

# Essential SAT Vocabulary

**M-O**

# MACHINATION

Tired of his enemies' endless machinations to remove him from the throne, the king had them executed.

# MACHINATION

- plot or scheme
- crafty design intended to accomplish evil goal

# MAELSTROM

The transportation system of the city had collapsed in the maelstrom of war.

# MAELSTROM

- whirlpool
- turmoil
- agitated state of mind

# MAGNANIMOUS

Although at first he seemed mean, Uncle Frank turned out to be a magnanimous fellow.

# MAGNANIMOUS

- generous
- noble in spirit

# MALADROIT

“So, when is your baby due?” said the maladroit guest to his overweight but not pregnant hostess.



# MALADROIT

- clumsy
- tactless

# MALINGER

A common way to doge the draft was by malingering—faking an illness so as to avoid having to serve in the Army.

# MALINGER

- to evade responsibility by pretending to be ill

# MARTINET

A complete martinet, the official insisted that Pete fill out all the forms again even though he was already familiar with his case.

# MARTINET

- strict disciplinarian
- one who rigidly follows rules

# MATRICULATE

When May matriculates at Yale University this fall, she'll move to New Haven.

# MATRICULATE

- to enroll as a member of a college or university

# MAUDLIN

The mother's death should have been a touching scene, but the movie's treatment of it was so maudlin that, instead of making the audience cry, it caused them to cringe.



# MAUDLIN

- overly sentimental
- obviously appealing to emotions

# MENDACIOUS

So many of her stories were mendacious that I decided she must be a pathological liar.

# MENDACIOUS

- dishonest
- untruthful and misleading

# MENDICANT

“Please, sir, can you spare a dime?” begged the mendicant as the businessman walked past.

# MENDICANT

- beggar
- pauper

# MERCURIAL

Her mercurial personality made it difficult to guess how she would react to the terrible news.

# MERCURIAL

- quick, shrewd, and unpredictable

# METICULOUS

To find all the clues at the crime scene, the investigators meticulously examined every inch of the area.



# METICULOUS

- extremely careful
- fastidious
- painstaking

# METTLE

The helicopter pilot showed her mettle as she landed in the battlefield to rescue the wounded soldiers.

# METTLE

- courageousness
- endurance

# MILITATE

Lenin militated against the tsar for years before he overthrew him and established the Soviet Union.

# MILITATE

- to operate against
- to work in opposition

# MIRTH

Vera's hilarious jokes contributed to the general mirth at the dinner party.

# MIRTH

- frivolity, gaiety, and laughter

# MORIBUND

Thanks to the feminist movement, many sexist customs are now moribund in this society.



# MORIBUND

- dying
- decaying

# MOTTLE

Food stains mottled  
the tablecloth.

# MOTTLE

- to mark with spots

# MULTIFARIOUS

Ken opened the hotel room window, letting in the multifarious noises of the great city.

# MULTIFARIOUS

- diverse
- consisting of various kinds

# MUNIFICENT

The munificent millionaire donated ten million dollars to the hospital.

# MUNIFICENT

- generous
- sharing in abundance and without hesitation

# NADIR

As Lou—once a Shakespearean actor—waited in line to audition for the diaper commercial, he realized he had reached the nadir of his career.



# NADIR

- the lowest point
- abyss

# NASCENT

The advertising campaign was still in a nascent stage, and nothing had been finalized yet.

# NASCENT

- starting to develop
- coming into existence

# NEGLECTIBLE

It's obvious from our negligible dropout rate that our students love our academic program.

# NEGLECTIBLE

- small and unimportant
- warranting little attention
- not worth considering

# NEOPHYTE

A relative neophyte at bowling, Seth rolled all of his balls into the gutter.

# NEOPHYTE

- novice
- beginner

# NETTLE

I don't particularly like having blue hair—I just dye it to nettle my parents.



# NETTLE

- to irritate
- to aggravate and annoy

# NOISOME

A dead mouse trapped in your walls produces a noisome odor.

# NOISOME

- stinking
- putrid

# NOTORIETY

Wayne realized from the silence that greeted him as he entered the bar that his notoriety preceded him.

# NOTORIETY

- unfavorable fame
- infamy

# NOXIOUS

The people on the sidewalk covered their noses and mouths as the bus passed to avoid breathing in the noxious exhaust fumes.

# NOXIOUS

- harmful and unhealthful
- unwholesome

# NUANCE

The scholars argued for hours over tiny nuances in the interpretation of the last line of the poem.



# NUANCE

- shade of meaning
- subtle distinction

# NULLIFY

Crystal nullified her contract with her publisher when she received a better offer from another company.

# NULLIFY

- to make legally invalid
- to counteract the effect of

# OBLIQUE

Usually open and friendly,  
Allie has been behaving in a  
curiously oblique manner  
lately.

# OBLIQUE

- indirect and evasive
- misleading and deceptive

# OBSEQUIOUS

The obsequious new employee complimented her supervisor's tie and agreed with him on every issue.

# OBSEQUIOUS

- overly submissive
- sycophantic and fawning

# OBSTREPEROUS

The obstreperous toddler, who refused to follow rules and was always breaking toys, was the terror of his nursery school.



# OBSTREPEROUS

- stubbornly resistant to control
- unruly and boisterous

# OBTUSE

The directions were so obtuse that Alfred did not understand what was expected of him.

# OBTUSE

- lacking intellect or sharpness
- stupid and dull

# OBVIATE

The river was shallow enough for the riders to wade across, which obviated the need for a bridge.

# OBVIATE

- to make unnecessary
- to anticipate and prevent

# OCCLUDE

A shadow is thrown across the Earth's surface during a solar eclipse, when the light from the sun is occluded by the moon.

# OCCLUDE

- to close or block off
- to obstruct

# OFFICIOUS

The officious waiter butted into the couple's conversation, advising them on how to take out a mortgage.



# OFFICIOUS

- too helpful
- meddlesome

# OMNISCIENT

Christians believe that because God is omniscient, they cannot hide their sins from Him.

# OMNISCIENT

- possessing infinite knowledge
- all-seeing

# ONEROUS

The assignment was so difficult to manage that it proved onerous to the team in charge.

# ONEROUS

- burdensome
- difficult to endure

# OPULENCE

Livingston considered his BMW to a symbol of both opulence and style.

# OPULENCE

- wealth
- fortune and riches

# OSTENSIBLE

The ostensible reason for his visit was to borrow a book, but secretly he wanted to chat with lovely Wanda.



# OSTENSIBLE

- apparent
- assumed and seeming

# OSTENTATIOUS

The billionaire's 200-room mansion was considered by many to be an ostentatious display of wealth.

# OSTENTATIOUS

- showy and flamboyant
- flashy and garish