

The following chart outlines the key points that you should remember about Vocabulary from Context questions.

KEY POINTS FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING VOCABULARY FROM CONTEXT	
FREQUENCY	3–5 questions per reading passage
WHERE TO FIND THE ANSWER	The word is highlighted in the passage. Most of the information needed to answer the question is in the context of the sentence in which the word is located. Occasionally, you may need to read a sentence before or after the highlighted word to help you choose the best answer.
HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTION	1. Read the entire sentence that the highlighted vocabulary word is in; see if the meaning is easy to understand. 2. Determine the function of the word (part of speech) in the sentence and its relationship to other words. 3. Identify any conjunctions or transitional words or phrases that can clarify the meaning of the highlighted word or its relationship to other words. 4. Identify any words or phrases in the sentence that might be synonyms or antonyms of the word in the question. 5. When necessary, read the sentences immediately before and after the highlighted word for more information.

In the exam, you may be able to eliminate incorrect answer choices by understanding what is wrong with them.

For vocabulary questions, incorrect answer choices may:

- be one definition of the word, but not the correct one in the context of the passage, which is using another definition of the word.
- be an antonym.
- be another word that could fit into the sentence, but does not match the actual meaning of the word in the question.

READING EXERCISE 1: Study each of the passages and choose the best answers to the questions that follow.

PASSAGE ONE (Questions 1–8)

Paragraph

Air Pollution

- 1▶ While air pollution is not entirely restricted to man-made substances, in the vast majority of areas where it is a problem, human activity has been the primary cause. The Industrial Revolution, which took place from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, generated the first **notable** increase of air pollution. As the use of coal became widespread to fuel factories and heat homes during this period, residents of large cities began to notice a smoky haze that hung over their heads. This haze was termed "smog" in the early twentieth century by Dr. Henry Antoine Des Voeux, who spoke at a public health meeting about the combination of smoke and fog that had **adversely** affected the health of London citizens.

- 2▶ Further modernization, especially of transportation, has led to smog being introduced into suburban and

While context clues can help you determine which answer choice is correct, it is not the only vocabulary skill you should rely on. The TOEFL iBT® test does include vocabulary questions in which they expect you to already know the meaning of the highlighted word without the use of context clues.

rural environments. The extensive rail system that started expanding in the late 1800s across the United States conveyed people and cargo to distant locations while the trains simultaneously puffed clouds of coal-produced smog along their path. The introduction of automobiles with oil as their fuel source compounded the issue by allowing individuals to add to the steadily increasing amount of air pollution. Personal vehicles permitted couples and families to travel long distances more easily, and promoted the settlement of previously untouched areas. An ever-growing global network of roads, and the proliferation of affordable vehicles have allowed air pollution to impact areas once considered safe from its effects.

3▶ Today, the oxidation of exhaust gases from cars and trucks is one of the primary sources of the world's pollution. This foggy vapor, poised over some of the world's largest cities, and growing to include smaller ones, is more accurately called "photochemical smog." It results from chemical reactions that take place in the air, using the energy of sunlight. The production of smog begins when gases are created in the cylinders of vehicle engines. In these cylinders, oxygen and nitrogen gas combine as the fuel burns to form nitric oxide (NO), a colorless gas. The nitric oxide is forced out into the air through the vehicle tailpipe along with other gases.

4▶ When the gas reaches the air, it comes into contact with available oxygen from the atmosphere and combines with the oxygen to produce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), which is a gas with a brownish hue. This nitrogen dioxide plays a role in the formation of acid rain in wetter or more humid climates and tends to decompose back into nitric acid as it releases an oxygen atom from each molecule; the released oxygen atoms quickly combine with oxygen (O₂) molecules to form ozone (O₃). The brownish colored nitrogen dioxide is partially responsible for the brown color in smoggy air; the ozone is the toxic substance that causes irritation to eyes.

5▶ In actuality, smog is far more hazardous in warm, sunny, dry weather than during rainy weather. This is because the air in the upper part of the atmosphere can become warm enough in these types of climatic conditions to prevent vertical circulation. Warm air tends to rise, so when the upper atmosphere is cooler than the lower, it pushes the cool air down and the warm air up, carrying whatever pollutants are trapped in the lower level up and away from people. However, when the upper layer of air is as warm as, or warmer than the lower level, the air does not circulate vertically and the impurities remain in the lower level of air that people breathe. The issue is made worse for cities that are in the basins of valleys, surrounded by mountain ranges, because the mountains act as an additional barrier to air movement. Thus, cities that sit in valleys, and are in climates where it is warm and dry for much of the year, such as Los Angeles, suffer the harmful effects of air pollution more than other locales.

6▶ As smog has become an international issue, especially in connection with the potential of global warming—still a controversial and debated concept—attempts to limit its production have intensified. The Kyoto Protocol, named after the Japanese city where it was initially adopted, is the most well-known of recent efforts. The protocol called for member nations of the United Nations to establish policies that would contain, and ultimately reduce, emissions that lead to smog. However, the protocol has had mixed results. While 191 nations signed and ratified the protocol, some did not ratify, or formally agree to, the policy.

Don't read the sentence containing the target vocabulary word only for the word's meaning. Pay attention to the information the sentence is telling you about the topic. This can help you answer other questions on the test.

1. The word "notable" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to

- (A) written
- (B) significant
- (C) measured
- (D) ordinary

2. The word "adversely" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to

- (A) carefully
- (B) accidentally
- (C) medically
- (D) negatively

3. The word "promoted" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to
 (A) encouraged
 (B) announced
 (C) blocked
 (D) lifted
4. The word "poised" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to
 (A) interacting
 (B) sitting
 (C) blowing
 (D) poisoning
5. The word "hue" in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to
 (A) color
 (B) odor
 (C) thickness
 (D) smoke
6. The word "hazardous" in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to
 (A) healthy
 (B) safe
 (C) dangerous
 (D) visible
7. The word "intensified" in paragraph 6 is closest in meaning to
 (A) calmed
 (B) lengthened
 (C) aggravated
 (D) strengthened
8. The word "protocol" in paragraph 6 is closest in meaning to
 (A) manners
 (B) agreement
 (C) law
 (D) preciseness

PASSAGE TWO (Questions 9–16)

Paragraph

Autism

- 1▶ Autism is one of a group of developmental disorders that are characterized by severe behavioral abnormalities across the following primary areas of functioning: social development, communication, and behavior. While it is a complex syndrome that is not currently well understood, autism seems to affect the processing of information in the brain by somehow disrupting the organization of the nervous system and the connections within it. In addition, there appears to be a genetic component to autism. However, it is not clear whether the causes of autism are gene mutations or highly unusual combinations of typical genetic variants. What is clear is that autistic sufferers perceive and react to normal stimuli in ways that are not thought of as typical by most of society.
- 2▶ The uncertain origins of autism often lead to controversy regarding its diagnosis. Part of the problem with diagnosing autism is that many of its defining traits commonly occur in the general population. For example, autistic toddlers, ages one to three, tend to make less eye contact and show lower ability to express themselves nonverbally than other young children of the same age. However, two- to three-year olds that have been raised in a highly stressful environment often display similar symptoms, making it difficult to attribute the behavior to a definite cause. In addition, older children and young adults demonstrate behaviors similar to responses connected with other disorders, such as anxiety disorders. Consequently, medical experts look for a broad range of symptoms that typically overlap the three areas of social development, communication, and behavior. When diagnosing autism, medical experts typically observe impaired social function, which manifests itself by a deficiency in social intuition. Autistics tend to smile less often, show decreased instances of eye contact, and respond less often when their own names are called. In addition, they demonstrate lower levels of social bonding, although they are likely to become very attached to their primary caretakers. This lack of social connection means they face

Some words, such as *beneficial* and *violent* have positive or negative meanings associated with them. Understanding whether a word is positive, negative, or neutral in meaning can help you eliminate incorrect answer choices.

Become familiar with Coxhead's Academic Word List (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/>). It will help you understand the TOEFL iBT® test passages better, and more specifically, help you to answer the vocabulary questions.

challenges in terms of making and maintaining friendships, which can result in higher levels of loneliness for them than their non-autistic peers.

- 3▶ An inability to develop **sufficient** natural speech to communicate at a level that meets their needs is another common symptom of the disorder. This symptom can often present itself in the first year of an infant's life, and is characterized by lower levels of common infant sounds, known as babbling, as well as unusual body language and reduced response to speech and movement directed at the autistic infant. The lack of communication skills may intensify as the child approaches the second and third year of life, displaying itself in lower levels of consonant, and word formation, along with less integration of words and corresponding movements. At this stage, many sufferers of autism may simply repeat the words they hear, a condition called echolalia, rather than **spontaneously** forming responses to speech directed at or around them.
- 4▶ Another hallmark of the condition is that autistic toddlers tend to **engage in** repetitive behavior that may be limited in scope. These behaviors can become ritualistic or compulsive in nature, meaning that the sufferer has to follow certain patterns of behavior in a certain arrangement, in order to maintain a sense of comfort and security in his environment. This tendency to repeat behaviors is often linked to a resistance to change, whether it is of schedules, immediate surroundings, or even objects within particular surroundings. In about 30 percent of autistic cases, certain behaviors can cause injury to the autistic or those around him, such as striking out or banging parts of his body against other objects.
- 5▶ In some cases, autistic children appear to develop normally in their first year, and then regress, though this is not common. Regardless of how the initial stage starts, once it begins, autism progresses consistently throughout childhood without remission. Obvious signs gradually show themselves in the first year of a child's life and become rooted between the second and third years; the disorder **persists** throughout adulthood, though it may present in a less obvious manner.

9. The word "**component**" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to
(A) element
(B) arrangement
(C) ornament
(D) disease
10. The word "**controversy**" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to
(A) discussion
(B) research
(C) agreement
(D) debate
11. The word "**attribute**" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to
(A) pull
(B) attach
(C) take
(D) commend
12. The word "**primary**" in paragraph 2 could best be replaced by
(A) elementary
(B) main
(C) introductory
(D) primitive
13. The word "**sufficient**" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to
(A) important
(B) abundant
(C) enough
(D) successive
14. The word "**spontaneously**" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to
(A) intentionally
(B) naturally
(C) irregularly
(D) repeatedly
15. The phrase "**engage in**" in paragraph 4 could best be replaced by
(A) protest
(B) start
(C) use
(D) determine
16. The word "**persists**" in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to
(A) lessens
(B) worsens
(C) stops
(D) continues

PASSAGE THREE (Questions 17–24)

Paragraph

Parasitic Plants

- 1▶ Parasitic plants are plants that survive by using food from a host plant rather than producing their own food from the sun's energy. Because they do not need sunlight to survive, parasitic plants are generally found in shaded areas as opposed to areas exposed to direct sunlight. The plants can be classified in various ways; one of the most prevalent methods is by determining whether the plant depends wholly on its host (holoparasite) or has some degree of photosynthesis¹ ability (hemiparasite), which allows it to provide some of its own nutrients when necessary. Regardless of which classification a parasitic plant falls under, it does rely on a host plant for its primary means of sustenance. At times it may overtake its host, although the parasitic plant will rarely destroy the host entirely.
- 2▶ In addition to whether the parasite is a holoparasite or a hemiparasite, another important method of classification exists to differentiate various plants. This classification is used to recognize how the plant attaches itself to its host. A stem parasite connects to the host stem, often wrapping itself around the stem, whereas a root parasite joins with the root of the host. In both instances, the parasites attach themselves to the host plant by means of their own modified root system, a haustorium. The haustorium penetrates into the host plant and creates a vascular system that channels nutrients from the host plant to the parasite.
- 3▶ In order for the parasitic plant to have the opportunity to thrive, it has to germinate, or sprout seeds close to the host plant whose nutrients it wishes to draw from. This can happen in multiple ways. New seeds may drop from existing plants adjacent to current host plants and their seedlings, creating an expanding area for new parasitic plants to bloom. In some cases, insects, birds, or small animals may transport tiny seeds from the parasites to new regions, where they may end up in proximity to new host plants that they can attach to for survival.
- 4▶ Once the seeds are in the vicinity of a host plant, they also need a method to determine in which direction to grow to reach the host. Root parasitic plants generally use chemical clues dispersed into the soil by the host plant to determine the direction. For most root plants, they can only grow three to four millimeters without nutritional provision from the host plant, so it is imperative that root seeds fall in very close proximity to the host. Stem parasites, on the other hand, can grow several centimeters on their own, before requiring an attachment to the host plant. Thus, stem parasites do not need to sprout as close to the host as a root parasite does. In addition, while scientists have concluded that root parasites use chemical clues as a guide, they believe that stem parasites rely on odor and light to turn them in the appropriate direction.
- 5▶ Seeds from the dodder, a stem parasite, can remain dormant for up to five years before they look for a host plant. Once awakened, the seed germinates above ground and then rapidly sends out stems in search of a host. A dodder seed has enough autonomous resources within its seed to survive for about six days. During this time, its stems can branch out up to six centimeters to reach a host plant. After the host plant is located, the dodder stem wraps itself around the host stem, moving in an upward direction and attaching its haustoria to several locations along the host plant's stem. In experiments performed with dodders and a variety of compatible host plants, experts have suggested dodders have a means to seek out plants with higher levels of sugar in them, which raises the parasite plant's chances of survival.
- 6▶ There is an additional way in which parasitic plants can be categorized. Certain parasitic plants are considered generalists, attaching themselves to a diversity of host plants, while other parasites specialize in just a few, or even a single, type of host plants. The dodder is a generalist, choosing among several kinds of hosts. The world's heaviest

Do not worry about understanding technical words. The TOEFL iBT® test does not ask questions about technical words. In fact, it generally provides definitions (see the glossary following this passage) for words that are specific to a passage.

flower, a species of rafflesia, is a specialist parasite that flourishes among, and lives off of, only the roots of jungle vines. Each of its ponderous blooms can weigh up to 15 pounds (7 kilograms) and can measure up to 3 feet (1 meter) across.

GLOSSARY

1. *photosynthesis*—a process in which green plants convert water and carbon dioxide into food when exposed to light

17. The phrase "as opposed to" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to
(A) in conflict with
(B) instead of
(C) on the other side of
(D) away from
18. The word "sustenance" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to
(A) sunlight
(B) protection
(C) maturity
(D) food
19. The word "channels" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to
(A) carries
(B) penetrates
(C) creates
(D) prevents
20. The word "adjacent" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to
(A) connected
(B) remote
(C) away
(D) near
21. The word "dispersed" in paragraph 4 could best be replaced by
(A) contained
(B) limited
(C) spread
(D) dug
22. The phrase "branch out" in paragraph 5 could best be replaced by
(A) decline
(B) collect
(C) modify
(D) extend
23. The word "compatible" in paragraph 5 could best be replaced by
(A) suitable
(B) related
(C) inappropriate
(D) solid
24. The word "diversity" in paragraph 6 could best be replaced by
(A) uniformity
(B) variety
(C) adaptation
(D) likeness

PASSAGE FOUR (Questions 25–32)

Paragraph

Edna Ferber

- 1▶ Edna Ferber (1887–1968) was a popular American novelist in the first half of the twentieth century. Growing up as the daughter of an immigrant father and U.S.-born mother, her Jewish heritage caused her to encounter numerous incidences of discrimination, though none were severe enough to hinder her from pursuing and achieving renown as an author. However, it was Ferber's gender more than her background that caused astonishment among the early readers of her stories. Many assumed from reading her first works that the author was a man hiding behind a female pseudonym, a false name, and were genuinely surprised to find out that the author was indeed female. This mistaken identity was a source of pride for Ferber, since she believed that it showed her work to be equal in quality to that of any man, and further reinforced her popularity as she consistently produced stories of the same high level.
- 2▶ Ferber initially planned to be a journalist and embarked on her career by working as a newspaper reporter in Wisconsin. While she was recovering from a period of sickness during this point in her career, Ferber decided to try her hand at writing fiction. Her first novel, *Dawn O'Hara, the Girl Who Laughed*, was published in 1911, when she was only 24 years old. By the following year, the prolific author's short stories were being collected and marketed in book form.

- 3▶ Although Ferber achieved rapid preliminary success with her fictional writing, it was not enough to sustain a living, so she continued in her career in journalism for a number of years after her early stories came out. During this time she was able to expand her newspaper writing beyond the local level to the national level. She covered major media events such as both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions of 1920, which preceded the presidential election of that same year. This work, in addition to her fiction writing, not only permitted her to support herself, but also **bolstered** her reputation as a flexible writer.
- 4▶ Her big break came with the novel *So Big* (1924), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Literature in the subsequent year and was quickly adapted into a silent film. The main conflict in the novel is between a mother who places a high value on work and honor and a son who **repudiates** his mother's values, instead preferring the easier path to fortune and celebrity. Like many of Ferber's novels, this novel features a tenacious female protagonist with strong character who struggles to deal with ethical dilemmas about the importance of status and money. Also like many of Ferber's writings, it contains a male character of markedly lesser moral strength who plays a prime role in the struggle of the female heroine.
- 5▶ Probably the best known of Ferber's novels was *Show Boat* (1926), which tells the story of a Southern woman married to a charismatic but irresponsible man who leaves her with a daughter she must take great pains to support. In 1927, the novel was made into a musical that has **endured** to the present; yet this was a production that Ferber at first declined. Her fear was that the tone and meaning of her novel would be made light of in the contemporary style of musicals being produced. It was only when the producer, Jerome Kern, assured her that the production would **convey** the original intent of her novel, that she agreed to collaborate on the musical.
- 6▶ In addition to *So Big*, well-known novels by Ferber that were made into films include *Cimarron* (1930), which won an Academy Award, and *Giant* (1952). Both *So Big* and *Cimarron* have been remade, with the first "talkie" version of *So Big* in 1932 and a more prominent version in 1953, and a remake of *Cimarron* in 1960.
- 7▶ One can speculate on whether Ferber's tendency to write novels with weak males was a reflection of what she observed in her own life or whether the strength of the female leads necessitated an **equilibrium** found by creating male counterparts for them that were lacking in their morals and work ethic. No definite link has been drawn from Ferber's personal life to that of her characters, since she never married and had no children. Nevertheless, it would certainly not be unreasonable to hypothesize that, within the framework of her writing, Ferber desired to present female role models of strength and independence to young women of her time, role models that they could aspire to become like.

25. The word "incidences" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to

- (A) occurrences
- (B) issues
- (C) problems
- (D) effects

26. The word "consistently" in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to

- (A) occasionally
- (B) stubbornly
- (C) regularly
- (D) rarely

27. The phrase "embarked on" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to

- (A) took a trip to
- (B) started out on
- (C) improved upon
- (D) had an opinion about

28. The word "bolstered" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to

- (A) changed
- (B) damaged
- (C) strengthened
- (D) started

29. The word “repudiates” in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to
- (A) refuses to accept
 - (B) lives up to
 - (C) tries to understand
 - (D) makes the best of

30. The word “endured” in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to
- (A) lasted
 - (B) tested
 - (C) waited
 - (D) limited

31. The word “convey” in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to
- (A) support
 - (B) differentiate
 - (C) transport
 - (D) communicate

32. The word “equilibrium” in paragraph 7 could best be replaced by
- (A) balance
 - (B) uniformity
 - (C) distinction
 - (D) similarity

Reading Skill 2: RECOGNIZE REFERENTS

The TOEFL iBT® test tests your ability to make connections between ideas through the use of pronouns and adjectives. The ideas you are asked to connect may be in the same sentence or may be in two consecutive sentences. You may be asked to determine the referent for a particular pronoun or adjective (the noun or noun phrase to which a pronoun or adjective refers is the referent). The referent usually comes before the pronoun or adjective being used, so it is important to pay careful attention to the context around both the pronoun or the adjective and the referent. Even though there aren't many referent questions in the Reading section—usually 1–2 per test—this is an important skill to develop to help you produce clear responses to the speaking and writing tasks on the test.

Reference Words	
Type of Word	Examples
third-person subject pronoun	<i>he, she, it, they</i>
third-person object pronoun	<i>him, her, it, them</i>
third-person possessive adjective	<i>his, her, its, their</i>
third-person possessive pronoun	<i>his, hers, theirs</i>
demonstrative pronoun*	<i>this, that, these, those</i>
relative pronoun	<i>who, whose, which, where, when, that</i>
quantifier*	<i>one, some, a few, many, several, few</i>
clause subordinator	<i>what, when, which</i>

* These words may sometimes be followed in the question by a noun that is included in the phrase (i.e., *this fact*; *many kinds*).

Strategies to Answer Referent Questions

- Determine what kind of reference word is being used (i.e., third-person pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, quantifier, etc.); eliminate any referents in the answers that do not match the type of pronoun or adjective in the question.
- Determine whether the reference word is singular or plural; eliminate any referents in the answers that do not match in number. For example, *this* = *the theory* is correct; *these* ≠ *the theory* (incorrect).