

# shades of meaning

Some words can be similar in meaning like SYNONYMS. These words can have SUBTLE changes in meaning. They help paint a mental picture of EXACTLY what you want to say!



Humans live in a “color-drenched world.” In fact, there are one million colors that the human eye can distinguish. Other researchers put the number as high as seven million. How we translate colors into language is a challenging and endless task. Did you know that the Inuit people have over 300 words for snow? Why do you think that is? It is because they want to distinguish between subtle, but important differences in color, texture, composition and origin.

Although there may be many different words for the same thing, there are usually slight differences in meaning. For example, “cross” and “furious” both mean angry, but “irate” is more intense than both of them.

Words that seem to mean the same thing often have different shades of meaning. If you study their definitions carefully, you will notice slight differences in meaning from one to another.

Learn key terms and ideas:



**Denotation:** the literal meaning of a word

nosey and curious both mean having an interest in someone else's concerns

**Connotation:** the feelings associated with a word

Being nose y is thought of as a bad thing -- someone who is looking into someone else's business without their permission.

Being curious is more likely to be thought of as a good quality that goes along with someone who likes to learn.

**Synonym:** words with similar meanings

When we look at "shades of meaning," we are examining words that are considered synonyms (same denotation) but have different feelings that go along with them (different connotations).

## Review these examples of shades of meaning:

The words **fast, rapid, speedy, and hasty** are all very close in meaning. Yet their shades of meaning are important to catch if you want to understand and use them correctly.

**Fast** is often used to refer to **a thing that moves**, such as a **fast car**.

**Rapid** usually **describes the movement itself**, such as a **rapid current**.

Something **speedy** is **quick**, but often the word adds the idea that **something is good or successful**, too, such as **speedy service**.

**Hasty** suggests that something **is hurried and done carelessly**, such as **hasty inspection**.

There's no magic way to learn all the shades of meaning that different words can carry. The best way is to read a lot and see how different words are used.

There is a certain skill involved in choosing the most appropriate synonym, as not all are created equal. It is important to consider the connotation of the word because some synonyms can inject a different meaning than the one intended.

For example, one synonym of sad is "gloomy" however, this word carries quite a negative connotation. Depending on the circumstance you can use it, but if you just want to say that someone is "down," then another synonym such as "blue" or "unhappy" would be more applicable.



Synonyms are words that are similar or have a related meaning to another word. They can be lifesavers, especially when you want to avoid repeating the same words over and over.

Let's take a look at some examples: Can you think of a person for each word list?

Outgoing: Friendly, Sociable, Warm, Extroverted

Rich: Affluent, Wealthy, Well-off, Well-to-do

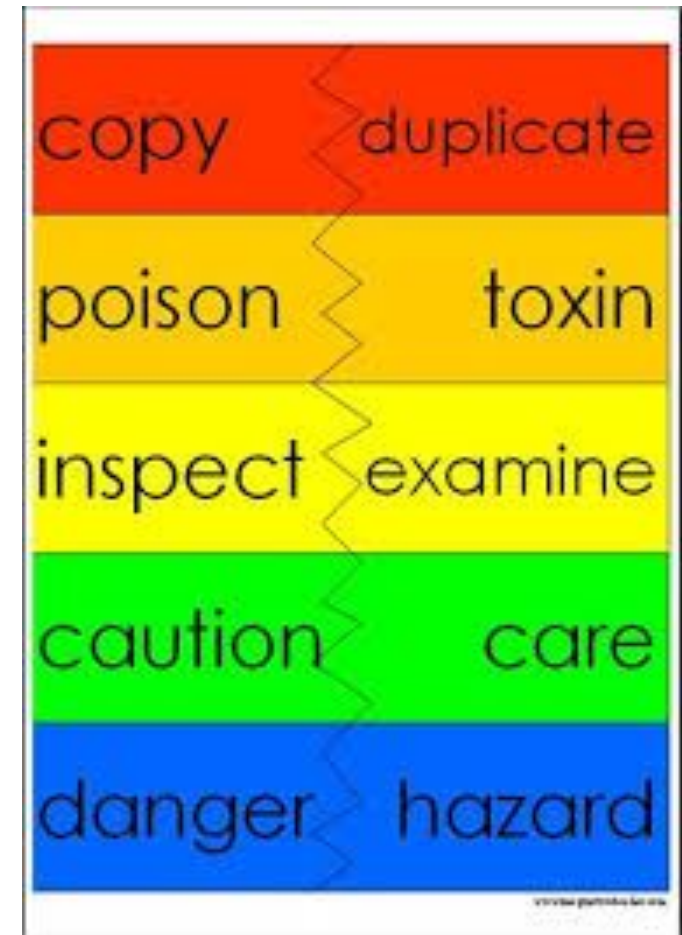
Strong: Stable, Secure, Solid, Tough

Unhappy: Sad, Depressed, Melancholy, Miserable

Lucky: Auspicious, Fortunate

Positive: Optimistic, Cheerful, Starry-eyed, Sanguine

Bossy: Controlling, Tyrannical



# Other ways to say...

**GOOD**

excellent  
amazing  
wonderful  
pleasant  
marvelous  
exceptional  
fantastic  
super  
outstanding  
terrific  
splendid  
stupendous

There are plenty of overused, tired words in English  
– namely adjectives, so why not spice up your language/communication skills with some synonyms?

One commonly overused word is , good.

Let's take a look at some alternatives!

- Can you think of alternatives for these words?

- WONDERFUL:

- INTERESTING:

- ELATED:



# SYNONYMS

## *adjectives*

### **wonderful**

amazing  
awesome  
fabulous  
stupendous

### **interesting**

fascinating  
appealing  
captivating  
engaging

### **elated**

= very happy

(use to describe a  
person's feelings)

euphoric  
ecstatic  
exhilarated

My vacation was wonderful. The hotel was amazing, the food was awesome, and I got a fabulous tan!

My history class is interesting. The teacher's lectures are fascinating, and the class activities are engaging.

Tim is very happy these days. He is exhilarated by his job. Plus, he was elated at the news of his big raise!

- Can you think of alternatives for these words?

- Run:

- Walk:

- Start:

- Choose:

- Reject:

- Hate:

- Want:

- Stop:



# SYNONYMS:

## VERBS

**run**

sprint  
bolt  
dash

**walk**

stroll  
saunter  
amble

**choose**

select  
pick  
elect

**reject**

decline  
refuse  
nix

**stop**

quit  
cease

**start**

begin  
commence

**SYNONYM**  
a word that has  
the same or similar  
meaning as  
another word in  
the same language

**hate**

despise  
loathe  
abhor

**want**

wish (for)  
crave  
desire

Can you think of alternatives for these words?

- Admire:
- Trite:
- Curious:
- Brave:



# Synonyms

**trite**

not interesting  
or effective  
because of being  
used too often

hackneyed  
clichéd  
banal

**admire**

to feel  
respect and  
approval for  
respect  
esteem  
regard

**curious**

having a  
desire to learn  
or know more

inquisitive  
interested  
inquiring

**brave**

feeling or  
showing  
no fear

courageous  
intrepid  
gutsy

Can you think of alternatives for these words?

- Explain:

- Tell:

- Ask:



# **synonyms**

## **verbs**

### **explain**

elaborate  
clarify  
define  
elucidate  
expound  
explicate

### **tell**

state  
declare  
communicate  
inform  
report  
describe  
utter  
voice

### **ask**

question  
inquire  
query  
interrogate

- How about trying to put these words to good use?
- Write a short story for homework, using as many of them as you can!

Maybe you would like to use some of the adjectives to describe some of the people in your life?

