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IELTS Synonyms List PDF

300 synonym sets with examples, grouped for Writing, Reading paraphrase and Speaking, plus 20 near-miss warnings and 25 practice sentences with answers.

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SECTION 1

300 synonym sets in three groups

Synonyms are only useful when they fit the sentence, the register and the part of speech. Every set below is checked for all three, and the example shows one synonym in use.

How to use this list

Learn by group. Writing synonyms go into your Task 2 essays, Reading pairs help you spot paraphrase, and Speaking alternatives make your answers sound less like a textbook.

SECTION 2

Writing: everyday words upgraded (120 sets)

Lexical Resource rewards precise, less common words used correctly. Each row gives three or four upgrades for a word that appears in almost every student essay.

Word		Synonyms	Example
aim	n	goal, objective, purpose, target	The main objective of the scheme is to cut waste.
allow	v	permit, enable, let, authorise	Flexible hours enable parents to balance work and family life.
almost	adv	nearly, virtually, practically, close to	Virtually every household in the region owns a mobile phone.
also	adv	in addition, furthermore, moreover, additionally	Furthermore, cycling reduces pollution in crowded urban areas.
always	adv	constantly, consistently, invariably, continually	The team has consistently met its targets since the merger.
answer	v	respond, reply, address, deal with	The minister refused to address the question about funding.
area	n	region, district, zone, neighbourhood	Crime rates fell sharply in the district after the reforms.
ask	v	request, enquire, question, consult	Patients should consult a doctor before changing their medication.
bad	adj	harmful, detrimental, negative, damaging	Smoking has a detrimental effect on the lungs over time.

Word		Synonyms	Example
ban	v	prohibit, forbid, outlaw, bar	Several countries have decided to prohibit plastic bags.
benefit	n	advantage, gain, merit, reward	A key advantage of homeworking is the time saved on travel.
big	adj	large, significant, considerable, substantial	The company made a substantial profit in its first year.
boss	n	manager, employer, supervisor, director	A supportive supervisor can greatly reduce stress at work.
break	v	damage, destroy, shatter, fracture	The storm destroyed several bridges along the coast.
build	v	construct, erect, establish, develop	The government plans to construct thousands of affordable homes.
buy	v	purchase, acquire, invest in, pay for	Consumers now purchase most electronic goods online.
chance	n	opportunity, possibility, likelihood, prospect	Internships give students the opportunity to gain experience.
change	v	alter, modify, transform, adjust	Technology has transformed the way people communicate at work.
cheap	adj	inexpensive, affordable, low-cost, economical	Low-cost airlines have made foreign travel possible for millions.
child	n	youngster, minor, young person, infant	Every youngster deserves access to a decent education.
choose	v	select, opt for, pick, decide on	More parents now opt for schools closer to home.
city	n	urban area, metropolis, municipality, conurbation	Pollution levels in the metropolis exceed safe limits most days.
clear	adj	obvious, evident, apparent, unmistakable	It is evident that public transport needs more investment.
come	v	arrive, approach, appear, reach	Most tourists arrive in the city during the summer months.
company	n	firm, business, corporation, enterprise	The firm relocated its headquarters to reduce costs.
country	n	nation, state, land, homeland	Every nation faces the challenge of an ageing population.

Word		Synonyms	Example
different	adj	various, diverse, distinct, dissimilar	The festival celebrates the diverse cultures of the city.
easy	adj	simple, straightforward, effortless, manageable	Online banking makes paying bills remarkably straightforward.
effect	n	impact, influence, consequence, outcome	Rising rents have had a severe impact on young families.
end	v	finish, conclude, complete, terminate	The lecture concluded with a short question and answer session.
enough	adj	sufficient, adequate, ample, plenty of	Few developing regions have adequate access to clean water.
expensive	adj	costly, high-priced, overpriced, dear	University education has become increasingly costly in many countries.
fact	n	reality, truth, certainty, evidence	The reality is that most people cannot afford private healthcare.
famous	adj	well-known, renowned, celebrated, prominent	The city is renowned for its historic architecture.
fast	adj	rapid, quick, swift, speedy	The rapid growth of cities puts pressure on housing.
fight	v	combat, tackle, oppose, resist	New technology can help cities combat air pollution.
finally	adv	eventually, ultimately, in the end, at last	Ultimately, parents must decide what is best for their children.
find	v	discover, identify, locate, detect	The survey identified three main causes of stress at work.
fix	v	repair, resolve, correct, mend	Engineers worked overnight to repair the damaged pipeline.
food	n	nourishment, diet, produce, provisions	Fresh local produce is often cheaper than imported goods.
get	v	obtain, acquire, receive, gain	Students can acquire practical skills through part-time work.
give	v	provide, offer, supply, grant	The government should provide free training for unemployed adults.
go	v	travel, proceed, head, journey	Thousands of students travel abroad each year to study.

Word		Synonyms	Example
good	adj	beneficial, worthwhile, valuable, rewarding	Regular exercise is beneficial for both physical and mental health.
grow	v	expand, develop, increase, flourish	Small businesses often flourish in areas with cheap rents.
hard	adj	difficult, challenging, demanding, tough	Nursing is a demanding career that requires patience and stamina.
health	n	wellbeing, fitness, condition, welfare	Regular walking improves the wellbeing of older adults.
help	v	assist, support, aid, facilitate	Volunteers assist elderly residents with their weekly shopping.
house	n	home, dwelling, residence, property	Few young couples can afford to buy a property in the capital.
hurt	v	harm, injure, damage, wound	Loud music can harm hearing if played for long periods.
idea	n	concept, notion, proposal, suggestion	The proposal to ban cars from the centre proved popular.
important	adj	crucial, essential, vital, significant	Clean water is essential for the survival of any community.
improve	v	enhance, strengthen, boost, upgrade	Smaller classes could enhance the quality of teaching.
increase	v	rise, grow, expand, climb	House prices continued to climb throughout the decade.
job	n	position, post, role, career	She applied for a senior position in the marketing department.
keep	v	retain, maintain, preserve, hold on to	Cities should preserve their historic buildings for future generations.
know	v	understand, recognise, be aware of, appreciate	Few teenagers appreciate the long-term risks of sun damage.



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Word		Synonyms	Example
learn	v	acquire, master, pick up, study	Children who travel often pick up new languages quickly.
leave	v	depart, abandon, exit, withdraw from	Young people often depart from rural areas to find work.
look	v	examine, inspect, study, consider	Researchers examined the diets of two thousand adults.
lose	v	forfeit, misplace, be deprived of, give up	Workers who strike may forfeit several days of pay.
lot	n	a great deal, plenty, a large amount, an abundance	There is plenty of evidence linking diet to heart disease.
make	v	create, produce, generate, construct	Wind farms generate electricity without burning fossil fuels.
many	adj	numerous, countless, a great number of, several	Numerous studies have linked sleep to better memory.
maybe	adv	perhaps, possibly, conceivably, potentially	Perhaps the simplest solution is to raise parking charges.
money	n	funds, finance, capital, income	The charity needs more funds to keep its shelters open.
need	v	require, demand, call for, depend on	Modern farming requires far less labour than it once did.
new	adj	modern, recent, innovative, contemporary	The museum attracts visitors with its innovative exhibitions.
now	adv	currently, at present, these days, nowadays	Nowadays most people book their holidays online.
often	adv	frequently, regularly, repeatedly, commonly	Workers who frequently change jobs may struggle to build pensions.
old	adj	elderly, ageing, outdated, traditional	The hospital replaced its outdated equipment last year.
only	adv	merely, solely, just, exclusively	The scholarship is awarded solely on academic merit.
part	n	section, portion, component, element	Rent takes up a large portion of most students' budgets.
people	n	individuals, citizens, the public, residents	Local residents objected to the plan for a new motorway.

Word		Synonyms	Example
place	n	location, site, area, venue	The council has not yet chosen a site for the stadium.
poor	adj	disadvantaged, low-income, deprived, underprivileged	Free school meals support children from low-income households.
problem	n	issue, difficulty, challenge, obstacle	Traffic congestion remains a serious challenge for large cities.
put	v	place, position, set, install	The council installed new benches along the riverside path.
quickly	adv	rapidly, swiftly, promptly, speedily	Emergency services responded promptly to the flood warning.
really	adv	truly, genuinely, actually, indeed	Few politicians genuinely understand the pressures facing farmers.
reason	n	cause, motive, explanation, justification	The main cause of the delay was a shortage of materials.
result	n	outcome, consequence, product, effect	One consequence of cheap flights is overcrowded tourist cities.
rich	adj	wealthy, affluent, prosperous, well-off	Affluent families can afford private tuition for their children.
rule	n	regulation, law, guideline, requirement	Strict regulations govern the sale of alcohol to minors.
same	adj	identical, equivalent, similar, matching	Both schools follow an identical curriculum for younger pupils.
say	v	state, claim, argue, point out	Critics claim that the policy favours wealthy families.
school	n	institution, academy, college, educational establishment	The institution offers evening classes for working adults.
see	v	observe, notice, witness, perceive	Scientists observed a sharp decline in bee populations.
sell	v	market, trade, retail, offer for sale	Local farmers trade their produce at the weekend market.
show	v	demonstrate, illustrate, reveal, indicate	The chart illustrates a steady rise in online sales.
skill	n	ability, expertise, competence, talent	Employers value practical expertise over academic qualifications.

Word		Synonyms	Example
slow	adj	gradual, sluggish, unhurried, leisurely	Recovery from the recession was gradual rather than immediate.
small	adj	minor, slight, limited, modest	There was only a slight difference between the two results.
sometimes	adv	occasionally, at times, now and then, from time to time	Even experienced drivers occasionally make serious mistakes.
soon	adv	shortly, in the near future, before long, presently	The new bridge will open to traffic shortly.
start	v	begin, commence, launch, initiate	The council will launch a recycling scheme next spring.
stop	v	prevent, halt, cease, discontinue	Strict laws could prevent companies from dumping waste in rivers.
strong	adj	powerful, robust, firm, intense	There is robust evidence that exercise improves mood.
student	n	learner, pupil, scholar, undergraduate	Every learner benefits from regular, detailed feedback.
teach	v	educate, instruct, train, coach	Schools should educate pupils about managing their money.
teacher	n	educator, instructor, tutor, lecturer	A good instructor adapts lessons to the needs of each learner.
tell	v	inform, notify, advise, instruct	Employers must inform staff about any changes to their contracts.
thing	n	factor, element, aspect, feature	Cost is the main factor when families choose a school.
think	v	believe, consider, maintain, argue	Some experts argue that homework offers little real benefit.
true	adj	accurate, correct, valid, factual	The report contains accurate figures from official sources.
try	v	attempt, endeavour, strive, seek	Governments should strive to reduce inequality between regions.
type	n	kind, category, sort, variety	This category of crime has risen sharply in recent years.
use	v	employ, utilise, apply, adopt	Many schools now utilise tablets instead of printed textbooks.

Word		Synonyms	Example
useful	adj	practical, valuable, beneficial, helpful	Volunteering provides valuable experience for young job seekers.
usually	adv	generally, typically, normally, as a rule	Children typically learn languages faster than adults do.
very	adv	extremely, highly, exceptionally, remarkably	The new airport terminal is extremely busy during the summer.
view	n	opinion, perspective, standpoint, belief	From an economic perspective, the policy makes little sense.
want	v	wish, desire, seek, aspire to	Many graduates seek employment in large international companies.
way	n	method, approach, means, manner	Cycling is an inexpensive means of getting to work.
weak	adj	feeble, fragile, poor, inadequate	The argument rests on fragile evidence from a single survey.
whole	adj	entire, complete, full, total	The entire region was affected by the drought last summer.
win	v	succeed, triumph, prevail, achieve victory	The campaign to save the library eventually prevailed.
work	n	employment, labour, occupation, job	Many graduates struggle to find employment in their field.
worker	n	employee, staff member, labourer, professional	Each employee receives twenty days of paid holiday.
wrong	adj	incorrect, mistaken, inaccurate, flawed	The study was based on flawed data and was later withdrawn.



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SECTION 3

Reading: paraphrase pairs (100 sets)

IELTS Reading questions rarely repeat the words of the passage. These are the swaps examiners use most, so you can scan for the idea rather than the exact word.

Word		Synonyms	Example
ability	n	capacity, skill, capability, competence	Dolphins have the capacity to recognise themselves in mirrors.
accurate	adj	precise, exact, correct, reliable	The new clock is precise to within a second a year.
achieve	v	accomplish, attain, reach, realise	Few runners attain the speeds reached by professional athletes.
advantage	n	benefit, strength, merit, plus	One merit of the scheme is its low running cost.
affect	v	influence, impact, shape, alter	Climate strongly influences the crops a region can grow.
amount	n	quantity, volume, level, sum	The volume of plastic in the oceans has doubled.
ancient	adj	old, early, prehistoric, archaic	Early farmers cultivated wheat in the river valleys.
assume	v	suppose, presume, take for granted, believe	Many people presume that recycling is always worthwhile.
available	adj	accessible, obtainable, on offer, at hand	Clean drinking water is not accessible to everyone.
believe	v	think, hold, consider, assume	Early astronomers assumed that the Earth was fixed in space.
cause	v	lead to, result in, bring about, give rise to	Heavy rainfall can lead to flooding in low-lying areas.
claim	v	assert, maintain, argue, contend	The author contends that reading improves empathy.
common	adj	widespread, frequent, prevalent, usual	Obesity is now prevalent in many wealthy countries.
compare	v	contrast, weigh up, set against, liken	The writer likens the brain to a complex computer.

Word		Synonyms	Example
consequence	n	result, outcome, effect, aftermath	The aftermath of the storm lasted for months.
consider	v	regard, view, deem, see	Doctors regard sleep as essential for good health.
contain	v	hold, include, comprise, house	The museum houses more than a million historical objects.
create	v	establish, form, set up, devise	Researchers devised a new method for recycling batteries.
decline	n	fall, drop, reduction, downturn	The downturn in tourism hit coastal towns hardest.
describe	v	outline, portray, depict, characterise	The passage depicts village life before electricity arrived.
destroy	v	wipe out, ruin, demolish, wreck	The earthquake demolished hundreds of homes in minutes.
develop	v	evolve, advance, progress, mature	Farming techniques evolved slowly over many centuries.
differ	v	vary, contrast, diverge, deviate	Opinions diverge sharply on the value of zoos.
difference	n	distinction, contrast, variation, gap	There is a clear distinction between weather and climate.
disadvantage	n	drawback, downside, weakness, limitation	The main drawback of solar power is its unreliability.
discourage	v	deter, dissuade, put off, hinder	High fees deter many students from applying to university.
discover	v	find, uncover, detect, identify	Archaeologists uncovered a Roman villa beneath the car park.
emphasise	v	stress, highlight, underline, draw attention to	The author stresses the importance of early education.
enable	v	allow, permit, let, empower	The grant permits small farmers to buy modern tools.
encourage	v	promote, foster, stimulate, motivate	Tax breaks were introduced to stimulate investment.
entire	adj	whole, complete, full, total	The whole valley was flooded when the dam burst.

Word		Synonyms	Example
estimate	v	calculate, judge, reckon, approximate	Experts reckon that half the species remain undiscovered.
evidence	n	proof, data, findings, support	The findings strongly support the theory of continental drift.
examine	v	investigate, analyse, inspect, scrutinise	Scientists analysed ice cores to study past climates.
exclude	v	omit, leave out, rule out, bar	The report omits any mention of costs.
expand	v	enlarge, extend, widen, broaden	The airport will extend its runway to handle larger aircraft.
explain	v	account for, clarify, justify, interpret	Genetics alone cannot account for the rise in obesity.
fall	v	drop, decline, decrease, plummet	Birth rates have declined steadily across the developed world.
feature	n	characteristic, trait, quality, attribute	A key characteristic of the species is its long tail.
following	adj	next, subsequent, later, succeeding	Subsequent research confirmed the surprising result of the first trial.
frequent	adj	regular, repeated, recurrent, constant	Repeated flooding forced many families to move.
gather	v	collect, assemble, accumulate, compile	Researchers compiled data from forty weather stations.
global	adj	worldwide, international, universal, planetary	The disease spread worldwide within a few months.
gradual	adj	slow, steady, progressive, step-by-step	The steady decline of the industry took decades.
growth	n	increase, expansion, rise, development	The expansion of the rail network boosted trade.
harmful	adj	damaging, destructive, dangerous, toxic	Toxic chemicals from the mine polluted the river.
huge	adj	enormous, vast, massive, immense	The desert covers a vast area of northern Africa.
impact	n	effect, influence, consequence, repercussion	The factory closure had serious repercussions for local shops.

Word		Synonyms	Example
include	v	involve, cover, incorporate, encompass	The course covers both theory and practical training.
likely	adj	probable, expected, plausible, anticipated	It is probable that the ice sheet will keep shrinking.
limit	v	restrict, confine, curb, cap	The city plans to cap the number of tourist buses.
link	v	connect, associate, relate, tie	Several studies associate poor sleep with weight gain.
local	adj	regional, nearby, neighbourhood, community	Regional dialects are slowly disappearing in many countries.
main	adj	central, key, primary, leading	The key reason for the delay was poor planning.
maintain	v	keep, preserve, sustain, uphold	Farmers struggle to sustain yields in dry years.
major	adj	main, principal, primary, chief	Tourism is the principal source of income for the island.
measure	v	assess, gauge, quantify, calculate	Scientists gauge ocean temperature using floating sensors.
method	n	technique, approach, procedure, system	The new technique allows surgeons to operate through tiny cuts.
minor	adj	small, slight, secondary, lesser	Only slight changes were made to the original plan.
modern	adj	contemporary, current, present-day, up-to-date	Present-day cities face problems the Romans never imagined.
necessary	adj	essential, required, needed, compulsory	Helmets are compulsory for all cyclists in the city.

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Word		Synonyms	Example
number	n	figure, total, quantity, count	The total of unemployed graduates rose for the third year.
obtain	v	get, acquire, gain, secure	The company managed to secure funding from private investors.
oppose	v	resist, object to, reject, challenge	Residents objected to the construction of the new runway.
period	n	era, age, phase, stretch	The industrial era brought rapid urban growth.
popular	adj	widespread, fashionable, well-liked, sought-after	Cycling has become fashionable among young professionals.
predict	v	forecast, anticipate, foresee, project	Economists forecast slower growth for the coming decade.
prevent	v	stop, avoid, avert, block	Vaccination programmes have helped avert several major outbreaks.
previous	adj	earlier, former, prior, preceding	Earlier studies had reached a very different conclusion.
produce	v	make, manufacture, generate, yield	The factory manufactures components for electric vehicles.
prohibit	v	ban, forbid, outlaw, bar	The city has banned cars from the historic centre.
protect	v	safeguard, shield, defend, preserve	Mangrove forests shield coastal villages from storms.
prove	v	confirm, demonstrate, establish, verify	Later experiments confirmed the original theory beyond reasonable doubt.
purpose	n	aim, goal, intention, function	The primary function of the dam is flood control.
rapid	adj	fast, quick, swift, speedy	The swift spread of the rumour surprised researchers.
rare	adj	uncommon, scarce, infrequent, unusual	Fresh water is scarce in much of the region.
recent	adj	latest, new, current, up-to-date	The latest figures show a slight improvement in air quality.
recover	v	recuperate, bounce back, regain, revive	Fish stocks began to revive once fishing was restricted.

Word		Synonyms	Example
reduce	v	decrease, lower, cut, diminish	The new tax is intended to lower sugar consumption.
region	n	area, zone, territory, district	The territory was once covered by dense forest.
rely	v	depend, count on, lean on, trust	Island communities depend heavily on imported fuel.
remove	v	eliminate, take away, extract, withdraw	The filter eliminates harmful bacteria from drinking water.
replace	v	substitute, swap, supersede, take the place of	Digital cameras quickly superseded film in the mass market.
require	v	need, demand, call for, necessitate	The job demands long hours and frequent travel.
rise	v	increase, grow, go up, climb	Sea levels are expected to go up over the century.
role	n	function, part, position, contribution	Bees play a vital part in pollinating food crops.
several	adj	a number of, various, a few, some	Various factors contributed to the collapse of the bridge.
shortage	n	lack, scarcity, deficiency, shortfall	A scarcity of skilled workers slowed the project.
similar	adj	alike, comparable, equivalent, analogous	The two villages have comparable populations and incomes.
source	n	origin, root, cause, basis	Historians traced the origin of the custom to ancient farming rituals.
spread	v	expand, disperse, circulate, proliferate	The invasive weed proliferated rapidly along the riverbanks.
sudden	adj	abrupt, unexpected, sharp, dramatic	An abrupt change in temperature killed the coral.
suggest	v	indicate, imply, propose, hint	The findings imply a link between diet and mood.
support	v	back, endorse, favour, advocate	Most scientists endorse the use of renewable energy.
tend	v	be inclined, be likely, have a tendency, lean	Older voters are inclined to favour traditional parties.

Word		Synonyms	Example
threaten	v	endanger, jeopardise, put at risk, imperil	Rising sea temperatures endanger coral reefs around the world.
tiny	adj	minute, minuscule, microscopic, very small	Minute particles of plastic have been found in rain.
transform	v	change, convert, revolutionise, overhaul	The printing press revolutionised the spread of knowledge.
trend	n	pattern, tendency, movement, shift	There is a clear shift towards plant-based diets.
wealthy	adj	rich, affluent, prosperous, well-off	Prosperous towns attracted migrants from the countryside.

SECTION 4

Speaking: natural alternatives (80 sets)

Spoken register. These alternatives make Part 1 and Part 2 answers sound natural. Do not use them in Writing Task 2.

Word		Synonyms	Example
amazing	adj	incredible, unbelievable, remarkable, mind-blowing	The fireworks over the harbour were simply incredible.
angry	adj	annoyed, furious, cross, livid	My dad was furious when I scratched his car.
annoying	adj	irritating, frustrating, a pain, infuriating	It's really frustrating when the internet keeps cutting out.
beautiful	adj	stunning, gorgeous, lovely, breathtaking	The view from the top of the hill was breathtaking.
bored	adj	fed up, uninterested, restless, disengaged	I got fed up with watching the same series every night.
boring	adj	dull, tedious, monotonous, uninspiring	My old job was tedious, just the same tasks every day.
busy	adj	hectic, rushed off my feet, packed, full-on	My week has been hectic, with exams and work.
calm	adj	relaxed, laid-back, chilled, peaceful	My brother is so laid-back that nothing ever bothers him.

Word		Synonyms	Example
clean	adj	spotless, tidy, immaculate, neat	My flatmate keeps the kitchen absolutely spotless.
cold	adj	freezing, chilly, bitter, icy	The mornings get really chilly in December.
comfortable	adj	cosy, comfy, snug, relaxed	My grandparents' house is small but incredibly cosy.
confident	adj	self-assured, sure of yourself, outgoing, assertive	Public speaking has made me far more self-assured.
crazy	adj	mad, wild, over the top, chaotic	The traffic in the city centre is absolutely chaotic.
crowded	adj	packed, heaving, jam-packed, overcrowded	The market was heaving on the morning of the festival.
dangerous	adj	risky, unsafe, hazardous, dodgy	Crossing that road is pretty risky at rush hour.
delicious	adj	tasty, mouth-watering, scrumptious, flavourful	My grandmother makes the most mouth-watering lentil curry.
dirty	adj	filthy, grubby, messy, grimy	The bus windows were so grubby I couldn't see out.
early	adj	ahead of time, in good time, bright and early, prompt	I like to arrive in good time for appointments.
eat	v	grab a bite, tuck into, have a meal, snack on	We grabbed a bite at a small cafe near the station.
embarrassing	adj	awkward, cringeworthy, humiliating, uncomfortable	It was so awkward when I forgot my colleague's name.
excited	adj	thrilled, buzzing, eager, can't wait	I'm thrilled about starting my new course next month.
exciting	adj	thrilling, exhilarating, gripping, electrifying	Riding a motorbike through the mountains was exhilarating.



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Word		Synonyms	Example
far	adj	distant, remote, a long way off, faraway	My grandparents live in a remote village in the hills.
fashionable	adj	trendy, stylish, in fashion, on trend	That part of town is full of trendy cafes.
fit	adj	healthy, in good shape, active, athletic	Cycling to work keeps me in pretty good shape.
forget	v	slip my mind, lose track of, overlook, not remember	It completely slipped my mind that we had plans.
friend	n	mate, pal, companion, buddy	My best mate and I have known each other since school.
friendly	adj	warm, welcoming, approachable, sociable	Everyone in my village is really approachable and chatty.
fun	adj	enjoyable, entertaining, a laugh, amusing	Camping with my cousins was a real laugh.
funny	adj	hilarious, amusing, witty, comical	My uncle tells the most hilarious stories at dinner.
grateful	adj	thankful, appreciative, indebted, obliged	I'm so thankful for the support my teachers gave me.
great	adj	fantastic, brilliant, superb, wonderful	We had a brilliant time at the beach last summer.
guess	v	reckon, suppose, imagine, suspect	I reckon most people would prefer working from home.
happy	adj	delighted, thrilled, over the moon, cheerful	I was over the moon when I passed my exam.
hate	v	can't stand, loathe, detest, be not keen on	I can't stand waiting in long queues at the bank.
hot	adj	boiling, sweltering, scorching, roasting	Summers in my hometown are sweltering and humid.
hungry	adj	starving, peckish, famished, ravenous	By lunchtime I am usually absolutely starving after lectures.
interesting	adj	fascinating, gripping, absorbing, intriguing	I found the documentary about deep-sea creatures absolutely fascinating.
kind	adj	caring, thoughtful, considerate, warm-hearted	My mum is the most thoughtful person I know.

Word		Synonyms	Example
late	adj	behind schedule, running late, delayed, overdue	The train was delayed by nearly an hour this morning.
lazy	adj	idle, work-shy, unmotivated, sluggish	On Sundays I'm happy to be completely idle.
like	v	be into, be keen on, be fond of, enjoy	I'm really into cooking, especially at the weekend.
loud	adj	noisy, deafening, blaring, rowdy	The music at the concert was absolutely deafening.
love	v	adore, be crazy about, be mad about, be passionate about	I am absolutely crazy about street food from night markets.
lucky	adj	fortunate, in luck, blessed, favoured	I feel very fortunate to have such supportive parents.
memorable	adj	unforgettable, special, remarkable, one to remember	My graduation day was truly unforgettable for the whole family.
near	adj	close, nearby, round the corner, within walking distance	Luckily the station is within walking distance of my flat.
nervous	adj	anxious, on edge, jittery, uneasy	I was on edge before my driving test last week.
nice	adj	lovely, pleasant, delightful, welcoming	The staff at the hotel were incredibly welcoming.
okay	adj	fine, decent, not bad, alright	The food at the canteen is decent but nothing special.
polite	adj	courteous, well-mannered, respectful, civil	The staff were courteous even when the restaurant was busy.
proud	adj	pleased with myself, chuffed, delighted, satisfied	I was chuffed when my teacher praised my essay.
quiet	adj	peaceful, silent, hushed, tranquil	I love how peaceful the park is early in the morning.
relax	v	unwind, chill out, take it easy, switch off	I usually unwind by listening to music after work.
relaxing	adj	restful, soothing, calming, chilled	A long bath is the most soothing way to end the day.
remember	v	recall, think back to, bring to mind, look back on	I still recall my first day at primary school clearly.

Word		Synonyms	Example
rude	adj	impolite, cheeky, disrespectful, bad-mannered	Some customers can be really disrespectful to shop staff.
run	v	jog, dash, sprint, go for a run	I jog around the park three mornings a week.
sad	adj	upset, down, miserable, disheartened	I felt quite down when my best friend moved abroad.
safe	adj	secure, risk-free, out of harm's way, well protected	I feel very secure walking home at night in my area.
scared	adj	frightened, terrified, afraid, petrified	I was petrified the first time I flew abroad.
shy	adj	reserved, timid, quiet, introverted	I was quite reserved as a child but I've opened up.
sick	adj	ill, unwell, under the weather, poorly	I was feeling a bit under the weather last week.
sleep	v	doze off, nod off, have a nap, get some rest	I often nod off on the train after a long day.
smart	adj	clever, bright, sharp, brainy	My sister is incredibly bright and loves solving puzzles.
spend	v	splash out, fork out, pay out, shell out	I splashed out on a new phone for my birthday.
stressful	adj	demanding, pressured, tense, nerve-racking	Working in a busy restaurant can be really pressured.
strict	adj	firm, tough, no-nonsense, stern	My maths teacher was stern but we respected her.
stupid	adj	silly, foolish, daft, senseless	It was a bit daft to leave my umbrella at home.
sure	adj	certain, positive, convinced, confident	I'm positive I left my keys on the kitchen table.
surprised	adj	amazed, astonished, taken aback, stunned	I was taken aback when my friends organised a party.
talk	v	chat, have a chat, natter, catch up	We usually catch up over coffee once a week.
terrible	adj	awful, dreadful, horrible, appalling	The weather on our trip was absolutely dreadful.
thin	adj	slim, slender, lean, skinny	My brother is tall and slim like our father.

Word		Synonyms	Example
tired	adj	exhausted, worn out, shattered, drained	After the night shift I was completely shattered.
ugly	adj	unattractive, hideous, unsightly, an eyesore	The new car park is a real eyesore in the town centre.
useless	adj	pointless, a waste of time, worthless, hopeless	I think most of those meetings are a complete waste of time.
walk	v	stroll, wander, go for a walk, amble	We strolled along the river until it got dark.
weird	adj	strange, odd, bizarre, peculiar	My neighbour has a rather peculiar habit of singing at dawn.
worried	adj	anxious, concerned, stressed, uneasy	I get quite anxious before any kind of exam.



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SECTION 5

Near misses: words that are not always interchangeable

A synonym that fits one sentence can be wrong in another. These notes stop the most common slips.

Words	When they differ
big / large / great	Great usually means important or excellent rather than physically big, so write a large house, not a great house, when you mean size.
say / tell / speak / talk	Tell needs a person as its object (tell me), say does not (say something), and speak and talk describe the activity rather than the words.
small / little	Little often carries feeling, as in a lovely little cafe, while small is neutral and is the only one that works with measurements such as small in size.
house / home	House is the building and home is where you live and feel you belong, so you go home but buy a house.
job / work / career	Job is countable (a good job), work is uncountable (a lot of work), and career means your working life over many years.
famous / notorious / well-known	Notorious means famous for something bad, so a notorious criminal is fine but a notorious singer sounds like an insult.
cheap / inexpensive / affordable	Cheap can suggest poor quality, so in Writing prefer inexpensive or affordable when you mean low in price with no criticism.
thin / slim / skinny	Slim is a compliment, skinny suggests too thin, and thin is neutral, so choose carefully when describing a person.
childish / childlike	Childish criticises an adult for behaving immaturely, while childlike praises innocence or wonder.
old / elderly / ancient	Elderly is the polite word for old people, ancient describes things from thousands of years ago, and neither fits an old car.
look / watch / see	See is what happens to your eyes, look is directing them deliberately, and watch means looking for a period at something that moves or changes.
rise / raise	Rise has no object (prices rise) and raise needs one (the shop raised prices), so a chart shows a rise, never a raise.
decrease / decline / reduce	Reduce needs someone or something doing the reducing (the law reduced crime), while decrease and decline can simply happen on their own.

Words	When they differ
borrow / lend	You borrow something from someone and lend something to someone, so the direction of the object is the whole difference.
teach / learn	A teacher teaches and a student learns, so you cannot say the course learned me a lot.
fun / funny	Fun means enjoyable and funny means it makes you laugh, so a holiday is fun but a comedian is funny.
interesting / interested	Things are interesting and people are interested, so an interesting lecture leaves you interested, not interesting.
price / cost / value	Price is the amount asked for, cost is what you actually pay including other expenses, and value is how much something is worth to you.
begin / start / commence	Commence is formal and suits Writing Task 2, while start is neutral and can also mean switch on (start a car), which begin cannot.
historic / historical	Historic means important in history, as in a historic agreement, while historical simply means relating to the past, as in historical records.

SECTION 6

Practice: 25 sentences to improve

Replace the word in square brackets with a more precise synonym. Answers follow the last sentence.

1. The government should [make] more jobs for young people.

2. Pollution is a [big] problem in most major cities.

3. Many people [think] that university education should be free.

4. The chart [shows] a sharp rise in car ownership.

5. Exercise is [good] for people of all ages.

6. The new law will [stop] companies from polluting rivers.

7. Smoking is [bad] for your lungs.

8. There are [many] reasons why people move to cities.

9. The scheme will [help] low-income families pay their bills.

10. Scientists [found] that the medicine had no effect.

11. The price of petrol [went up] sharply last month.

12. The factory [gives] jobs to hundreds of local people.

13. Doctors [say] that most adults sleep too little.

14. Children [get] many skills by playing with others.

15. The company [used] new software to cut costs.

16. This is a [hard] decision for any parent.

17. The city needs a [cheap] form of public transport.

18. Tourism is [very] important to the local economy.

19. The [old] factory was replaced by modern flats.

20. The council [fixed] the damaged road within a week.

21. Farmers [need] more water during the summer months.

22. A good diet can [change] how a person feels each day.

23. The teacher [told] the students about the exam dates.

24. The [thing] that matters most to most families is cost.

25. The museum [keeps] thousands of ancient coins.

Answers

No.	Best answer	Also acceptable
1	create	generate, provide
2	serious	significant, major
3	believe	argue, maintain
4	illustrates	reveals, indicates
5	beneficial	valuable, worthwhile
6	prevent	prohibit, deter
7	harmful	damaging, detrimental
8	numerous	various, several
9	assist	support, enable
10	discovered	concluded, established
11	rose	increased, climbed

No.	Best answer	Also acceptable
12	provides	offers, supplies
13	report	state, claim
14	acquire	develop, gain
15	adopted	employed, introduced
16	difficult	tough, challenging
17	affordable	low-cost, inexpensive
18	extremely	vitaly, hugely
19	derelict	disused, former
20	repaired	restored, mended
21	require	demand, depend on
22	transform	alter, affect
23	informed	notified, advised
24	factor	issue, consideration
25	houses	holds, preserves



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