Easily confused words

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1 Match each high-level pair with the exact distinction.

1 disinterested / uninterested	____	a reduce severity / exert a powerful influence against
2 prescribe / proscribe	____	b impartial / lacking interest
3 comprise / compose	____	c cleverly inventive / innocent and candid
4 corroborate / collaborate	____	d confirm with evidence / work jointly
5 ingenious / ingenuous	____	e open to objection / outstanding or unusual
6 mitigate / militate	____	f consist of / constitute or make up
7 fortuitous / fortunate	____	g occurring by chance / bringing good fortune
8 exceptionable / exceptional	____	h recommend or authorise / prohibit

2 Complete the high-precision collocations.

collaborate | corroborate | disinterested | exceptional | fortuitous | ingenious | mitigate | proscribe

1 appoint a _____ mediator

2 _____ dangerous conduct

3 _____ an account with records

4 _____ across disciplines

5 devise an _____ solution

6 _____ the adverse effects

7 make a _____ discovery

8 demonstrate _____ ability

3 Choose the word that precisely fits the context.

1 An impartial judge must be *disinterested / uninterested*.

2 Regulations may *proscribe / prescribe* a banned practice.

3 Twelve chapters *comprise / compose* the volume.

4 Documents may *corroborate / collaborate* a witness's account.

5 A clever device is *ingenious / ingenuous*.

6 Lack of evidence may *militate / mitigate* against conviction.

7 A chance meeting is *fortuitous / fortunate*, whether helpful or not.

8 Seriously objectionable conduct is *exceptionable / exceptional*.

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4 Complete the review with words from the box.

collaborate | comprise | disinterested | exceptionable | fortunate | ingenious | prescribe | mitigate

A **1** _____ panel reviewed the proposal. The main document and seven annexes **2** _____ a detailed risk plan. Specialists agreed to **3** _____ on testing and devised an **4** _____ monitoring system. The rules **5** _____ monthly inspections to **6** _____ foreseeable harm. Reviewers found one clause **7** _____ because it restricted appeals. It was **8** _____ that the defect was discovered before approval, although the discovery was not accidental.

5 Read the text and answer the questions concisely.

Precision beyond frequency
Some disputed distinctions survive because they perform useful semantic work. 'Disinterested' can identify impartiality, while 'uninterested' describes lack of engagement. Yet dictionaries also record change, and rigid correction can ignore established usage. An editor should examine genre, audience, ambiguity and house style rather than apply a distinction mechanically. Precision is valuable when it clarifies meaning; it becomes pedantry when it merely displays knowledge without helping the reader.

1 Why do some distinctions survive? _____

2 What can 'disinterested' identify? _____

3 What do dictionaries also record? _____

4 Name three factors an editor should examine. _____

5 When is precision valuable? _____

6 When does it become pedantry? _____

6 Correct the confused word and preserve the intended meaning.

1 The neutral chair was completely uninterested. _____

2 The law prescribes the sale of this chemical. _____

3 The archive collaborated her account. _____

4 The chance error was fortunate but caused serious harm. ___

OVER TO YOU

Write a **160-190 word** usage note on four advanced confused-word pairs. Discuss precision, context and legitimate language change.

[ ] Use at least eight target words. [ ] Define each contrast precisely. [ ] Avoid correction for its own sake.

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ANSWER KEY

1 High-level distinctions

1 **b** 2 **h** 3 **f** 4 **d** 5 **c** 6 **a** 7 **g** 8 **e**

2 High-precision collocations

1 **disinterested** 2 **proscribe** 3 **corroborate** 4 **collaborate** 5 **ingenious** 6 **mitigate** 7 **fortuitous** 8 **exceptional**

3 Precise choices

1 **disinterested** 2 **proscribe** 3 **comprise** 4 **corroborate**
5 **ingenious** 6 **militate** 7 **fortuitous** 8 **exceptionable**

4 Review

1 **disinterested** 2 **comprise** 3 **collaborate** 4 **ingenious** 5 **prescribe** 6 **mitigate** 7 **exceptionable** 8 **fortunate**

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 They do useful semantic work. 2 Impartiality. 3 Language change.
4 Any three: genre, audience, ambiguity, house style. 5 When it clarifies meaning. 6 When it does not help the reader.

6 Corrections

1 The neutral chair was completely **disinterested**. 2 The law **proscribes** the sale.
3 The archive **corroborated** her account. 4 The chance error was **fortuitous** but harmful.

Over to you: Answers will vary. Check semantic precision, contextual judgement and reader benefit.