ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Essential Words for the TOEFL Lesson 30 Vocabulary Test

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Explanations

1. **Choose the synonym.**
astute
✓ **C) clever**
Astute means quick to understand situations and use them to your advantage, so it is closest to **clever**. Example: **an astute businesswoman**.

2. sporadic
✓ **C) erratic**
Sporadic means happening at irregular intervals, not in a steady pattern, so it is closest to **erratic** (irregular, unpredictable). Example: **sporadic gunfire**, **sporadic rain**. Not **archaic**, which means very old or out of date.

3. relinquish
✓ **C) forfeit**
To **relinquish** something means to give it up, often unwillingly, so it is closest to **forfeit** (lose or give up a right or possession). Example: **He relinquished control of the company.** Not **deplete**, which means to use up a supply.

4. persevering
✓ **A) enduring**
Persevering describes someone who keeps trying despite difficulties, so it is closest to **enduring** (lasting, continuing through hardship). Example: **a persevering student who never gave up**.

5. superior
✓ **D) exceptional**
Superior means better than others or of very high quality, so it is closest to **exceptional**. Example: **superior quality**. Not **superficial**, which looks similar but means shallow or only on the surface.

6. truncate
✓ **B) cut**
To **truncate** means to make something shorter by cutting off part of it, so it is closest to **cut**. Example: **The article was truncated to fit the page.** Not **postpone**, which means to delay, not to shorten.

7. precarious
✓ **B) dangerous**
Precarious means not safe or secure and likely to fall or fail, so it is closest to **dangerous**. Example: **a precarious position on the edge of the cliff**.

8. persuade
✓ **A) convince**
To **persuade** means to make someone agree or believe something by giving reasons, so it is closest to **convince**. Not **confirm**, which means to show that something is true.

9. wisdom
✓ **B) insight**
Wisdom is the ability to understand things deeply and make good judgments, so it is closest to **insight**. Not **caution**, which means being careful to avoid danger.

10. intense
✓ **C) severe**
Intense means very strong or extreme, so it is closest to **severe**. Example: **intense heat**, **severe pain**. Not **robust**, which means strong and healthy, not extreme.

11. The circulation war of the tabloids that took place in New York City in the 1920s was copied in Britain in the 1930s. This brought numerous circulation-boosting schemes. Prizes for readers were introduced in the 1890s and had become popular measures to **woo** new subscribers by the 1900s. Although the practice was condemned by the Newspaper Proprietors' Association, gift schemes grew along with the number of newspapers for many years. They continue today.

The word **woo** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✓ **B) attract**
To **woo** customers means to try to win them over and bring them to you, so here it is closest to **attract**. The passage says prizes were used to **woo new subscribers**, i.e. to get people to start buying the paper. Not **convince**, which is about changing someone's opinion with arguments, not drawing them in with gifts.

12. Intensity, intimacy, and omnipresence have been identified as the distinctive characteristics of the motion-picture image. Its intensity stems from its power to capture the complete attention of the theatergoer. Outside the theater, a person's attention is usually divided among the elements of the limitless reality around him or her, except for **sporadic** moments of concentration on what is selected for closer examination.

The word **sporadic** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✓ **A) occasional**
Sporadic means happening only now and then, at irregular times, so it is closest to **occasional**. The passage contrasts our usually divided attention with brief, irregular moments of concentration. Not **recurrent**, which suggests happening again and again regularly.

13. Established in 1942, the Voice of America is the international radio network of the U.S. Information Agency. Its charge is the **widespread** decree of a favorable understanding of the United States abroad. It achieves this task with a wide range of programs, including news, editorials, features, and music. The VOA has established a long-term modernization plan to increase its number of broadcasting languages from 42 to 60.

The word **widespread** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ C) extensive
Widespread means spread over a large area or among many people, so it is closest to **extensive**. The VOA spreads its message broadly abroad. Not **unlimited**, which means having no limits at all, a stronger idea than wide coverage.

14. Jellyfish capture their prey by using nematocysts, small stinging organs found on their tentacles. They feed on organisms such as plankton, fish, and other jellyfish they may **stumble upon** while propelling themselves through the ocean. Their movement is produced through rhythmic contractions of the bell's perimeter surface, which discharges water. This causes water to move the animal forward by jet propulsion. Some varieties of jellyfish are able to swim well, but most are weak swimmers that drift with sea currents.

The phrasal verb **stumble upon** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ A) encounter
To **stumble upon** something means to find or meet it by chance, so it is closest to **encounter**. The passage says jellyfish feed on organisms they happen to meet while moving through the ocean. Not **ingest** (to eat), which happens after they find the prey.

15. During his administration, Thomas Jefferson pursued a policy of expansion. He seized an opportunity when Napoleon Bonaparte decided to **forfeit** French ambitions in North America by offering the Louisiana Territory for sale. This remarkable acquisition, purchased for a few cents per acre, more than doubled the area of the United States. Jefferson had no constitutional right to complete the transaction. Nevertheless, he made up the rules as he went along, broadly interpreting the Constitution.

The word **forfeit** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ C) relinquish
To **forfeit** means to give up or lose something, so it is closest to **relinquish**. Napoleon gave up French ambitions in North America by selling the Louisiana Territory. Not **restrain**, which means to hold back or control, not to give up.

16. In some countries, high-speed driving is **severely punished**, while in others speed is ignored, tolerated, or encouraged. For example, French police fine drivers as much as 380 euros on the spot for driving more than 110 kilometers per hour, while the famous German expressway known as the "Autobahn" has no speed limit, although sections of it may have recommended limits. The lack of a speed limit and lighter police surveillance turn many drivers into skillful competitors.

In stating that high-speed driving is **severely punished**, the author means that _____.
✔ C) authorities impose heavy penalties, such as large fines.
Severely punished means the penalties are heavy. The passage supports this with the example of French police fining drivers **as much as 380 euros on the spot**. Not **offenders are sure to be arrested at once**, because the passage mentions fines, not arrests.

17. As a U.S. congressman, Davy Crockett won a reputation as a **witty**, shrewd, and outspoken backwoodsman. It was in Washington that the legend of this man as a coonskin-hatted bear hunter and tall-tale teller was created. There, his political allies promoted this image so he could compete with President Jackson's image as a democrat.

The word **witty** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ C) humorous
Witty means clever and funny in the way you speak, so it is closest to **humorous**. It fits Crockett's image as a **tall-tale teller** in the passage. Not **instinctive**, which means acting naturally without thinking.

18. The volcanic areas of southern Guatemala contain some of the nation's richest soils. However, the northern parts of this region are particularly subject to erosion encouraged by steep slopes and deforestation. Within the Sierra region, heavier rainfall combined with thinner soils on the steep slopes and the **wanton** destruction of forests have led to widespread erosion.

The word **wanton** in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.
✔ A) senseless
Wanton describes harmful action done deliberately and without any good reason, so it is closest to **senseless**. The passage describes forest destruction that is careless and unnecessary. Not **outlandish**, which means very strange or unusual.

19. In all the Apache groups, the family structure was matrilocal. The women cared for the children, gathered plant food, and collected firewood and water. The men of the family hunted, fought, raided, and made weapons and shields. The most persuasive, tenacious, and successful family heads became Apache leaders. Those in authority were chosen because they had personal **charisma** and success in warfare.

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

✔ C) appeal

Charisma is a strong personal charm that makes people like and follow you, so it is closest to **appeal**. The passage says Apache leaders were chosen for their personal charisma and success in warfare. Not **capriciousness**, which means changing your mind suddenly.

20. Bishop Wright profoundly influenced the lives of his children. Wilbur and Orville, like their father, were independent thinkers. They had deep confidence in their own talents, and an unwavering faith in the soundness of their judgment. They were taught to **endure** difficulties and continue in the face of disappointment. Those qualities, when combined with their unique talents, help to explain the accomplishments of the Wright brothers as inventors.

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

✔ D) persevere

To **endure** difficulties means to bear them and keep going, so it is closest to **persevere**. The passage links it with continuing **in the face of disappointment**. Not **endorse**, which looks similar but means to support or approve.

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