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Vocabulary Builder Reference from...

Sophie Scott: Why we laugh | TED Talk

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Advanced Words Only

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Session 1: Word List

incidentally

adv. by the way; as an aside or in passing

synonym: by chance, by accident, inadvertently

(1) **incidentally** discovered, (2) **incidentally** mentioned

Incidentally, I know the answer to that question.

neuroscience

n. the scientific study of the function, structure, and disorder of the brain and the nervous system

(1) the branch of **neuroscience**, (2) a theoretical concept in **neuroscience**

Our university is famous for its professors, who are well-versed in behavioral **neuroscience**.

ribcage

n. the bony structure in the chest that protects the heart and lungs, composed of twelve pairs of curved bones called ribs that are joined to the spine in the back and the breastbone (sternum) in the front

synonym: chest, thorax, torso

(1) **ribcage** pain, (2) **ribcage** injury

After the accident, the doctors found multiple fractures in his **ribcage** and advised him complete rest.

intercostal

adj. located between or among the ribs; relating to the intercostal muscles, which aid in breathing by raising and lowering the ribcage

synonym : ribcage, thoracic

(1) **intercostal** nerve, (2) **intercostal** artery

The **intercostal** muscles are essential for breathing.

rib

n. each of a series of curved bones that are connected to the spine and surround the chest; (adjective) subject to laughter or ridicule

synonym : costa

(1) brake a **rib**, (2) **rib** cage

The accident caused a cracked **rib**.

sinusoidal

adj. having a smooth, curved shape like a sine wave; characterized by regular, rhythmic oscillations or fluctuations

synonym : wave-like, undulating, wavy

(1) **sinusoidal** wave, (2) **sinusoidal** function

The brainwave displayed a **sinusoidal** pattern during the sleep study.

zigzag

adj. having short sharp turns or angles

synonym : bent, crinkled, crooked

(1) **zigzag** sewing machine, (2) a **zigzag** line

We had to go through a **zigzag** course.

contraction

n. the act or process of becoming smaller or shorter in size, volume, or amount

synonym : shrinking, compression, reduction

(1) **contraction** of a disease, (2) **contraction** in the industry

The **contraction** of the economy has led to job losses.

spasm

n. a sudden, involuntary contraction of a muscle, causing a range of sensations from mild discomfort to severe pain; a sudden outburst or brief episode of intense emotion or activity

synonym : convulsion, cramp, twitch

(1) gastric **spasm**, (2) **spasm** of laughter

The patient's face twitched in **spasms** as the dentist started

drilling her tooth.

wheeze

v. to breathe with difficulty, usually accompanied by a whistling or rattling sound; to make a high-pitched or whistling sound

synonym: pant, gasp

(1) **wheeze** during exercise, (2) **wheeze** sickly

The asthmatic child began to **wheeze** after running too fast.

primate

n. any mammal of the order Primates, which includes monkeys, apes, and humans

synonym: ape, monkey, lemur

(1) **primate** species, (2) **primate** sanctuary

Many scientists study **primate** behavior and intelligence.

tickle

v. to lightly touch a sensitive part of somebody's body in a way that makes them laugh

synonym: titillate, make laugh

(1) **tickle** his ribs, (2) **tickle** her vanity

These models explain why you can't **tickle** yourself.

contagious

adj. able to be passed on to others through contact or proximity, especially by infection or disease

synonym: infectious, transmissible, communicable

(1) **contagious** enthusiasm, (2) **contagious** virus

The disease is highly **contagious** and spreads quickly.

neurobiology

n. a field of biology that studies the structure, function, and development of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nerves encompassing a wide range of research topics, including the molecular and cellular processes involved in neural signaling, the organization of neural circuits, and the neural basis of behavior, cognition, and emotion

synonym: brain science, neural science, neurology

(1) **neurobiology** research, (2) cellular **neurobiology**

The professor's research in **neurobiology** has led to

groundbreaking discoveries in the field of brain science.

helpless

adj. unable to take care of oneself or to do things without help

synonym: defenseless, powerless, susceptible

(1) **helpless** baby, (2) **helpless** victims

I feel so **helpless** without you.

involuntary

adj. acting or done without or against one's will

synonym: coerced, forced, automatic

(1) **involuntary** manslaughter, (2) **involuntary** muscles

The drug's side effects can include **involuntary** loss of urine.

chimpanzee

n. a small, very intelligent ape found in west and central Africa with black or brown fur

synonym: ape, chimp, pan troglodytes

(1) **chimpanzee** behavior, (2) **chimpanzee** society

Many zoos have **chimpanzee** exhibits, allowing visitors to observe these intelligent primates up close.

whistle

v. to make a high-pitched sound by forcing breath through a small opening, usually with the lips or fingers; (noun) a piece of equipment that forces air or steam against an edge or into a cavity and so produces a loud shrill sound

synonym: sound, honk, tweet

(1) **whistle** a tune, (2) **whistle** for help

The employee decided to **whistle-blow** on the company's illegal activities.

distract

v. to draw someone's attention away from what they are trying to do

synonym: divert, preoccupy, confuse

(1) **distract** attention from the real issue, (2) **distract** public opinion

Please don't **distract** me while I'm studying.

auditory

adj. of or relating to hearing or the ability to hear

synonym : hearing, audible, aural

(1) a good **auditory** memory, (2) **auditory** system

The **auditory** nerve carries sound signals from the ear to the brain.

opportune

adj. suitable or happening at a time that is suitable or convenient for a particular purpose

synonym : suitable, timely, practical

(1) **opportune** occasion, (2) an **opportune** remark

The phone rang at the most **opportune** time.

dataset

n. a structured collection of data that is compiled and processed in a computer system or program, typically for analysis, research, or machine learning purposes

synonym : data array, database

(1) **dataset** analysis, (2) publicly available **dataset**

The scientist analyzed the large **dataset** to conclude the experiment.

puberty

n. the process of a person's physical changes through which their sexual organs develop and become capable of reproduction

synonym : adolescence, young adulthood

(1) at the height of **puberty** ., (2) the onset of **puberty**

In this culture, men are initiated when they reach **puberty**.

grumpy

adj. easily annoyed or irritable; inclined to complain or show dissatisfaction, often in an ill-tempered way

synonym : crabby, grouchy, irritable

(1) **grumpy** cat, (2) **grumpy** mood

The **grumpy** older man snapped at the children for playing too loudly.

phenomenally

adv. extremely or exceptionally, especially in a way that is surprising

synonym : exceptionally, amazingly, remarkably

(1) **phenomenally** quick, (2) **phenomenally** gifted
He became **phenomenally** successful in the entertainment industry.

nuanced

adj. characterized by subtle differences in appearance, meaning, sound, etc.

synonym: fine, subtle, slight

(1) **nuanced** view, (2) the common but **nuanced** opinion
The sommelier can distinguish **nuanced** variance in the flavor of the wine.

polygraph

n. a machine that measures physiological responses such as heart rate, respiration, and skin conductance, used especially as a lie detector in criminal investigations or other circumstances where truthfulness is questioned

synonym: lie detector, truth detector

(1) **polygraph** interrogation, (2) **polygraph** machine
Some people refuse to take a **polygraph** test because they believe it is unreliable.

irritate

v. to annoy, provoke, or cause resentment or anger in someone; to inflame or make sore

synonym: annoy, vex, bother

(1) **irritate** skin, (2) **irritate** my partner
The sound of his chewing loudly **irritates** me during dinner.

emit

v. to give off or send out something such as light, heat, sound, gas, etc.

synonym: give off, radiate, expel

(1) **emit** a gamma ray, (2) **emit** air pollution
During the unloading, the container box **emits** a clicking sound.

macho

adj. characterized by a strong sense of masculinity or male dominance, often in a way that is perceived as arrogant or aggressive

synonym: masculine, aggressive, virile

(1) **macho** culture, (2) maintain a **macho** image
His **macho** posturing was just a cover for his insecurities and lack of confidence.

embarrass

v. to cause someone to feel awkward, worried, or ashamed
synonym: disconcert, unsettle, agitate

(1) **embarrass** political enemy, (2) **embarrass** my project
He looked for an opportunity to **embarrass** that actor in public.

sitcom

n. a television or radio program that features a continuing cast of characters in humorous or dramatic situations, typically presented in a half-hour format

synonym: comedy, TV show

(1) **sitcom** series, (2) popular **sitcom**

I love to watch **sitcoms** when I need a good laugh.

underestimate

v. to think or suppose that a quantity, price, or size is smaller than it is

synonym: underrate, misjudge, miscalculate

(1) **underestimate** an enemy, (2) **underestimate** the probability

They frequently **underestimated** their abilities and felt inferior.

Session 2: Spelling

1. ma__o culture
adj. characterized by a strong sense of masculinity or male dominance, often in a way that is perceived as arrogant or aggressive
2. an op_____ne remark
adj. suitable or happening at a time that is suitable or convenient for a particular purpose
3. wh___e during exercise
v. to breathe with difficulty, usually accompanied by a whistling or rattling sound; to make a high-pitched or whistling sound
4. inv_____ry manslaughter
adj. acting or done without or against one's will
5. wh___e sickly
v. to breathe with difficulty, usually accompanied by a whistling or rattling sound; to make a high-pitched or whistling sound
6. ri_____e pain
n. the bony structure in the chest that protects the heart and lungs, composed of twelve pairs of curved bones called ribs that are joined to the spine in the back and the breastbone (sternum) in the front
7. si___m series
n. a television or radio program that features a continuing cast of characters in humorous or dramatic situations, typically presented in a half-hour format

ANSWERS: 1. macho, 2. opportune, 3. wheeze, 4. involuntary, 5. wheeze, 6. ribcage, 7. sitcom

8. pr____e sanctuary *n.* any mammal of the order Primates, which includes monkeys, apes, and humans
9. con_____on in the industry *n.* the act or process of becoming smaller or shorter in size, volume, or amount
10. da____t analysis *n.* a structured collection of data that is compiled and processed in a computer system or program, typically for analysis, research, or machine learning purposes
11. em_____ss my project *v.* to cause someone to feel awkward, worried, or ashamed
12. con_____us enthusiasm *adj.* able to be passed on to others through contact or proximity, especially by infection or disease
13. inv_____ry muscles *adj.* acting or done without or against one's will
14. gr____y mood *adj.* easily annoyed or irritable; inclined to complain or show dissatisfaction, often in an ill-tempered way
15. di____ct public opinion *v.* to draw someone's attention away from what they are trying to do
16. r_b cage *n.* each of a series of curved bones that are connected to the spine and surround the chest; (adjective) subject to laughter or ridicule
17. ti____e her vanity *v.* to lightly touch a sensitive part of somebody's body in a way that makes them laugh

ANSWERS: 8. primate, 9. contraction, 10. dataset, 11. embarrass, 12. contagious, 13. involuntary, 14. grumpy, 15. distract, 16. rib, 17. tickle

18. zi___g sewing machine *adj.* having short sharp turns or angles
19. inc_____lly discovered *adv.* by the way; as an aside or in passing
20. au_____ry system *adj.* of or relating to hearing or the ability to hear
21. the common but nu_____d opinion *adj.* characterized by subtle differences in appearance, meaning, sound, etc.
22. sin_____al function *adj.* having a smooth, curved shape like a sine wave; characterized by regular, rhythmic oscillations or fluctuations
23. nu_____d view *adj.* characterized by subtle differences in appearance, meaning, sound, etc.
24. e__t a gamma ray *v.* to give off or send out something such as light, heat, sound, gas, etc.
25. phe_____lly quick *adv.* extremely or exceptionally, especially in a way that is surprising
26. und_____ate an enemy *v.* to think or suppose that a quantity, price, or size is smaller than it is
27. gr___y cat *adj.* easily annoyed or irritable; inclined to complain or show dissatisfaction, often in an ill-tempered way
28. po_____ph machine *n.* a machine that measures physiological responses such as heart rate, respiration, and skin conductance, used especially as a lie detector in criminal investigations or other circumstances where truthfulness is questioned
29. chi_____ee society *n.* a small, very intelligent ape found in west and central Africa with black or brown fur

ANSWERS: 18. zigzag, 19. incidentally, 20. auditory, 21. nuanced, 22. sinusoidal, 23. nuanced, 24. emit, 25. phenomenally, 26. underestimate, 27. grumpy, 28. polygraph, 29. chimpanzee

30. int_____al nerve *adj.* located between or among the ribs; relating to the intercostal muscles, which aid in breathing by raising and lowering the ribcage
31. pr_____e species *n.* any mammal of the order Primates, which includes monkeys, apes, and humans
32. gastric sp__m *n.* a sudden, involuntary contraction of a muscle, causing a range of sensations from mild discomfort to severe pain; a sudden outburst or brief episode of intense emotion or activity
33. op_____ne occasion *adj.* suitable or happening at a time that is suitable or convenient for a particular purpose
34. publicly available da_____t *n.* a structured collection of data that is compiled and processed in a computer system or program, typically for analysis, research, or machine learning purposes
35. neu_____ogy research *n.* a field of biology that studies the structure, function, and development of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nerves encompassing a wide range of research topics, including the molecular and cellular processes involved in neural signaling, the organization of neural circuits, and the neural basis of behavior, cognition, and emotion

ANSWERS: 30. intercostal, 31. primate, 32. spasm, 33. opportune, 34. dataset, 35. neurobiology

36. phe_____lly gifted *adv.* extremely or exceptionally, especially in a way that is surprising
37. cellular neu_____ogy *n.* a field of biology that studies the structure, function, and development of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nerves encompassing a wide range of research topics, including the molecular and cellular processes involved in neural signaling, the organization of neural circuits, and the neural basis of behavior, cognition, and emotion
38. popular si___m *n.* a television or radio program that features a continuing cast of characters in humorous or dramatic situations, typically presented in a half-hour format
39. chi_____ee behavior *n.* a small, very intelligent ape found in west and central Africa with black or brown fur
40. sp__m of laughter *n.* a sudden, involuntary contraction of a muscle, causing a range of sensations from mild discomfort to severe pain; a sudden outburst or brief episode of intense emotion or activity
41. wh_____e a tune *v.* to make a high-pitched sound by forcing breath through a small opening, usually with the lips or fingers; (noun) a piece of equipment that forces air or steam against an edge or into a cavity and so produces a loud shrill sound

ANSWERS: 36. phenomenally, 37. neurobiology, 38. sitcom, 39. chimpanzee, 40. spasm, 41. whistle

42. a zi___g line *adj.* having short sharp turns or angles
43. em_____ss political enemy *v.* to cause someone to feel awkward, worried, or ashamed
44. sin_____al wave *adj.* having a smooth, curved shape like a sine wave; characterized by regular, rhythmic oscillations or fluctuations
45. wh_____e for help *v.* to make a high-pitched sound by forcing breath through a small opening, usually with the lips or fingers; (noun) a piece of equipment that forces air or steam against an edge or into a cavity and so produces a loud shrill sound
46. a theoretical concept in neu_____nce *n.* the scientific study of the function, structure, and disorder of the brain and the nervous system
47. a good au_____ry memory *adj.* of or relating to hearing or the ability to hear
48. at the height of pu_____y. *n.* the process of a person's physical changes through which their sexual organs develop and become capable of reproduction
49. inc_____lly mentioned *adv.* by the way; as an aside or in passing
50. und_____ate the probability *v.* to think or suppose that a quantity, price, or size is smaller than it is
51. ti___e his ribs *v.* to lightly touch a sensitive part of somebody's body in a way that makes them laugh
52. the branch of neu_____nce *n.* the scientific study of the function, structure, and disorder of the brain and the nervous system

ANSWERS: 42. zigzag, 43. embarrass, 44. sinusoidal, 45. whistle, 46. neuroscience, 47. auditory, 48. puberty, 49. incidentally, 50. underestimate, 51. tickle, 52. neuroscience

53. e__t air pollution *v.* to give off or send out something such as light, heat, sound, gas, etc.
54. maintain a ma__o image *adj.* characterized by a strong sense of masculinity or male dominance, often in a way that is perceived as arrogant or aggressive
55. he_____ss baby *adj.* unable to take care of oneself or to do things without help
56. po_____ph interrogation *n.* a machine that measures physiological responses such as heart rate, respiration, and skin conductance, used especially as a lie detector in criminal investigations or other circumstances where truthfulness is questioned
57. ri_____e injury *n.* the bony structure in the chest that protects the heart and lungs, composed of twelve pairs of curved bones called ribs that are joined to the spine in the back and the breastbone (sternum) in the front
58. con_____us virus *adj.* able to be passed on to others through contact or proximity, especially by infection or disease
59. the onset of pu_____y *n.* the process of a person's physical changes through which their sexual organs develop and become capable of reproduction
60. he_____ss victims *adj.* unable to take care of oneself or to do things without help
61. ir_____te my partner *v.* to annoy, provoke, or cause resentment or anger in someone; to inflame or make sore

ANSWERS: 53. emit, 54. macho, 55. helpless, 56. polygraph, 57. ribcage, 58. contagious, 59. puberty, 60. helpless, 61. irritate

62. con_____on of a disease *n.* the act or process of becoming smaller or shorter in size, volume, or amount
63. int_____al artery *adj.* located between or among the ribs; relating to the intercostal muscles, which aid in breathing by raising and lowering the ribcage
64. di_____ct attention from the real issue *v.* to draw someone's attention away from what they are trying to do
65. ir_____te skin *v.* to annoy, provoke, or cause resentment or anger in someone; to inflame or make sore
66. brake a r_b *n.* each of a series of curved bones that are connected to the spine and surround the chest; (adjective) subject to laughter or ridicule

ANSWERS: 62. contraction, 63. intercostal, 64. distract, 65. irritate, 66. rib

Session 3: Fill in the Blanks

1. Some people refuse to take a _____ test because they believe it is unreliable.
 - n.* a machine that measures physiological responses such as heart rate, respiration, and skin conductance, used especially as a lie detector in criminal investigations or other circumstances where truthfulness is questioned

2. The professor's research in _____ has led to groundbreaking discoveries in the field of brain science.
 - n.* a field of biology that studies the structure, function, and development of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nerves encompassing a wide range of research topics, including the molecular and cellular processes involved in neural signaling, the organization of neural circuits, and the neural basis of behavior, cognition, and emotion

3. Our university is famous for its professors, who are well-versed in behavioral _____.
 - n.* the scientific study of the function, structure, and disorder of the brain and the nervous system

4. The accident caused a cracked _____.
 - n.* each of a series of curved bones that are connected to the spine and surround the chest; (adjective) subject to laughter or ridicule

5. The _____ older man snapped at the children for playing too loudly.
 - adj.* easily annoyed or irritable; inclined to complain or show dissatisfaction, often in an ill-tempered way

6. The disease is highly _____ and spreads quickly.
 - adj.* able to be passed on to others through contact or proximity, especially by infection or disease

ANSWERS: 1. polygraph, 2. neurobiology, 3. neuroscience, 4. rib, 5. grumpy, 6. contagious

7. The sommelier can distinguish _____ variance in the flavor of the wine.

adj. characterized by subtle differences in appearance, meaning, sound, etc.

8. I feel so _____ without you.

adj. unable to take care of oneself or to do things without help

9. The drug's side effects can include _____ loss of urine.

adj. acting or done without or against one's will

10. The _____ muscles are essential for breathing.

adj. located between or among the ribs; relating to the intercostal muscles, which aid in breathing by raising and lowering the ribcage

11. He became _____ successful in the entertainment industry.

adv. extremely or exceptionally, especially in a way that is surprising

12. The asthmatic child began to _____ after running too fast.

v. to breathe with difficulty, usually accompanied by a whistling or rattling sound; to make a high-pitched or whistling sound

13. The brainwave displayed a _____ pattern during the sleep study.

adj. having a smooth, curved shape like a sine wave; characterized by regular, rhythmic oscillations or fluctuations

14. These models explain why you can't _____ yourself.

v. to lightly touch a sensitive part of somebody's body in a way that makes them laugh

15. _____ I know the answer to that question.

adv. by the way; as an aside or in passing

ANSWERS: 7. nuanced, 8. helpless, 9. involuntary, 10. intercostal, 11. phenomenally, 12. wheeze, 13. sinusoidal, 14. tickle, 15. Incidentally,

16. After the accident, the doctors found multiple fractures in his _____ and advised him complete rest.
- n.* the bony structure in the chest that protects the heart and lungs, composed of twelve pairs of curved bones called ribs that are joined to the spine in the back and the breastbone (sternum) in the front
17. Many zoos have _____ exhibits, allowing visitors to observe these intelligent primates up close.
- n.* a small, very intelligent ape found in west and central Africa with black or brown fur
18. The _____ of the economy has led to job losses.
- n.* the act or process of becoming smaller or shorter in size, volume, or amount
19. The sound of his chewing loudly _____ me during dinner.
- v.* to annoy, provoke, or cause resentment or anger in someone; to inflame or make sore
20. We had to go through a _____ course.
- adj.* having short sharp turns or angles
21. The scientist analyzed the large _____ to conclude the experiment.
- n.* a structured collection of data that is compiled and processed in a computer system or program, typically for analysis, research, or machine learning purposes
22. In this culture, men are initiated when they reach _____.
- n.* the process of a person's physical changes through which their sexual organs develop and become capable of reproduction

ANSWERS: 16. ribcage, 17. chimpanzee, 18. contraction, 19. irritates, 20. zigzag, 21. dataset, 22. puberty

23. During the unloading, the container box _____ a clicking sound.
v. to give off or send out something such as light, heat, sound, gas, etc.
24. The _____ nerve carries sound signals from the ear to the brain.
adj. of or relating to hearing or the ability to hear
25. The employee decided to _____ on the company's illegal activities.
v. to make a high-pitched sound by forcing breath through a small opening, usually with the lips or fingers; (noun) a piece of equipment that forces air or steam against an edge or into a cavity and so produces a loud shrill sound
26. Please don't _____ me while I'm studying.
v. to draw someone's attention away from what they are trying to do
27. The patient's face twitched in _____ as the dentist started drilling her tooth.
n. a sudden, involuntary contraction of a muscle, causing a range of sensations from mild discomfort to severe pain; a sudden outburst or brief episode of intense emotion or activity
28. They frequently _____ their abilities and felt inferior.
v. to think or suppose that a quantity, price, or size is smaller than it is
29. The phone rang at the most _____ time.
adj. suitable or happening at a time that is suitable or convenient for a particular purpose
30. His _____ posturing was just a cover for his insecurities and lack of confidence.
adj. characterized by a strong sense of masculinity or male dominance, often in a way that is perceived as arrogant or aggressive

ANSWERS: 23. emits, 24. auditory, 25. whistle-blow, 26. distract, 27. spasms, 28. underestimated, 29. opportune, 30. macho

31. He looked for an opportunity to _____ that actor in public.

v. to cause someone to feel awkward, worried, or ashamed

32. Many scientists study _____ behavior and intelligence.

n. any mammal of the order Primates, which includes monkeys, apes, and humans

33. I love to watch _____ when I need a good laugh.

n. a television or radio program that features a continuing cast of characters in humorous or dramatic situations, typically presented in a half-hour format

ANSWERS: 31. embarrass, 32. primate, 33. sitcoms