analogous uh-NAL-uh-gus *adjective*

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS ANSWER AND TRAP

similar in a way that allows a useful comparison

> *The wings of bats and butterflies are **analogous** structures: they serve the same function of flight, yet they evolved entirely separately.*

FAMILY analogously, analogy, analog

DON'T CONFUSE comparable (similar enough to compare) vs homologous (alike from a shared origin)

analogy uh-NAL-uh-jee *noun*

ACADEMIC

a comparison between two things for explanation

> *To explain how the heart works, the teacher drew an **analogy** to a pump, since both push fluid through a network of pipes.*

FAMILY analogous, analogical, analog

DON'T CONFUSE metaphor (calls one thing another, figuratively) vs comparison (notes likeness or difference)

anomaly uh-NOM-uh-lee *noun*

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

something that differs from what is normal or expected

> *The researchers first dismissed the white-furred mouse as an **anomaly**, a rare departure from the brown coats seen in every other litter.*

FAMILY anomalous, anomalously

DON'T CONFUSE outlier (a data point far from others) vs paradox (a seemingly self-contradictory statement)

atypical ay-TIP-ih-kul *adjective*

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

not typical; unusual for its type or group

> *Unlike most owls, which hunt at night, the northern hawk owl is **atypical**, hunting mainly during daylight hours.*

FAMILY atypically, typical

DON'T CONFUSE anomalous (breaking an expected rule or pattern) vs eccentric (oddly unconventional, usually a person)

belie bih-LY *verb*

RARE · ON THE SAT AS A TRAP

to give a false impression of; to hide the true nature of

> *The scholar's gentle, soft-spoken manner **belied** a fierce intellect that left her opponents stunned during debates.*

SIMILAR misrepresent, disguise, mask

DON'T CONFUSE betray (unintentionally reveals the truth) vs contradict (says or shows the opposite)

conjecture kun-JEK-cher *noun*

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS ANSWER AND TRAP

an opinion or guess formed without full evidence

> *For over three centuries, Fermat's claim remained a mere **conjecture**, since no mathematician could supply the proof needed to confirm it.*

FAMILY conjectural, conjecturally

DON'T CONFUSE speculation (theorizing without a firm basis) vs hypothesis (testable claim guiding research)

consistent with kun-SIS-tunt with *phrase (adjective)*

SECOND MEANING · ON THE SAT AS ANSWER AND TRAP

in agreement with; fitting something without contradicting it

Everyday meaning: always behaving or performing the same way

> *The bite marks on the bones are **consistent with** an attack by a large cat, though they do not rule out other predators.*

DON'T CONFUSE compatible with (can coexist without conflict) vs corroborated by (actively supported by evidence)

FALSE FRIEND it: consistente means solid or firm

contradict kon-truh-DIKT *verb*

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

to say or show the opposite of a statement or idea

> *New genetic data **contradicted** the long-held view that the two frog species were closely related, revealing that they had split millions of years ago.*

FAMILY contradiction, contradictory

DON'T CONFUSE refute (proves something false) vs dispute (argues against, without proof)

counterfactual kown-ter-FAK-choo-ul *adjective*

RARE ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

describing what would have happened if past events had gone differently

> *Historians distrust **counterfactual** questions, such as how Europe would look had Napoleon won at Waterloo, because no evidence can ever settle them.*

FAMILY counterfactually
DON'T CONFUSE hypothetical (any imagined case, any time) vs speculative (based on guesswork)

desultory DES-ul-tor-ee *adjective*

RARE ON THE SAT AS A TRAP

lacking a clear plan or consistency

> *The conversation was **desultory**, drifting from the weather to politics to old school friends without settling on anything.*

SIMILAR aimless, random
FAMILY desultorily
DON'T CONFUSE haphazard (random, without a plan) vs perfunctory (routine, minimal effort)

distinct dih-STINGKT *adjective*

ACADEMIC ON THE SAT AS ANSWER AND TRAP

clearly separate or different from something else

> *Although the two tree frogs look nearly identical, their calls are **distinct**, which lets researchers tell the species apart by ear alone.*

FAMILY distinction, distinctly, distinctive, indistinct
DON'T CONFUSE distinctive (characteristic and easily recognized) vs discrete (made of separate units)

dogmatic dog-MAT-ik *adjective*

RARE ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

asserting opinions as unquestionably true

> *The **dogmatic** professor dismissed every new finding that contradicted his theory, insisting that the matter was already settled.*

FAMILY dogma, dogmatically, dogmatism
DON'T CONFUSE doctrinaire (applies a theory rigidly) vs opinionated (holds strong views, often loudly)

evident EV-ih-dunt *adjective*

ACADEMIC ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

clear and easy to see or understand

> *By midnight the comet was **evident** even without a telescope, its pale tail stretching across a quarter of the sky.*

SIMILAR clear, obvious, apparent
FAMILY evidence, evidently
DON'T CONFUSE apparent (seems true, may not be) vs explicit (directly stated in words)

fallacious fuh-LAY-shus *adjective*

RARE

based on a mistaken belief or flawed reasoning

> *The argument was **fallacious**, assuming that because the rooster crows before sunrise, its crowing must cause the sun to rise.*

SIMILAR erroneous, unsound, invalid
FAMILY fallacy, fallaciously
DON'T CONFUSE specious (seems right but is wrong) vs erroneous (simply mistaken in fact)

haphazard hap-HAZ-erd *adjective*

RARE ON THE SAT AS ANSWER AND TRAP

random and disorganized; done without a plan

> *Unlike planned Washington, D.C., colonial Boston grew in a **haphazard** way, its lanes twisting wherever early settlers happened to build.*

FAMILY haphazardly
DON'T CONFUSE arbitrary (based on whim, not reason) vs careless (lacking attention or effort)

inconsequential in-kon-suh-KWEN-shul *adjective*

RARE ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

unimportant; too small to matter

> *The researchers dismissed the temperature changes as **inconsequential**, noting that a shift of a tenth of a degree had no effect on the enzyme.*

FAMILY consequential, inconsequentially
DON'T CONFUSE irrelevant (unconnected to the matter) vs minor (small but still counts)
FALSE FRIEND es: inconsecuente means inconsistent or illogical, not unimportant

independent of in-dih-PEN-dunt of

adjective phrase

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS ANSWER AND TRAP

not influenced or controlled by something else

> *Galileo argued that a falling object's acceleration is **independent of** its weight, so a heavy ball and a light one should land together.*

FAMILY independence, independently, dependent

DON'T CONFUSE immune to (protected from harm by) vs isolated from (physically cut off from)

inevitable in-EV-ih-tuh-bul

adjective

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS A TRAP

certain to happen; impossible to avoid

> *Once smartphones carried good cameras, the decline of cheap pocket cameras seemed **inevitable**; no amount of advertising could stop buyers from switching.*

FAMILY inevitably, inevitability

DON'T CONFUSE imminent (about to happen soon) vs predictable (able to be foreseen)

maxim MAK-sim

noun

ACADEMIC

a short statement expressing a general truth

> *The carpenter lived by a simple **maxim**, "measure twice, cut once," a short saying that summed up his careful approach to work.*

SIMILAR proverb, aphorism, principle

DON'T CONFUSE proverb (traditional folk saying) vs axiom (self-evident starting truth)

negligible NEG-lih-juh-bul

adjective

ACADEMIC · ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

so small or unimportant that it can be ignored

> *Because air resistance on the small steel ball was **negligible**, the students could ignore it when calculating the fall time.*

SIMILAR insignificant, trivial, minimal

FAMILY negligibly, neglect

DON'T CONFUSE trivial (unimportant, of little value) vs modest (small but still meaningful)

nullify NUL-uh-fy

verb

RARE · ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

to cancel the effect or legal force of something

> *A single ruling **nullified** the athlete's record-breaking jump, because the wind behind her had exceeded the legal limit.*

SIMILAR cancel, negate, invalidate

FAMILY null, nullification

DON'T CONFUSE annul (declare legally void) vs offset (balance out with a counterweight)

oblique oh-BLEEK

adjective

ACADEMIC

indirect or not straightforward

> *Rather than name the scandal, the speaker made only an **oblique** reference to recent troubles, trusting listeners to understand.*

SIMILAR indirect, implicit, veiled

FAMILY obliquely

DON'T CONFUSE indirect (not straight or explicit) vs evasive (deliberately avoids answering)

postulate POS-chuh-layt

verb

RARE · ON THE SAT AS A TRAP

to propose an idea as true, as a basis for reasoning

> *Before Neptune was discovered, astronomers **postulated** an unknown planet beyond Uranus to explain why Uranus kept drifting from its predicted path.*

FAMILY postulation

DON'T CONFUSE posit (put forward as a fact) vs speculate (guess without firm evidence)

rationalize RASH-uh-nuh-lyz

verb

SECOND MEANING · ON THE SAT AS A TRAP

to justify behavior with reasons that sound logical but may be false

Everyday meaning: to make something more logical or efficient

> *After skipping every rehearsal, the violinist **rationalized** her poor performance by blaming the hall's dry air and the noisy audience.*

DON'T CONFUSE justify (give valid reasons for) vs reason (think logically to a conclusion)

FALSE FRIEND es: racionalizar means make rational or organize work efficiently, not make excuses

refute rih-FYOOT *verb*

ACADEMIC ON THE SAT AS A TRAP

to prove a statement or theory wrong

> *Pasteur's swan-neck flask experiments **refuted** the idea of spontaneous generation by showing that no microbes grew when airborne dust was kept out.*

FAMILY refutation, irrefutable, irrefutably

DON'T CONFUSE rebut (argue against, not necessarily disproving) vs debunk (expose as false or exaggerated)

retrospective ret-ruh-SPEK-tiv *adjective*

ACADEMIC ON THE SAT AS A TRAP

looking back on or dealing with past events

> *Because the study was **retrospective**, researchers could only review old hospital records rather than follow new patients forward in time.*

FAMILY retrospectively, retrospect, in retrospect

DON'T CONFUSE reflective (thoughtful about past experience) vs nostalgic (longing fondly for the past)

semantics sih-MAN-tiks *noun*

ACADEMIC

the meaning of words and phrases

> *The dispute was really about **semantics**: both sides agreed on the facts but meant different things by the word "fair."*

SIMILAR meaning, interpretation

FAMILY semantic, semantically

DON'T CONFUSE denotation (literal meaning of one word) vs connotation (feelings a word suggests)

specious SPEE-shus *adjective*

RARE

superficially plausible but actually wrong

> *The salesman's **specious** argument sounded convincing at first, but it fell apart once anyone checked his numbers.*

SIMILAR misleading, deceptive, fallacious

FAMILY speciously, speciousness

DON'T CONFUSE spurious (fake, not genuine) vs fallacious (based on faulty reasoning)

supposition sup-uh-ZISH-un *noun*

RARE ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

something believed or assumed to be true without proof

> *For centuries physicians worked from the **supposition** that disease spread through foul air, an assumption that germ theory eventually overturned.*

FAMILY suppose, supposed, supposedly

DON'T CONFUSE presumption (assumed true until proven otherwise) vs premise (statement an argument builds on)

surmise ser-MYZ *verb*

RARE ON THE SAT AS AN ANSWER

to guess or conclude something without firm evidence

> *Finding fish bones but no hooks at the site, archaeologists **surmised** that the villagers fished with nets, though no nets had survived.*

SIMILAR guess, infer, conjecture

DON'T CONFUSE deduce (conclude by strict logic) vs speculate (theorize freely and loosely)

CAPTAIN'S LOG

Close the word pages first. The key is at the back of the booklet.

MATCH THE WORDS

Write the letter of each meaning. Two meanings fit no word.

1. **atypical** ____
2. **distinct** ____
3. **independent of** ____
4. **specious** ____
5. **nullify** ____
6. **surmise** ____
7. **contradict** ____
8. **negligible** ____
9. **postulate** ____
10. **inevitable** ____

a. not influenced or controlled by something else
b. the meaning of words and phrases
c. clearly separate or different from something else
d. to guess or conclude something without firm evidence
e. to say or show the opposite of a statement or idea
f. to cancel the effect or legal force of something
g. not typical; unusual for its type or group
h. superficially plausible but actually wrong
i. a short statement expressing a general truth
j. certain to happen; impossible to avoid
k. so small or unimportant that it can be ignored
l. to propose an idea as true, as a basis for reasoning

FILL THE GAP

New sentences. Use each word once, and change its form if the sentence needs it.

analogous · rationalize · counterfactual · fallacious · oblique

1. The novelist never describes the war directly; instead she offers _____ hints, such as empty chairs at dinner and letters that stop arriving.
2. Some linguists treat a dialect's spread as _____ to a virus moving through a population, since both pass from person to person through contact.
3. Having spent his savings on an expensive camera, the hobbyist _____ the purchase by claiming it would someday pay for itself through photo sales.
4. The claim that a cure must work because it is old is _____, since a remedy's age offers no proof of its effectiveness.
5. Economists built a _____ model of the town's economy, estimating how local jobs might have fared if the factory had never closed.

PRECISION LADDER

Write the words in order, from weakest to strongest.

How strongly you reject a claim
contradict · qualify · refute · repudiate

_____ _____ _____ _____

How alike two things are
interchangeable · distinct · disparate · analogous

_____ _____ _____ _____

Today: Know ___ · Kind of know ___ · Don't know ___ Review the last two groups tomorrow.

SAT CHECK

Three questions in the style of the Digital SAT, each built on a word from today's Sea. Cover the choices, find the clue and say your own word, then match. Explanations are at the back.

1 Engineers testing a new suspension bridge measured how much one of its main cables stretched while a line of heavy trucks crossed. The stretch was so small, only a few millimeters along a cable more than a kilometer long, that the team judged it _____ and saw no reason to change the design.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) substantial
B) precarious
C) negligible
D) diminishing

2 For centuries, many European naturalists believed that eels arose from river mud, since no one had ever found eel eggs in local streams. Researchers in the early twentieth century, tracing ever smaller young eels across the Atlantic to the Sargasso Sea, helped _____ that belief, showing instead that the fish hatch far out in the ocean.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) validate
B) qualify
C) rationalize
D) refute

3 No written records survive from the people who built many of Britain's Neolithic stone circles. Archaeologists can therefore offer only _____ about the ceremonies once held at these sites, although careful study of how the stones line up with the rising and setting sun has narrowed the range of possibilities.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

A) conjecture
B) analogy
C) approximation
D) certainty