

HOW TO TALK ABOUT WHAT GOES ON

(Sessions 42–44)

TEASER PREVIEW

What verb, ending in *-ate*, means:

to exhaust?

to scold severely?

to deny oneself?

to repeat the main points?

to be a victim of mental or intellectual stagnation?

to pretend?

to hint?

to make (something) easier to bear?

to show sympathy?

to waver indecisively?

SESSION 42

WORDS are symbols of ideas—and we have been learning, discussing, and working with words as they revolve around certain basic concepts.

Starting with an idea (personality types, doctors, occupations, science, lying, actions, speech, insults, compliments, etc.), we have explored the meanings and uses of ten basic words; then, working from each word, we have wandered off toward any ideas and additional words that a basic word might suggest, or toward any *other* words built on the same Latin or Greek roots.

By this natural and logical method, you have been able to make meaningful and lasting contact with fifty to a hundred or more words in each chapter. And you have discovered, I think, that while five *isolated* words may be difficult to learn in one day, fifty to a hundred or more *related* words are easy to learn in a few sessions.

In this session we learn words that tell what's going on, what's happening, what people do to each other or to themselves, or what others do to *them*.

IDEAS

1. complete exhaustion

You have stayed up all night. And what were you doing? Playing poker, a very pleasant way of whiling away time? No. Engaging in some creative activity, like writing a short story, planning a political campaign, discussing fascinating questions with friends? No.

The examples I have offered are exciting or stimulating—as

psychologists have discovered, it is not work or effort that causes fatigue, but boredom, frustration, or a similar feeling.

You have stayed up all night with a very sick husband, wife, child, or dear friend. And despite all your ministrations, the patient is sinking. You can see how this long vigil contains all the elements of frustration that contribute to mental, physical, and nervous fatigue.

And so you are bushed—but completely bushed. Your exhaustion is mental, it is physiological, it is emotional.

What verb expresses the effect of the night's frustrations on you?

to enervate

2. tongue-lashing

You suddenly see the flashing red light as you glance in your rear-view mirror. It's the middle of the night, yet the police flasher is clear as day—and then you hear the low growl of the siren. So you pull over, knowing you were speeding along at 70 on the 55-mile-an-hour-limit freeway—after all, there was not another car in sight on the deserted stretch of road you were traveling.

The cop is pleasant, courteous, smiling; merely asks for your driver's license and registration; even says "Please."

Feeling guilty and stupid, you become irritated. So what do you do?

You lash out at the officer with all the verbal vituperation welling up in you from your self-anger. You scold him harshly for not spending his time looking for violent criminals instead of harassing innocent motorists; you call into question his honesty, his ambition, his fairness, even his ancestry. To no avail, of course—you stare at the traffic ticket morosely as the police cruiser pulls away.

What verb describes how you reacted?

to castigate

3. altruistic

Phyllis is selfless and self-sacrificing. Her husband's needs and desires come first—even when they conflict with her own. Clothes for her two daughters are her main concern—even if she has to wear a seven-year-old coat and outmoded dresses so that Paula and Evelyn can look smart and trim. At the dinner table, she heaps everyone's plate—while she herself often goes without. Phyllis will deny herself, will scrimp and save—all to the end that she may offer her husband and children the luxuries that her low self-esteem does not permit her to give herself.

What verb expresses what Phyllis does?

to self-abnegate

4. repetition

You have delivered a long, complicated lecture to your class, and now, to make sure that they will remember the important points, you restate the key ideas, the main thoughts. You offer, in short, a kind of brief summary, step by step, omitting all extraneous details.

What verb best describes what you do?

to recapitulate

5. no joie de vivre

Perhaps you wake up some gloomy Monday morning (why is it that Monday is always the worst day of the week?) and begin to think of the waste of the last five years. Intellectually, there has been no progress—you've read scarcely half a dozen books, haven't made one new, exciting friend, haven't had a startling or unusual thought. Economically, things are no better—same old debts to meet, same old hundred dollars in the bank, same old job, same old routine of the eight-to-five workdays, the tuna fish or chicken salad sandwich for lunch, the same dreary ride home. What a life! No change, nothing but routine, sameness, monotony—and for what?

(By now you'd better get up—this type of thinking never leads anywhere, as you've long since learned.)

What verb describes how you think you live?

to vegetate

6. pretense

Your neighbor, Mrs. Brown, pops in without invitation to tell you of her latest troubles with (a) her therapist, (b) her hairdresser, (c) her husband, (d) her children, and/or (e) her gynecologist.

Since Florence Brown is dull to the point of ennui, and anyway you have a desk piled high with work you were planning to light into, you find it difficult to concentrate on what she is saying. However, you do not wish to offend her by sending her packing, or even by appearing to be uninterested, so you pretend rapt attention, nodding wisely at what you hope are the right places.

What verb describes this feigning of interest?

to simulate

7. slight hint, no more

You are an author and are discussing with your editor the possible avenues of publicity and advertising for your new book. At one point in the conversation the editor makes several statements which might—or might not—be construed to mean that the company is going to promote the book heavily. For example, “If we put some real money behind this, we might sell a few copies,” or “I wonder if it would be a good idea to get you on a few talk shows ...” No unequivocal commitments, no clear-cut promises, only the slight and oblique mention of possibilities.

What verb expresses what the editor is doing?

to intimate

8. helpful

Aspirin doesn't cure any diseases. Yet this popular and inexpensive drug is universally used to lighten and relieve various unpleasant symptoms of disease: aches and pains, fever, inflammations, etc.

What verb expresses the action of aspirin?

to alleviate

9. when the bell tolls

John Donne's lines (made famous by Ernest Hemingway):

No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

are truer than you may think; any person who views another's pain with complete detachment or indifference is shutting off important feelings.

When people have suffered a bereavement (as through death); when they have been wounded by life or by friends; then is the time they most need to feel that they are not alone, that you share their misery with them even if you cannot directly alleviate their sorrow. Your sympathy and compassion are, of course, alleviation enough.

What verb signifies this vicarious sharing of sorrow with someone who directly suffers?

to commiserate

10. when two men propose

Should you marry John or George? (You're strongly and equally attracted to both.) John is handsome, virile, tender; George is stable, reliable, dependable, always there when you need him. George loves you deeply; John is more exciting. You decide on John, naturally.

But wait—marrying John would mean giving up George, and with George you always know where you stand; he's like the Rock of Gibraltar (and sometimes almost as dull). So you change your mind—it's George, on more mature reflection.

But how happy can you be with a husband who is not exciting? Maybe John would be best after all....

The pendulum swings back and forth—you cannot make up your mind and stick to it. (You fail to realize that your indecision proves that you don't want to marry either one, or perhaps don't want to give either one up, or possibly don't even want to get married.) First it's John, then it's George, then back to John, then George again. *Which is it, which is it?*

What verb describes your pendulum-like indecision?

to vacillate

USING THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words?

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>enervate</i> | EN'-ər-vayt' |
| 2. <i>castigate</i> | KAS'-tə-gayt' |
| 3. <i>self-abnegate</i> | self-AB'-nə-gayt' |
| 4. <i>recapitulate</i> | ree'-kə-PICH'-ə-layt' |
| 5. <i>vegetate</i> | VEJ'-ə-tayt' |
| 6. <i>simulate</i> | SIM'-yə-layt' |
| 7. <i>intimate</i> | IN'-tə-mayt' |

8. <i>alleviate</i>	ə-LEE'-vee-ayt'
9. <i>commiserate</i>	kə-MIZ'-ə-rayt
10. <i>vacillate</i>	VAS'-ə-layt

Can you work with the words?

1. enervate	a. deny oneself
2. castigate	b. stagnate
3. self-abnegate	c. suggest; hint
4. recapitulate	d. sympathize
5. vegetate	e. waver
6. simulate	f. exhaust
7. intimate	g. lessen; lighten
8. alleviate	h. summarize
9. commiserate	i. pretend
10. vacillate	j. censure; scold; slash at verbally

KEY: 1–f, 2–j, 3–a, 4–h, 5–b, 6–i, 7–c, 8–g, 9–d, 10–e

Do you understand the words? (I)

Should you feel *enervated* after a good night's sleep?

YES NO

Do motorists who have been caught speeding sometimes start *castigating* the traffic officer?

YES NO

Do people who are completely *self-abnegating* say “No!” to their needs and desires?

YES NO

When you *recapitulate*, do you cover new material?

YES NO

Do people possessed of *joie de vivre* usually feel that they are *vegetating*?

YES NO

When you *simulate* alertness, do you purposely act somnolent?

YES NO

When you *intimate*, do you make a direct statement?

YES NO

Does aspirin often have an *alleviating* effect on pain?

YES NO

Do we naturally *commiserate* with people who have suffered a bereavement?

YES NO

Do decisive people often *vacillate*?

YES NO

KEY: 1–no, 2–yes, 3–yes, 4–no, 5–no, 6–no, 7–no, 8–yes, 9–yes, 10–no

Do you understand the words? (II)

enervated—exhilarated

SAME OPPOSITE

castigate—praise

SAME OPPOSITE

self-abnegate—deny oneself

SAME OPPOSITE

recapitulate—summarize

SAME OPPOSITE

vegetate—stagnate

SAME OPPOSITE

simulate—pretend

SAME OPPOSITE

intimate—hint

SAME OPPOSITE

alleviate—make worse

SAME OPPOSITE

commiserate—sympathize

SAME OPPOSITE

vacillate—decide

SAME OPPOSITE

KEY: 1–O, 2–O, 3–S, 4–S, 5–S, 6–S, 7–S, 8–O, 9–S, 10–O

Can you recall the words?

pretend

1. S _____

scold

2. C _____

sacrifice one's desires

3. S _____

waver

4. V _____

exhaust

5. E _____

sympathize

6. C _____

summarize

7. R _____

lighten

8. A _____

hint

9. I _____

stagnate

10. V _____

KEY: 1-simulate, 2-castigate, 3-self-abnegate, 4-vacillate, 5-
enervate, 6-commiserate, 7-recapitulate, 8-alleviate, 9-
intimate, 10-vegetate

(End of Session 42)

SESSION 43

ORIGINS AND RELATED WORDS

1. more than fatigue

When you are *enervated*, you feel as if your nerves have been ripped out—or so the etymology of the word indicates.

Enervate is derived from *e-* (*ex-*), out, and Latin *nervus*, nerve. *Enervation* (en'-ər-VAY'-shən) is not just fatigue, but complete devitalization—physical, emotional, mental—as if every ounce of the life force has been sapped out, as if the last particle of energy has been drained away.

Despite its similar appearance to the word *energy*, *enervation* is almost a direct antonym. *Energy* is derived from the Greek prefix *en-*, in, plus the root *ergon*, work; *erg* is the term used in physics for a unit of work or energy. *Synergism* (SIN'-ər-jiz-əm)—the prefix *syn-*, together or with, plus *ergon*—is the process by which two or more substances or drugs, by working together, produce a greater effect in combination than the sum total of their individual effects.

Alcohol, for example, is a depressant. So are barbiturates and other soporifics. Alcohol and barbiturates work *synergistically* (sin'-ər-JIS'-tik'-lee)—the effect of each is increased by the other if the two are taken together.

So if you're drinking, don't take a sleeping pill—or if you *must* take a pill for your insomnia, don't drink—the combination, if not lethal, will do more to you than you may want done!

Synergy (SIN'-ər-jee), by the way, is an alternate form of *synergism*.

2. verbal punishment

Castigate is derived from a Latin verb meaning *to punish*; in present-day usage, the verb generally refers to verbal punishment, usually harsh and severe. It is somewhat synonymous with *scold*, *criticize*, *rebuke*, *censure*, *reprimand*, or *berate*, but much stronger than any of these—*rail at*, *rant at*, *slash at*, *lash out at*, or *tongue-lash* is a much closer synonym. When candidates for office *castigate* their opponents, they do not mince words.

Can you construct the noun form of *castigate*? _____.

3. saying “No!” to oneself

Abnegate is derived from Latin *ab-*, away (as in *absent*), plus *nego*, to deny—*self-abnegation* (ab'-nə-GAY'-shən), then, is self-denial. *Nego* itself is a contraction of Latin *neg-*, not, no, and *aio*, I say; to be *self-abnegating* is to say “No!” to what you want, as if some inner censor were at work whispering, “No, you can’t have that, you can’t do that, you don’t deserve that, you’re not good enough for that...”

To *negate* (nə-GAYT') is to deny the truth or existence of, as in “The atheist *negates* God”; or, by extension, to destroy by working against, as in, “His indulgence in expensive hobbies *negates* all his wife’s attempts to keep the family solvent.” Can you write the noun form of the verb *negate*? _____.

Negative and *negativity* obviously spring from the same source as *negate*.

4. heads and headings

Latin *caput*, *capitis* means *head*. The *captain* is the *head* of any group; the *capital* is the “*head city*” of a state or nation; and to *decapitate* (dee-KAP'-ə-tayt') is to chop off someone’s *head*, a popular activity during the French Revolution after the guillotine was invented. Write the noun form of *decapitate*: _____.

Latin *capitulum* is a little head, or, by extension, the heading, or title, of a chapter. So when you *recapitulate*, you go through the chapter headings again (*re-*), etymologically speaking, or you summarize or review the main points.

Remembering how the noun and adjective forms are derived from *adulate* ([Chapter 9](#)), can you write the required forms of *recapitulate*?

NOUN: _____.

ADJECTIVE: _____.

When you *capitulate* (kə-PICH'-ə-layt'), etymologically you arrange in headings, or, as the meaning of the verb naturally evolved, you arrange conditions of surrender, as when an army *capitulates* to the enemy forces under prearranged conditions; or, by further natural extension, you stop resisting and give up, as in, "He realized there was no longer any point in resisting her advances, so he reluctantly *capitulated*." Can you write the noun form of *capitulate*? _____.

5. mere vegetables

Vegetable is from Latin *vegeto*, to live and grow, which is what vegetables do—but that's *all* they do, so to *vegetate*, is, by implication, to do no more than stay alive, stuck in a rut, leading an inactive, unstimulating, emotionally and intellectually stagnant existence. *Vegetation* (vej'-ə-TAY'-shən) is any dull, passive, stagnant existence; also any plant life, as the thick *vegetation* of a jungle.

REVIEW OF ETYMOLOGY

PREFIX, ROOT, SUFFIX	MEANING
1. <i>e-</i> (<i>ex-</i>)	out
ENGLISH WORD _____	

2. <i>nervus</i>	nerve
ENGLISH WORD _____	
3. <i>en-</i>	in
ENGLISH WORD _____	
4. <i>ergon</i>	work
ENGLISH WORD _____	
5. <i>syn-</i>	with, together
ENGLISH WORD _____	
6. <i>-ic</i>	adjective suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
7. <i>-ion</i>	noun suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
8. <i>ab-</i>	away
ENGLISH WORD _____	
9. <i>nego</i>	to deny
ENGLISH WORD _____	
10. <i>caput, capitis</i>	head
ENGLISH WORD _____	
11. <i>de-</i>	negative prefix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
12. <i>capitulum</i>	little head, chapter heading
ENGLISH WORD _____	
13. <i>re-</i>	again

ENGLISH WORD _____

14. *-ory*

adjective suffix

ENGLISH WORD _____

15. *vegeto*

to live and grow

ENGLISH WORD _____

USING THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words?

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>enervation</i> | en'-ər-VAY'-shən |
| 2. <i>synergism</i> | SIN'-ər-jiz-əm |
| 3. <i>synergy</i> | SIN'-ər-jee |
| 4. <i>synergistic</i> | sin'-ər-JIS'-tik |
| 5. <i>castigation</i> | kas'-tə-GAY'-shən |
| 6. <i>self-abnegation</i> | self-ab'-nə-GAY'-shən |
| 7. <i>negate</i> | nə-GAYT' |
| 8. <i>negation</i> | nə-GAY'-shən |
| 9. <i>decapitate</i> | dee-KAP'-ə-tayt' |
| 10. <i>decapitation</i> | dee-kap'-ə-TAY'-shən |
| 11. <i>recapitulation</i> | ree-kə-pich'-ə-LAY'-shən |
| 12. <i>recapitulatory</i> | ree-kə-PICH'-ə-lə-tawr'-ee |
| 13. <i>capitulate</i> | kə-PICH'-ə-layt' |

14. *capitulation*

kə-pich'-ə-LAY'-shən

Can you work with the words?

1. enervation

a. tongue-lashing

2. synergism, synergy

b. denial; destruction

3. castigation

c. a lopping off of one's head

4. self-abnegation

d. summary; review of main points

5. negation

e. self-denial

6. decapitation

f. utter exhaustion; mental, emotional, and physical drain

7. recapitulation

g. a working together for greater effect

8. capitulation

h. surrender

KEY: 1–f, 2–h, 3–a, 4–e, 5–b, 6–c, 7–d, 8–g

Do you understand the words?

enervating—refreshing

SAME OPPOSITE

synergistic—neutralizing

SAME OPPOSITE

castigation—scolding

SAME OPPOSITE

self-abnegation—egoism

SAME OPPOSITE

negate—accept

SAME OPPOSITE

decapitate—behead

SAME OPPOSITE

recapitulatory—summarizing

SAME OPPOSITE

capitulate—resist

SAME OPPOSITE

KEY: 1–O, 2–O, 3–S, 4–O, 5–O, 6–S, 7–S, 8–O

Can you recall the words?

to give in

1. C _____

working together for greater effect (*adj.*)

2. S _____

total fatigue

3. E _____

for the purpose of summarizing or review (*adj.*)

4. R _____

self-denial

5. S _____ -A _____

deny; render ineffective; nullify

6. N _____

process by which two or more substances produce a greater effect than the sum of the individual effects

7. S _____

or S _____

to cut off the head of

8. D _____

strong censure

9. C _____

to surrender

10. C _____

KEY: 1–capitulate, 2–synergistic, 3–enervation, 4–recapitulatory, 5–self-abnegation, 6–negate, 7–synergism *or* synergy, 8–decapitate, 9–castigation, 10–capitulate

(End of Session 43)

SESSION 44

ORIGINS AND RELATED WORDS

1. not the real McCoy

Simulate is from Latin *simulo*, to copy; and *simulo* itself derives from the Latin adjectives *similis*, like or similar.

Simulation (sim'-yə-LAY'-shən), then, is copying the real thing, pretending to be the genuine article by taking on a similar appearance. The *simulation* of joy is quite a feat when you really feel depressed.

Genuine pearls grow inside oysters; *simulated* pearls are synthetic, but look like the ones from oysters. (Rub a pearl against your teeth to tell the difference—the natural pearl feels gritty.) So the frequent advertisement of an inexpensive necklace made of “genuine *simulated* pearls” can fool you if you don’t know the word—you’re being offered a genuine fake.

Dissimulation (də-sim'-yə-LAY'-shən) is something else! When you *dissimulate* (də-SIM'-yə-layt'), you hide your true feelings by making a pretense of opposite feelings. (Then again, maybe it’s not something completely else!)

Sycophants are great *dissimulators*—they may feel contempt, but show admiration; they may feel negative, but express absolutely positive agreement.

A close synonym of *dissimulate* is *dissemble* (də-SEM'-bəl), which also is to hide true feelings by pretending the opposite; or, additionally, to conceal facts, or one’s true intentions, by deception; or, still further additionally, to pretend ignorance of facts you’d rather not admit, when, indeed, you’re fully aware of them.

The noun is *dissemblance* (də-SEM'-bləns).

In *dissimulate* and *dissemble*, the negative prefix *dis-* acts largely to make both words pejorative.

2. hints and helps

The verb *intimate* is from Latin *intimus*, innermost, the same root from which the adjective *intimate* (IN'-tə-mət) and its noun *intimacy* (IN'-tə-mə-see) are derived; but the relationship is only in etymology, not in meaning. An *intimation* (in'-tə-MAY'-shən) contains a significance buried deep in the innermost core, only a hint showing. As you grow older, you begin to have *intimations* that you are mortal; when someone aims a .45 at you, or when a truck comes roaring down at you as you drive absent-mindedly against a red light through an intersection, you are suddenly *very sure* that you are mortal.

Alleviate is a combination of Latin *levis*, light (not heavy), the prefix *ad-*, to, and the verb suffix. (*Ad-* changes to *al-* before a root starting with *l-*.)

If something *alleviates* your pain, it makes your pain lighter for you; if I *alleviate* your sadness, I make it lighter to bear; and if you need some *alleviation* (ə-lee'-vee-AY'-shən) of your problems, you need them made lighter and less burdensome. To *alleviate* is to relieve only temporarily, not to cure or do away with. (*Relieve* is also from *levis*, plus *re-*, again—to make light or easy again.) The adjective form of *alleviate* is *alleviative* (ə-LEE'-vee-ay'-tiv)—aspirin is an *alleviative* drug.

Anything light will rise—so from the prefix *e-* (*ex-*), out, plus *levis*, we can construct the verb *elevate*, etymologically, to raise out, or, actually, raise up, as to *elevate* one's spirits, raise them up, make them lighter; or *elevate* someone to a higher position, which is what an *elevator* does.

Have you ever seen a performance of magic in which a person or an object apparently rises in the air as if floating? That's *levitation*

(lev'-ə-TAY'-shən)—rising through no visible means. (I've watched it a dozen times and never *could* figure it out!) The verb, to so rise, is *levitate* (LEV'-ə-tayt').

And how about *levity* (LEV'-ə-tee)? That's lightness too, but of a different sort—lightness in the sense of frivolity, flippancy, joking, or lack of seriousness, especially when solemnity, dignity, or formality is required or more appropriate, as in “tones of *levity*,” or as in, “Levity is out of place at a funeral, in a house of worship, at the swearing-in ceremonies of a President or Supreme Court Justice,” or as in, “Okay, enough *levity*—now let's get down to business!”

3. sharing someone's misery

Latin *miser*, wretched, the prefix *con-* (which, as you know, becomes *com-* before a root beginning with *m-*), together or with, and the verb suffix *-ate* are the building blocks from which *commiserate* is constructed. “I *commiserate* with you,” then, means, “I am wretched together with you—I share your misery.” The noun form? _____.

Miser, miserly, miserable, misery all come from the same root.

4. swing and sway

Vacillate—note the single *c*, double *l*—derives from Latin *vacillo*, to swing back and forth. The noun form? _____.

People who swing back and forth in indecision, who are irresolute, who can, unfortunately, see both, or even three or four, sides of every question, and so have difficulty making up their minds, are *vacillatory* (VAS'-ə-lə-tawr'-ee). They are also, usually, *ambivalent* (am-BIV'-ə-lənt)—they have conflicting and simultaneous emotions about the same person or thing; or they want to go but they also want to stay; or they love something, but they hate it too. The noun is *ambivalence* (am-BIV'-ə-ləns)—from *ambi* both.

(Remember *ambivert* and *ambidextrous* from [Chapter 3](#)?)

Ambivalence has best been defined (perhaps by Henny Youngman—if he didn't say it first, he should have) as watching your mother-in-law drive over a cliff in your new Cadillac.

To *vacillate* is to swing mentally or emotionally. To sway back and forth physically is *oscillate*—again note the double *l*—(OS'-ə-layt'), from Latin *oscillum*, a swing. A pendulum *oscillates*, the arm of a metronome *oscillates*, and people who've had much too much to drink *oscillate* when they try to walk. The noun? _____.

REVIEW OF ETYMOLOGY

PREFIX, ROOT, SUFFIX	MEANING
1. <i>simulo</i>	to copy
ENGLISH WORD _____	
2. <i>similis</i>	like, similar
ENGLISH WORD _____	
3. <i>dis-</i>	pejorative prefix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
4. <i>ad-</i> (<i>al-</i>)	to, toward
ENGLISH WORD _____	
5. <i>levis</i>	light
ENGLISH WORD _____	
6. <i>-ate</i>	verb suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	
7. <i>-ion</i>	noun suffix
ENGLISH WORD _____	

8. <i>e-</i> (<i>ex-</i>)	out
ENGLISH WORD _____	
9. <i>intimus</i>	innermost
ENGLISH WORD _____	
10. <i>miser</i>	wretched
ENGLISH WORD _____	
11. <i>vacillo</i>	to swing back and forth
ENGLISH WORD _____	
12. <i>ambi-</i>	both
ENGLISH WORD _____	
13. <i>oscillum</i>	a swing
ENGLISH WORD _____	

USING THE WORDS

Can you pronounce the words?

1. <i>simulation</i>	sim'-yə-LAY'-shən
2. <i>dissimulate</i>	də-SIM'-yə-layt'
3. <i>dissimulation</i>	də-sim'-yə-LAY'-shən
4. <i>dissemble</i>	də-SEM'-bəl
5. <i>dissemblance</i>	də-SEM'-bləns
6. <i>intimation</i>	in'-tə-MAY'-shən
7. <i>alleviation</i>	ə-lee'-vee-AY'-shən

8. <i>alleviative</i>	ə-LEE'-vee-ay'-tiv
9. <i>levitate</i>	LEV'-ə-tayt'
10. <i>levitation</i>	lev'-ə-TAY'-shən
11. <i>levity</i>	LEV'-ə-tee
12. <i>commiseration</i>	kə-miz'-ə-RAY'-shən
13. <i>vacillation</i>	vas'-ə-LAY'-shən
14. <i>vacillatory</i>	VAS'-ə-lə-tawr'-ee
15. <i>ambivalent</i>	am-BIV'-ə-lənt
16. <i>ambivalence</i>	am-BIV'-ə-ləns
17. <i>oscillate</i>	OS'-ə-layt'
18. <i>oscillation</i>	os'-ə-LAY'-shən

Can you work with the words? (I)

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. simulation | a. hint |
| 2. dissemble | b. flippancy or joking when
seriousness is required |
| 3. intimation | c. a sharing of grief |
| 4. alleviation | d. physical swaying; swinging
action, as of a pendulum |
| 5. levitate | e. a swinging back and forth in
indecision |
| 6. levity | f. pretense |
| | g. conflicted and contrary |

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 7. commiseration | feelings |
| 8. vacillation | h. rise in the air (as by magic or illusion) |
| 9. ambivalence | i. pretend |
| 10. oscillation | j. a lightening; a making less severe |

KEY: 1–f, 2–i, 3–a, 4–j, 5–h, 6–b, 7–c, 8–e, 9–g, 10–d

Can you work with the words? (II)

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. dissimulate | a. pretense of ignorance |
| 2. dissemblance | b. a rising and floating in air |
| 3. alleviative | c. having simultaneous and
contrary feelings |
| 4. levitation | d. tending to swing back and
forth in indecision |
| 5. vacillatory | e. to swing back and forth like a
pendulum |
| 6. ambivalent | f. to hide real feelings by
pretending opposite feelings |
| 7. oscillate | g. tending to ease (pain, burdens,
suffering, etc.) |

KEY: 1–f, 2–a, 3–g, 4–b, 5–d, 6–c, 7–e

Do you understand the words?

simulated—genuine

SAME OPPOSITE

dissimulate—pretend

SAME OPPOSITE

dissemble—be truthful

SAME OPPOSITE

intimation—hint

SAME OPPOSITE

alleviation—reduction

SAME OPPOSITE

levitate—sink

SAME OPPOSITE

levity—flippancy

SAME OPPOSITE

vacillation—decisiveness

SAME OPPOSITE

ambivalent—confused

SAME OPPOSITE

oscillate—sway

SAME OPPOSITE

KEY: 1–O, 2–S, 3–O, 4–S, 5–S, 6–O, 7–S, 8–O, 9–S, 10–S

Can you recall the words?

to swing back and forth

1. O _____

feeling both ways at the same time (*adj.*)

2. A _____

to conceal real feelings

3. D _____

or D _____

pretense

4. S _____

to pretend ignorance though knowing the facts

5. D _____

joking; frivolity; flippancy

6. L _____

indecisive

7. V _____

or V _____

to rise in the air, as by illusion

8. L _____

tending to ease (pain, etc.) (*adj.*)

9. A _____

or A _____

a sharing of another's grief

10. C _____

KEY: 1–oscillate, 2–ambivalent, 3–dissimulate *or* dissemble, 4–simulation, 5–dissemble, 6–levity, 7–vacillatory *or* vacillating, 8–levitate, 9–alleviative *or* alleviating, 10–commiseration

CHAPTER REVIEW

A. Do you recognize the words?

1. Complete exhaustion:
(a) synergism, (b) enervation, (c) negation
2. Co-operation in producing effects:
(a) synergy, (b) castigation, (c) capitulation
3. Lop off the head of:
(a) castigate, (b) capitulate, (c) decapitate
4. deny; render ineffective:
(a) castigate, (b) negate, (c) recapitulate
5. stagnate:
(a) intimate, (b) simulate, (c) vegetate
6. concealment of true feelings:
(a) simulation, (b) dissimulation, (c) dissemblance
7. sympathy:
(a) levity, (b) ambivalence, (c) commiseration
8. indecisiveness:
(a) vacillation, (b) oscillation, (c) dissimulation
9. aware of contrary feelings:
(a) alleviative, (b) dissimulating, (c) ambivalent

KEY: 1–b, 2–a, 3–c, 4–b, 5–c, 6–b *and* c, 7–c, 8–a, 9–c

B. Can you recognize roots?

ROOT	MEANING
1. <i>nervus</i>	_____
EXAMPLE enervate	
2. <i>ergon</i>	_____
EXAMPLE energy	
3. <i>nego</i>	_____
EXAMPLE self-abnegation	
4. <i>caput, capitis</i>	_____
EXAMPLE decapitate	
5. <i>capitulum</i>	_____
EXAMPLE recapitulate	
6. <i>vegeto</i>	_____
EXAMPLE vegetate	
7. <i>simulo</i>	_____
EXAMPLE dissimulate	
8. <i>similis</i>	_____
EXAMPLE similarity	
9. <i>levis</i>	_____

EXAMPLE levity

10. *intimus*

EXAMPLE intimation

11. *miser*

EXAMPLE commiserate

12. *vacillo*

EXAMPLE vacillate

13. *ambi-*

EXAMPLE ambivalent

14. *oscillum*

EXAMPLE oscillate

KEY: 1–nerve, 2–work, 3–deny, 4–head, 5–little head, chapter heading, 6–live and grow, 7–to copy, 8–like, similar, 9–light, 10–innermost, 11–wretched, 12–swing back and forth, 13–both, 14–a swing

TEASER QUESTIONS FOR THE AMATEUR ETYMOLOGIST

We have previously met the Greek prefix *syn-*, together or with, in *synonym* (“names together”) and *sympathy* (“feeling with”), and again in this chapter in *synergism* (“working together”).

Syn- is a most useful prefix to know. Like Latin *con-*, (together or with) and *ad-* (to, toward), the final letter changes depending on the first letter of the root to which it is attached. *Syn-* becomes *sym-* before *b*, *m*, and *p*.

Can you construct some words using *syn-*, or *sym-*?

1. Etymologically, Jews are “led together” in a house of worship (*agogos*, leading). Can you construct the word for this temple or place of worship? _____.

2. There is a process by which dissimilar organisms live together (*bios*, life) in close association, each in some way helping, and getting help from, the other (like the shark and the pilot fish). What word, ending in *-sis*, designates such a process? _____.

What would the adjective form be? _____.

3. Using Greek *phone*, sound, write the word that etymologically refers to a musical composition in which the sounds of all instruments are in harmony together _____. Using the suffix *-ic*, write the adjective form of this word: _____.

4. Combine *sym-* with *metron*, measurement, to construct a word designating similarity of shape on both sides (i.e., “measurement together”): _____.

Write the adjective form of this word: _____.

5. *Syn-* plus *dromos*, a running, are the building blocks of a medical word designating a group of symptoms that occur (i.e., run) together in certain diseases. Can you figure out the word?

6. The same *dromos*, a running, combines with Greek *hippos*, horse, to form a word referring to a place in ancient Greece in which horse and chariot races were run. The word? _____.

7. *Hippos*, horse, plus Greek *potamos*, river, combine to form a word designating one of the three pachyderms we discussed in an earlier chapter. The word? _____.

(Answers in [Chapter 18](#).)

PICKING YOUR FRIENDS' BRAINS

You can build your vocabulary, I have said, by increasing your familiarity with new ideas and by becoming alert to the new words you meet in your reading of magazines and books.

There is still another productive method, one that will be particularly applicable in view of all the new words you are learning from your study of these pages.

That method is *picking your friends' brains*.

Intelligent people are interested in words because words are symbols of ideas, and the person with an alert mind is always interested in ideas.

You may be amazed, if you have never tried it, to find that you can stir up an animated discussion by asking, in a social group that you attend, "What does _____ mean?" (Use any word that particularly fascinates you.) Someone in the group is likely to know, and almost everyone will be willing to make a guess. From that point on, others in the group will ask questions about their own favorite words (most people do have favorites), or about words that they themselves have in some manner recently learned. As the

discussion continues along these lines, you will be introduced to new words yourself, and if your friends have fairly good vocabularies you may strike a rich vein of pay dirt and come away with a large number of words to add to your vocabulary.

This method of picking your friends' brains is particularly fruitful because you will be learning not from a page of print (as in this book or as in your other reading) but from real live persons—the same sources that children use to increase their vocabularies at such prodigious rates. No learning is quite as effective as the learning that comes from other people—no information in print can ever be as vivid as information that comes from another human being. And so the words you pick up from your friends will have an amazingly strong appeal, will make a lasting impression on your mind.

Needless to say, your own rich vocabulary, now that you have come this far in the book, will make it possible for you to contribute to your friends' vocabulary as much as, if not more than, you take away—but since giving to others is one of the greatest sources of a feeling of self-worth, you can hardly complain about this extra dividend.

(End of Session 44)

——— *Brief Intermission Nine* ———

TAKE THIS SPELLING TEST

Even in the most painstakingly edited of magazines, a silly little misspelling of a perfectly common word will occasionally appear. How the error eluded the collective and watchful eyes of the editor, the associate editor, the assistant editor, the typesetter, and the proofreader, no one will ever know—for practically every reader of the magazine spots it at once and writes an indignant letter, beginning: “Didn’t you ever go to school ...?”

Even if you went to school, you’re going to have plenty of trouble spotting the one misspelled word in each group below. And not one of these words will be a demon like *sphygmomanometer* (a device for measuring blood pressure) or *piccalilli* (a highly seasoned relish), which no one would ever dare spell without first checking with a dictionary. On the contrary, every word will be of the common or garden variety that you might use every day in your social or business correspondence.

Nevertheless, you’re letting yourself in for ten minutes of real trouble, for you will be working with fifty particularly difficult spelling words. So put on your thinking cap before you begin.

A half-dozen high school teachers who took this test were able to make an average score of only five proper choices. Can you do better? Six or seven right is *very good*, eight or nine right is *excellent*, and 100 per cent success marks you as an absolute expert in English spelling.

Check the only misspelled word in each group.

- A: 1-surprise, 2-disappear, 3-innoculate, 4-description, 5-recommend
- B: 1-privilege, 2-separate, 3-incidentally, 4-dissipate, 5-occurence
- C: 1-analize, 2-argument, 3-assistant, 4-comparative, 5-truly
- D: 1-grammar, 2-drunkenness, 4-parallel, 4-sacrilegious, 5-conscience
- E: 1-precede, 2-exceed, 3-accede, 4-procede, 5-concede
- F: 1-pronunciation, 2-noticable, 3-desirable, 4-holiday, 5-anoint
- G: 1-wierd, 2-seize, 3-achieve, 4-receive, 5-leisure
- H: 1-superintendent, 2-persistent, 3-resistant, 4-insistent, 5-perseverence
- I: 1-accessible, 2-permissible, 3-inimitable, 4-irresistable, 5-irritable
- J: 1-pursue, 2-pastime, 3-kidnapped, 4-rhythmical, 5-exhilarate

KEY: A-3 (inoculate), B-5 (occurrence), C-1 (analyze), D-2
 (drunkenness), E-4 (proceed), F-2 (noticeable), G-1 (weird),
 H-5 (perseverance), I-4 (irresistible), J-5 (exhilarate)
