

CONTEXT CLUES TO DEFINE NEW WORDS

Use evidence in the text to determine the meaning of words or phrases.

Context Clue Strategy	Explanation	Example
Use the definition	The word or phrase may be defined again in the sentence. Some clues: "Called", "Or", "Also known as", information followed by a comma, etc.	Wendy was known as capricious , with unpredictable behavior that made her mood change quickly.
Compare similar text to determine similar and repeated words or phrases	Analyze synonyms and other words and phrases that repeat the same idea or rephrase the same concept. Some clues: "like," "compared to", "because", "in other words", cause and effect language, use of colons or semicolons, etc.	Jan is a versatile mom; she is great at cooking, the best homework helper, and the best person to talk to after a long day.
Contrast different text to determine the opposite meaning	Analyze antonyms and other words and phrases that describe the opposite idea to help you determine meaning. Some clues: "but", "however", "although", "while", "on the other hand", etc.	One of my friends succumbed to the temptation of a second donut, while the others resisted.
Find specific examples before or after your word or phrase to help clarify	Using examples written in the text, illustrations referring to the text, and other methods, the author can attempt to describe what a word or phrase means. Some clues may be words like "such as", "including", "consists of", dashes (-), colons (:), reference to an image/ chart, a list of information, etc.	Jim excelled in reading, math, and science. So, he decided to compete in the academic pentathlon rather than just choosing one subject.
Use your knowledge of root words and affixes to figure out the word	Determine the meaning of the word by applying the meaning of its affix or root word. Prefixes like in-, dis-, mis-, and suffixes like -ble, -ful, -less, -ly, -men, can help clarify the meaning of the word. *Refer to the prefix-suffix- root list by grade level for grade appropriate applications.	My dictator teacher made me complete an hour of homework tonight. *dict- is the root to say or tell; so presumably this teacher told him what to do.
Use knowledge of grammar rules -parts of speech in the sentence- to determine the unknown word	Use the part of speech- whether a word is a noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, verb, to help determine the purpose of the sentence and meaning of the unknown word.	The school could avert the spread of flu by closing during flu season. *Avert is a verb. Determining other action statements in the sentence helps define meaning.
Use the tone of the sentence or surrounding sentences to help give a feeling to the word or phrase	Determining the general feeling of a sentence or passage can help guess the meaning of the word.	The lugubrious cries of the child matched the depressing whistling of the wind in the lonely park. *The sad tone of the sentence means the word is likely also sad or depressing.

