10–S, 11–D, 12–O, 13–O, 14–S, 15–O, 16–O, 17–O, 18–D, 19–O, 20–D, 21–S, 22–D, 23–O, 24–S, 25–D, 26–S, 27–S, 28–O, 29–S, 30–S

Part 2: Any English word starting with *D* is correct unless it is merely another form of a previous word on the list.

Scoring:

PART 1

If you have up to 10 correct answers, credit your score with 25 points.

If you have 11–20 correct answers, credit your score with 50 points.

21–25 correct answers—75 points.

26–30 correct answers—100 points.

Your Score on **Part 1**: ____

PART 2

Up to 30 words: 25 points

31–50 words: 50 points

51–70 words: 75 points

71–125 words: 100 points

Your Score on **Part 2**: ____

TOTAL SCORE

On Verbal Speed: ____

The meaning of your verbal speed score:

50: below average

75: average

100: above average

125–150: excellent

175–200: superior

A TEST OF VERBAL RESPONSIVENESS

PART 1

Write in the blank in column B a word starting with the letter *P* that is the *same*, or *approximately the same*, in meaning as the word given in column A.

Example: look peer_____

Warning: Every answer *must* start with the letter P.

A	B
1. bucket	_____
2. trousers	_____
3. maybe	_____
4. forgive	_____
5. separate	_____
6. likely	_____
7. annoy	_____
8. good-looking	_____
9. picture	_____
10. choose	_____
11. ugly	_____
12. go	_____
13. dish	_____

- | | |
|----------------|-------|
| 14. location | _____ |
| 15. stone | _____ |
| 16. inactive | _____ |
| 17. fussy | _____ |
| 18. suffering | _____ |
| 19. castle | _____ |
| 20. gasp | _____ |
| 21. fear | _____ |
| 22. twosome | _____ |
| 23. artist | _____ |
| 24. sheet | _____ |
| 25. collection | _____ |

PART 2

Write in the blank in column B a word starting with the letter *G* that is *opposite*, *approximately opposite*, or *in contrast to* the word given in column A.

Example: stop go

Warning: Every answer *must* start with the letter G.

- | A | B |
|------------|-------|
| 1. lose | _____ |
| 2. midget | _____ |
| 3. special | _____ |
| 4. lady | _____ |

5. take _____
6. moron _____
7. sad _____
8. boy _____
9. happy _____
10. plain _____
11. hello _____
12. here _____
13. bad _____
14. ugly _____
15. stingy _____
16. awkward _____
17. little _____
18. rough _____
19. bride _____
20. ripe _____
21. unwanted _____
22. unprotected _____
23. experienced _____
24. scarcity _____
25. unappreciative _____

KEY, Part 1: If more than one answer is given, count as correct any word you have written that is the same as any *one* of the answers.

1–pail, pan, 2–pants, 3–perhaps, possibly, probably, 4–pardon, 5–part, 6–probable, possible, perhaps, 7–pester, 8–pretty, 9–photograph, painting, 10–pick, 11–plain, 12–proceed, 13–plate, platter, 14–place, 15–pebble, 16–passive, 17–particular, picky, 18–pain, 19–palace, 20–pant, puff, 21–panic, 22–pair, 23–painter, 24–page, 25–pack

Part 2: If more than one answer is given, count as correct any word you have written that is the same as any *one* of the answers.

1–gain, get, garner, grab, glean, grasp, grip, 2–giant, gigantic, great, gross, 3–general, 4–gentleman, 5–give, 6–genius, 7–glad, gleeful, gleesome, 8–girl, 9–gloomy, glum, grieving, grumpy, 10–gaudy, grand, grandiose, 11–goodbye, 12–gone, 13–good, 14–good-looking, 15–generous, giving, 16–graceful, 17–great, giant, gigantic, 18–gentle, 19–groom, 20–green, 21–greedy, grasping, 22–guarded, 23–green, 24–glut, gobs, 25–grateful

Scoring:

Score Parts 1 and 2 together. Write in the blank the *total* number of correct responses you made: _____

The meaning of your verbal responsiveness score:

0–10: below average

11-20: average
21-30: above average
31-40: excellent
41-50: superior

VOCABULARY AND SUCCESS

Now you know where you stand. If you are in the below average or average group, you must consider, seriously, whether an inadequate vocabulary may be holding you back. (If you tested out on the above average, excellent, or superior level, you have doubtless already discovered the unique and far-reaching value of a rich vocabulary, and you are eager to add still further to your knowledge of words.)

Let us examine, briefly, some of the evidence that points to the close relationship between vocabulary and personal, professional, and intellectual growth.

The Human Engineering Laboratory found that the *only* common characteristic of successful people in this country is an unusual grasp of the meanings of words. The Laboratory tested the vocabularies of thousands of people in all age groups and in all walks of life—and discovered that those people drawing down the highest salaries made the highest scores. Consider very thoughtfully the explanation that the director of the Laboratory offered for the relationship between vocabulary and success:

“Why do large vocabularies characterize executives and possibly outstanding men and women in other fields? The final answer seems to be that words are the instruments by means of which men and women grasp the thoughts of others and with which they do much of their own thinking. They are the tools of thought.”

There is other evidence.

At many universities, groups of freshmen were put into experimental classes for the sole purpose of increasing their knowledge of English words. *These groups did better in their sophomore, junior, and senior years than control groups of similarly endowed students who did not receive such training.*

And still more evidence:

At the University of Illinois, entering students were given a simple twenty-nine-word vocabulary test. The results of this test could be used, according to Professor William D. Templeman, to make an accurate prediction of future academic success—or lack of success—over the entire four year college course. “If a student has a superior vocabulary,” states Professor Templeman, “it will probably follow that he will do better work academically.”

And finally:

Educational research has discovered that your I.Q. is intimately related to your vocabulary. Take a standard vocabulary test and then an intelligence test—the results in both will be substantially the same.

YOU CAN INCREASE YOUR VOCABULARY

The more extensive your vocabulary, the better your chances for success, other things being equal—success in attaining your educational goals, success in moving ahead in your business or professional career, success in achieving your intellectual potential.

And you *can* increase your vocabulary—faster and easier than you may realize.

You can, in fact, accomplish a tremendous gain in less than two to three months of concentrated effort, even if you do only one session a day—in less time if you do two or more sessions a day.

Furthermore—

You can start improving your vocabulary immediately—and within a few days you can be cruising along at such a rapid rate that there will be an actual change in your thinking, in your ability to express your thoughts, and in your powers of understanding.

Does this sound as if I am promising you the whole world in a neat package with a pretty pink ribbon tied around it? I am. And I am willing to make such an unqualified promise because I have seen what happens to those of my students at New York University and at Rio Hondo College in Whittier, California, who make sincere, methodical efforts to learn more, many more, words.