Sentence Equivalence

Example:  Select the two answer choices that, when used to complete the sentence, fit the meaning of the sentence as a whole and produce completed sentences that are alike in meaning.

Her _____________ should not be confused with miserliness; as long as I have known her, she has always been willing to assist those who are in need.

A) stinginess  D) illiberality
B) diffidence  E) intolerance
C) frugality  F) thrift

Read the sentence. Before you even look at the answers, look for words or phrases that suggest the passage's general topic and tone.

Look at the sentence's structure. How many parts does it have? What’s the relationship between those parts? Is the sentence saying the same thing in several ways? Is it talking about two opposites? Note trigger words like:

but  despite  indeed  consequently
although  unfortunately  since  likewise
yet  by contrast  also  similarly

Try to guess the correct answer before you look at answer choices. If you can’t, try to figure out whether the blank should be filled by a word with positive or negative connotations. Should it be a positive example of an earlier positive statement? A negative contrast to a later positive statement?

Now look at the answers. If two answers are clearly closer to your prediction than others, choose them. Otherwise, start eliminating.

Remember that many words can have several different meanings. An answer may be based on a secondary meaning of a word, one which doesn’t come to your mind right away (catholic, wide-ranging). A word used as a noun (bear) may have a different meaning when used as a verb (bear).

Note any common prefixes (pro-/con-, pre-/post, in-/ex-) that appear in the stem word and answer choices; these may give you some clue to their relationship.

Reread both your completed sentences to make sure they sound right and mean the same thing.
Text Completion

Example:  
For each blank, select one entry from the corresponding column of choices. Fill all blanks in the way that best completes the text.

There has been much hand-wringing about how unprepared American students are for college. Graff reverses this perspective, suggesting that colleges are unprepared for students. In his analysis, the university culture is largely (i)________ entering students because academic culture fails to make connections to the kinds of arguments and cultural references that students grasp. Understandably, many students view academic life as (ii)________ ritual.

Blank (i)  
- a. primed for  
- b. opaque to  
- c. essential for

Blank (ii)  
- d. an arcane  
- e. a laudable  
- f. a painstaking

Read the passage. Before you even look at the answers, look for words or phrases that indicate the passage’s general topic and tone.

Look at the passage’s structure. How many parts does the passage have? What’s the relationship between those parts? Note any trigger words.

Multiple-blank questions are harder than one-blank questions only if you try to fill in all blanks at the same time. Instead, work on one blank at a time, beginning with the easiest one. The easier blank is not always the first.

Once you’ve see the relationship between the different parts of the sentence, try to figure out whether the blank you’ve chosen should be filled by a word with positive or negative connotations.

Try to guess the correct answer before you look at answer choices. If you can’t, establishing its connotations should at least help you eliminate.

Choose the answer that’s closest to your prediction. When you’re unfamiliar with a word, try turning it into different forms: for example, lucid, lucidly, or even Lucite. Are any of these more familiar?

Reread the sentence with your answer in it to be sure it makes sense.

When all else fails, choose the answer option containing the hardest words.
Practice Test: Sentence Equivalence

For the following questions, select the two answer choices that, when used to complete the sentence, fit the meaning of the sentence as a whole and produce completed sentences that are alike in meaning.

1. It is truly paradoxical that the Amazon, the lushest of all rainforests, is rooted in the most _______ of all soils.
   A. acidic  D. impoverished
   B. coarse  E. infertile
   C. stark  F. austere

2. Cynics believe that people who _______ compliments do so in order to be praised twice.
   A. conjure up  D. grasp
   B. covet  E. shrug off
   C. deflect  F. understand

3. A restaurant's menu is generally reflected in its decor; however, despite this restaurant's _______ appearance it is pedestrian in the menu it offers.
   A. elegant  D. traditional
   B. tawdry  E. conventional
   C. modern  F. chic

4. International financial issues are typically _______ by the United States media because they are too technical to make snappy headlines and too inaccessible to people who lack a background in economics.
   A. neglected  D. hidden
   B. slighted  E. criticized
   C. overrated  F. repudiated
Practice Test: Text Completion

For each blank, select one entry from the corresponding column of choices. Fill all blanks in the way that best completes the text.

5. Voters have become so inured to the fickle nature of politicians that they responded to the levy of a new tax with ______________.
   a. amazement   b. stolidity   c. alarm   d. perplexity   e. exasperation

6. Murray, whose show of recent paintings and drawings is her best in many years, has been eminent hereabouts for a quarter century, although often regarded with (i)________, but the most (ii)________ of these paintings (iii)________ all doubts.

   Blank (i)  Blank (ii)  Blank (iii)
   a. partiality   b. credulity   c. ambivalence   d. problematic   e. successful   f. disparaged   g. exculpate   h. assuage   i. whet

7. The (i)________ nature of classical tragedy in Athens belies the modern image of tragedy: in the modern view tragedy is austere and stripped down, its representations of ideological and emotional conflicts so superbly compressed that there’s nothing (ii)________ for time to erode.

   Blank (i)  Blank (ii)
   a. unadorned   b. harmonious   c. multifaceted   d. inalienable   e. exigent   f. extraneous

8. Robert Ingersoll, although virtually unknown today, was the ______________ orator of the nineteenth century; people travelled hundreds of miles to hear his eloquent speeches.

   a. domineering   b. consummate   c. conventional   d. execrable   e. unobjectionable