

Synonyms and Word Choice: Nuance & Register

Worksheet

Synonyms are words with similar meanings, but each has nuances in tone, formality, and context. For example, 'happy', 'pleased', and 'ecstatic' all relate to positive emotion but differ in intensity and tone.

Questions

1. "The weather is ___ today." Casual conversation. Best word?

- A) pleasant
- B) salubrious
- C) nice
- D) propitious

2. "After the accident, she was extremely ___." Formal report context.

- A) freaked out
- B) upset
- C) distressed
- D) bummed

3. Why do synonyms matter?

- A) They sound fancy
- B) They all mean the same, so it doesn't matter
- C) Each carries different tone, formality, and connotation
- D) To confuse readers

4. "I ___ the good news to everyone." Best formal word?

- A) told
- B) spilled
- C) communicated
- D) blurted

5. Choose the best word: "The manager was very ___ with the presentation."

6. Choose the best word: "When I won the lottery, I was ___."

7. Choose the best word: "I'm ___ you could come to the party."

8. Define: happy vs pleased

9. Define: big vs large

10. Define: said vs uttered

Answer Key

1. C) nice — 'Nice' matches the casual register of everyday conversation. 'Salubrious' and 'propitious' are too formal; 'pleasant' is borderline but 'nice' is most natural.
2. C) distressed — 'Distressed' matches formal writing. 'Freaked out', 'bummed', and 'upset' are too casual for a formal report.
3. C) Each carries different tone, formality, and connotation — Synonyms differ in tone, register, and nuance. Choosing the right one makes your message more precise and appropriate.
4. C) communicated — 'Communicated' is formal and professional. 'Told' is neutral; 'spilled' and 'blurted' are too casual/negative for formal news-sharing.
5. Options: happy, pleased, ecstatic Best answer: pleased. Why: In professional settings, 'pleased' is more formal than 'happy' and more measured than 'ecstatic'. It's the right register for a manager's reaction.
6. Options: happy, pleased, ecstatic Best answer: ecstatic. Why: Winning the lottery is extraordinary joy. 'Ecstatic' captures the intensity. 'Happy' would understate it; 'pleased' would be ironic/understated.
7. Options: happy, pleased, ecstatic Best answer: happy or pleased. Why: 'Happy' is casual and warm; 'pleased' is friendly and slightly formal. Both work for inviting a friend. 'Ecstatic' would seem exaggerated.
8. Happy = general positive emotion, casual. Pleased = more formal, satisfied. 'I'm happy' (casual); 'We're pleased with results' (professional).
9. Big = informal, everyday. Large = formal, precise measurements. 'A big dog' (casual); 'A large sample size' (technical).
10. Said = common, neutral. Uttered = rare, formal, dramatic. 'He said hello' vs. 'He uttered a scream.'

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