Sentence equivalence: fitting context and matching complete meanings

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Sentence Equivalence: Fitting the Context and Matching Meanings

- Choose exactly two of six options to complete a sentence.
- Make sure both words fit the context's logic, tone and grammar.
- Make sure the two completed sentences mean the same, so that a **modest** 有限的 claim stays **modest** and an **evasive** 回避的 answer stays **evasive**.

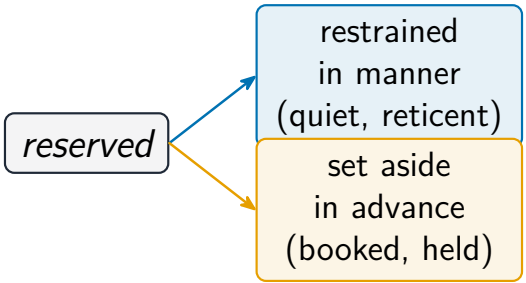
Predict the meaning

- Read the sentence, find the clue, and say what the blank must mean before looking at the options.
- Clues include contrast words, causes, examples and restatements.
- Your prediction is a meaning, not a word.

Find two words that both fit

- Look for options that match your prediction. There should be two.
- A word may have several senses; only the sense this sentence needs counts.
- Watch for a tempting synonym pair that does not fit, and for a fitting word that has no partner.

Figure: Find two words that both fit



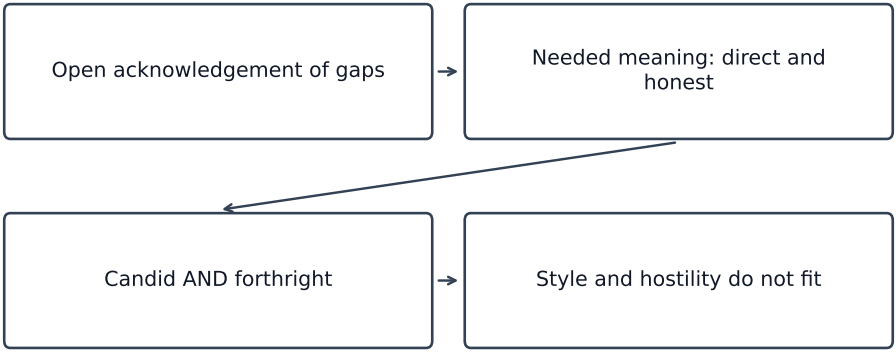
the complete sentence chooses one sense; a candidate synonym of the *other* sense is a trap

- Match the sense the sentence needs, not just the dictionary word.
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Check the whole sentence twice

- Read the sentence with each chosen word. Both must make the same complete statement.
- Check strength: "content" and "ecstatic" are both positive but not equivalent.
- No partial credit: both choices must be correct.

Figure: Check the whole sentence twice



- Both words must give the needed meaning: candid and forthright

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Worked example: two senses of a word

- The contrast "surprised everyone by speaking at length" means she usually speaks little.
- *Reserved* (in the sense "quiet, holding back") and *reticent* both fit and give the same meaning.
- *Booked* and *held* match a different sense of "reserved" (set aside); *talkative* reverses the contrast.

Worked example: an 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
- **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.

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
- **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.

Common errors

- Choosing the first synonym pair you notice.
- Choosing a word in the wrong sense.
- Choosing two words of the same direction but different strength.

Common errors (2)

- Ignoring a contrast word.
- Choosing only one word, or three.

Key terms

- **modest**: Limited in size or degree; not exaggerated.
- **evasive**: Avoiding a direct answer.

Check yourself

- How many options must you choose in sentence equivalence?
- Are "pleased" and "overjoyed" equivalent in "The team was _____ with a small improvement"?
- Why might a pair of synonyms be wrong?