

## Exercise 29: Identifying context clues

Identify the meaning of the *italicized* word. Then write the word(s) in the sentence which worked as clues to help you.

1. The rock singer was very popular. A *crowd* was waiting at the park to listen to her songs.

'Crowd' means ☒ a lot of people.

☐ few

The word(s) which helped me were: rock singer; park

2. There are many ships near our city, so there is a lot of *tar* in the water.

When there is tar in the water, the water is ☒ dirty.

☐ clean.

The word(s) which helped me were: many ships

3. I helped my friend in math. He was very *grateful*. He thanked me again and again.

A grateful person is ☒ appreciative of someone's favor.

☐ indifferent to

The word(s) which helped me were: thanked me

4. He ate *large amounts* of food, so he got very fat.

'Large amounts of food' is ☐ a little food.

☒ a lot of

The word(s) which helped me were: very fat

5. I didn't *expect* a present from Danny, so I was surprised when he gave me a radio!

'To expect' means to think something ☒ is going to happen.

☐ isn't

The word(s) which helped me were: surprised

6. They bothered me all the time. They had no *consideration* for my privacy or my need to rest.

'To have consideration' means ☐ not to care about other people's feelings.

☒ to care

The word(s) which helped me were: bothered me all the time

7. "Excuse me," said the girl, "I thought you were someone else." She was very *embarrassed*.

When you are embarrassed you are ☐ proud.

☒ uncomfortable.

☐ satisfied.

The word(s) which helped me were: Excuse me

### ***Exercise 30: Using context clues to infer meaning***

Use the two sentences given after the question to help you guess the meaning of the word. These words are more difficult, but remember, don't use your dictionary.

1. What does 'ravenous' mean? Very hungry
  - A. Could I have a piece of bread? I missed breakfast and I'm simply *ravenous*.
  - B. The poor horse was *ravenous* and it ate the leaves and bark off the trees.
2. What does 'dike' mean? A wall to stop water
  - A. After so much rain, the river flowed over the *dike* and into the fields.
  - B. People in this area began building *dikes* many centuries ago. It was the only way to keep the sea out of their village.
3. What does 'pitch' mean? sound
  - A. The singer was so terribly off *pitch* that it hurt my ears to listen.
  - B. The ambulance siren was at such a high *pitch* that we all jumped.
4. What does 'mold' mean? A container in the shape of something we want to copy or reproduce
  - A. The liquid plastic was poured into a *mold* and left there until it was hard.
  - B. The dentist first makes a *mold* of his patient's teeth. From that he makes a model of the teeth to decide how to correct any problem.
5. What does 'squall' mean? A storm
  - A. The *squall* arrived so suddenly that we all got wet when we ran home from the beach.
  - B. When they saw the *squall* coming, the sailors took down the sail and headed for the port.
6. What does 'gush' mean? To flow (violently)
  - A. When the fountain was turned on, the water *gushed* up several feet into the air.
  - B. The blood *gushed* out of his wound until the doctor put on a tight bandage.
7. What does 'soggy' mean? Wet
  - A. The study window had been left open during the storm, and my papers were a *soggy* mess.
  - B. We gathered up the *soggy* towels and bathing suits and hung them all in the sun to dry.
8. What does 'rugged' mean? Rough, rural

- A. Susan and her husband led a *rugged* life in the Alaskan mountains, with no electricity and no running water.
- B. The young man's face was *rugged*, but his smile was friendly and the children soon forgot their fears.
9. What does 'stoop' mean? To bend your body
- A. The old man walked slowly along, all *stooped* over and leaning on a stick.
- B. When I *stooped* down to get a better look, I realized that it was a dead rabbit. It must have been hit by a car.
10. What does 'wink' mean? To close one eye and rapidly open it
- A. George *winked* at me from across the room. It was a signal not to say anything about what we had seen.
- B. I've only known one cat that could *wink* and that was Tinker. She really could close just one of her eyes and she did it often.

*Taken from Feuerstein, T., & Scholnik, M. (1995). Enhancing Reading Comprehension in the Language Learning Classroom. San Francisco, CA: Alta Books Center.*

## Using synonyms and antonyms

Writers can make their writing more interesting and enjoyable by using a variety of words to refer to the same thing. Look at the example below.

An *orange* can be a delicious snack. This *citrus fruit* is also very healthy for you because it is a good source of vitamin C.

Both 'orange' and 'citrus fruit' refer to the same thing.

Now let us do the following exercise. Underline the synonym for the *italicized* word. Sometimes the synonym will be more than a single word.

1. During its history, *Estonia* was occupied and ruled by forces from Germany, Sweden and other countries. Nevertheless, this small eastern-European nation still boasts a rich cultural heritage.
2. A favourite activity of Estonians is *singing in groups*. They are very fond of giving choral concerts.
3. Tartu, a smaller city to the southeast of Tallinn, is the home of Estonia's oldest and largest *educational institution*. Tartu University is the only university in the world where Estonian is the language of instruction.
4. Both Tallinn and Tartu were originally built to be *fortresses*. The two strongholds were built on hills with good views of the surrounding countryside.
5. A controversial *organization* was recently recognized by the government. Now the Society of Estonian Nudists can meet legally in their club—without clothes.

## Exercise 31: Synonyms

From the list below, choose a synonym for the italicized word in each sentence. Write it on the line provided.

on the average	customer
battle	extremely angry
complicated	lack
hardly	useful
omit	move forward

1. The Russian *consumer* has a particularly difficult time shopping in the Soviet Union. customer
2. The main reason seems to be the *shortage* of merchandise. lack
3. *Typically*, a person in the Soviet Union spends two hours a day standing in shopping lines. on the average
4. Some of the lines *advance* very quickly. move forward
5. Others seem to *barely* move at all. hardly
6. Shopping has always been a *struggle* in the Soviet Union. battle

You can also build your vocabulary by asking yourself if you know the **antonym** or **opposite** of one of the most important words in a sentence. Knowing antonyms also helps you to learn words in a complete sentence. According to some researchers, this makes them easier to remember.

You will notice as well that some words have several opposites depending on the context. For example, the opposite of 'old' could be 'new' or 'young' depending on the situation, as in the sentences below:

1. Pedro is very lucky; his English teacher is *young* and beautiful. I'm unlucky; my teacher is *old* and ugly.
2. Mary and Paul have just moved from an *old* house to a *new* flat.

Can you think of any more examples like this? Write them in the space below. Compare them with your classmates.

fast (=quick) vs. slow / fast (=to not eat) vs. eat

question vs. answer / question (=to challenge) vs. accept

Asking yourself questions about your own English—what you know, and what you don't know—will help you to improve more quickly.

## Exercise 32:Antonyms

Complete each sentence with the opposite of the *italicized* word. Choose from the following list. Use each word once only.

cry	sharp	light
decrease	reject	present
hate	shallow	receive
borrow	tight	set

1. The student you mentioned is present today, but Mary is *absent*.
2. He separated the sharp knives from the *blunt* ones.
3. The water is pretty shallow around here. But be careful around the other end of the pool where it is *deep*.
4. If you have a *heavy* meal before exercising, you'll feel ill. Please, have something light before going to the gym.
5. Are you sure your belt isn't too tight ? I really think it should be *loose* to allow blood circulation.
6. Do you think he'll reject your offer? I would *accept* it immediately if I were in his place.
7. He really didn't want to borrow so much money, although I had no problem in *lending* it to him.
8. Although sales have *decreased* this year, I think they will increase in the next.
9. They were *laughing* about the new regulation, but they all began to cry when they realized it would affect them too.
10. I *love* classical music. Why do you hate it so much?
11. We hope to receive the letter tomorrow. Benny said he'd *sent* it today.
12. The sun *rises* in the east and sets in the west.

## Using definitions, restatements, examples, and explanations

Sometimes we can guess the meaning of the word through an explicit definition given in the context. The unknown word is followed or preceded by other words which describe it. Look at this example:

A skyscraper, *which is a tall building*, dominates its surrounding.

The words following the unknown word, “a tall building,” tell us what a skyscraper is.

Read the following sentences and underline the word that is being defined and double underline its definition in the context. The first sentence is done for you.

1. Camouflage, or protective colouring, helps the animal hide.
2. Motivation—that is, the willingness to act—is the secret to a successful career.
3. Literacy, defined as the ability to read with understanding, is a concern for most educators.
4. He is mostly concerned with the formation and origin of the Earth; in other words, he is a geologist.
5. A space station—a kind of platform floating in space—will be used in the future as a meeting place for space vehicles.

How did the definition given in the context help you to understand what the unknown word means?

On other occasions, examples, explanations, and restatements can help you understand the meaning of unknown words. Read the following sentences and guess the meaning of the words in *italics*.

1. A *sledge* is used to carry people and goods in the snow.  
A ‘sledge’ is a vehicle for use in the snow.
2. He is a *loner*; he invites no one and keeps his address a secret.  
A ‘loner’ is a person who likes to be alone.
3. To build the new club, they *pooled their resources*, each giving a small sum of money.  
‘To pool resources’ means to cooperate.
4. This knife is so *blunt* that it does not cut at all.  
‘Blunt’ is the opposite of sharp.
5. Everyone can vote in our country: the educated and the ignorant, the *affluent* and the poor.  
‘Affluent’ means rich, wealthy.

6. She likes warm colours such as red, scarlet, and *vermilion*.

'Vermilion' is a warm color.

### Exercise 33: Nonsense words

The words that appear in *italics* in the following statements are nonsense words, that is, words that do not exist in English—therefore you cannot find them in the dictionary! But you can guess their meanings from the context . . . Can you? If you can, write an equivalent for each nonsense word and underline the words that helped you. If you can't, double underline the words you don't know but which are needed for understanding the nonsense word.

1. My father is a *bodder*. He can make beautiful things out of wood.

Bodder = carpenter

2. Alma is really *gribb*, but her sister is *gribber*, so she finds it easier to find jobs.

Gribb = clever; beautiful; resourceful

3. Ben is quite *grappy*. He never lets anyone finish a sentence.

Grappy = talkative

4. Last night, both Sherry and David became very *gompered*. They wouldn't stop shouting at each other.

Gompered = angry; mad

5. He ran down the street very *brodingly* because he was late for his meeting.

Brodingly = hastily; quickly