ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Essential Words for the TOEFL Lesson 28 Vocabulary Test

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1	**A**	2	**C**	3	**C**	4	**B**	5	**D**	6	**A**	7	**C**	8	**D**	9	**B**	10	**C**
11	**D**	12	**A**	13	**C**	14	**A**	15	**C**	16	**B**	17	**C**	18	**A**	19	**C**	20	**C**

Explanations

1. **Choose the synonym.**
curative
✓ **A) healing**
Curative means able to cure an illness, so it is closest to **healing**. Example: **the curative power of herbs**. Not **toxic**, which means poisonous, almost the opposite.

2. limited
✓ **C) finite**
Limited means having an end or a fixed amount, which is what **finite** means. Example: **Oil is a finite resource.** Not **ample**, which means more than enough, the opposite idea.

3. amusement
✓ **C) diversion**
An **amusement** is something that entertains you. A **diversion** is an activity that takes your mind off work or worries in a pleasant way. Example: **Chess was his favourite diversion.** Not **marvel**, which means a wonderful or surprising thing.

4. security
✓ **B) safety**
Security means being protected from danger, so it is closest to **safety**. Example: **They moved for the security of their children.**

5. debilitating
✓ **D) weakening**
Debilitating describes something that makes a person or thing weak, so it means **weakening**. Example: **a debilitating illness**. Not **formidable**, which means impressive or difficult to deal with.

6. singular
✓ **A) unique**
Singular (as an adjective) means unusual and one of a kind, so it matches **unique**. Example: **a woman of singular talent**. It does not mean **solid** or **available**.

7. conceivably
✓ **C) possibly**
Conceivably means it can be imagined or is possible, so it is closest to **possibly**. Example: **The project could conceivably finish early.** Not **absolutely**, which expresses certainty, not possibility.

8. alter
✓ **D) convert**
To **alter** something is to change it. **Convert** also means to change something into a different form or use. Example: **They converted the garage into an office.** Not **sustain**, which means to keep something going without change.

9. depleted
✓ **B) consumed**
Depleted means used up or greatly reduced, so it is closest to **consumed**. Example: **Fish stocks are severely depleted.** Not **retained**, which means kept, the opposite.

10. perceive
✓ **C) observe**
To **perceive** is to notice or become aware of something through the senses or the mind, so it is closest to **observe**. Example: **She perceived a change in his mood.** Not **estimate**, which means to guess a size or amount.

11. Less than one percent of all freight cargo is carried by air, most being carried by surface methods. Nevertheless, this curious fact significantly **underestimates** the importance of air freight. In terms of value of cargo carried, air transport is greater than all other modes. By the early 1990s Tokyo's Narita Airport and New York's John F. Kennedy Airport were handling in excess of one million tons of cargo per year.

The word **underestimates** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✓ **D) miscalculates**
To **underestimate** is to judge something as smaller or less important than it really is, which is a kind of **miscalculation**. The passage says air freight is a tiny share by weight but the largest by value, so the weight figure **miscalculates** its importance. Not **assesses**, which is neutral and does not mean getting the value wrong.

12. Margaret Mead, a well-known cultural anthropologist, was associated with the American Museum of Natural History in New York City from 1926 until her death. In the 1980s, her work, in particular her famous study of Samoa, became a subject of controversy. Her critics alleged that her belief in the predominant influence of culture in shaping personality led her to misread evidence and overgeneralize. Her defenders endorsed her **undeniably** keen observations.

The word **undeniably** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✓ **A) absolutely**
Undeniably means in a way that nobody can deny, that is, certainly, so it is closest to **absolutely**. Her defenders were saying that her observations were without doubt keen. Not **presumably**, which means probably or supposedly, so it shows doubt.

13. While many people refer to the Arctic as being covered in a “solid sheet of ice,” this **trite** expression is also incorrect. Ice, a nearly pure solid, contains few foreign ions in its structure. It contains particles of matter and gases, which are trapped in bubbles within the ice. A change in makeup of these materials over time is recorded in the successive layers of ice. This has been used to interpret the history of the environment of Earth’s surface and the influence of human activities on the environment.

The word **trite** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ C) cliché
A **trite** expression has been used so often that it is no longer fresh or original, in other words a **cliché**. The passage calls "solid sheet of ice" a common, overused phrase. Not **ambiguous**, which means having more than one possible meaning.

14. Wang Wei was a Chinese poet, painter, and scholar of the Tang dynasty. He left behind both a significant body of lyrical poetry and delicately depicted landscape paintings. These paintings reflected a love of nature and an inner **tranquility** derived from Buddhism and meditation. He is traditionally credited with founding the Southern School of Chinese landscape painting.

The word **tranquility** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ A) peacefulness
Tranquility means a calm, quiet state, so it is closest to **peacefulness**. The passage links it to Buddhism and meditation, which bring inner calm. Not **fulfillment**, which means satisfaction from achieving something.

15. The problem of ocean pollution has been acknowledged at national and international levels. The U.S. Congress passed an act in 1988 that phased in a complete prohibition of ocean dumping by 1991. Also in 1988, 65 nations agreed to stop burning **toxic** waste at sea by 1994. The legality of the latter measure remains debatable and may be proven unenforceable, mirroring the experience of a 1977 law that attempted the same prohibition.

The word **toxic** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ C) poisonous
Toxic means **poisonous**, harmful to living things. The passage talks about **toxic waste** burned at sea, which pollutes the ocean. Not **debilitating**, which means weakening, not poisonous.

16. Before Alexander Fleming made his great discovery, he had been studying lysozyme, an enzyme found in tears that prevents infection. However, he wanted to find a substance with **curative powers**, something that would keep bacteria from growing and multiplying altogether. By accident, he noticed a mold growing in one of his laboratory dishes that had this effect. It turned out to be penicillin, one of the most widely used antibiotics today.

In stating that Fleming wanted to find a substance with **curative powers**, the author means that he was looking for a medicine that would _____.
✔ B) combat disease-causing bacteria.
Curative powers are the ability to cure illness. The passage explains this as "something that would keep bacteria from growing and multiplying", which means the medicine would **combat disease-causing bacteria**. Not "regulate a patient's exposure to germs", because the medicine attacks the bacteria rather than controlling contact with them.

17. So-called prophetic dreams in ancient Middle Eastern cultures were often used to help the sick. In classical Greece, ailing people came to dream in special temples where priests and priestesses advised them about their dreams’ **curative** benefits. A similar practice known as dream incubation is known to have existed in the ancient cultures of Babylon and Egypt.

The word **curative** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ C) healing
Curative means able to cure, that is, **healing**. The passage says sick people came to the temples for help, so the dreams' benefits were healing ones. Not **corrective**, which means fixing a fault or a mistake (**corrective glasses**) rather than curing an illness.

18. Chronic fatigue syndrome is a disorder characterized by at least six months of **debilitating** fatigue that begins abruptly and is usually accompanied by mild fever, sore throat, tender muscles, joint pain, headache, sleep disorders, confusion, memory loss, and vision problems. Once considered an imagined rather than a specific physical condition, chronic fatigue syndrome remains controversial.

The word **debilitating** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ A) weakening
Debilitating means making someone weak, so **debilitating fatigue** is **weakening** tiredness. Not **persistent**: the passage does say the fatigue lasts six months, but that is given by "at least six months", not by the word **debilitating**.

19. Fireworms are marine worms that inhabit warm tropical waters. They produce an **aggravating** stinging sensation if touched. One particular species, *H. carunculata*, found in the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea, has a body covered with fine, white, brittle bristles that embed themselves in human skin if touched.

The word **aggravating** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ C) irritating
Here **aggravating** describes a stinging feeling on the skin that is unpleasant and keeps bothering you, so it is closest to **irritating**. Example: **an irritating rash**. Not **soothing**, which means calming pain, the opposite.

20. Scientists have tried to find a way to make hurricanes less dangerous by analyzing their component parts and neutralizing them. A hurricane contains huge quantities of supercooled water. Seeding the hurricane with silver iodide could **conceivably** produce some changes in storm behavior. Aircraft seeding experiments have obtained some minor, short-lived changes resulting in decreased wind speeds for a few hours.

The word **conceivably** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.

✔ **C) possibly**

Conceivably means that something can be imagined or is possible, so it is closest to **possibly**. The passage says seeding **could** produce changes, and the experiments got only minor, short-lived results. This shows a possibility, not a certainty. Not **presumably**, which means something is probably true or expected; that is a stronger idea than the passage gives.

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