

You are familiar with adjective opposites like: big-small, tall-short, easy-hard. But discuss the meaning of these more difficult adjectives.

colorful - drab amusing - boring phony - real famous - unknown
wild - tame unique - ordinary shiny - dull
amateur - professional artificial - natural bitter - sweet desperate - hopeful
compulsory - voluntary courageous - cowardly destructive - constructive

Work with a partner. Read these sentence pairs and decide which adjective opposites would fit in the blanks.

1. Lucy decorated her new apartment. She made curtains for all the windows out of bright, _____ fabric. The apartment looks so great now. Before it was all grey and very _____.
2. Military service in some countries is _____, in other words, required. But in the U.S., military service is _____. You volunteer to serve your country.
3. Before Harrison Ford became _____ as Han Solo in Star Wars, he was an _____ carpenter that worked on houses.
4. The teacher was very good about giving _____ criticism. Her comments were always helpful and will make us better writers. Some teachers give _____ criticism which just makes you feel bad about yourself.
5. I expected the lecture to be very _____ because I wasn't interested in the topic. But the speaker told so many _____ jokes and stories that I really enjoyed listening.
6. The _____ soldier ran into the battle to rescue his fallen comrades. I'm afraid I would have been too _____ to act when the bullets were flying.
7. That watch must be _____. A _____ Rolex watch costs several hundred dollars and you only paid \$50.
8. People seem to think animals in the zoo are _____ because they just lie around most of the time. But when the small child fell into the gorilla pen, we saw that these gorillas are still _____ animals that could easily kill a child.
9. I just received a scholarship to the college I want to attend. I had been so _____ to get some kind of financial aid, so that I could afford to go. I'm _____ that the scholarship money will be enough to cover all four years of college.
10. She is an _____ track athlete which means she isn't paid to compete in races. After the Olympics she will probably become a _____ track athlete so that she can earn a living racing.

11. Bill always buys unusual and _____ jewelry for his wife. I feel so bad because I just bought an _____ gold chain for Julia. I hope she's not disappointed that I didn't give her a more creative gift.

12. I bought an old brass bell at an antique shop. It didn't look like much because the finish was so _____. But I spent all day polishing it, and it is _____ and beautiful now.

13. So much of our food contains _____ ingredients that were never intended to be eaten. I try to buy products that say, "all _____", but even then some of the ingredients are not things that you would find in nature.

14. I bought some lemons yesterday that were really _____. I know lemons aren't supposed to taste _____, but these were so tart they hurt my tongue.

Confusing words:

1. The (descent/ decent) from the mountaintop took three days.
2. His mother gave him a (doze/dose) of medicine.
3. His secretary left a (message/massage) for the boss on the desk.
4. The team's (moral/morale) was low after losing all of their games.
5. Could you (overlook/look over) my notes to make sure they are correct?
6. The program will (reply/replay) later this month.
7. The boy (wondered/wandered) through the mall looking for something to eat.
8. My family went on a long (trip/travel) last summer.
9. Ben really enjoys living (lonely/alone).
10. Sara always wears colorful (cloths/ clothes).
11. The elephant broke (lose/ loose) and ran through the town.
12. John (spoke/ told) me yesterday that he would be leaving soon.
13. New York is located on the east (coast/ beach) of the United States.
14. Mrs. White (lead/led) us through the dark hallway with a flashlight.
15. All the stores will have a (sell/sale) after Thanksgiving.