

Essential SAT Vocabulary

P-Q

PALAUVER

The journalist eagerly recorded the palaver among the football players in the locker room.

PALAUVER

- discussion between people of different cultures or levels of sophistication
- idle talk
- colloquy

PALL

- A pall fell over the landscape as the clouds obscured the moon in the night sky.
- Over time, the model's beauty palled, though her haughty attitude remained intact.

PALL

- covering that darkens or obscures; coffin
- to lose strength or interest

PALLIATE

The accused's crime was so vicious that the defense lawyer could not palliate it for the jury.

PALLIATE

- to make less serious
- to ease severity

PANACEA

Some claim that vitamin C is a panacea for all sorts of illnesses, but I have my doubts.

PANACEA

- cure-all
- remedy for all illnesses

PANOPLY

Corrina casually sifted through a panoply of job offers before finally deciding on one.

PANOPLY

- impressive array
- Something forming a protective covering

PARITY

Mrs. Lutskaya tried to maintain parity between her children, although each claimed she gave the other preferential treatment.

PARITY

- equality
- comparability

PARLEY

The peace organization tried in vain to schedule a parley between Israel and Iraq.

PARLEY

- discussion, usually between enemies

PAROCHIAL

It was obvious that Victor's parochial mentality would clash with Ivonne's liberal open-mindedness.

PAROCHIAL

- of limited scope or outlook
- provincial

PARRY

Kris parried every question the army officer fired at her, much to his frustration.

PARRY

- to ward off or deflect
- to evade or turn aside

PARSIMONY

Ethel gained a reputation for parsimony when she refused to pay for her daughter's college education.

PARSIMONY

- stinginess
- quality of being careful with money

PASTICHE

The playwright's clever pastiche of the well-known Bible story had the audience rolling in the aisles.

PASTICHE

- piece of literature or music imitating other works
- artistic composition made up of selections from different works

PAUCITY

Because of the relative paucity of bananas in the country, their price was very high.

PAUCITY

- scarcity
- lack or dearth

PECCADILLO

Gabriel tends to harp on his brother's peccadilloes and never lets him live them down.

PECCADILLO

- minor sin
- slight offense

PEDAGOGUE

Jesus was known as an influential pedagogue in his society.

PEDAGOGUE

- teacher, educator, or instructor

PEDANT

The professor's tedious commentary on the subject soon gained her a reputation as a pedant.

PEDANT

- one who makes a show of learning and knowledge
- uninspired, boring academic

PEJORATIVE

The teacher scolded Mark for his unduly pejorative comments about his classmate's presentation.

PEJORATIVE

- having negative connotations
- disparaging

PERCIPIENT

The percipient detective saw through the suspect's lies and uncovered the truth in the matter.

PERCIPIENT

- discerning
- able to perceive

PERDITION

Faust brought perdition upon himself when he made a deal with the Devil in exchange for power.

PERDITION

- complete and utter loss
- damnation

PERFIDIOUS

The actress's perfidious companion revealed all of her intimate secrets to the gossip columnist.

PERFIDIOUS

- disloyal and untrustworthy
- faithless

PERFUNCTORY

The machinelike bank teller processed the transaction and gave the waiting customer a perfunctory smile.

PERFUNCTORY

- done in a routine way
- indifferent

PERIPATETIC

Morty claims that his peripatetic hot dog stand gives him the opportunity to travel all over the city.

PERIPATETIC

- moving from place to place
- itinerant

PERMEABLE

Karen discovered that her raincoat was permeable when she was drenched while wearing it in a rainstorm.

PERMEABLE

- penetrable
- pervious

PERNICIOUS

The Claytons considered Rocky, a convicted felon, to be a pernicious influence on their innocent daughter.

PERNICIOUS

- extremely harmful
- dangerous
- destructive and deadly

PERSPICACIOUS

Inspector Poirot used his perspicacious mind to solve mysteries.

PERSPICACIOUS

- shrewd and insightful
- astute and keen witted

PERTINACIOUS

Despite her parents' opposition, Tina pertinaciously insisted on continuing to date her boyfriend.

PERTINACIOUS

- persistent
- stubborn

PESTILENCE

The country went into national crisis when it was plagued by both pestilence and floods at the same time.

PESTILENCE

- epidemic
- plague

PETULANCE

The child's petulance annoyed the teacher, who liked her young students to be cheerful and cooperative.

PETULANCE

- rudeness in speech or behavior
- peevishness

PHLEGMATIC

The phlegmatic old boar snoozed in the grass as the energetic piglets frolicked around him.

PHLEGMATIC

- calm in temperament
- sluggish

PILFER

Marianne did not pilfer the money for herself but rather for her sick brother, who needed medicine.

PILFER

- to steal stealthily and usually in small quantities

PITHY

Martha's pithy comments during the interview must have been impressive because she got the job.

PITHY

- possessing substance and conciseness
- succinct and to the point

PITTANCE

Zack felt sure he would not be able to buy food for his family with the small pittance the government gave him.

PITTANCE

- meager amount of pay
- small wage

PLACATE

The burglar tried to placate the snarling Doberman by saying, “Nice doggey,” and offering it a treat.

PLACATE

- to soothe
- to pacify

PLY

The weaver plied the fibers together to make a blanket.

PLY

- to use diligently
- to engage
- to join together

POLEMIC

The candidate's polemic against his opponent was vicious and small-minded rather than well reasoned and convincing.

POLEMIC

- controversy or argument
- verbal attack

PONTIFICATE

She pontificated about the virtues of being rich until we all left the room in disgust.

PONTIFICATE

- to speak in a pretentious manner

PRECIPITATE

- Since the couple wed after knowing each other only a month, many expected their precipitate marriage to end in divorce.
- It's fairly certain that Lloyd's incessant smoking precipitated his early death from cancer.

PRECIPITATE

- sudden and unexpected
- to cause to happen; to throw down from a height

PREDILECTION

The old woman's predilection for candy was evident from the chocolate bar wrappers strewn all over her apartment.

PREDILECTION

- established preference
- firm liking

PRESCIENT

Jonah's decision to sell the apartment turned out to be a prescient one, as its value soon dropped by half.

PRESCIENT

- having foresight
- knowing in advance

PREVARICATE

Rather than admit he had overslept again, the employee prevaricated, claiming that traffic had made him late.

PREVARICATE

- to evade the truth
- to lie

PRIVATION

The convict endured total privation while locked up in solitary confinement for a month.

PRIVATION

- lack of usual necessities or comforts
- state of being deprived

PROBITY

The conscientious witness responded with the utmost probity to all the questions posed to her.

PROBITY

- honest
- adhering to the highest principles and standards

PROCLIVITY

His proclivity for speeding got him into trouble with the highway patrol on many occasions.

PROCLIVITY

- tendency
- inclination

PRODIGIOUS

The musician's prodigious talent made her famous all over the world.

PRODIGIOUS

- vast and enormous
- extraordinary

PROFLIGATE

Some historians claim that it was the Romans' decadent, profligate behavior that led to the decline of their empire.

PROFLIGATE

- corrupt
- degenerate

PROPINQUITY

The house's propinquity to the foul-smelling pig farm made it impossible to sell.

PROPINQUITY

- nearness
- proximity

PROFITIOUS

“I realized that I should have brought this up at a more propitious moment, but I don’t love you,” said the bride to the groom in the middle of their marriage vows.

PROPITIOUS

- favorable
- advantageous

PROSELYTIZE

The missionaries went from door to door in the neighborhood, proselytizing enthusiastically.

PROSELYTIZE

- to convert to a particular belief or religion
- to recruit someone to join one's institution, group, or cause

PROTEAN

The protean Scarlet
Pimpernel could play a wide
variety of different
characters convincingly.

PROTEAN

- readily assuming different forms or characters
- displaying great diversity; versatile

PRURIENT

The drunken sailor gave the
buxom young waitress a
prurient look.

PRURIENT

- lustful
- exhibiting lewd desires

PUERILE

Olivia's boyfriend's puerile antics are really annoying; sometimes he acts like a five-year-old!

PUERILE

- childish and immature
- silly and juvenile

PUGNACIOUS

The serene eight-year-old used to be a pugnacious troublemaker in her youth, but she's softer now.

PUGNACIOUS

- quarrelsome
- eager and ready to fight

PULCHRITUDE

The mortals gazed in admiration at Venus, stunned by her incredible pulchritude.

PULCHRITUDE

- beauty
- physical comeliness

QUAGMIRE

Kevin realized that he needed help to get himself out of this quagmire.

QUAGMIRE

- difficult situation
- predicament
- marsh or swamp

QUERULOUS

Curtis's complaint letter received prompt attention after the company labeled him a querulous potential troublemaker.

QUERULOUS

- inclined to complain
- habitually irritable

QUIESCENCE

Bears typically fall into a state of quiescence when they hibernate during the winter months.

QUIESCENCE

- temporary inactivity
- stillness or dormancy

QUIXOTIC

The practical Dana was skeptical of her roommate's quixotic plans to build a roller coaster in their yard.

QUIXOTIC

- overly idealistic
- impractical and unrealistic

QUOTIDIAN

The sight of people signing on the street is so quotidian in New York that passersby rarely react to it.

QUOTIDIAN

- occurring daily
- commonplace