

100 Words Every College Graduate Should Know

aberration (*n.*) something that differs from the norm (In 1974, Poland won the World Cup, but the success turned out to be an aberration, and Poland have not won a World Cup since).

abhor (*v.*) to hate, detest (Because he always wound up getting hit in the head when he tried to play cricket, Marcin began to abhor the sport).

acquiesce (*v.*) to agree without protesting (Though Mr. Pospieszny wanted to stay outside and work in his garage, when his wife told him that he had better come in to dinner, he acquiesced to her demands.)

alacrity (*n.*) eagerness, speed (For some reason, Simon loved to help his girlfriend whenever he could, so when his girlfriend asked him to set the table he did so with alacrity.)

amiable (*adj.*) friendly (An amiable fellow, Neil got along with just about everyone.)

appease (*v.*) to calm, satisfy (When Jerry cries, his mother gives him chocolate to appease him.)

arcane (*adj.*) obscure, secret, known only by a few (The professor is an expert in arcane Kashubian literature.)

avarice (*n.*) excessive greed (The banker's avarice led him to amass an enormous personal fortune.)

brazen (*adj.*) excessively bold, brash, clear and obvious (Critics condemned the writer's brazen attempt to plagiarize Frankow-Czerwonko's work.)

brusque (*adj.*) short, abrupt, dismissive (Simon's brusque manner sometimes offends his colleagues.)

cajole (*v.*) to urge, coax (Magda's friends cajoled her into drinking too much.)

callous (*adj.*) harsh, cold, unfeeling (The murderer's callous lack of remorse shocked the jury.)

candor (*n.*) honesty, frankness (We were surprised by the candor of the politician's speech because she is usually rather evasive.)

chide (*v.*) to voice disapproval (Hania chided Gregory for his vulgar habits and sloppy appearance.)

circumspect (*adj.*) cautious (Though I promised Marta's father I would bring her home promptly by midnight, it would have been more circumspect not to have specified a time.)

clandestine (*adj.*) secret (Announcing to her boyfriend that she was going to the library, Maria actually went to meet George for a clandestine liaison.)

coerce (*v.*) to make somebody do something by force or threat (The court decided that David Beckham did not have to honor the contract because he had been coerced into signing it.)

coherent (*adj.*) logically consistent, intelligible (William could not figure out what Harold had seen because he was too distraught to deliver a coherent statement.)

complacency (*n.*) self-satisfied ignorance of danger (Simon tried to shock his friends out of their complacency by painting a frightening picture of what might happen to them.)

confidant (*n.*) a person entrusted with secrets (Shortly after we met, he became my chief confidant.)

connive (*v.*) to plot, scheme (She connived to get me to give up my plans to start up a new business.)

cumulative (*adj.*) increasing, building upon itself (The cumulative effect of hours spent using the World English website was a vast improvement in his vocabulary and general level of English.)

debase (*v.*) to lower the quality or esteem of something (The large raise that he gave himself debased his motives for running the charity.)

decry (*v.*) to criticize openly (Andrzej Lepper, the leader of the Polish Self Defence party decried the appalling state of Polish roads.)

deferential (*adj.*) showing respect for another's authority (Donata is always excessively deferential to any kind of authority figure.)

demure (*adj.*) quiet, modest, reserved (Though everyone else at the party was dancing and going crazy, she remained demure.)

deride (*v.*) to laugh at mockingly, scorn (The native speaker often derided the other teacher's accent.)

despot (*n.*) one who has total power and rules brutally (The despot issued a death sentence for anyone who disobeyed his laws.)

diligent (*adj.*) showing care in doing one's work (The diligent researcher made sure to double check her measurements.)

elated (*adj.*) overjoyed, thrilled (When he found out he had won the lottery, the postman was *elated*.)

eloquent (*adj.*) expressive, articulate, moving (The best man gave such an *eloquent* speech that most guests were crying.)

embezzle (*v.*) to steal money by falsifying records (The accountant was fired for *embezzling* €10,000 of the company's funds.)

empathy (*n.*) sensitivity to another's feelings as if they were one's own (I feel such *empathy* for my dog when she's upset so am I!)

enmity (*n.*) ill will, hatred, hostility (John and Scott have clearly not forgiven each other, because the *enmity* between them is obvious to anyone in their presence.)

erudite (*adj.*) learned (My English teacher is such an *erudite* scholar that he has translated some of the most difficult and abstruse Old English poetry.)

extol (*v.*) to praise, revere (Kamila *extolled* the virtues of a vegetarian diet to her meat-loving boyfriend.)

fabricate (*v.*) to make up, invent (When I arrived an hour late to class, I *fabricated* some excuse about my car breaking down on the way to work.)

feral (*adj.*) wild, savage (That beast looks so *feral* that I would fear being alone with it.)

flabbergasted (*adj.*) astounded (Whenever I read an Agatha Christie mystery novel, I am always *flabbergasted* when I learn the identity of the murderer.)

forsake (*v.*) to give up, renounce (I won't *forsake* my conservative principles.)

fractious (*adj.*) troublesome or irritable (Although the child insisted he wasn't tired, his *fractious* behaviour - especially his decision to crush his jam sandwiches all over the floor - convinced everyone present that it was time to put him to bed.)

furtive (*adj.*) secretive, sly (Claudia's placement of her drugs in her sock drawer was not as *furtive* as she thought, as the sock drawer is the first place most parents look.)

gluttony (*n.*) overindulgence in food or drink (Helen's fried chicken tastes so divine, I don't know how anyone can call *gluttony* a sin.)

gratuitous (*adj.*) uncalled for, unwarranted (Every evening the guy at the fish and chip shop gives me a *gratuitous* helping of vinegar.)

haughty (*adj.*) disdainfully proud (The superstar's *haughty* dismissal of her co-stars will backfire on her someday.)

hypocrisy (*n.*) pretending to believe what one does not (Once the politician began passing legislation that contradicted his campaign promises, his *hypocrisy* became apparent.)

impeccable (*adj.*) exemplary, flawless (If your grades were as *impeccable* as your brother's, then you too would receive a car for a graduation present.)

impertinent (*adj.*) rude, insolent (Most of your comments are so *impertinent* that I don't wish to dignify them with an answer.)

implacable (*adj.*) incapable of being appeased or mitigated (Watch out: once you shun Grandmother's cooking, she is totally *implacable*.)

impudent (*adj.*) casually rude, insolent, impertinent (The *impudent* young woman looked her teacher up and down and told him he was hot.)

incisive (*adj.*) clear, sharp, direct (The discussion wasn't going anywhere until her *incisive* comment allowed everyone to see what the true issues were.)

indolent (*adj.*) lazy (Why should my *indolent* children, who can't even pick themselves up off the sofa to pour their own juice, be rewarded with a trip to Burger King?)

inept (*adj.*) not suitable or capable, unqualified (She proved how *inept* she was when she forgot two orders and spilled a pint of cider in a customer's lap.)

infamy (*n.*) notoriety, extreme ill repute (The *infamy* of his crime will not lessen as time passes.)

inhibit (*v.*) to prevent, restrain, stop (When I told you I needed the car last night, I certainly never meant to *inhibit* you from going out.)

innate (*adj.*) inborn, native, inherent (His incredible athletic talent is innate, he never trains, lifts weights, or practices.)

insatiable (*adj.*) incapable of being satisfied (My insatiable appetite for blondes was a real problem on my recent holiday in Japan!)

insular (*adj.*) separated and narrow-minded; tight-knit, closed off (Because of the sensitive nature of their jobs, those who work for MI5 must remain insular and generally only spend time with each other.)

intrepid (*adj.*) brave in the face of danger (After scaling a live volcano prior to its eruption, the explorer was praised for his intrepid attitude.)

inveterate (*adj.*) stubbornly established by habit (I'm the first to admit that I'm an inveterate cider drinker—I drink four pints a day.)

jubilant (*adj.*) extremely joyful, happy (The crowd was jubilant when the firefighter carried the woman from the flaming building.)

knell (*n.*) the solemn sound of a bell, often indicating a death (Echoing throughout our village, the funeral knell made the grey day even more grim.)

lithe (*adj.*) graceful, flexible, supple (Although the dancers were all outstanding, Joanna's control of her lithe body was particularly impressive.)

lurid (*adj.*) ghastly, sensational (Barry's story, in which he described a character torturing his neighbour's tortoise, was judged too lurid to be published on the English Library's website.)

maverick (*n.*) an independent, nonconformist person (John is a real maverick and always does things his own way.)

maxim (*n.*) a common saying expressing a principle of conduct (Ms. Stone's etiquette maxims are both entertaining and instructional.)

meticulous (*adj.*) extremely careful with details (The ornate needlework in the bride's gown was a product of meticulous handiwork.)

modicum (*n.*) a small amount of something (Refusing to display even a modicum of sensitivity, Magda announced her boss's affair to the entire office.)

morose (*adj.*) gloomy or sullen (David's morose nature made him very unpleasant to talk to.)

myriad (*adj.*) consisting of a very great number (It was difficult to decide what to do on Saturday night because the city presented us with myriad possibilities for fun.)

nadir (*n.*) the lowest point of something (My day was boring, but the nadir came when my new car was stolen.)

nominal (*adj.*) trifling, insignificant (Because he was moving the following week and needed to get rid of his furniture more than he needed money, Kim sold everything for a nominal price.)

novice (*n.*) a beginner, someone without training or experience (Because we were all novices at archery, our instructor decided to begin with the basics)

nuance (*n.*) a slight variation in meaning, tone, expression (The nuances of the poem were not obvious to the casual reader, but the teacher was able to point them out.)

oblivious (*adj.*) lacking consciousness or awareness of something (Oblivious to the burning smell emanating from the kitchen, my father did not notice that the rolls in the oven were burned until much too late.)

obsequious (*adj.*) excessively compliant or submissive (Donald acted like Susan's servant, obeying her every request in an obsequious manner.)

obtuse (*adj.*) lacking quickness of sensibility or intellect (Political opponents warned that the prime minister's obtuse approach to foreign policy would embroil the nation in mindless war.)

panacea (*n.*) a remedy for all ills or difficulties (Doctors wish there was a single panacea for every disease, but sadly there is not.)

parody (*n.*) a satirical imitation (A hush fell over the classroom when the teacher returned to find Magdalena acting out a parody of his teaching style.)

penchant (*n.*) a tendency, partiality, preference (Fiona's dinner parties quickly became monotonous on account of her penchant for Indian dishes.)

perusal (*n.*) a careful examination, review (The actor agreed to accept the role after a three-month perusal of the movie script.)

plethora (*n.*) an abundance, excess (The wedding banquet included a plethora of oysters piled almost three feet high.)

predilection (*n.*) a preference or inclination for something (James has a predilection for eating toad in the whole with tomato ketchup.)

quaint (*adj.*) charmingly old-fashioned (Mary was delighted by the quaint bonnets she saw in Romania.)

rash (*adj.*) hasty, incautious (It's best to think things over calmly and thoroughly, rather than make rash decisions.)

refurbish (*v.*) to restore, clean up (After being refurbished the old Triumph motorcycle commanded the handsome price of \$6000.)

repudiate (*v.*) to reject, refuse to accept (Tom made a strong case for an extension of his curfew, but his mother repudiated it with a few biting words.)

rife (*adj.*) abundant (Surprisingly, the teacher's writing was rife with spelling errors.)

salient (*adj.*) significant, conspicuous (One of the salient differences between Alison and Helen is that Alison is a couple of kilos heavier.)

serendipity (*n.*) luck, finding good things without looking for them (In an amazing bit of serendipity, penniless Mark found a \$50 bill on the back seat of the bus.)

staid (*adj.*) sedate, serious, self-restrained (The staid butler never changed his expression no matter what happened.)

superfluous (*adj.*) exceeding what is necessary (Samantha had already won the campaign so her constant flattery of others was superfluous.)

sycophant (*n.*) one who flatters for self-gain (Some see the people in the cabinet as the Prime Minister's closest advisors, but others see them as sycophants.)

taciturn (*adj.*) not inclined to talk (Though Magda never seems to stop talking, her brother is quite taciturn.)

truculent (*adj.*) ready to fight, cruel (This club doesn't really attract the dangerous types, so why was that bouncer being so truculent?)

umbrage (*n.*) resentment, offence (He called me a lily-livered coward, and I took umbrage at the insult.)

venerable (*adj.*) deserving of respect because of age or achievement (The venerable High Court judge had made several key rulings in landmark cases throughout the years.)

vex (*v.*) to confuse or annoy (My boyfriend vexes me by pinching my bottom for hours on end.)

vociferous (*adj.*) loud, boisterous (I'm tired of his vociferous whining so I'm breaking up with him.)

wanton (*adj.*) undisciplined, lewd, lustful (Joanna's wanton demeanor often made the frat guys next door very excited.)

zenith (*n.*) the highest point, culminating point (I was too nice to tell Emily that she had reached the absolute zenith of her career with that one top 10 hit of hers.)