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50 Similar-Sounding Words

1. **affect** / **effect** Context:

The new policy will ___ economic growth.

Answer: affect

Reasoning: After “will” we need a **verb** meaning “influence.” **Effect** is usually a **noun** (“the effect”).

2. **population** / **pollution**

Context: Air ___ has increased in major cities.

Answer: pollution

Reasoning: “Air” collocates with **pollution**, not population.

3. **accept** / **except**

Context: All students attended ___ Ali.

Answer: except

Reasoning: We need a word meaning “excluding.” Accept means “agree/receive,” not exclusion.

4. **access** / **excess**

Context: Students have ___ to online resources.

Answer: access

Reasoning: Access to is the correct collocation meaning “ability to use.” Excess means “too much.”

5. **cite** / **site**

Context: Researchers must ___ reliable sources.

Answer: cite

Reasoning: In academic writing you **cite sources**. A **site** is a place/website/location.

6. **ensure** / **insure**

Context: Safety checks help ___ quality.



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Answer: ensure

Reasoning: Ensure = “make sure.” Insure relates to **insurance** policies.

7. **compliment / complement**

Context: These two methods ___ each other.

Answer: complement

Reasoning: Complement = “go well together.” Compliment = “praise someone.”

8. **practice / practise**

Context: Regular ___ improves performance.

Answer: practice

Reasoning: Here it's a noun (“regular practice”). **Practise** is the verb (more common in UK).

9. **principal / principle**

Context: Honesty is an important moral ___.

Answer: principle

Reasoning: A moral rule is a principle. **Principal** is a person (school principal) or “main.”

10. **advice / advise**

Context: Experts ___ students to manage time.

Answer: advise

Reasoning: After the subject we need a **verb** (“experts advise”). Advice is a noun.

11. **economic / economical**

Context: The report discusses ___ growth in Asia.

Answer: economic

Reasoning: Growth related to the economy is **economic**. Economical = cheap/saving money.

12. **precede / proceed**

Context: The introduction should ___ the main discussion.

Answer: precede

Reasoning: It means “come before.” *Proceed* means “continue/go forward.”



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13. **explicit / implicit**

Context: The instructions were ____ and clear.

Answer: explicit

Reasoning: "Clear instructions" suggests **directly stated** = **explicit**. Implicit = indirect/unstated.

14. **criteria / criterion**

Context: The study used several ____ for evaluation.

Answer: criteria

Reasoning: "Several" needs a **plural** noun → criteria. Criterion is singular.

15. **adapt / adopt**

Context: The company decided to ____ new technology.

Answer: adopt

Reasoning: You **adopt** a system (start using it). Adapt means change something to fit.

16. **mitigate / meditate**

Context: Measures were taken to ____ risk.

Answer: mitigate

Reasoning: "Risk" collocates with **mitigate** (reduce). Meditate = relaxation/thinking.

17. **credible / creditable**

Context: The source is considered ____ by experts.

Answer: credible

Reasoning: A reliable source is **credible**. Creditable means "deserving praise," less common here.

18. **imply / apply**

Context: The results ____ a strong relationship.

Answer: imply

Reasoning: Results **suggest** something = imply. Apply means use/submit.



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19. **evaluate / alleviate**

Context: The new program aims to ___ stress.

Answer: alleviate

Reasoning: "Stress" is reduced/relieved → alleviate. Evaluate means assess.

20. **compile / comply**

Context: Students must ___ with the rules.

Answer: comply

Reasoning: The collocation is **comply with** (follow rules). Compile means collect information.

21. **precedent / president**

Context: This case sets an important ___.

Answer: precedent

Reasoning: Legal cases set **precedents**. A president is a leader of a country/company.

22. **discrete / discreet**

Context: The data was divided into ___ categories.

Answer: discrete

Reasoning: Categories are separate → **discrete**. Discreet means careful/private in behaviour.

23. **coherent / inherent**

Context: The argument was logical and ___.

Answer: coherent

Reasoning: Logical + coherent (clear and consistent). Inherent means "existing as a natural part."

24. **conscience / conscious**

Context: He was fully ___ of the consequences.

Answer: conscious

Reasoning: **Conscious of** = aware. Conscience is your moral sense.

25. **legible / legitimate**



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Context: Handwriting must be ___ for marking.

Answer: legible

Reasoning: Handwriting needs to be readable = legible. Legitimate = legal/valid.

26. viable / violent

Context: This is a ___ solution to the problem.

Answer: viable

Reasoning: A workable solution is **viable**. Violent relates to aggression.

27. random / redundant

Context: Some information was ___ and unnecessary.

Answer: redundant

Reasoning: Unnecessary/extra = **redundant**. Random means not planned/without pattern.

28. inference / interference

Context: Logical ___ can be drawn from the data.

Answer: inference

Reasoning: You draw an **inference** (conclusion). Interference is disruption.

29. allocate / locate

Context: Funds were ___ to the project.

Answer: allocated

Reasoning: Money is **allocated** to something. Locate means find a place.

30. mandatory / monetary

Context: Attendance is ___ for all staff.

Answer: mandatory

Reasoning: Required = mandatory. Monetary relates to money.

31. retain / restrain

Context: The company wants to ___ skilled employees.

Answer: retain



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Reasoning: Keep employees = retain. Restrain means control/hold back.

32. **implement / supplement**

Context: The policy will be ____ next year.

Answer: implemented

Reasoning: Policies are implemented (put into action). Supplement means add extra.

33. **subsequent / consequent**

Context: In ____ years, demand increased.

Answer: subsequent

Reasoning: "In later years" = subsequent. Consequent usually means "resulting from."

34. **persecute / prosecute**

Context: The state decided to ____ the offender.

Answer: prosecute

Reasoning: Legal action in court = prosecute. Persecute means unfairly harm/target a group/person.

35. **stationary / stationery**

Context: Please write the letter on official ____.

Answer: stationery

Reasoning: Paper supplies = stationery. Stationary means not moving.

36. **desert / dessert**

Context: Chocolate cake is my favourite ____.

Answer: dessert

Reasoning: Food after a meal = dessert. Desert is a dry region.

37. **their / there**

Context: ____ are many reasons for this change.

Answer: there

Reasoning: "There are" is the structure for existence. Their shows possession.



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38. loose / lose

Context: People may ___ money through poor decisions.

Answer: lose

Reasoning: Verb meaning “not keep” = lose. Loose is an adjective (not tight).

39. breathe / breath

Context: Deep ___ helps reduce anxiety.

Answer: breath

Reasoning: “Deep breath” is a noun phrase. Breathe is the verb.

40. advise / advice

Context: She gave useful ___.

Answer: advice

Reasoning: After “gave” we need a **noun**. Advise is the verb.

41. rise / raise

Context: The company will ___ prices next month.

Answer: raise

Reasoning: A company **raises** prices (causes increase). Prices **rise** by themselves.

42. borrow / lend

Context: Can you ___ me your notes?

Answer: lend

Reasoning: You lend to someone; you **borrow** from someone.

43. fewer / less

Context: There are ___ errors in this version.

Answer: fewer

Reasoning: “Errors” are countable → fewer. Less is for uncountable nouns.



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44. **affect / effect**

Context: The new rule had a negative ____.

Answer: effect

Reasoning: "A negative ____" needs a **noun** → effect.

45. **emigrate / immigrate**

Context: Many people ____ to Australia for work.

Answer: immigrate

Reasoning: Move into a country = immigrate. Emigrate = leave your own country.

46. **historic / historical**

Context: This is a ____ building from the 1800s.

Answer: historic

Reasoning: Important in history = historic. Historical means "related to history" generally.

47. **eligible / illegible**

Context: His handwriting was ____ and hard to read.

Answer: illegible

Reasoning: Hard to read = illegible. Eligible means qualified (can apply).

48. **composed / proposed**

Context: The committee was ____ of five members.

Answer: composed

Reasoning: "Composed of" = made up of. Proposed = suggested.

49. **council / counsel**

Context: She sought legal ____.

Answer: counsel

Reasoning: Legal advice = counsel. A council is a group/organisation.



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50. **weather / whether**

Context: We are not sure ____ the plan will work.

Answer: whether

Reasoning: "Whether" introduces a choice/uncertainty. Weather is climate.



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Fill in the Blanks: Word Form Grammar Cheat Sheet

PTE Listening Fill in the Blanks (FIB)

Easy Correct Word Form Guide (Student-Friendly)

STEP 1: Look at the Word Before the Blank

This tells you what to write.

You see before the blank	Write this	Example
a / an / the	Noun	the Earth
will / can/ may	Verb (base form)	will increase
is / are / was	Adjective or verb	is important
very / highly	Adjective	very useful
in / on / for / of	Noun or verb + ing	source of energy

STEP 2: Singular or Plural?

Check for number words.

Clue	Write	Example
a / an / each	Singular	a student
many / several	Plural	many students
a number of	Plural	a number of workers



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Example:

quite a number of ____ ✓

Workers

STEP 3: Subject and Verb Must Match

Ignore extra words like of the or with.

Subject	Correct Verb
researcher	studies
researchers	study

Example:

The focus of the study is important.

STEP 4: Check Time (Tense)

Time words help you.

Time Word	Use	Example
yesterday / last year	Past	increased



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now / currently	Present	increases
tomorrow	Future	will increase

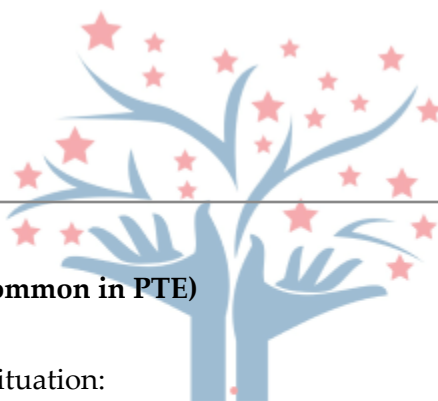
Modal verbs

will / can / may / must

👉 Use verb base form only

✓ will reduce

✗ will reduces



STEP 5: Passive Voice (Very Common in PTE)

This step is ONLY about ONE situation:

👉 when the sentence means “something is done”.

⚠ Do NOT decide passive just because you see is / are / was / were.

Those words are very common and are often NOT passive.

✓ When to use V3 (PASSIVE)

Use V3 (past participle) ONLY when:

- the sentence talks about a **process, system, data, result, method**, and
- the meaning is **something is done** (who does it is not important)



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Correct examples (PASSIVE):

- The system **is used** worldwide.
- The data **are collected** annually.
- The method **was developed** in 2020.
- The samples **were analysed** carefully.
- The report **will be published** next year.

(You can imagine a person, but the sentence does NOT name them.)

✗ When NOT to use V3 (NOT passive)

1 Describing something (adjective)

- The system **is reliable**.
- The results **are accurate**.

2 Naming something (noun)

- This **is a solution**.
- These **are the reasons**.

3 Action happening now (V-ing)

- The company **is developing** new technology.
- The researchers **were studying** climate change.



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If the blank needs:

- a **describing word** → adjective (NOT passive)
 - a **thing** → noun (NOT passive)
 - an **action done to something** → V3 (PASSIVE)
-

Common mistakes

- ✗ is use / was develop
 - ✓ is used / was developed
-



STEP 6: After Prepositions

This step is about ONE thing only:

👉 what comes **after** words like in / on / for / of / with.

⚠ After a preposition, you **NEVER** use:

- verb base form
 - past tense verb
-

✓ **What you CAN use after a preposition**

1 Use a noun



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Examples:

- source of **energy**
 - improvement **in quality**
 - impact **on society**
 - solution **to the problem**
-

2 Use verb + ing (when it is an action)

Examples:

- for **improving** health
 - by **using** technology
 - in **reducing** costs
 - without **considering** risks
-



✗ What students often do wrong

- ✗ for improve
- ✗ of increase
- ✗ in reduce

- ✓ for improving
 - ✓ of increase → **increase** is a noun here
 - ✓ in reducing
-



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Exam shortcut

After in / on / for / of / with:

- If it is a **thing** → noun
 - If it is an **action** → verb + ing
-

STEP 7: Noun, Adjective or Adverb?

Before choosing a word, know **what each one means**.

♦ What is a NOUN?

A **noun** is a **thing**. It can be:

- an object
- an idea
- a place
- a result

Examples:

- energy
- system
- decision
- growth

In sentences:

- The company showed strong **growth**.
- This method saves **energy**.



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♦ What is an ADJECTIVE?

An **adjective** describes a **noun**. It tells us what kind or how big/important.

Examples:

- important
- effective
- significant
- rapid

In sentences:

- an **important** decision
- a **significant** change

👉 Adjectives come **before nouns** or **after is / are / was / were**.



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♦ What is an ADVERB?

An **adverb** describes a **verb** (an action). It tells us how, how much, or how often.

Examples:

- quickly
- significantly
- carefully
- efficiently

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In sentences:

- prices increased **significantly**
- the data was analysed **carefully**

👉 Many adverbs end in **-ly** (not all, but many).

🎯 **Exam shortcut (student-safe)**

Ask ONE question:

- Is it a **thing**? → noun
 - Is it **describing a thing**? → adjective
 - Is it **describing an action**? → adverb
-

STEP 8: Word Families (Same Meaning, Different Form)

Word family = words with the same meaning but different grammar forms.

This step helps when:

- pronunciation is unclear
- spelling is confusing
- you hear the word but must choose the **correct form**

♦ **What is a WORD FAMILY?**

One idea can appear as:



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- a **noun** (thing)
- a **verb** (action)
- an **adjective** (description)
- sometimes an **adverb**

Common PTE Word Families (Very Important)

Meaning	Verb	Noun	Adjective
decide	decide	decision	decisive
change	change	change	changing
vary	vary	variation	variable
grow	grow	growth	growing
produce	produce	production	productive
improve	improve	improvement	improved

How to choose the correct form (student-safe)

Ask ONE question:

👉 What does the blank need?

- a **thing** → noun



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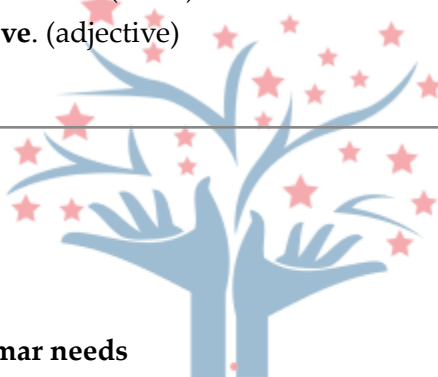
- an **action** → verb
 - a **describing word** → adjective
-

Example sentences

- This **decision** was difficult. (noun)
 - Prices may **vary** each year. (verb)
 - There was significant **growth** in sales. (noun)
 - The system is highly **productive**. (adjective)
-

Common student mistake

- ✗ choosing the word you hear
- ✓ choosing the word the **grammar needs**



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STEP 9: Final Check (5 Seconds)

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Ask yourself:

- Is grammar correct?
- Does it make sense?
- Does it sound academic?

- ✓ Yes → **Type it**
-



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One-Glance Exam Strategy

- 1 Check word before blank
- 2 Singular or plural?
- 3 Match subject & verb
- 4 Check tense / passive
- 5 Does it sound natural?