

Usefulness

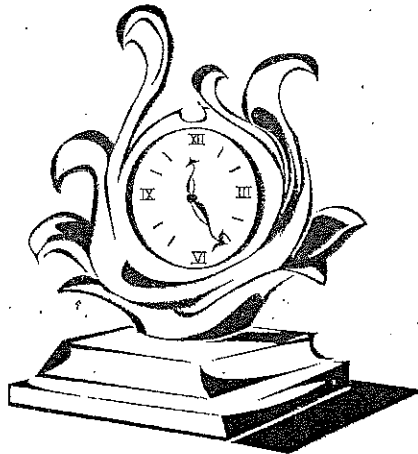
WORD LIST

applicable	expedient	extraneous	functional	futile
obsolete	opportune	pragmatic	relevant	utilitarian

If calling someone “useless” is an insult, then being “useful” would seem to be a good thing, right? But then why is feeling “used” almost always negative? The difference between feeling “useful” and “used” has to do with the context. The words in this lesson will help you express and understand the many aspects of “use.”

- 1. applicable** (ăp`lĭ-kə-bəl) *adjective*
Appropriate or relevant to a situation
 - The new curfew is **applicable** to everyone under the age of eighteen.
- 2. expedient** (ĭk-spĕ`dĕ-ənt)
 - adjective* Convenient and self-serving rather than morally correct
 - To help her election campaign, Representative Carson suddenly found it **expedient** to support lower taxes.
 - noun* A convenience; something used to achieve a result
 - Shopping online has become a time-saving **expedient**.
- 3. extraneous** (ĭk-strā`nĕ-əs) *adjective* from Latin *exter*, “outside”
Not essential or relevant; unrelated
 - The debater lost points for using facts that were **extraneous** to her argument.
- 4. functional** (fŭngk`shə-nəl)
adjective from Latin *functio*, “performance”
 - Able to operate; in working order
 - Our old washing machine is still **functional**.
 - Intended to be useful
 - The clock sculpture was **functional art** because it actually told time.
- 5. futile** (fyōōt`l, fyōō`tĭl`) *adjective*
Not successful; without effect or result
 - Carla made a **futile** attempt to convince her parents to loan her the car.

Expedient is often used to describe a self-serving, unethical purpose or action.



functional art

futility *noun* The height of **futility** is raising your voice when trying to talk with someone who does not speak your language.

6. **obsolete** (ɒb'sə-lēt') *adjective* from Latin *obsolescere*, "to go out of use"

No longer in use or fashion

- Computers have made typewriters **obsolete**.

7. **opportune** (ɒp'ər-tōn') *adjective*

Well timed; occurring at an appropriate or fitting time

- The job offer came at an **opportune** time, for Julia's bank account was almost empty.

opportunity *noun* Jesse took the opportunity to study abroad during his junior year.

opportunist *noun* One who takes advantage of an opportunity, often ignoring moral principles

- Some considered Hal an **opportunist** for making friends only with those who could help advance his career.

8. **pragmatic** (præg-măt'ik) *adjective* from Latin *pragmaticus*, "skilled in business"

Practical; concerned with realities and actual needs (as opposed to ideas or theories)

- Instead of having a big wedding, the **pragmatic** couple spent their money on a house.

pragmatism *noun* **Pragmatism** dictates that people living in cold climates should carry blankets and jumper cables in their cars.

pragmatist *noun* A true **pragmatist**, Kara did not ponder the organization's philosophy, but simply got down to work.

9. **relevant** (rəl'ə-vənt) *adjective*

Related or connected to; important in a given context

- A person's eye color is not **relevant** to his or her musical tastes.

relevance *noun* What he said was mildly interesting, but it had very little **relevance** to the subject of the conversation.

10. **utilitarian** (yūō-tīl'ī-târ'ē-ən) *adjective* from Latin *uti*, "to use"

Designed to be useful rather than beautiful or pleasing

- The first jeep was a very **utilitarian** vehicle: as long as it performed in rough conditions, the soldiers didn't care what it looked like.

utility *noun* The **utility** of an adjustable wrench makes it essential for any workshop.

Irrelevant is the opposite of *relevant*.

The word *utility* also refers to a company that provides something *useful* to the public, such as electricity or water.

WORD ENRICHMENT

Foot words

The words *expedient* and *expedite* come from the Latin roots *ex-*, "out," and *ped*, "foot." Many other English words are formed from the Latin word for foot. A *pedal* is worked with one's foot. Human beings are *bipeds*, meaning "two-footed." A *pedestrian* walks on the street, rather than riding in a car. Even the word *pioneer* comes from this root. It once meant "a soldier who traveled on foot."