

Sentence equivalence: fitting context and matching complete meanings

GRE General Test

Scope and task

Original classroom practice within the reviewed shorter-test task types. This does not simulate an adaptive test or predict a scaled or writing score.

- Select exactly two of six choices for an equivalence task
- Check both contextual fit and the meaning of the resulting sentences
- Reject synonym pairs that reverse the passage’s logic

modest : Small in amount or degree in the stated context.

evasive : Avoiding a direct response to the issue.

Read the evidence and choose a method

Predict what belongs in the blank from the whole sentence. Contrast and degree matter: “only a few errors” supports a different judgement from “errors throughout.” Avoid choosing pairs before reading the context. The pair must yield two coherent sentences that convey alike meanings, rather than merely share a dictionary association.

Group possible equivalents after establishing the needed sense. A word can have several meanings, and a candidate synonym may match the wrong one. “Reserved” can mean restrained in manner or set aside in advance. The complete sentence selects the sense, so test each candidate using a plain paraphrase.

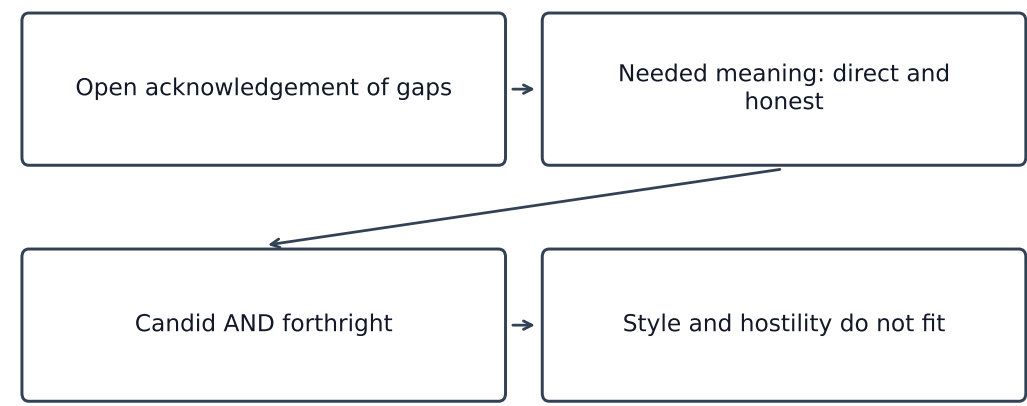
Sentence Equivalence has six choices and requires two selections. There is no partial credit for one correct word, and selecting a third word invalidates the answer. The practice check requires exactly the correct pair; it does not award an official GRE score.

Compare the remaining plausible pair for scope and tone. Small versus negligible, uncertain versus impossible, or critical versus hostile may differ in strength. If the passage supports modest gains, do not infer that no gains occurred. Keep a vocabulary record with the contextual sense and one contrasting use rather than learning isolated translation pairs only.

Worked reasoning

Original case: “Despite the team’s ambitious targets, the pilot produced only _____ improvements.” Choices: dramatic, modest, erratic, slight, unprecedented, comprehensive. Modest and slight both fit the contrast between high ambitions and limited improvement. Dramatic and unprecedented share a strong-result direction, but nei-

ther fits the limited result signalled by “only”. Original second case: “Far from being candid, the witness remained _____ about the missing receipt.” Evasive and noncommittal can preserve reluctance to give a direct account; eloquent concerns fluency and is not equivalent to either.



Both words must give the needed meaning: candid and forthright

Conditions and common errors

Do not choose a pair solely because the words are related. Degree, direction and local sense must all match.

Original application

Select exactly two of six options: “The curator openly acknowledged gaps in the records; her account was therefore unusually _____ about what remained unknown.” A. candid B. evasive C. ornate D. forthright E. repetitive F. hostile

■ Model and reasoning

A and D. Candid and forthright both express openness about uncertainty. Evasive reverses the meaning. Ornate describes style; repetitive describes recurrence; hostile adds an unsupported attitude. The sentence praises direct acknowledgement, not certainty about every detail.

Independent transfer

Select exactly two of six options: “Despite its imposing appearance, the device proved remarkably _____ to operate; first-time users completed the procedure without assistance.” A. cumbersome B. intuitive C. unwieldy D. straightforward E. delicate F.

novel

■ Check after attempting

B and D. Both make operation readily understandable in this context, supported by unaided new users. Cumbersome and unwieldy form a tempting negative pair but conflict with the evidence and contrast. Delicate concerns fragility or care, and novel concerns newness; neither matches ease of operation. Equivalent completed meanings matter more than choosing a dictionary synonym pair in isolation.