

Advanced Synonyms for Essay Writing

The tricky thing about synonyms is that words/phrases are only synonyms in certain contexts. In this PDF we look at some common words/phrases that can be used as synonyms. After that, we look at some strategies for how to learn synonyms.

1. Answer - Response

Yes: I've just called him but there was no answer/response.

No: Responses/~~Answers~~ to our advertising campaign have been disappointing. (response= what people say)

2. Become worse - Deteriorate

Yes: The political situation in the region has become worse/deteriorated rapidly.

No: My fever is ~~becoming worse~~/deteriorating. (if your fever is 'deteriorating' then it is becoming better)

3. Benefit - Advantage

Yes: There are many advantages/benefits of attending university.

No: The government should provide unemployment ~~advantages~~/benefits to those out of work. (benefits= money given by the government)

4. Basic - Fundamental

Yes: It's easier to learn a language if you have a basic/fundamental understanding of its grammar.

No: All the music they like is so basic/~~fundamental~~. (basic= boring)

5. Build - Construct

Yes: High-rise residential buildings are being built/constructed in the city centres.

No: The boss has built/~~constructed~~ a good reputation. (build= develop)

6. Buy - Purchase

Yes: It's illegal to buy/purchase a gun in Britain.

No: If we delay the meeting we can buy/~~purchase~~ some time to finish the project. (buy time= do something to get more time)

7. Change - Alter

Yes: Buying a car can really change/alter your lifestyle.

No: When we first met I didn't like him. But now I've changed/~~altered~~ my mind. ('change my mind' is a collocation)

8. Choose - Select

Yes: It's difficult for managers to choose/select which employees should be promoted.

No: Why did you choose/~~select~~ to live in London? (only use "select" if there is a list of options)

9. Combine - Integrate

Yes: You need to combine/integrate exercise into your normal life*.

No: The two countries combined/~~integrated~~ against their common enemy. ('integrate' means they become the same country, 'combine' means they put their efforts together)

10. Communicate - Interact

Yes: Some children spend more time communicating/interacting with their teachers than their parents.

No: It's important for teachers to be able to communicate/~~interact~~ their ideas in ways that can be understood. (communicate= explain)

11. Continue - Maintain

Yes: Instant messaging services enable families in different countries to continue/maintain communication.

No: After stopping for a quick drink, they continued/~~maintained~~ on their way home. (continue: return to doing something)

12. Develop - Evolve

Yes: Most languages are constantly developing/evolving, which is what keeps them alive.

No: This exercise will develop/~~evolve~~ your back muscles. (develop= make stronger)

13. Enough - Sufficient

Yes: Most people don't have enough/sufficient savings to survive a year without work.

No: That's enough/~~sufficient~~, Peter. Give him back his toys. (That's enough= used to tell someone to stop behaving badly)

14. Find - Locate

Yes: Police are still trying to find/locate the suspect.

No: The company decided to ~~find~~/locate its headquarters in Beijing. (Locate= choose)

15. Get - Acquire

Yes: Companies spend millions on advertising to get/acquire new customers.

No: I got/~~acquired~~ a phone call from the police last night. (get= receive)

16. Give out - Distribute

Yes: Schools should give out/distribute free stationery at the beginning of the year.

No: At the end of the race his legs gave out/~~distributed~~ and he collapsed on the ground. (give out= stopped working)

17 Go forward - Proceed

Yes: It's important that we go forward/proceed with the plan despite delays.

No: The ~~go forwards~~/proceeds from the event went to charity. (proceed= money raised)

18. Help - Assist

Yes: College counsellor's should assist/help students with both personal and academic work problems.

No: Aspirin will help/~~assist~~ with the pain. (help= to lessen)

19. Keep - Retain

Yes: In times of financial crisis, the Government should incentivise companies to keep/retain staff.

No: I made a promise to you, and I intend to keep/~~retain~~ it. ('keep a promise' is a collocation)

20. Leave out - Exclude

Yes: A trade deal that leaves out/excludes the emerging economies would miss out on creating opportunities for trade among developing countries.

No: In this recipe, you can leave out/~~exclude~~ the butter if you're on a low-fat die. ('exclude' would be too formal)

21. Look for - Seek

Yes: The government is looking for/seeking ways to reduce the cost of healthcare.

No: I'll look for/~~seek~~ a present while I'm at the shopping centre. ('seek' would be too formal in this context)

22. Make (something) possible - Enable

Yes: Automation will make cutting costs possible/enable us to cut costs.

No: Make sure to enable/~~make possible~~ your computers firewall ('enable' means to turn on)

23. Make sure - Ensure

Yes: The role of the police is to make sure/ensure that the law is upheld.

No: Make sure/~~Ensure~~ to tell them that I said 'hi'. ('Ensure' is not appropriate in this context)

24. Move - Transfer

Yes: Sometimes moving/transferring to a different department is the best way to get promoted.

No: I'm so cold I can't move/~~transfer~~ my fingers. ('transfer' means to move from one place to another)

25. Need - Require

Yes: People living below the poverty line need/require government assistance.

No: I need/~~require~~ to do some shopping on the way home from work. (need= have to)

26. Replace - Substitute

Yes: When it comes to knowledge, no amount of academic study can replace/substitute real experience.

No: I promise to replace/~~substitute~~ the plate that I dropped.

27. Set up - Establish

Yes: The brand Nike was set up/established in 1964.

No: His friends set him up/~~established~~ him with a blind date. (set up= organise a date)

28. Show - Demonstrate

Yes: Research has shown/demonstrated that babies can identify their mother's voice soon after being born.

No: Let me show/~~demonstrate~~ you this new book I've bought recently.

29. Speak to - Converse with

Yes: Teenagers often spend hours speaking to/conversing with their friends by phone.

No: Would you mind speaking/~~conversing~~ more slowly, please? (speak= the act of talking)

30. Take part - Participate

Yes: Children should be encouraged to take part/participate in games at school.

No: She took part/~~participated~~ of her savings and invested it in the stock market.

Go to the next page to learn some useful tips and strategies for learning synonyms.