Vocabulary in Context

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. By the end of the bus ride, Nina was drowsy and had to fight to keep her eyes open. What does drowsy mean here?

A. Sleepy
B. Restless
C. Confused
D. Thirsty

Correct answer: A. Sleepy
Nina is struggling to stay awake. That behavior points to sleepy.

2. The model's brittle plastic snapped when I tried to bend it a little. What does brittle tell you about the plastic?

A. It absorbs water.
B. It stretches easily.
C. It breaks easily.
D. It weighs very little.

Correct answer: C. It breaks easily.
The plastic breaks under a small amount of bending. That result is the clue to brittle.

3. The coordinator said the meeting room was vacant, so our group could walk in and use it. What does vacant mean here?

A. Reserved
B. Unoccupied
C. Crowded
D. Locked

Correct answer: B. Unoccupied
The group could use the room because no one was occupying it.

4. Evan was reluctant to read his draft aloud. He paused and finally agreed after a friend offered to start. How did he feel about reading?

A. Certain
B. Eager
C. Relieved
D. Hesitant

Correct answer: D. Hesitant
The pause and Evan's need for encouragement show that he was hesitant to go ahead.

5. The donation list asked for one notebook per household, but a generous neighbor brought a whole box. What does generous describe?

A. A habit of arriving early
B. A willingness to give freely
C. An interest in meeting neighbors
D. A preference for following directions exactly

Correct answer: B. A willingness to give freely
Bringing a whole box when only one notebook was requested shows a willingness to give more.

6. The school kept the old card readers in a display case. They were obsolete once every entrance switched to an electronic pass. What does obsolete mean here?

A. No longer in use
B. Hard to find
C. Temporarily broken
D. Expensive to install

Correct answer: A. No longer in use
The switch replaced the card readers rather than merely interrupting their use.

7. Amara was meticulous in checking the exhibit labels. She verified the dates, middle initials, and even the spacing around each dash. What does meticulous mean here?

A. Uncertain about where to begin
B. Quick to finish a task
C. Unwilling to make corrections
D. Very attentive to details

Correct answer: D. Very attentive to details
The list includes progressively smaller details. Her repeated checks point to unusually careful work.

8. We expected the music to fade gradually. Instead, it stopped in the middle of a note, an abrupt end to the performance. What does abrupt mean here?

A. Deliberate
B. Delayed
C. Sudden
D. Repeated

Correct answer: C. Sudden
The contrast is with a gradual ending. The music stopped suddenly.

9. Omar's explanation was plausible because it fit the observations, although no one could confirm it yet. What does plausible mean here?

A. Believable on the evidence so far
B. Proven beyond doubt
C. Contradicted by the observations
D. Too complicated to consider

Correct answer: A. Believable on the evidence so far
The explanation fits what people know, which makes it believable. It still needs confirmation.

10. The library hung thick curtains to mitigate the echo. Visitors could still hear an echo, but it was much softer. What does mitigate mean here?

A. Predict in advance
B. Hide the cause
C. Make permanent
D. Make less severe

Correct answer: D. Make less severe
The quieter echo shows that the curtains reduced the effect.

11. Asked whether the festival would go ahead, the organizer said the plan was still possible but could change overnight. Reporters called the answer equivocal. What did they mean?

A. It announced a specific change to the plan.
B. It confirmed the festival would happen.
C. It did not clearly commit to either outcome.
D. It refused to address the festival at all.

Correct answer: C. It did not clearly commit to either outcome.
The response leaves both outcomes open. The key clue is its lack of a clear commitment.

12. The class wanted a spectacular set, but its budget covered only a few painted panels. Priya took a pragmatic approach and designed a scene the class could actually build. What does pragmatic mean here?

A. Committed to the most ambitious idea
B. Guided by what will work in practice
C. Focused on following tradition
D. Driven mainly by artistic originality

Correct answer: B. Guided by what will work in practice
Priya works with the available budget and materials. Her plan is practical under those constraints.

13. The shop tracked sales for nine weeks. To estimate its tenth week before it happened, the manager would extrapolate from the earlier figures. What does extrapolate mean here?

A. Remove unusual figures already in the records
B. Find the average of the nine recorded weeks
C. Replace estimates with verified totals for the first nine weeks
D. Extend the observed pattern beyond the data already collected

Correct answer: D. Extend the observed pattern beyond the data already collected
The tenth week lies outside the observed period. Extrapolating extends a pattern to make an estimate beyond that range.

14. A writer claimed the bus was always faster than walking. Her editor asked her to qualify the claim by specifying that it applied only during the morning rush. What does qualify mean here?

A. Limit the scope of the claim
B. Prove that the writer meets a requirement
C. Repeat the claim in simpler words
D. Verify the claim for every time of day

Correct answer: A. Limit the scope of the claim
The edit narrows the original claim to a specific condition. In this context, qualify means add a limit or exception.

15. Cold drink sales and pool visits both rise on hot days. Comparing days at the same temperature, an analyst finds no link. She calls the apparent connection spurious. What does spurious mean here?

A. Temporary but direct
B. Real but weak
C. False despite seeming real
D. Too small to measure

Correct answer: C. False despite seeming real
The numbers appear connected when hot and cool days are compared together. The comparison at the same temperature suggests that apparent link is misleading.