

Vocabulary Power

Lesson 16 Using Reference Skills

Using a Thesaurus: Synonyms and Antonyms

A thesaurus, a reference tool that lists synonyms, can help you pinpoint the particular word you need in writing. Many thesauruses are in dictionary form; that is, the entries are listed alphabetically, as in the sample below. Synonyms with a common basic meaning are grouped together. In some cases, antonyms, words with the opposite meaning, are also given. Entries for more specific words usually include a cross-reference to a general word with the same basic meaning. If you turn to that entry, you can find a larger selection of related words.

lenient *adj.* – *Syn.* loving, soft, soft-hearted, mild, yielding, pampering, indulgent, tolerant; see also **kind**. – *Ant.* severe, firm, austere.

leverage *n.* – *Syn.* purchase, lift, hold; see **support 2**.

liable *adj.* **1.** [Responsible] – *Syn.* answerable, subject, accountable; see **responsible 1**. **2.** [Likely] – *Syn.* verisimilar, apt, inclined; see **likely 5**.

liberal *n.* **1.** [Open-handed] – *Syn.* unselfish, bountiful, benevolent; see **generous 1, kind**. **2.** [Open-minded] tolerant, receptive, progressive, advanced, left, radical, broad-minded, permissive, left-wing; see also **fair 1**.

EXERCISE

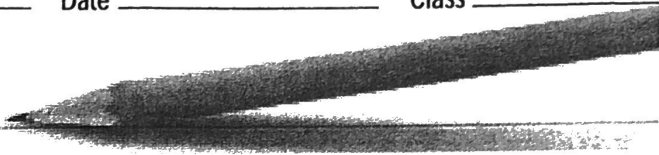
Use the sample thesaurus entries above to answer the questions about synonyms and antonyms.

1. What is one synonym for the word **lenient**? _____ What is one word that has the opposite meaning of this word? _____
2. Under what general entry should you look to find additional words that share the meaning of the word **leverage**? _____ What specific subentry for that word should you check? _____
3. What are the two basic meanings of the word **liable**? _____
4. If you were writing a paper about a presidential election, which synonyms for **liberal** might you use? _____
5. If you were having trouble deciding whether to use **severe** or **austere** as an antonym for **lenient**, how could you find out exactly how the two words differ in meaning? _____
6. Substitute an appropriate synonym for the boldfaced word in each phrase:
Liberal quantities of ice cream _____
Liberal in lending equipment _____

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Review: Unit 4

EXERCISE

Circle the letter of the word that best matches each clue.

1. a plan to transform the U.S. highway system
 a. grandiose b. frivolous c. inept d. intermediary
2. wearing a large fish as a hat
 a. superfluous b. superficial c. opportune d. outlandish
3. the reason a term paper is not completed by the deadline
 a. procrastination b. proliferation c. levitation d. obfuscation
4. a tiny scratch on the skin
 a. extravagant b. outlandish c. superficial d. intermediary
5. a birthday gift of \$1000
 a. superficial b. whimsical c. adroit d. extravagant
6. a car that runs on water instead of gasoline
 a. levitation b. ingenious c. subterranean d. inept
7. someone who is always dropping and breaking things
 a. grandiose b. opportune c. inept d. adroit
8. extremely bad feelings between individuals
 a. paucity b. enmity c. obfuscation d. propensity
9. location of the subway
 a. subterranean b. frivolous c. whimsical d. outlandish
10. someone with the ability to handle a problem with skill
 a. inept b. adroit c. opportune d. grandiose
11. planting a few red flowers here and there among the white flowers
 a. subjugate b. intersperse c. extrapolate d. transcend
12. predicting the hottest Christmas toy based on a phone survey
 a. transgress b. transcend c. subjugate d. extrapolate
13. devotion to religion
 a. paucity b. piety c. levitation d. proliferation
14. a magician's ability to make things appear to float
 a. levitation b. laceration c. paucity d. piety
15. a preference for one type of music over another
 a. proliferation b. viability c. propensity d. legibility