

Use Context Clues for Meaning

How to use: Print first for the main practice. Then use the device to repeat activities and save progress.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Identify context clues in a sentence to work out the meaning of an unknown word
- 2 Use surrounding words and phrases to choose the best word to fill a gap
- 3 Explain how context clues help readers understand unfamiliar vocabulary

MINI LESSON

When you meet a word you do not know, you do not need to stop reading. Look at the other words in the sentence — they are your context clues. Context clues are hints that help you figure out what an unfamiliar word means.

Types of Context Clues

- Definition clue — the sentence explains the word directly. "A herbivore, an animal that eats only plants, was grazing in the field."
- Example clue — the sentence gives examples. "Citrus fruits, such as oranges, lemons, and limes, are high in vitamin C."
- Contrast clue — the sentence shows the opposite. "Unlike her timid sister, Maya was bold and spoke in front of the whole class."
- Inference clue — you use what you know to make a reasonable guess. "After the long hike, the children were famished and ate every last bite."

Steps to Use Context Clues

1. Read the whole sentence (or the sentences before and after).
2. Find any words or phrases that give hints about the unknown word.
3. Decide which meaning makes the sentence make sense.
4. Replace the unknown word with your guess and reread to check.

! Look beyond the sentence — the paragraph around an unknown word often holds the best clues.

Types of Context Clues

Definition

Word explained in sentence

Example

Examples given nearby

Contrast

Opposite word nearby

Inference

Use what you know

Use surrounding words to work out unknown word meanings.

How to Use Context Clues

1 Read the whole sentence

2 Find hint words nearby

3 Decide the best meaning

4 Replace and reread to check

Follow these steps every time you meet an unknown word.

EXERCISES — MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the best answer.

What is a context clue?

- A picture that helps explain a story
- A hint in the surrounding words that helps work out the meaning of an unknown word
- A word at the end of a sentence that sounds like another word

"Unlike her energetic brother, Lily was lethargic and spent the day on the sofa." What does lethargic mean?

- Active and full of energy
- Lacking energy; sluggish
- Frightened and nervous

"Citrus fruits, such as lemons, limes, and oranges, are rich in vitamin C." The underlined clue type is:

- Example clue
- Contrast clue
- Inference clue

"After the enormous meal, the guests were satiated and did not want dessert." What does satiated mean?

- Very hungry
- Completely full
- Feeling sick

Why are context clues useful for readers?

- They make sentences shorter and easier to read
- They help readers understand unfamiliar words without stopping to look them up
- They tell the reader whether a story is fiction or nonfiction

"A carnivore, an animal that eats only meat, prowled the forest." What type of context clue is used here?

- Contrast clue
- Inference clue
- Definition clue

Which is the best first step when you meet an unknown word?

- Stop reading and ask a teacher immediately
- Skip the word and carry on without thinking
- Read the whole sentence to look for hints

How do you check whether your guess for an unknown word is correct?

- Replace the unknown word with your guess and reread the sentence
- Count the letters in the word to see if it fits
- Look at the first letter only and guess any word that starts the same way

Which sentence uses a contrast clue?

- "The child was nimble, moving quickly and lightly on her feet."
- "Unlike the frail old bridge, the new one was very sturdy."
- "Legumes, such as beans, peas, and lentils, are a good source of protein."

"The explorer was dauntless; even in the face of danger, she showed no fear." What does dauntless mean?

- Fearless
- Careless
- Frightened

ASSESSMENT

PARENT / TEACHER CHECKLIST

- Identifies the type of context clue used in at least two example sentences.
- Uses context clues to correctly complete at least six of the eight sentence-card blanks.
- Explains in their own words why context clues help readers understand unfamiliar vocabulary.