

CHAPTER 11

Action Words

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The verb is the beating heart of the sentence. A strong, meaningful verb often lets you cut out prepositional phrases that clutter and suffocate a sentence. One student writes, "The temperatures were now at a much lower level than during the previous period." Another writes, "The temperatures plunged." The good writer gets considerable mileage from vigorous, well-selected action words (verbs).

This chapter focuses on action words. The drill technique is the same as with the descriptive words.

Study carefully the words and definitions at the top of each frame; then try to fill in the blanks without looking back or at the answers.

COVER THIS STRIP ▼



EXERCISES

1. **abscond** (ab-skond'): to depart hastily and secretly, especially to escape the law.
 2. **acquit** (ə-kwit'): to declare innocent; to absolve.
- (b)
- If *acquitted* of a crime you are legally (a) guilty, (b) innocent. ()
- The prisoner was so pretty that the Yukon jury voted unanimously to *ac*_____ her.
- acquit
- absconded
- A company clerk known as Honest Jim has _____ [absconded / abdicated] with our money.
- absconded
- Our bank teller, who was five feet tall and ten thousand dollars short, has _____ *ed*.
- abscond
- Although the treasurer did *ab*_____ one night with the union funds, his lawyer managed later to get him _____ *ed*.
- acquitted
3. **adulterate** (ə-dul'tə-rāt): to cheapen by adding inferior ingredients; to corrupt.
 4. **alienate** (ā'l'yə-nāt'): to make unfriendly; to estrange.
- adulterates
- Adding sawdust to sausage meat _____ [fortifies / adulterates] it.
- alienate
- Insulting your friends in public is usually a good way to _____ [alienate / captivate] them.
- alienate
- If Linus flirts with everybody, he'll soon *al*_____ his girlfriend.
- adulterate
- Chemical additives often *ad*_____ our food.
- adulterate
- Many bakeries add generous amounts of artificial preservative to their bread and thus *ad*_____ it; such practices
- alienate
- al*_____ health-minded customers.

5. **blaspheme** (blas-fēm'): to speak profanely of God or sacred things; to curse.
 6. **bungle**: to botch; to perform clumsily.

- bungled ■ If her surgeon had been sober, he would not have _____ [bungled / misfired] that operation.
 (a) ■ Those who *blaspheme* are (a) cursing, (b) praying. ()
 blaspheme ■ The priest shuddered to hear the atheist *bl* _____ near the cathedral.
 bungle ■ If you *bu* _____ your baking, the upside-down cake may come out rightside-up.
 ■ Although the clumsy carpenter had to cut only one board, he managed to *b* _____ the job; then he began to *bl* _____.

QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- | | | |
|--------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. (b) | () 1. abscond | a. to add inferior ingredients |
| 2. (e) | () 2. acquit | b. to flee from the law |
| 3. (a) | () 3. adulterate | c. to do imperfectly |
| 4. (f) | () 4. alienate | d. to use profanity |
| 5. (d) | () 5. blaspheme | e. to declare not guilty |
| 6. (c) | () 6. bungle | f. to make hostile |

7. **canonize** (kan'ə-nīz'): to declare a dead person to be a saint.
 8. **canvass** (kan'vəs): to go through a district asking for votes, opinions, or orders.

- canvass ■ We'll get Dooley elected even if we have to _____ [canvas / canvass] the whole town.
 (b) ■ The Catholic Church has *canonized* (a) Columbus, (b) Saint Joan of Arc. ()
 canonize ■ Live like a saint and maybe the Church will *can* _____ you.

- canvass ■ "To sell tickets for—pardon the expression—*Gotterdammerung*," said Silas, "we had to *can* _____ the county."

- canvass ■ When Bobo hit that grand slam home run, he became an instant saint; you didn't have to _____ *ss* the crowd to know they would practically _____ *ze* him.
 canonize

9. **cauterize** (ko'tə-rīz'): to sear with a hot iron, as to cure wounds.
 10. **condone** (kən-dōn'): to pardon or overlook a fault.

- (a) ■ Infected wounds can be *cauterized* by (a) burning, (b) ice cubes. ()
 ■ When a father shrugs off his son's vandalism, he is said to _____ [condone / canonize] it.
 condone
 cauterize ■ A white-hot needle was used to *cau* _____ the ugly scratch.

- condone ■ Though Gauguin was an inspired artist, many cannot *con* _____ his desertion of his family.
 cauterize ■ The army surgeon's failure to *c* _____ Fenwick's bullet wound cannot be _____ *ed*.
 condoned

11. **decimate** (des'ə-māt'): to kill many of.
 12. **deify** (dē'ə-fī'): to make a god of; to exalt and idealize.

- deify ■ We tend to _____ [decimate / deify] our top athletes.
 ■ A heavyweight champion is not a god, and we should not *d* _____ him.
 deify

- decimate ■ With the hydrogen bomb any two nations can _____ [decimate / deify] each other more efficiently.

- decimate ■ We gave the South Sea natives the benefits of our modern "syphilization" and managed to *dec* _____ them.

- deify ■ It was the habit of the ancient Greeks to *de* _____ the sun, the moon, and the winds; it was also their habit to *dec* _____ their enemies.
 decimate

QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- | | | |
|--------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. (d) | () 1. canonize | a. to shrug off a fault |
| 2. (b) | () 2. canvass | b. to check opinions of an area |
| 3. (e) | () 3. cauterize | c. to slay large numbers |
| 4. (a) | () 4. condone | d. to raise to sainthood |
| 5. (c) | () 5. decimate | e. to sear a wound |
| 6. (f) | () 6. deify | f. to treat as a god |

13. **disconcert** (dis'kən-sŭrt'): to embarrass; to confuse; to upset.
 14. **disparage** (dis-par'ij): to belittle; to speak of with contempt.

disparage ■ To belittle an effort is to _____ [condone / disparage] it.

disconcert ■ Jeering at a speaker tends to _____ [deify / disconcert] him.

disconcert ■ Finding half a worm in my apple was enough to *dis*_____ me.

disparage ■ Don't *dis*_____ the restaurant coffee—it's quite good compared to the doughnut.

disparage, disconcert ■ The clarinet duet sounded like cats fighting, but let's not _____ *ge* it or we may _____ *ert* the young artists.

15. **disseminate** (di-sem'ə-nāt'): to scatter everywhere; to spread, as if sowing.
 16. **elucidate** (i-lōō'si-dāt'): to make clear; to explain.

(b) ■ To *elucidate* a literary passage is (a) to disparage it, (b) to clarify its meaning. ()

(b) ■ To *disseminate* propaganda is (a) to stifle it, (b) to spread it. ()

elucidate ■ This poem sounds like jabberwocky. Please *el*_____ it, Sheldon.

disseminate ■ A helicopter was used to drop and *dis*_____ circulars advertising Anti-Litter Week.

disseminate

■ The Internal Revenue Service loved to *dis*_____ among common citizens a tax form that only a genius could *el*_____.

elucidate

17. **expurgate** (ek'spər-gāt'): to remove obscene or objectionable matter; to purge.

18. **extradite** (ek'strā-dīt'): to return a fugitive to another state or nation.

(a)

■ The PTA members *expurgated* our class play. In other words, they (a) cleaned it up, (b) added a few dirty words. ()

(b)

■ France promised to *extradite* Killer McGee. This means he will be (a) executed there, (b) shipped back to us. ()

extradite

■ Argentina was requested by Israel to *ex*_____ a Nazi war criminal.

expurgate

■ Censors used a blue pencil to *ex*_____ the naughty lines.

extradite

■ Some countries refuse to *ex*_____ political refugees; some show Hollywood films but will *ex*_____ the kissing scenes.

expurgate

QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- | | | |
|--------|--------------------|--|
| 1. (d) | () 1. elucidate | a. to return a fugitive across borders |
| 2. (e) | () 2. expurgate | b. to spread everywhere |
| 3. (a) | () 3. extradite | c. to speak slightly of |
| 4. (f) | () 4. disconcert | d. to clarify |
| 5. (c) | () 5. disparage | e. to eliminate objectionable passages |
| 6. (b) | () 6. disseminate | f. to embarrass |

19. **haggle**: to argue in petty fashion about terms and prices.
 20. **heckle**: to harass with questions and sarcastic remarks.

(b)

■ Those who *haggle* at a garage sale are probably discussing (a) politics, (b) prices. ()

(a)

■ To *heckle* the chairman is to shower him with words of (a) sarcasm, (b) praise. ()

- haggle ■ Natives in the marketplace would *hag* _____ ten minutes over the price of a fish.
- heckle ■ Spectators in Hyde Park who disagree with speakers will mercilessly *hec* _____ them.
- heckle ■ The crowd began to *h* _____ the orator; meanwhile, the haggle peddler and the hippie continued to *h* _____ for the overripe cantaloupe.
21. **immobilize** (i-mō'bā-līz'): to make unable to move; to fix in place.
22. **impeach**: to accuse an official of wrongdoing.
- President Andrew Johnson was *impeached*; this means that he was (a) guilty, (b) accused. ()
- If the governor has misused the funds, we should *imp* _____ him.
- To *immobilize* a broken leg is (a) to exercise it, (b) to keep it from moving. ()
- The police officer pulled Nick's arms back so as to *im* _____ him.
- One columnist predicts that we will *im* _____ Senator Swindle, convict him, and send him to a prison cell to *im* _____ him.
23. **intimidate** (in-tim'i-dāt'): to make timid; to control action by inducing fear.
24. **laud** (lôd): to praise.
- Bugsy's scowl and brass knuckles were enough to _____ [intimate / intimidate] me.
- If critics *laud* your performance, they are (a) praising it, (b) knocking it. ()
- Some artists have to die before anyone will *l* _____ them for their accomplishments.
- Drive a compact car in heavy traffic and the huge trucks will *int* _____ you.

- laud ■ Belinda saved the hikers' lives, and our newspapers all *l* _____ her bravery. She did not let the grizzly bears
- intimidate *int* _____ her.

QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- | | | |
|--------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. (e) | () 1. impeach | a. to quibble about prices |
| 2. (b) | () 2. intimidate | b. to control by fear |
| 3. (d) | () 3. laud | c. to annoy with sarcastic remarks |
| 4. (a) | () 4. haggle | d. to heap praises on |
| 5. (c) | () 5. heckle | e. to accuse of misconduct |
| 6. (f) | () 6. immobilize | f. to eliminate movement |
-
25. **orient** (ôr'ē-ənt): to adjust to a situation.
26. **ostracize** (os'trə-sīz'): to exclude from society; to banish.
- When a person is shunned by others, he is said to be _____ [extradited / ostracized].
- In your first days of work at the stock exchange, you will try to _____ [alienate / orient] yourself.
- The new clerk at the department store didn't know a lace curtain from a lace panty. He was not yet _____ *ed*.
- Jasper was a sneak and a tattletale, so his fellow workers began to *os* _____ him.
- Every year this college must *or* _____ a new class of freshmen and must hope that each newcomer will be accepted, not _____ *ed*, by campus groups.
27. **pander**: to help satisfy the base desires of others.
28. **procrastinate** (prō-kras'tə-nāt'): to delay, to postpone action.
- Dope pushers, bootleggers, and prostitutes _____ [pander / don't pander] to the vices of others.
- No lust or desire is so low but that someone will *pa* _____ to it.

- (b) ■ Elmer *procrastinates*, repeating, (a) "Let's do it now," (b) "Let's wait." ()
- procrastinate ■ Huge term reports are due soon, so don't *pro*_____.
- procrastinate ■ Our town drunkard gets up early; he does not *pr*_____.
- pander ■ By nine a.m. he has found a bartender to *pa*_____ to his thirst.
29. **prognosticate** (prog-nos'tə-kāt'): to predict; to foretell.
30. **rant**: to speak wildly; to rave.
- (a) ■ Every day the newspaper *prognosticates* (a) the weather, (b) accidents and crimes. ()
- (b) ■ To *rant* is to speak (a) logically, (b) loudly and wildly. ()
- rant ■ Julius mounted the soapbox and began to fling his arms around and *ra*_____.
- prognosticate ■ Madame Zaza used a crystal ball to *pro*_____ the misfortunes ahead.
- rant ■ Professor Schluck would glare at us and *r*_____ about our lack of discipline; then he would *pro*_____ our final reward—on the gallows.

QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- | | | |
|--------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. (b) | () 1. procrastinate | a. to serve the low desires of others |
| 2. (e) | () 2. prognosticate | b. to put off taking action |
| 3. (d) | () 3. rant | c. to adjust to surroundings |
| 4. (c) | () 4. orient | d. to talk wildly and noisily |
| 5. (f) | () 5. ostracize | e. to predict future events |
| 6. (a) | () 6. pander | f. to shut out from society |

31. **raze** (rāz): to tear to the ground; to demolish.
32. **recant** (ri-kant'): to renounce formally one's previous statements.
- (b) ■ To *recant* is (a) to add overwhelming evidence, (b) to take back one's words. ()
- raze ■ To improve our city we should first _____ [raise / raze] more condemned tenements.
- recant ■ Galileo asserted that the earth revolved around the sun, but he was forced by the Church to *re*_____.
- raze ■ Let's *ra*_____ the old barn, Hiram, and build a newfangled garage.
- raze ■ Mayor Gronk promised to *ra*_____ all unsafe buildings, but when his own hotel was condemned, he decided to
- recant *re*_____.
33. **simulate** (sim'yə-lāt'): to pretend; to imitate; to counterfeit.
34. **slander**: to utter falsehoods injuring someone's reputation.
- (b) ■ "Real simulated pearls," recently advertised for \$15.95, are (a) genuine pearls, (b) imitations. ()
- simulate ■ Death and agony, says Emily Dickinson, are genuine and not easy to *sim*_____.
- slander ■ To print damaging lies about somebody is to libel; to speak such lies is to *sla*_____.
- slander ■ Call the tax assessor a "bribe-happy reptile" and he'll sue you for *sl*_____.
- simulate ■ Thomas Paine had many enemies, and when he died a few tried to *sim*_____ grief and others continued to
- slander *sl*_____ him.
35. **smirk**: to smile in a conceited or affected manner.
36. **supersede** (sūp'pər-sēd'): to take the place of; to replace; to supplant.
- (b) ■ As a news reporter you would be insulting the guest of honor if you wrote that he (a) smiled, (b) smirked. ()
- (b) ■ If Plan X *supersedes* Plan W, then (a) both plans are in effect, (b) only Plan X is in effect. ()

supersede

smirk

supersede

smirk

- Yesterday's orders are void because today's orders *sup*_____ them.
- Posing for the camera, most tourists will stand in front of a museum and *sm*_____.
- When Dora told Moose, the big fullback, that he was going to *su*_____ everybody else in her affections, he could only scratch his ear and *sm*_____.

QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- | | | |
|--------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. (b) | () 1. raze | a. to take the place of |
| 2. (c) | () 2. recant | b. to tear down |
| 3. (d) | () 3. simulate | c. to take back what was said |
| 4. (f) | () 4. slander | d. to imitate |
| 5. (e) | () 5. smirk | e. to smile in a silly way |
| 6. (a) | () 6. supersede | f. to utter defamatory remarks |

REVIEW TEST

Write the word studied in this chapter that will complete the sentence.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| _____ | 1. Heat the iron! We must [ca-t-z-] the wound. |
| _____ | 2. This passage in Homer is Greek to me. Please [el-d-t-]. |
| _____ | 3. Adding chicory will merely [ad-lt-] this pure coffee. |
| _____ | 4. Calling him a dirty thief is [sl-d-]. |
| _____ | 5. My term paper is due. Oh, why did I [pr-c-t-]? |
| _____ | 6. Our governor is corrupt. We must [imp-] him. |
| _____ | 7. We ignore the live artist. He dies and we [l-d] his works. |
| _____ | 8. In Morocco one is expected to [h-gl-] over rug prices. |
| _____ | 9. I want a candid camera shot. Please don't [sm-k]. |
| _____ | 10. Sally sprayed the ants and managed to [dec-] them. |
| _____ | 11. He'd become St. Buster if the Church would [can-] him. |
| _____ | 12. Your leg is broken. We'll use splints to [im-b-z-] it. |
| _____ | 13. Praise your spouse in public. Never [dis-ge] her. |
| _____ | 14. What a mimic! She can [sim-t-] the sound of a dog-cat fight. |
| _____ | 15. "Trigger" Sloan is a killer. Why did the jury [a-q-t] him? |
| _____ | 16. Ohio wants the fugitive and has asked Utah to [ex-d-] him. |
| _____ | 17. At a new school you need a week to [or-t] yourself. |
| _____ | 18. Never have so many economists tried to [prog-] future economic trends. We need an excess prophets' tax. |

Matching. Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| () 19. blaspheme | a. to taunt and annoy a speaker |
| () 20. canvass | b. to put up a tent |
| () 21. condone | c. to meditate |
| () 22. heckle | d. to excuse a fault |
| () 23. ostracize | e. to satisfy vulgar desires of others |
| () 24. pander | f. to swear profanely |
| () 25. rant | g. to lease to a tenant |
| | h. to check district opinions |
| | i. to shun socially |
| | j. to speak wildly |



KEY TO REVIEW TEST

Check your test answers with the following key. Deduct 4% per error from a possible 100%.

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------|
| 1. cauterize | 10. decimate | 19. (f) |
| 2. elucidate | 11. canonize | 20. (h) |
| 3. adulterate | 12. immobilize | 21. (d) |
| 4. slander | 13. disparage | 22. (a) |
| 5. procrastinate | 14. simulate | 23. (i) |
| 6. impeach | 15. acquit | 24. (e) |
| 7. laud | 16. extradite | 25. (j) |
| 8. haggle | 17. orient | |
| 9. smirk | 18. prognosticate | |

Score: _____%



SUPPLEMENTARY EXERCISE

Fill in the blank with the verb that fits the definition. Although these verbs were not defined in this chapter, you should recognize most of them. Check your answers with the key at the end of the exercise. Use your dictionary to study any unknown words.

■ atrophy, belie, browbeat, corroborate, covet

1. _____ to bully; to intimidate
2. _____ to confirm; to make more certain
3. _____ to prove false
4. _____ to desire what belongs to another
5. _____ to wither; to waste away

■ decry, deploy, dismantle, edify, emulate

6. _____ to instruct; to enlighten spiritually
7. _____ to imitate so as to equal or excel
8. _____ to spread out forces according to plan
9. _____ to denounce; to condemn; to disparage
10. _____ to strip of equipment; to disassemble

■ epitomize, equivocate, implicate, impoverish, jettison

11. _____ to represent the essence of
12. _____ to be ambiguous purposely; to hedge; to mislead
13. _____ to make poor; to reduce to poverty
14. _____ to throw cargo overboard in an emergency
15. _____ to show to be involved; to entangle

■ mollify, osculate, rankle, retaliate, retrench

16. _____ to kiss
17. _____ to cause resentment; to fester; to irritate
18. _____ to pay back injury for injury; to revenge
19. _____ to make less angry; to soothe; to appease
20. _____ to cut expenses; to economize

■ scrutinize, skulk, swelter, thwart, tipple

21. _____ to prevent from accomplishing a purpose; to hinder
22. _____ to drink liquor frequently
23. _____ to move about furtively; to lurk; to shirk
24. _____ to examine carefully; to look at closely
25. _____ to suffer or perspire from oppressive heat

KEY TO SUPPLEMENTARY EXERCISE

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. browbeat | 10. dismantle | 19. mollify |
| 2. corroborate | 11. epitomize | 20. retrench |
| 3. belie | 12. equivocate | 21. thwart |
| 4. covet | 13. impoverish | 22. tipple |
| 5. atrophy | 14. jettison | 23. skulk |
| 6. edify | 15. implicate | 24. scrutinize |
| 7. emulate | 16. osculate | 25. swelter |
| 8. deploy | 17. rankle | |
| 9. decry | 18. retaliate | |

Score: _____%



PART 2