ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Essential Words for the TOEFL Lesson 15 Vocabulary Test

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Explanations

1. **Choose the synonym.**
foster
✓ **B) stimulate**
To **foster** means to encourage something to grow or develop, so **stimulate** is the closest synonym: **The program fosters creativity.** Not **enhance**, which means to improve the quality of something that already exists, not to help it start or grow.

2. halt
✓ **D) stop**
To **halt** means to **stop**, either suddenly or completely: **The train halted at the border.**

3. trait
✓ **B) characteristic**
A **trait** is a quality or feature that someone or something has, a **characteristic**: **Honesty is his best trait.**

4. adept
✓ **D) talented**
Adept means very skilled or **talented** at something: **She is adept at solving puzzles.** Not **clumsy**, which is the opposite: it describes someone who does things badly or awkwardly.

5. redundant
✓ **A) repetitious**
Redundant describes something that is unnecessary because it repeats what is already there, so it is **repetitious**: **Delete the redundant sentences in your essay.**

6. substantial
✓ **C) significant**
Substantial means large in amount or importance, so it is **significant**: **a substantial increase in prices**.

7. underscore
✓ **B) highlight**
To **underscore** means to emphasize something or draw attention to it, so it means to **highlight**: **The report underscores the need for change.** Not **exaggerate**, which means to make something seem bigger than it really is.

8. mysterious
✓ **D) baffling**
Something **mysterious** is hard to understand or explain, so it is **baffling**: **a mysterious disappearance**.

9. insignificant
✓ **A) meaningless**
Insignificant means having little importance or value, so it is **meaningless**: **an insignificant detail**. Not **rudimentary**, which means basic or simple.

10. adhere
✓ **C) comply**
To **adhere** to a rule or agreement means to follow it, that is, to **comply**: **All members must adhere to the rules.** Not **withstand**, which means to resist or survive something.

11. Scientists can only speculate on the possible fate of the Cosmos. If the universe is unbound, there is little possibility that its expansion will **halt**. Thus, eventually, the galaxies and stars will all die. The Cosmos then would be a cold, dark, and virtually empty place. If the universe is bound, the mass and energy content will come together again in a big fiery squeeze.

The word **halt** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✓ **B) stop**
Halt means **stop**. The passage says that if the universe is unbound, its expansion will probably not stop, so the galaxies and stars will eventually die. Not **continue**, which means the opposite.

12. The perception of depth and distance depends on information transmitted through various sense organs. Sensory cues indicate the distance at which objects are located from the individual and from each other. The senses of sight and hearing transmit depth and distance cues that are **substantially** independent of one another.

The word **substantially** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✓ **A) significantly**
Substantially means to a large degree, so it means **significantly**. The passage says that sight and hearing give depth and distance cues that are largely independent of each other.

13. Because the needs of human communication are so various, the study of meaning is probably the most difficult and **mysterious** aspect of serious language study. Traditionally, language has been defined as the expression of thought. But this idea is far too narrow an interpretation of language and far too broad a view of thought to be worthwhile. The expression of thought is just one of the many roles of language.

The word **mysterious** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **D) baffling**
Mysterious means hard to understand or explain, so it means **baffling**. The passage calls the study of meaning the most difficult and puzzling part of language study. Not **meaningful**, which only repeats the topic of the sentence and does not match the sense of the word.

14. The theory of environmental determinism says that the physical surroundings of a people, including natural resources, climate, and geography, are the major determining factors in the development of their culture. Therefore, determinism **rejects** the idea that history and tradition, social and economic factors, and other elements of culture explain social development.

The word **rejects** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **A) refuses**
To **reject** an idea means to **refuse** to accept it. Determinism actively denies that history and tradition explain social development. Not **ignores**, which means only paying no attention to something, not openly denying it.

15. The greatest benefit of a regular exercise program is an improvement in overall fitness. Appropriate exercise **boosts** muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardiorespiratory endurance. The level of maximum oxygen intake or cardiorespiratory endurance is usually not of great importance to most individuals. The most important thing is to attain their maximum level of performance.

The word **boosts** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **C) promotes**
To **boost** means to increase or improve something, so it means **promotes**. The passage says that exercise improves strength, endurance and flexibility. Not **alters**, which only means 'changes' and does not say whether the change is good or bad.

16. The number of giant pandas in the world is dwindling. The chief reason is that their natural habitat in China has been reduced as bamboo forests have been cleared to increase available land for China's vast human population. In fact, the world came **perilously close** to losing the panda altogether in the 1980s as a result. Today, the panda's future is brighter. The Chinese government now protects most of the panda's natural habitat.

In saying that the world came **perilously close** to losing the panda, the author means that the giant panda _____.
✔ **D) was nearly entirely eliminated.**
Perilously close means dangerously near to something bad happening. The passage says that in the 1980s the world nearly lost the panda altogether, so the giant panda **was nearly entirely eliminated**.

17. Several pilots were killed during the competition for the Orteig Prize, which was promised to the first pilot to fly nonstop from New York to Paris. Charles Lindbergh believed he could win it if he had the right airplane, and he was right. He received the $25,000 prize in 1927 for being the first to make the **perilous** solo flight across the Atlantic.

The word **perilous** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **B) dangerous**
Perilous means full of danger, so it means **dangerous**. The passage says several pilots were killed trying to win the prize, which shows how risky the flight across the Atlantic was. Not **prosperous**, which means successful or rich.

18. In parts of the world that lack modern sewage treatment plants, water carrying human waste can flow into drinking water supplies. Disease-carrying bacteria in the waste can make the drinking water **harmful**. Even in certain U.S. cities, such contaminants have been found in urban water supplies.

The word **harmful** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **D) unhealthy**
Harmful means causing damage, so here the water becomes **unhealthy**. The passage says bacteria in the waste can make drinking water bad for people's health. Not **adverse**, which describes effects or conditions, not water itself (**adverse effects**).

19. Commercial arbitration has been practiced in European countries for many years. In the United States, commercial arbitration to **handle** disputes is gaining in popularity. The American Arbitration Association hires panels of arbitrators who mediate disagreements and propose solutions. The decisions of these panels have been enforced by the courts of many states.

The word **handle** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **B) manage**
To **handle** a problem means to deal with it, that is, to **manage** it. The passage says that arbitration is used to settle disputes. Not **face**, which means only to confront a problem, not to deal with it.

20. Martin Luther King Jr. had a magnificent speaking ability. This quality enabled him to **adeptly** express African-Americans' need for social justice. He gained the support of millions of people of all races through his eloquent pleas for nonviolent social action in the face of acute opposition. He received international accolades when he was awarded the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, after many years of struggle to assure basic civil rights for all citizens.

The word **adeptly** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **D) skillfully**
Adeptly means in a very skilled way, so it means **skillfully**. The passage says King's great speaking ability let him express the need for social justice very well. Not **passionately**, which means with strong feeling, not with skill.