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PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

The pronunciation of the *504 absolutely essential words* included in this book are those used by educated, cultured speakers in everyday, relaxed informal conversation.

Below are a list of symbols; the sound that each symbol represents can be easily understood from the key word in which it is shown.

a	back	ô	horn	f	fall	s	sit
ā	hay	oo	look	g	get	t	tin
ä	car	ōō	too	h	hotel	v	voice
ā	care	oi	toy	j	joy	w	win
e	then	u	up	k	kill	ch	church
ē	easy	û	toot	l	let	hw	white
é	bird	û	you	m	man	zh	leisure
i	it	ou	out	n	not	y	yes
ī	kite	b	bed	p	put	z	zebra
ō	home	d	done	r	rose	ŋ	drink

The unstressed vowel sound is symbolized as follows:

- ◌ for **a** as in around for **i** as in sanity for **u** as in focus
- ◌ for **e** as in glitter for **o** as in complete

INTRODUCTION

This is a self-help book. If you use it intelligently, you will help yourself to strengthen and expand your word knowledge. The words you will learn, moreover, are essential in that they are known and used regularly by educated people. You will find that such words as *squander*, *rehabilitate*, *blunder*, *obesity*, and five hundred more will turn up in your newspapers, in the magazines you read, in books, on television, in the movies, and in the conversation of the people you meet daily.

504 Absolutely Essential Words is divided into 42 lessons, each containing 12 new words. Those words are first presented to you in three sample sentences; next, the new words appear in a brief passage; the last part of each lesson is a set of exercises that give you practice using the new words. One of the most important features of **504 . . . Words** is that each of the new words is repeated over and over again throughout this book so that you will have a greater chance to become familiar with it.

Included are seven Word Review sections, each containing challenging exercises that will help you to test your mastery of the new words.

Newly added are interesting exercises in letter writing and parts of speech that will familiarize you with our basic 504 essential words. Finally, this 6th edition features frequently misspelled words, a Bonus Review, a Bonus Lesson with 125 More Difficult (But Essential) Words, and a new section called Panorama of Words.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

504 Absolutely Essential Words can be used in a number of ways, depending upon the needs and the status of the reader. A student in a high school English class, for example, could work with the book over a period of one school year, learning a dozen words each week for 42 weeks. Pupils who are studying vocabulary in an individualized program can move through the text at their own speed, mastering the new words as rapidly as they are able. Adults, out of school, can dip into the book on a selective basis, paying attention to the new words and skipping over those with which they are already familiar.

The High School English Class Some teachers prefer to set aside one day a week for intensive vocabulary study. At such time the sentences containing the new words are often read aloud so that the students hear them used in context. The definitions may be copied into a vocabulary notebook to reinforce the learning. Next, the accompanying paragraph(s) containing the 12 new words should be read aloud, followed by the exercise in which the blanks are to be filled in. Some discussion of the “Spotlight On” word is appropriate, preceding a homework assignment in which the students compose original sentences for each of the new words.

Independent Study An interesting way to approach **504 Absolutely Essential Words** on one’s own is to take an informal pretest on each week’s words, comparing the definitions with the ones provided in the text. After studying the three sample sentences, the reader should compose several original ones, using the model paragraph(s) for resource material.

The “Spotlight On” word introduces students to the fascinating history of the English language. They are advised to look up other words in each lesson in order to find out about their origin and to expand their vocabulary in the process.

Finally, students who are working on their own should complete the exercises at the end of each section, filling in the blanks and striving for a perfect score.

Repetition The words with asterisks (*) are those that have been taught in previous lessons. They are planted everywhere in the book since the repetition of newly learned material is a recognized road to mastery. If you come across such a word but cannot remember its meaning, turn back to the lesson in which that word first appeared. (See the index on pages 200–202 for such information.)

LESSON

“All words are pegs to hang ideas on.”

—Henry Ward Beecher, *Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit*

Words to Learn This Week

abandon

keen

jealous

tact

oath

vacant

hardship

gallant

data

unaccustomed

bachelor

qualify

1. abandon (ə ban' dən) desert; leave without planning to come back; quit
 - a. When Roy **abandoned** his family, the police went looking for him.
 - b. The soldier could not **abandon** his friends who were hurt in battle.
 - c. Because Rose was poor, she had to **abandon** her idea of going to college.
2. keen (kēn) sharp; eager; intense; sensitive
 - a. The butcher's **keen** knife cut through the meat.
 - b. My dog has a **keen** sense of smell.
 - c. Bill's **keen** mind pleased all his teachers.
3. jealous (jel' əs) afraid that the one you love might prefer someone else; wanting what someone else has
 - a. A detective was hired by the **jealous** widow to find the boyfriend who had abandoned* her.
 - b. Although my neighbor just bought a new car, I am not **jealous** of him.
 - c. Being **jealous**, Mona would not let her boyfriend dance with any of the cheerleaders.
4. tact (takt) ability to say the right thing
 - a. My aunt never hurts anyone's feelings because she always uses **tact**.
 - b. By the use of **tact**, Janet was able to calm her jealous* husband.
 - c. Your friends will admire you if you use **tact** and thoughtfulness.
5. oath (ōth) a promise that something is true; a curse
 - a. The president will take the **oath** of office tomorrow.
 - b. In court, the witness took an **oath** that he would tell the whole truth.
 - c. When Terry discovered that he had been abandoned,* he let out an angry **oath**.
6. vacant (vā' kənt) empty; not filled
 - a. Someone is planning to build a house on that **vacant** lot.
 - b. I put my coat on that **vacant** seat.
 - c. When the landlord broke in, he found that apartment **vacant**.
7. hardship (hārd' ship) something that is hard to bear; difficulty
 - a. The fighter had to face many **hardships** before he became champion.
 - b. Abe Lincoln was able to overcome one **hardship** after another.
 - c. On account of **hardship**, Bert was let out of the army to take care of his sick mother.
8. gallant (gal' ənt) brave; showing respect for women
 - a. The pilot swore a **gallant** oath* to save his buddy.
 - b. Many **gallant** knights entered the contest to win the princess.
 - c. Ed is so **gallant** that he always gives up his subway seat to a woman.
9. data (dāt' ə or dat' ə) facts; information
 - a. The **data** about the bank robbery were given to the F.B.I.
 - b. After studying the **data**, we were able to finish our report.
 - c. Unless you are given all the **data**, you cannot do the math problem.

10. **unaccustomed** (ən ə kəs' təmd) not used to something
- Coming from Alaska, Claude was **unaccustomed** to Florida's heat.
 - The king was **unaccustomed** to having people disobey him.
 - Unaccustomed** as he was to exercise, Vic quickly became tired.
11. **bachelor** (batch' ə lər) a man who has not married
- My brother took an oath* to remain a **bachelor**.
 - In the movie, the married man was mistaken for a **bachelor**.
 - Before the wedding, all his **bachelor** friends had a party.
12. **qualify** (kwəl' ə -fī) become fit; show that you are able
- I am trying to **qualify** for the job that is now vacant.*
 - Since Pauline can't carry a tune, she is sure that she will never **qualify** for the Girls' Chorus.
 - You have to be taller than 5'5" to **qualify** as a policeman in our town.

Words in Use

Read the following passage to see how the new words are used in it.

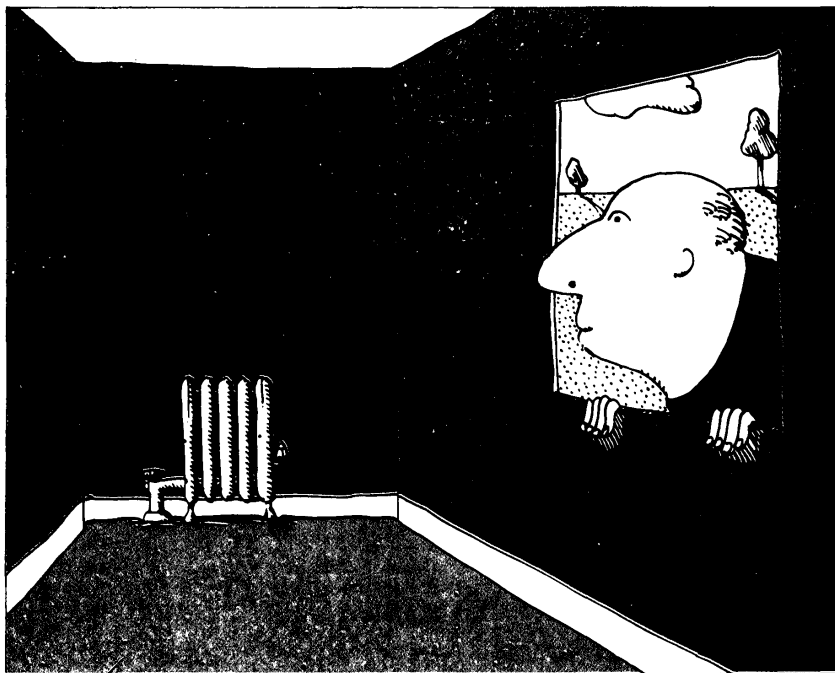
My Brother, the Gentleman

The story of Sir Walter Raleigh, who spread his cloak on the ground to keep Queen Elizabeth from the **hardship** of crossing a muddy puddle, can **qualify** that nobleman for an award as a man of **tact** and good breeding. My brother Kenny, a **bachelor** with a **keen** interest in history, was impressed by that anecdote and thought he might demonstrate his excellent upbringing in a parallel situation. Accordingly he decided to **abandon** his subway seat in favor of a woman standing nearby.

Although **unaccustomed** to such generous treatment, the young woman was pleased to accept Kenny's kind offer. However, her **jealous** boyfriend swore an **oath** under his breath because he thought my brother was flirting with his girlfriend. I don't have any **data** on the number of young men who get into similar trouble as a result of a **gallant** gesture, but it's probably one in a thousand. Poor Kenny! He pointed to the now **vacant** seat.

Picture It

Which of the words studied in this lesson is suggested by the picture?



Fill in the Blanks

Place one of the new words in each of the blanks below.

1. As I looked at all the _____ the salesman showed me, I knew that I was getting more and more mixed up.
2. I used _____ when I told my fat uncle that his extra weight made him look better.
3. When the guard saw that the cot was _____, he realized that the prisoner had left the jail.
4. Although he took an _____ on the Bible, Sal lied to the jury.
5. My aunt was so _____ of our new couch that she bought one just like it.
6. I enjoyed reading the story of the _____ man who put his cloak over a mud puddle so that the queen would not dirty her feet.
7. The loss of Claudia's eyesight was a _____ which she learned to live with.
8. The driver was forced to _____ his car when two of the tires became flat.
9. Betty could not _____ for the Miss Teenage America Contest because she was twenty years old.
10. The blade was so _____ that I cut myself in four places while shaving.
11. _____ to being kept waiting, the angry woman marched out of the store.
12. Because he was a _____, the movie actor was invited to many parties.

Answer key, p. 196

Word Detective

From the list of 12 new words that follows, choose the one that corresponds to each definition below.

abandon	keen	jealous	tact
oath	vacant	hardship	gallant
data	unaccustomed	bachelor	qualify

1. a promise that something is true
2. sharp; eager; intense
3. to desert; to leave without planning to come back
4. something that is hard to bear
5. to become fit
6. wanting what someone else has
7. brave; showing respect for women
8. a man who has not married
9. facts; information
10. the ability to say the right thing
11. empty; not filled
12. not used to something

Answer key, p. 196

Spotlight On

abandon—This is an interesting word with a French background; in that language it meant “to put under another’s control,” hence, “to give up.” In Lesson 19 you will find the new word *ban*, and may discover how it is related to *abandon*. A good dictionary will also show you the connection with other words such as *bandit* and *contraband*.

LESSON

“Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say.”

—Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Words to Learn This Week

corpse
conceal
dismal
frigid
inhabit
numb
peril
recline
shriek
sinister
tempt
wager

1. corpse (kôrps) a dead body, usually of a person
 - a. When given all the data* on the **corpse**, the professor was able to solve the murder.
 - b. The **corpse** was laid to rest in the vacant* coffin.
 - c. An oath* of revenge was sworn over the **corpse** by his relatives.
2. conceal (kən sēl') hide
 - a. Tris could not **conceal** his love for Gloria.
 - b. Count Dracula **concealed** the corpse* in his castle.
 - c. The money was so cleverly **concealed** that we were forced to abandon* our search for it.
3. dismal (diz' məl) dark and depressing
 - a. When the weather is so **dismal**, I sometimes stay in bed all day.
 - b. I am unaccustomed* to this **dismal** climate.
 - c. As the **dismal** reports of the election came in, the senator's friends tactfully* made no mention of them.
4. frigid (frij' id) very cold
 - a. It was a great hardship* for the men to live through the **frigid** winter at Valley Forge.
 - b. The jealous* bachelor* was treated in a **frigid** manner by his girlfriend.
 - c. Inside the butcher's freezer the temperature was **frigid**.
5. inhabit (in hab' it) live in
 - a. Eskimos **inhabit** the frigid* part of Alaska.
 - b. Because Sidney qualified,* he was allowed to **inhabit** the vacant* apartment.
 - c. Many crimes are committed each year against those who **inhabit** the slum area of our city.
6. numb (num) without the power of feeling; deadened
 - a. My fingers quickly became **numb** in the frigid* room.
 - b. A **numb** feeling came over Mr. Massey as he read the telegram.
 - c. When the nurse stuck a pin in my **numb** leg, I felt nothing.
7. peril (per' əl) danger
 - a. The hunter was abandoned* by the natives when he described the **peril** that lay ahead of them.
 - b. There is great **peril** in trying to climb the mountain.
 - c. Our library is filled with stories of **perilous** adventures.
8. recline (ri klīn') lie down; stretch out; lean back
 - a. Richard likes to **recline** in front of the television set.
 - b. After **reclining** on her right arm for an hour, Maxine found that it had become numb.*
 - c. My dog's greatest pleasure is to **recline** by the warm fireplace.
9. shriek (shrēk) scream
 - a. The maid **shrieked** when she discovered the corpse.*
 - b. With a loud **shriek**, Ronald fled from the room.
 - c. Facing the peril* of the waterfall, the boatman let out a terrible **shriek**.

10. sinister (sin' is tər) evil; wicked; dishonest; frightening
- The **sinister** plot to cheat the widow was uncovered by the police.
 - When the bank guard spied the **sinister**-looking customer, he drew his gun.
 - I was frightened by the **sinister** shadow at the bottom of the stairs.
11. tempt (tempt) try to get someone to do something; test; invite
- A banana split can **tempt** me to break my diet.
 - The sight of beautiful Louise **tempted** the bachelor* to change his mind about marriage.
 - Your offer of a job **tempts** me greatly.
12. wager (wā ' jər) bet
- I lost a small **wager** on the Super Bowl.
 - After winning the **wager**, Tex treated everyone to free drinks.
 - It is legal to make a **wager** in the state of Nevada.

Words in Use

Read the following passage to see how the new words are used in it.

Terror in the Cemetery

I like to bet on anything that is exciting, so when my friends tried to **tempt** me with an offer, I took it. The idea was for me to spend a **frigid** December night in a cemetery, all alone, in order to win twenty dollars. Little did I realize that they would use dirty tricks to try to frighten me into abandoning the cemetery, therefore losing my **wager**.

My plan was to **recline** in front of a large grave, covered by a warm blanket, with a flashlight to help me cut through the **dismal** darkness. After

midnight, I heard a wild **shriek**. I thought I saw the grave open and a **corpse** rise out of it! Although I was somewhat **numb** with fear, I tried to keep my senses. Using good judgment, I knew that no **peril** could come to me from that **sinister** figure. When I did not run in terror, my friends, who had decided to **conceal** themselves behind the nearby tombstones, came out and we all had a good laugh. Those spirits that may **inhabit** a cemetery must have had a good laugh, too.

Fill in the Blanks

Place one of the new words in each of the blanks below.

- The chances of my winning the election were so _____ that I decided to quit before the votes were counted.
- I won the _____ that my bachelor* friend would be married by June.
- Kit Carson's keen* eyesight protected him from the _____ in the forest.
- While escaping from the bank, the robbers forced the teller to _____ on the floor of their car.
- Since the shack was vacant,* we did not expect to hear the terrible _____ which came from it.
- With a _____ smile, the gangster invited Martha into his Cadillac.
- You cannot _____ the truth when you are questioned by the keen* lawyer.
- It is said that many ghosts _____ the old Butler house.
- In _____ weather I always wear three or four sweaters.
- After standing guard duty for four hours, I became completely _____.
- As the closet was opened, the _____ fell out, frightening the janitor out of one year's growth.
- With the promise of a raise in pay, my boss tried to _____ me to stay on in the job.

Answer key, p. 196

Creativity Exercise

Now make up your own sentences, one for each of the new words you have just been taught.

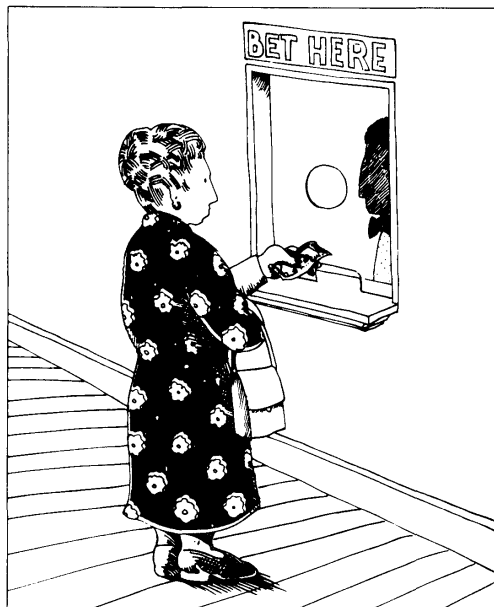
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
 7. _____
 8. _____
 9. _____
 10. _____
 11. _____
 12. _____
-

Spotlight On

sinister—In Latin this word means “on the left.” According to ancient belief, that which appeared on the left-hand side brought bad luck. Another explanation for connecting bad luck with the left side is that the west (left) is toward the setting sun.

Picture It

Which of the words studied in this lesson is suggested by the picture?



LESSON

“Good words anoint a man, ill words kill a man.”

—John Florio, *First Fruits*

Words to Learn This Week

typical
minimum
scarce
annual
persuade
essential
blend
visible
expensive
talent
devise
wholesale

1. **typical** (tip' ə kəl) usual; of a kind
 - a. The sinister* character in the movie wore a **typical** costume, a dark shirt, loud tie, and tight jacket.
 - b. The horse ran its **typical** race, a slow start and a slower finish, and my uncle lost his wager.*
 - c. It was **typical** of the latecomer to conceal* the real cause of his lateness.
2. **minimum** (min' ə məm) the least possible amount; the lowest amount
 - a. Studies show that adults need a **minimum** of six hours sleep.
 - b. The **minimum** charge for a telephone, even if no calls are made, is about \$60 a month.
 - c. Congress has set a **minimum** wage for all workers.
3. **scarce** (skārs) hard to get; rare
 - a. Chairs that are older than one hundred years are **scarce**.
 - b. Because there is little moisture in the desert, trees are **scarce**.
 - c. How **scarce** are good cooks?
4. **annual** (an' ū əl) once a year; something that appears yearly or lasts for a year
 - a. The **annual** convention of musicians takes place in Hollywood.
 - b. The publishers of the encyclopedia put out a book each year called an **annual**.
 - c. Plants that live only one year are called **annuals**.
5. **persuade** (pər swād') win over to do or believe; make willing
 - a. Can you **persuade** him to give up his bachelor* days and get married?
 - b. No one could **persuade** the captain to leave the sinking ship.
 - c. Beth's shriek* **persuaded** Jesse that she was in real danger.
6. **essential** (ə sen' shəl) necessary; very important
 - a. The **essential** items in the cake are flour, sugar, and shortening.
 - b. It is **essential** that we follow the road map.
 - c. Several layers of thin clothing are **essential** to keeping warm in frigid* climates.
7. **blend** (blend) mix together thoroughly; a mixture
 - a. The colors of the rainbow **blend** into one another.
 - b. A careful **blend** of fine products will result in delicious food.
 - c. When Jose **blends** the potatoes together, they come out very smooth.
8. **visible** (viz' ə bəl) able to be seen
 - a. The ship was barely **visible** through the dense fog.
 - b. Before the stars are **visible**, the sky has to become quite dark.
 - c. You need a powerful lens to make some germs **visible**.
9. **expensive** (eks pen' səv) costly; high-priced
 - a. Because diamonds are scarce* they are **expensive**.
 - b. Margarine is much less **expensive** than butter.
 - c. Shirley's **expensive** dress created a great deal of excitement at the party.
10. **talent** (tal'ənt) natural ability
 - a. Medori's **talent** was noted when she was in first grade.

- b. Feeling that he had the essential* **talent**, Carlos tried out for the school play.
- c. Hard work can often make up for a lack of **talent**.

11. devise (də vīz') think out; plan; invent

- a. The burglars **devised** a scheme for entering the bank at night.
- b. I would like to **devise** a method for keeping my toes from becoming numb* while I am ice skating.
- c. If we could **devise** a plan for using the abandoned* building, we could save thousands of dollars.

12. wholesale (hō l' sāl) in large quantity; less than retail in price

- a. The **wholesale** price of milk is six cents a quart lower than retail.
- b. Many people were angered by the **wholesale** slaughter of birds.
- c. By buying my eggs **wholesale** I save fifteen dollars a year.

Words in Use

Read the following passage to see how the new words are used in it.

An Unusual Strike

The baseball strike of 1994–95, which kept the public from seeing the **annual** World Series, was not a **typical** labor dispute in which low-paid workers try to **persuade** their employers to grant a raise above their **minimum** wage. On the contrary, players who earned millions of dollars yearly, who were **visible** on TV commercials, drove **expensive** autos, and dined with presidents, withheld their **essential** skills until the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of our government were forced to **devise** solutions to the quarrel.

The team owners, a **blend** of lawyers, manufacturers, corporate executives, etc., felt that something had to be done about the huge salaries that the players were demanding. Since the **talent** beyond the major leagues was **scarce**, they had to start spring training in 1995 with a **wholesale** invitation to replacement players. The regular athletes returned in late April but there was a feeling that the strike could happen again.

Fill in the Blanks

Place one of the new words in each of the blanks below.

1. The March of Dimes makes its _____ appeal in the early spring.
2. Oil paints _____ easily to form thousands of different shades.
3. The _____ passing mark in most schools is 65%.
4. The producer always had her eye out for young _____.
5. Your gifts do not tempt* me and will not _____ me to change my mind.
6. In the cemetery the corpse* was _____ in the bright moonlight.
7. A _____ day in Florida is full of sunshine and warm breezes.
8. Let's _____ a plan for doing away with homework.
9. Everyone agrees that friendship is _____ for all of us.
10. A sharp rise in _____ prices is bound to affect the prices in our neighborhood stores.
11. The buffalo, which once roamed the plains, is quite _____ today.
12. Government experts told us to buy chicken without realizing how _____ it had become.

Answer key, p. 196

Creativity Exercise

Now make up your own sentences, one for each of the new words you have just been taught.

1. _____

2. _____