



● Sentence Completion 4 (high-advanced GRE level)

Directions: Choose the best word(s) to complete each sentence.

1. Because Richard loathed idle chitchat, he hated that his job as a salesman frequently required such _____.
 - A. inanity
 - B. flattery
 - C. palaver
 - D. rapprochement
 - E. candor
2. The public was outraged at the apparent unfairness of the _____ sentence; however, legal scholars pointed out that it is a judge's job to make such _____ rulings.
 - A. capricious ... judicious
 - B. facultative ... equitable
 - C. dispassionate ... partisan
 - D. arbitrary ... discretionary
 - E. objective ... prejudicial
3. Though the teacher disliked having to _____ the troublesome student, his behavior was so reprehensible that she had no other choice.
 - A. expostulate
 - B. vituperate
 - C. venerate
 - D. obfuscate
 - E. objurgate
4. Nikola Tesla was _____ when it came to business matters, and this lack of insight allowed others to make millions off of his inventions while he died nearly penniless.
 - A. sagacious
 - B. spendthrift
 - C. tenebrous
 - D. prodigal
 - E. purblind
5. Dana believed in the adage that good things come to those who wait; thus, she always practiced _____.
 - A. diligence
 - B. forbearance
 - C. haste
 - D. prudence
 - E. fortitude
6. Because both seemed ancient to me as a child, it was hard to tell who was older: my uncle or the _____ Border Collie he had owned.
 - A. hoary
 - B. obsolete
 - C. sprightly
 - D. archaic
 - E. primordial

Answers and Explanations

1) C

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. In this prompt, the key words are “idle chitchat,” which the prompt describes as something “Richard loathed.” The missing word likewise describes something he loathed or “hated,” namely the fact that his job required whatever the missing word describes. Thus the missing word must also mean chitchat. Choice **(C)** is correct, as *palaver* means prolonged idle talk or chitchat.

(A) is not correct because *inanity* is foolishness or insignificance. While “idle chitchat” could be described as “inanity,” this word is still not the best choice. Inanity is not necessarily related to talking or speech in the way that choice (C)’s word is.

(B) is not correct because *flattery* is insincere praise. Though “chitchat” could involve flattery, the prompt does not specify that it does in this case.

(D) is not correct because *rapprochement* is an establishment of cordial or harmonious relations. “Chitchat” does not necessarily require or establish such relations.

(E) is not correct because *candor* is frankness or honesty in speech, though “chitchat” does not necessarily require any such frankness.

2) D

To figure out what the missing words are, try to predict their definition by using key words from the prompt. In this prompt, the key words can be used to predict the relationship between the missing words. The key words here are “sentence,” “such,” and “rulings.” The sentence in this question is synonymous with the judge’s ruling, so both missing words describe the same thing. Moreover, the inclusion of the modifier “such” in front of the second missing word makes it clear the two missing words describe the same thing. Thus, the correct answer must provide a pair of synonyms. Choice **(D)** is correct, since it is the only answer choice that provides synonyms: *arbitrary* means contingent on one’s discretion or judgment, and *discretionary* also means subject to one’s own discretion or judgment.

(A) is not correct because the two words are not synonymous with each other. *Capricious* means erratic, while *judicious* means sensible. If anything, these words are antonyms, though the prompt requires synonyms.

(B) is not correct because the two words are not synonymous with each other. *Facultative* means left to one person’s choice, while *equitable* means fair. However, a facultative sentence is not necessarily fair. Additionally, the prompt suggests that the “sentence” was indeed unfair.

(C) is not correct because the two words are not synonymous with each other. *Dispassionate* means devoid of bias, while *partisan* means partial to one side. Thus, these words are antonyms, though the prompt requires synonyms.

(E) is not correct because the two words are not synonymous with each other. *Objective* means impartial, while *prejudicial* means related to a preconceived bias. Thus, these words are antonyms, though the prompt requires synonyms.

3) E

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. We know that the student's behavior was "so reprehensible," which means it was bad. We also know that, although the teacher disliked having to do it, she had no other choice but to react to such behavior. Out of the choices provided, the only logical reaction for a teacher to have involves scolding the student. The missing word must likewise mean to scold, so choice (E) is correct, since *objurgate* means berate sharply.

(A) is not correct because *expostulate* means reason earnestly against an action or intention of another person. Thus, it correctly implies that the student has misbehaved, but it is not strong enough to work in context. Expostulating is talking earnestly, not scolding.

(B) is not correct because *vituperate* means address with harsh language, which is close in meaning to "scold." However, vituperate does not have anything to do with punishment, so it is not the strongest answer choice.

(C) is not correct because *venerate* means revere, the very opposite of what the teacher had to do the child whose behavior was "reprehensible."

(D) is not correct because *obfuscate* means confuse or obscure. This is not something a teacher would have to do to a child whose behavior was "reprehensible."

4) E

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. In this sentence, the key words are "lack of insight," a phrase used in place of the missing word in the final independent clause of the sentence. Thus, the missing word must also mean lack of insight, and so choice (E) is correct: *purblind* means lacking in insight or intelligence.

(A) is not correct because *sagacious* means shrewd or wise. This would not describe Tesla "when it came to business matters," since he had a "lack of insight" on the subject.

(B) is not correct because *spendthrift* means wastefully extravagant. Though the prompt does suggest that Tesla was not good with money, it does not say he was a reckless spender. The prompt actually implies that he did not make much money at all from his inventions.

(C) is not correct because *tenebrous* means dark or gloomy. As such, this word would not be used to describe someone's knowledge of "business matters," since one cannot logically have gloomy knowledge.

(D) is not correct because *prodigal* means wastefully extravagant or lavish. Though the prompt does suggest that Tesla was not good with money, it does not say he was a reckless spender. Instead, the prompt actually implies that he did not make much money at all from his inventions.

5) **C**

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. The key words in this sentence are found in the "adage": "good things come to those who wait." Dana "believed in" that adage, and the missing word describes what she "practiced" as a result. One who believed in the adage would be likely to practice patience, so the missing word must mean patience. Choice **(B)** is the best choice, since *forbearance* means patience or restraint.

(A) is not correct because *diligence* means persistence. However, the adage in the prompt relates to patience, not persistence. These two qualities do not necessarily mean the same thing.

(C) is not correct because *haste* means unnecessarily quick action, the very opposite of what Dana would practice as a believer in the importance of patience.

(D) is not correct because *prudence* means good judgment or reasoning. However, the adage in the prompt relates to patience, not reason. These two qualities do not necessarily mean the same thing.

(E) is not correct because *fortitude* means mental strength in facing temptation. Though resisting temptation can involve a type of patience, this word has too specific of a meaning to work in context.

6) **B**

To figure out what the missing word is, try to predict its definition by using key words from the prompt. In this prompt, the key word is "ancient," which is used to describe both the uncle and his Border Collie. The missing word also describes the Border Collie, so it must also mean ancient or old. Choice **(A)** is, therefore, the correct answer, since *hoary* means very old.

(B) is not correct because *obsolete* means no longer in use. Though old things are often obsolete, this word does not work as well in context as does choice (A). One does not usually refer to living creatures as obsolete.

(C) is not correct because *sprightly* means animated or lively. As such, this word would be more likely to describe a Border Collie that was young, not one that “seemed ancient.”

(D) is not correct because *archaic* means marked by the characteristics of an earlier time period. However, a Border Collie could not literally be archaic unless it had some characteristic of an earlier, more primitive species. This word does not work in context because archaic is not quite synonymous with old or ancient.

(E) is not correct because *primordial* means original. Even though the uncle’s Border Collie was old, it was probably not the first or original member of that particular dog breed. Primordial does not have the same meaning as ancient or old and, thus, does not work in place of the missing word.