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Synonyms: Almost the Same

Synonyms are especially important when you decide you need a more exact word or a better word to express your meaning when you are writing or reading. At such times, a thesaurus is a helpful reference.

Because a thesaurus entry usually contains several words that are considered synonyms, you need to also use a dictionary to be sure that the word you choose produces the meaning you want. You cannot be sure that every word in the list will work as a substitute for the one you started with.

For example, if you want to describe a landscape that does not contain a lot of vegetation and other objects, you might think of the word *bare*, but that is not exactly what you mean. The thesaurus lists several words that could be used in place of *bare*: naked, simple, stark, nude, exposed, uncovered, undressed, stripped. Most of those do not seem to fit, but you are not sure about the word *stark*. When you look it up in the dictionary, you find that it means exactly what you had in mind: plain, unadorned.



Use a thesaurus and a dictionary to choose the best synonyms to replace the italicized words in the following sentences. (Remember that one word often leads to another. You may have to go to the next step and look in the dictionary for definitions of one or more unfamiliar words in a definition.)

1. The preacher moved so fast from point to point that Ivan could not easily follow the *lecture*.
a. sermon b. harangue c. speech
2. Between the ages of three and five, Willard had an *imaginary* companion.
a. real b. make-believe c. feign
3. My friend Philomena's grandmother *descended* onto the lawn in a hot-air balloon.
a. crawled b. came down c. climbed
4. Everyone who sees them declares that the Smoky Mountains are a *glorious* sight.
a. strange b. bizarre c. magnificent
5. With the help of an architect, landscaper, and many construction workers, the *enterprising* George Washington Vanderbilt constructed the largest private residence in the United States.
a. inventive b. unusual c. new
6. Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Harry Truman are often described as *humble* men.
a. humiliated b. modest c. subservient

Synonyms: Almost the Same *(cont.)*

7. Socrates was a Greek *philosopher* and teacher.
a. romantic b. thinker c. researcher
8. My mother's voice was rather *shrill* when she told me for the tenth time to do my homework.
a. harsh b. inconsiderate c. noisy
9. A good quarterback should not only have a good throwing arm but should also be *nimble*.
a. willowy b. lively c. agile
10. David did not *quail* as Goliath approached.
a. chill b. shrink back c. recede
11. The *tawny* coat of the young male elk glowed in the Yellowstone sun.
a. fair b. blond c. yellowish-brown
12. As soon as he caught the scent of the fox, the hound let out a *yelp*.
a. shout b. snap c. bark
13. Mr. Chang, our new neighbor, is an *agent* for a life insurance company.
a. representative b. ambassador c. cause
14. The wind was so strong that it broke off a *bough* of our big oak tree.
a. extremity b. limb c. area
15. Many people in California especially think it is sensible to be prepared for the *disaster* an earthquake can cause.
a. tragedy b. bad luck c. rage
16. Saying "yes" to the birthday party invitation will *oblige* you to bring a gift.
a. persuade b. force c. obligate
17. After some *reflection*, Luis decided that he would not go to the party after all.
a. consideration b. likeness c. image