ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Essential Words for the TOEFL Lesson 3 Vocabulary Test

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Explanations

1. **Choose the synonym.**
indispensable
✓ **C) vital**
Indispensable means absolutely necessary, something you cannot do without. **Vital** has the same meaning: **Water is vital for life.** Not **frail**, which means weak or easily broken.

2. restore
✓ **B) revitalize**
To **restore** something is to bring it back to its earlier good condition. **Revitalize** means to give new life or strength to something: **The project restored/revitalized the old town centre.** Not **disrupt**, which means to interrupt or disturb.

3. conform
✓ **D) adapt**
To **conform** is to change your behaviour or form so that it fits rules, customs or surroundings. **Adapt** has the same idea of adjusting to fit: **New students quickly conform/adapt to school rules.**

4. turbulent
✓ **A) chaotic**
Turbulent describes something full of confusion, disorder or violent movement, e.g. **a turbulent period in history**. **Chaotic** means completely disordered and confused. Not **adverse**, which means harmful or unfavourable.

5. ascertain
✓ **C) determine**
To **ascertain** is to find out something for certain. **Determine** means the same: **Police tried to ascertain/determine the cause of the fire.** Not **assert**, which means to state something firmly.

6. potential
✓ **B) possibility**
As a noun, **potential** is the possibility that something will develop or happen in the future: **The plan has the potential to succeed.** So the closest word is **possibility**. Not **anticipation**, which means expecting or looking forward to something.

7. benign
✓ **A) harmless**
Benign means not harmful or dangerous, e.g. **a benign tumour**. The closest word is **harmless**. Not **weak**: something benign is not necessarily weak, just not harmful.

8. enrich
✓ **D) enhance**
To **enrich** something is to improve its quality or value by adding something to it. **Enhance** also means to improve: **Music can enrich/enhance a film.** Not **alter**, which simply means to change, not necessarily for the better.

9. unbearable
✓ **C) intolerable**
Unbearable means too painful or unpleasant to accept or deal with. **Intolerable** has the same meaning: **The heat was unbearable/intolerable.** Not **unfavorable**, which only means not good or not helpful.

10. proposal
✓ **D) suggestion**
A **proposal** is a plan or idea that is put forward for others to consider. **Suggestion** is the closest word: **Her proposal/suggestion was accepted by the committee.**

11. The point at which pain is first felt is known as the pain perception threshold. Studies have found this point to be similar among different social and cultural groups. However, the pain tolerance threshold, the point at which pain becomes **intolerable**, varies significantly among these groups. A stoical, unemotional response to pain may be seen as a sign of braveness in certain cultural or social environments. However, this behavior can also mask the seriousness of an injury to an examining physician.

The word **intolerable** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✓ **D) unbearable**
Intolerable means too painful to accept or endure, so the closest meaning is **unbearable**. The third sentence describes the pain tolerance threshold, the point at which pain can no longer be endured. Not **intense**: pain can be intense but still bearable, so **intense** does not carry the idea of reaching a limit.

12. Nutritional additives are utilized to restore nutrients lost during production, to **enrich** certain foods in order to correct dietary deficiencies, or to add nutrients to food substitutes. Nowadays, vitamins are commonly added to many foods in order to increase their nutritional value. For example, vitamins A and D are added to dairy and cereal products, and several of the B vitamins are added to cereals.

The word **enrich** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ B) enhance
Here **enrich** means to improve foods by adding nutrients. The next sentence says vitamins are added to **increase their nutritional value**. So the closest meaning is **enhance** (improve). Not **restore**: the passage uses **restore** for a different purpose, replacing nutrients lost during production.

13. In modern manufacturing production facilities that produce equipment sensitive to environmental contamination, a dust-free working area with strict temperature and humidity controls is of **vital** importance. Seamless plastic walls and ceilings, external lighting, a continuous flow of dust-free air, and daily cleaning are features of this “clean room.” Workers wear special clothing, including head coverings. When entering this room, they pass through a “shower” to remove contaminants.

The word **vital** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ A) indispensable
Of vital importance means extremely important and necessary. **Indispensable** means absolutely necessary, so it is the closest meaning. A dust-free area is essential when equipment is sensitive to contamination. Not **lively**: **vital** can mean full of energy, but not in the phrase **vital importance**.

14. Human populations are classified in terms of genetically transmitted traits. For groups that have lived for generations in certain locations, research illustrates the long-term genetic effects of environmental factors such as climate and diet. **Ongoing** investigations track the history of evolution and its genetic changes and help to explain the origin of genetically determined diseases and their long-term influence.

The word **ongoing** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ A) current
Ongoing means still happening or continuing at the present time. The investigations are being carried out now, so the closest meaning is **current**. Not **temporary**, which means lasting only a short time.

15. In the 1890s, a rising generation of young anti-organization leaders came on the political scene. These leaders transformed the art and practice of politics in the United States, by exercising strong leadership and by bringing about institutional changes that helped **revitalize** political democracy. Most important was their achievement of economic and social objectives, such as legislation to prevent child labor, and accident insurance systems to provide compensation to injured workers.

The word **revitalize** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ D) restore
To **revitalize** is to give new life and strength to something that has become weak. The new leaders' changes brought democracy back to a strong, healthy state, so the closest meaning is **restore**. Not **reform**: to reform is to change something in order to improve it, but it does not carry the idea of bringing back lost strength.

16. There are more than 100 types or species of chameleon. A member of the lizard family, the chameleon lives in countries as diverse as Madagascar, Spain, and Sri Lanka. It is thought to change color to **conform to** its surroundings, but that is rarely true. While changes do occur with changes in light or temperature, especially when the chameleon is frightened, its new color rarely matches its immediate surroundings.

In stating that the chameleon’s color **conforms to** its surroundings, the author means that it _____.
✔ D) looks the same as its environment.
To **conform to** something is to match or fit it. The chameleon is thought to change colour so that it **looks the same as its environment**. The passage then says its new colour **rarely matches** its surroundings, which confirms that **conform to** means **match**. The other three options all mean the opposite: being different from the surroundings.

17. Infrared light emission photographs are particularly helpful to astronomers. The composition and temperature of heavenly bodies can often be determined by **analysis** of photos taken with a camera that is sensitive to infrared light emissions. Using infrared detectors, astronomers can observe cooler celestial objects than they can with optical devices, since infrared radiation is less affected by interstellar dust than is light.

The word **analysis** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ B) examination
Analysis is the careful study of something in order to understand it. Astronomers study the infrared photos to work out the composition and temperature of heavenly bodies, so the closest meaning is **examination**.

18. Working environments in which loud noise is frequent can be harmful to the employee. Aside from simply being **annoying**, the most measurable physical effect of noise pollution is damage to hearing. This may be either temporary or permanent and may cause disruption of normal activities. In work areas where noise is a problem, care should be taken to protect the ears with earplugs.

The word **annoying** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **C) bothersome**
Annoying describes something that irritates or disturbs you. Loud noise at work is unpleasant and irritating, so the closest meaning is **bothersome**. Not **difficult**, which means hard to do or deal with, not irritating.

19. The construction of shelter, found among the first stable human societies about 5,000 years ago, is considered to be among the most important of all **ancient** human activities. The systematic placement of groups of housing marked a momentous cultural transition toward the formation of towns. It generated new needs and resources and was accompanied by a significant increase in technological innovation.

The word **ancient** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **A) old**
Ancient means belonging to the very distant past. The passage refers to activities of human societies about 5,000 years ago, so the closest meaning is **old**. Not **dated**, which means old-fashioned or out of date. It does not mean from the distant past.

20. Seeking to take advantage of new economic trends of the late 1800s, Manitoba's leaders made important changes in economic policies. These changes, which **anticipated** new directions in the economic development of the region, took advantage of the unique business attributes of the province. During the early 1900s, these policies gave the province an advantage over other prairie provinces.

The word **anticipated** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ **D) predicted**
To **anticipate** is to see or expect something before it happens. Manitoba's policy changes came before the new directions in economic development and prepared for them, so the closest meaning is **predicted**. Not **encouraged**: the passage is about foreseeing future trends, not supporting them.

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