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(v.) (n.) (adj.)

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— A —

1. abandon (v.)

FORMAL

■V

Give up completely; desert.

Informal: give up / drop / quit

Forms: abandons/abandoning/abandoned

They abandoned the plan after the first failure.

Synonyms: desert, forsake, relinquish, surrender

Antonyms: retain, keep, continue

Related: abandonment, abandoned, abandoning

2. abate (v.)

FORMAL

■V

Become less intense or widespread.

Informal: die down / ease off

Forms: abates/abating/abated

The storm eventually abated.

Synonyms: subside, diminish, lessen, recede

Antonyms: intensify, increase, escalate

Related: abatement, unabated

3. abhorrent (adj.)

FORMAL

■A

Inspiring disgust and loathing.

Informal: disgusting / sickening

The practice is abhorrent to civilised standards.

Synonyms: detestable, odious, repugnant, loathsome

Antonyms: admirable, attractive, pleasing

Related: abhor, abhorrence

4. absolute (adj.)

FORMAL

■A

Complete; not qualified or diminished.

Informal: total / complete

There is no absolute solution to complex social problems.

Synonyms: complete, total, utter, unqualified

Antonyms: relative, partial, limited

Related: absolutely, absolutism

5. accumulate (v.)

FORMAL

■V

Gather or pile up over time.

Informal: build up / pile up

Forms: accumulates/accumulating/accumulated

Evidence continues to accumulate against the official account.

Synonyms: amass, gather, collect, accrue

Antonyms: disperse, dwindle, diminish

Related: accumulation, cumulative

6. acknowledge (v.)

FORMAL

■A

Accept or admit the existence or truth of.

Informal: admit / own up to

Forms: acknowledges/acknowledging/acknowledged

Any honest analysis must acknowledge the limitations of the data.

Synonyms: admit, concede, recognise, accept

Antonyms: deny, dispute, ignore

Related: acknowledgement, acknowledged

7. advocate (v./n.)

FORMAL

■A

Publicly recommend or support; a person who does so.

Informal: support / push for / back

Forms: advocates/advocating/advocated

I would advocate a more cautious approach until further evidence is available.

Synonyms: support, champion, promote, recommend

Antonyms: oppose, criticise, attack

Related: advocacy, advocate (n.)

8. alleviate (v.)

FORMAL

■A

Make suffering, deficiency or a problem less severe.

Informal: ease / lessen / take the edge off

Forms: alleviates/alleviating/alleviated

The measure may alleviate immediate hardship without addressing structural causes.

Synonyms: ease, mitigate, relieve, reduce

Antonyms: aggravate, worsen, intensify

Related: alleviation

9. ambiguous (adj.)

FORMAL

■V

Open to more than one interpretation.

Informal: unclear / vague / double meaning

The wording of the clause is deliberately ambiguous.

Synonyms: unclear, equivocal, vague, uncertain

Antonyms: clear, unambiguous, definite

Related: ambiguity, ambiguously

10. analyse (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Examine in detail in order to explain or interpret.

Informal: look into / break down / study

Forms: analyses/analysing/analysed

It is not enough to describe the problem; one must analyse its underlying causes.

Synonyms: examine, study, investigate, scrutinise

Antonyms: ignore, overlook, synthesise

Related: analysis, analytical, analyst

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— B —

11. beneficial (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Resulting in good; favourable.

Informal: good / helpful / useful

Not all consequences of the policy have been beneficial.

Synonyms: advantageous, favourable, helpful, useful

Antonyms: harmful, detrimental, adverse

Related: benefit, beneficially

— C —

12. coherent (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Logical and consistent.

Informal: clear / joined-up / makes sense

A coherent policy requires clear objectives and consistent instruments.

Synonyms: logical, consistent, rational, orderly

Antonyms: incoherent, confused, fragmented

Related: coherence, coherently

13. comprehensive (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Including or dealing with all or nearly all elements.

Informal: full / complete / all-in

A comprehensive strategy must address both symptoms and structural causes.

Synonyms: thorough, complete, extensive, inclusive

Antonyms: partial, limited, incomplete

Related: comprehensively, comprehension

14. crucial (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Decisive or critical, especially in the success or failure of something.

Informal: vital / key / make-or-break

Public trust is crucial to the legitimacy of any institution.

Synonyms: critical, vital, essential, decisive

Antonyms: unimportant, minor, peripheral

Related: crucially

— D —

15. demonstrate (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Clearly show the existence or truth of by giving proof.

Informal: show / prove / display

Forms: demonstrates/demonstrating/demonstrated

The data demonstrate a clear correlation, though not necessarily causation.

Synonyms: show, prove, establish, illustrate

Antonyms: hide, disprove, obscure

Related: demonstration, demonstrable

— E —

16. empirical (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Based on observation or experience rather than theory.

Informal: based on evidence / practical

Empirical evidence continues to accumulate in support of the more cautious interpretation.

Synonyms: observational, experimental, factual, practical

Antonyms: theoretical, speculative, abstract

Related: empirically, empiricism

17. exacerbate (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Make a problem, bad situation or negative feeling worse.

Informal: make worse / aggravate

Forms: exacerbates/exacerbating/exacerbated

Poorly designed interventions can exacerbate the problems they are meant to solve.

Synonyms: worsen, aggravate, intensify, compound

Antonyms: alleviate, ease, improve

Related: exacerbation

— F —

18. facilitate (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Make an action or process easy or easier.

Informal: help / make easier / enable

Forms: facilitates/facilitating/facilitated

*Clear procedures facilitate both efficiency and accountability.***Synonyms:** enable, assist, ease, promote**Antonyms:** hinder, obstruct, impede

Related: facilitation, facilitator

19. fundamental (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Forming a necessary base or core; of central importance.

Informal: basic / core / key*The debate turns on fundamental questions of fairness and authority.***Synonyms:** basic, essential, central, primary**Antonyms:** secondary, peripheral, superficial

Related: fundamentally, fundamentals

— H —

20. hypothesis (n.)**FORMAL**

■A

A proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence.

Informal: theory / idea / guess*The hypothesis remains plausible but unproven.***Synonyms:** theory, proposition, conjecture, assumption**Antonyms:** fact, proof, certainty

Related: hypothetical, hypothesise

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— I —

21. implement (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Put a decision, plan or agreement into effect.

Informal: carry out / put into practice

Forms: implements/implementing/implemented

*The challenge is not to design policy but to implement it effectively.***Synonyms:** execute, apply, enact, carry out**Antonyms:** abandon, neglect, plan only

Related: implementation, implement (n.)

22. inevitable (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Certain to happen; unavoidable.

Informal: bound to happen / certain*Some degree of disruption is inevitable; the question is how it is managed.***Synonyms:** unavoidable, certain, inescapable, sure**Antonyms:** avoidable, uncertain, optional

Related: inevitably, inevitability

— J —

23. justify (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Show or prove to be right or reasonable.

Informal: defend / explain / make right

Forms: justifies/justifying/justified

*The benefits must be shown to justify the costs.***Synonyms:** defend, warrant, explain, validate**Antonyms:** condemn, invalidate, refute

Related: justification, justifiable

— M —

24. mitigate (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Make less severe, serious or painful.

Informal: ease / lessen / soften

Forms: mitigates/mitigating/mitigated

*The measure may mitigate immediate hardship without addressing structural causes.***Synonyms:** alleviate, ease, reduce, soften**Antonyms:** aggravate, worsen, intensify

Related: mitigation, mitigating

— N —

25. nuance (n.)**FORMAL**

■A

A subtle difference in meaning, expression or sound.

Informal: subtle difference / shade*Policy debate often loses the nuances that matter in practice.***Synonyms:** subtlety, shade, distinction, refinement**Antonyms:** bluntness, simplicity

Related: nuanced

— O —

26. objective (adj./n.)**FORMAL**

■A

Not influenced by personal feelings; a goal.

Informal: fair / neutral / goal*An objective assessment of the evidence is the starting point of any serious inquiry.***Synonyms:** impartial, unbiased, neutral, goal**Antonyms:** subjective, biased, partial

Related: objectivity, objectively

— P —

27. plausible (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Seeming reasonable or probable.

Informal: believable / likely / credible*Several plausible explanations remain consistent with the data.***Synonyms:** credible, believable, possible, probable**Antonyms:** implausible, unlikely, improbable

Related: plausibility, plausibly

— R —

28. rigorous (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Extremely thorough and careful.

Informal: strict / thorough / tough*Rigorous evaluation is the only reliable basis for claims of success.***Synonyms:** thorough, strict, careful, exacting**Antonyms:** lax, careless, superficial

Related: rigour, rigorously

— S —

29. sceptical (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Not easily convinced; having doubts.

Informal: doubtful / questioning / not buying it*A sceptical reading of the official claims is warranted by the available evidence.***Synonyms:** doubtful, questioning, dubious, distrustful**Antonyms:** credulous, trusting, convinced

Related: scepticism, sceptically

30. substantial (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Of considerable importance, size or worth.

Informal: considerable / large / solid*Substantial progress has been made, yet major gaps remain.***Synonyms:** considerable, significant, sizeable, solid**Antonyms:** minor, trivial, insubstantial

Related: substantially, substance

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— U —

31. undermine (v.)**FORMAL**

■A

Lessen the effectiveness, power or ability of.

Informal: weaken / undercut / damage

Forms: undermines/undermining/undermined

*Inconsistent enforcement undermines the credibility of any regulatory system.***Synonyms:** weaken, undercut, sabotage, erode**Antonyms:** strengthen, support, reinforce

Related: undermining

— V —

32. viable (adj.)**FORMAL**

■A

Capable of working successfully; feasible.

Informal: workable / doable / realistic*A viable alternative must be both desirable and feasible.***Synonyms:** workable, feasible, practicable, possible**Antonyms:** unworkable, impractical, impossible

Related: viability, viably

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