

Words to Know for AP Language

1. Create an index card for each term. On one side, write the word; on the other side write the definition as well as your own example for each.
2. These are due on the first day of class.
3. Expect a test on the terms (very possibly the first day of class), so be sure to study them all summer!

Ad Hominem - An argument based on the failings of an adversary rather than on the merits of the case; a logical fallacy that involves a personal attack.

Allegory - Extending a metaphor so that objects, persons, and actions in a text are equated with meanings that lie outside the text.

Alliteration - The repetition of an initial consonant sound.

Allusion - A brief, usually indirect reference to a person, place, or event--real or fictional.

Ambiguity - The presence of two or more possible meanings in any passage.

Analogy - Reasoning or arguing from parallel cases.

Anaphora - The repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses.

Antecedent - The noun or noun phrase referred to by a pronoun.

Antithesis - The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases.

Aphorism - (1) A tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion. (2) A brief statement of a principle.

Apostrophe - A rhetorical term for breaking off discourse to address some absent person or thing.

Appeal to Authority - A fallacy in which a speaker or writer seeks to persuade not by giving evidence but by appealing to the respect people have for a famous person or institution.

Argument - A course of reasoning aimed at demonstrating truth or falsehood.

Assonance - The identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words.

Asyndeton - The omission of conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses (opposite of polysyndeton).

Chiasmus - A verbal pattern in which the second half of an expression is balanced against the first but with the parts reversed.

Claim - An arguable statement, which may be a claim of fact, value, or policy.

Climax - Mounting by degrees through words or sentences of increasing weight and in parallel construction with an emphasis on the high point or culmination of a series of events.

Colloquial - Characteristic of writing that seeks the effect of informal spoken language as distinct from formal or literary English.

Comparison - A rhetorical strategy in which a writer examines similarities and/or differences between two people, places, ideas, or objects.

Concession - An argumentative strategy by which a speaker or writer acknowledges the validity of an opponent's point.

Confirmation - The main part of a text in which logical arguments in support of a position are elaborated.

Conjunction - The part of speech (or word class) that serves to connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences.

Connotation - The emotional implications and associations that a word may carry.

Coordination - The grammatical connection of two or more ideas to give them equal emphasis and importance. Contrast with subordination.

Deduction - A method of reasoning in which a conclusion follows necessarily from the stated premises.

Denotation - The direct or dictionary meaning of a word, in contrast to its figurative or associated meanings.

Diction - (1) The choice and use of words in speech or writing. (2) A way of speaking, usually assessed in terms of prevailing standards of pronunciation and elocution.

Didactic - Intended or inclined to teach or instruct, often excessively.

Epiphora - The repetition of a word or phrase at the end of several clauses. (Also known as epistrophe.)

Epitaph - (1) A short inscription in prose or verse on a tombstone or monument. (2) A statement or speech commemorating someone who has died: a funeral oration.

Ethos - A persuasive appeal based on the projected character of the speaker or narrator.

Euphemism - The substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit.

Exposition - A statement or type of composition intended to give information about (or an explanation of) an issue, subject, method, or idea.

Extended Metaphor - A comparison between two unlike things that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph or lines in a poem.

Fallacy - An error in reasoning that renders an argument invalid.

False Dilemma - A fallacy of oversimplification that offers a limited number of options (usually two) when in fact more options are available.

Figurative Language - Language in which figures of speech (such as metaphors, similes, and hyperbole) freely occur.

Figures of Speech - The various uses of language that depart from customary construction, order, or significance.

Flashback - A shift in a narrative to an earlier event that interrupts the normal chronological development of a story.

Hasty Generalization - A fallacy in which a conclusion is not logically justified by sufficient or unbiased evidence.

Hyperbole - A figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect; an extravagant statement.

Imagery - Vivid descriptive language that appeals to one or more of the senses.

Induction - A method of reasoning by which a rhetor collects a number of instances and forms a generalization that is meant to apply to all instances.

Invective - Denunciatory or abusive language; discourse that casts blame on somebody or something.

Irony - The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. A statement or situation where the meaning is directly contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.

Jargon - The specialized language of a professional, occupational, or other group, often meaningless to outsiders.

Juxtaposition - Placing dissimilar items, descriptions, or ideas close together or side-by-side, especially for comparison or contrast.

Litotes - A figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite.

Logos - Employs logical reasoning, combining a clear idea (or multiple ideas) with well-thought-out and appropriate examples and details. These supports are logically presented and rationally reach the writer's conclusion.

Loose Sentence - A sentence structure in which a main clause is followed by subordinate phrases and clauses. Contrast with periodic sentence.

Metaphor - A figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something important in common.

Metonymy - A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated (such as "crown" for "royalty").

Mode of Discourse - The way in which information is presented in a text. The four traditional modes are narration, description, exposition, and argument.

Mood - (1) The quality of a verb that conveys the writer's attitude toward a subject. (2) The emotion evoked by a text.

Narrative - A rhetorical strategy that recounts a sequence of events, usually in chronological order.

Onomatopoeia - The formation or use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to.

Oxymoron - A figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side-by-side.

Paradox - A statement that appears to contradict itself.

Parallelism - The similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses.

Parody - A literary or artistic work that imitates the characteristic style of an author or a work for comic effect or ridicule.

Pathos - The means of persuasion that appeals to the audience's emotions.

Periodic Sentence - A long and frequently involved sentence, marked by suspended syntax, in which the sense is not completed until the final word--usually with an emphatic climax.

Personification - A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities.

Point of View - The perspective from which a speaker or writer tells a story or presents information.

Prose - Ordinary writing (both fiction and nonfiction) as distinguished from verse.

Pun - a word employed in two senses, or a word used in a context that suggests a second term sounding like it. Puns are usually used for comic effect.

Refutation - The part of an argument wherein a speaker or writer anticipates and counters opposing points of view.

Repetition - An instance of using a word, phrase, or clause more than once in a short passage--dwelling on a point.

Rhetoric - The study and practice of effective communication.

Rhetorical Question - A question asked merely for effect with no answer expected.

Running Style - Sentence style that appears to follow the mind as it worries a problem through, mimicking the “rambling, associative syntax of conversation”--the opposite of periodic sentence style.

Sarcasm - A mocking, often ironic or satirical remark.

Satire - A text or performance that uses irony, derision, or wit to expose or attack human vice, foolishness, or stupidity.

Simile - A figure of speech in which two fundamentally unlike things are explicitly compared, usually in a phrase introduced by “like” or “as.”

Style - Narrowly interpreted as those figures that ornament speech or writing; broadly, as representing a manifestation of the person speaking or writing.

Syllogism - A form of deductive reasoning consisting of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion.

Subordination - Words, phrases, and clauses that make one element of a sentence dependent on (or subordinate to) another. Contrast with coordination.

Symbol - A person, place, action, or thing that (by association, resemblance, or convention) represents something other than itself.

Synecdoche - A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, the whole for a part, the specific for the general, the general for the specific, or the material for the thing made from it.

Syntax - (1) The study of the rules that govern the way words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. (2) The arrangement of words in a sentence.

Thesis - The main idea of an essay or report, often written as a single declarative sentence.

Tone - A writer’s attitude toward the subject and audience. Tone is primarily conveyed through diction, point of view, syntax, and level of formality.

Understatement - A figure of speech in which a writer deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is.

Voice - (1) The quality of a verb that indicates whether its subject acts (active voice) or is acted upon (passive voice). (2) The distinctive style or manner of expression of an author or narrator.

Zeugma - The use of a word to modify or govern two or more words although its use maybe grammatically or logically correct with only one.