

A child wearing a snowsuit on a snowy Detroit street in February is a fairly usual sight. The same scene on a Los Angeles beach would be most unusual. Whether a given situation is considered usual or unusual depends greatly upon the circumstances in which it occurs.

Some activities, though, are usual among all the peoples of the world. Sleeping during the night is an example of an activity practiced by most people everywhere. The words in this lesson can help you understand those things that all people share and those things that give variety to the range of human experiences.

WORD LIST

abnormal
conventional
idiosyncrasy
orthodox
precedent
prevalent
prosaic
quaint
rarity
singular

DEFINITIONS

After you have studied the definitions and example for each vocabulary word, write the word on the line to the right.

1. **abnormal** (ăb-nôr'məl) *adjective* Not normal. (From the Latin *ab-*, meaning "away from," and *norma*, meaning "rule")

Related Words *abnormality* noun; *abnormally* adverb

Example An *abnormal* body temperature is significantly above or below 98.6°F.

2. **conventional** (kən-vən'shə-nəl) *adjective* Customary; conforming to most standards. (From the Latin word *conventio*, meaning "agreement")

Related Words *convention* noun; *conventionality* noun; *conventionally* adverb

Example The *conventional* telephone greeting in the United States and Canada is "Hello."

3. **idiosyncrasy** (id'ē-ō-sīng'krə-sē) *noun* An unusual habit or mannerism of one particular person. (From the Greek words *idios*, meaning "personal," and *synkrasis*, meaning "temperament")

Related Word *idiosyncratic* adjective

Example Michael's *idiosyncrasy* of snapping his fingers while he walked annoyed Roxanne.

1. _____
USAGE NOTE: Compare with *paranormal*, "beyond the range of normal experience or scientifically explainable phenomena."

2. _____

3. _____

4. **orthodox** (ôr'thə-dōks') *adjective* a. Adhering to commonly accepted tradition. b. Adhering to an established religious faith. c. Sound; true; authoritative. (From the Greek words *orthos*, meaning "correct," and *doxa*, meaning "opinion")

Related Word **orthodoxy** *noun*

Example The Berrys maintain the *orthodox* view that children should show respect for adults.

4. _____

5. **precedent** (prēs'ī-dənt) *noun* An action that can be used as an example for subsequent similar cases. (From the Latin *prae-*, meaning "before," and *cedere*, meaning "to go")

Related Word **precedence** *noun*

Example In the Supreme Court, an existing decision is used as a *precedent* for future decisions on comparable matters.

5. _____

6. **prevalent** (prēv'ə-lənt) *adjective* Widespread; commonly occurring; generally accepted or practiced. (From the Latin word *praevalere*, meaning "to be stronger")

Related Words **prevail** *verb*; **prevalence** *noun*

Example Polio is no longer *prevalent* in the United States.

6. _____
USAGE NOTE *Prevail* means "to be most common or frequent" but also "to win out or triumph."

7. **prosaic** (prō-zā'īk) *adjective* Ordinary; lacking in imagination; commonplace. (From the Latin word *prosa*, meaning "prose")

Related Word **prosaically** *adverb*

Example We were disappointed that the well-known graduation speaker gave a *prosaic* speech.

7. _____

8. **quaint** (kwānt) *adjective* Charmingly old-fashioned. (From the Latin word *cognitus*, meaning "known")

Related Word **quaintness** *noun*

Example The *quaint* country inn has fireplaces and quilts in every room.

8. _____

9. **rarity** (râr'ī-tē) *noun* a. Something special or uncommon, usually valued. b. The state or condition of being uncommon. (From the Latin word *rarus*, meaning "scarce")

Related Words **rare** *adjective*; **rarely** *adverb*

Example The bald eagle was once common in North America, but the bird is now a *rarity*.

9. _____

10. **singular** (sīng'gyə-lər) *adjective* a. Out of the ordinary; particular. b. Peculiar; eccentric. (From the Latin word *singularis*, meaning "single")

Related Words **singularity** *noun*; **singularly** *adverb*

Example A *singular* talent for solving difficult cases gained the detective a promotion.

10. _____