

# Vocabulary

**Vocabulary** – all the words used or understood by a person

**Context Clues** – the information that surrounds a new word; it is used to understand its meaning

**Synonym** – a word that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word

**Antonym** – a word that has the opposite meaning of another word

**When reading, it is common to encounter words that are unfamiliar. Don't get discouraged if you don't know every word. This worksheet will show you ways to figure out new words, so that you won't need a dictionary every time.**

## Using Context Clues to Figure Out Unfamiliar Words

### ➤ Synonyms

Often an author will place a synonym near a new or difficult word as a context clue. Usually a synonym is set off with a pair of commas, a pair of dashes, or a pair of parentheses. Some words that signal synonyms are *or* and *that is*.

Example: Being **nocturnal**, that is, active at night, owls are rarely seen during the day.

Explanation: The signal words *that is* clue the reader that the synonym for nocturnal is *active at night*.

### ➤ Antonyms

An author may use an antonym to help you understand an unfamiliar word by showing you what the word is not. Sometimes an antonym can be found directly next to the unfamiliar word set off with a pair of commas, a pair of dashes, or a pair of parentheses. At other times, antonyms are placed in other parts of the sentence to emphasize the contrast between the ideas. Some words that signal synonyms are: *but, however, in contrast, instead, not, on the other hand, unlike, and yet*.

Example: Suzanne's tone was surprisingly **flippant** in contrast to her usual respectful manner.

Explanation: The signal words *in contrast* clue the reader that the antonym is respectful. Therefore, flippant means disrespectful or sassy.

### ➤ Examples

Often an author will show the meaning of a new or difficult word by providing an example. The following signal words indicate that an example is coming: *for instance, for example, such as, and including*.

Example: Some authors use **pseudonyms**; for example, famous American author Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Clemens.

Explanation: From the example the reader can conclude that a pseudonym is a pen (false) name, a name used by the writer to possibly keep anonymity.

➤ **General Context**

When a synonym, antonym, or example is not given, you must rely on the general context to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. This requires you to read the entire sentence, or to read ahead for a few sentences, for information that will help you understand the new word. The context may include vivid word pictures or descriptions of a situation. It may also require you to use logic or reasoning skills to figure out unfamiliar words.

Example: To ensure safety, written and road tests should be **mandatory** for everyone who seeks a driver's license for the first time; no exceptions should be allowed.

Explanation: The best meaning of the word is *required*. Clues from the sentence are the words *ensure* and *no exceptions should be allowed*.

## Using Word Parts to Figure Out a New Word

**Roots** – the main or basic part of a word. Prefixes and suffixes are added to roots to make new words.

**Prefix** – a group of letters with a specific meaning added to the beginning of a word (root) to make a new word

**Suffix** – a group of letters with a specific meaning added to the end of a word (root) to make a new word

**If you encounter an unfamiliar word, you can break it into parts. Then you can look for parts that you know. If you know a few common word parts, then you will be able to figure out many words.**

Example: Create 2 words using the following word parts and define them.

Prefix in- (not)	Root -vis- (see)	Suffix -ible (can be)
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1. visible – can be seen

2. invisible – not able to be seen

Explanation: When the word parts combine, they form words with different definitions.

## Commonly Used Word Parts

Word Part	Meaning	Examples
<b>Prefix</b>		
a-	on, in	ashore, atop
de-	from, remove, opposite of	derail, defrost
de-	down	descend
en-, em-	in, put into, cause to be	enrage, embattle
ex-	out of	exchange
il-	not	illegal
un-	not	uneasy
in-, im-	in, into	inject, implant
in-	not	incomplete
pre-	before	prepay
re-	again, back	retell, recall
sub-	under	subway
trans-	across	transport
<b>Root</b>		
-don-, -dot-, -dow-	to give	donate, antidote
-fact-	make	factory
-fer-	to bring, to carry	transfer, offer
-mis-, -mit-	to send	transmit, mission
-mut-	change	mutant
-ped-	foot	pedal, pedestrian
-pot-	strength	potent
-rupt-	break	disrupt, erupt
-ven-, vent-	to come, to move toward	convene, circumvent
-vert-	turn	divert
-vid-, -vis-	see	video, vision
<b>Suffix</b>		
-able, -ible	can be	washable, collectible
-al	like, suitable for, based on	magical, seasonal, fictional
-an, -ian, -or, -er	person who	American, politician, conductor, voter
-ful	full of	graceful
-fy, -ify	to make	beautify
-ia	condition	hysteria, insomnia
-ic	made of, made by	metallic, photographic
-ion, -tion, -ation	result of action, state of being	election, imagination
-less	without	colorless
-ness	state of being	darkness
-ous	having	famous
-some	making someone feel	lonesome

# Practice Exercises

Putting off your work will have **adverse** – negative – effects on your learning.

1. What does **adverse** mean?
  - a. helpful
  - b. harmful
  - c. long-term
  - d. short-term
2. Identify the context clue you used.
  - a. synonym
  - b. antonym
  - c. general context
  - d. example

Don't be slothful or lazy; be **diligent** in your work habits.

3. What does **diligent** mean?
  - a. hardworking
  - b. self-paced
  - c. respectful
  - d. idle
4. Identify the context clue you used.
  - a. synonym
  - b. antonym
  - c. general context
  - d. example

Children can be **contrary** sometimes. They do exactly what they want when they want. For instance, a parent might tell a child to sit down, and the child will do the exact opposite, running away. Fortunately, even when parents might feel like yelling, they can choose to stay mute and instead breathe deeply to remain patient and calm.

**Frustration** can build on the parents' behalf when they are exhausted from trying to make a child follow instructions. However, because the children are cute and lovable, the parents remain **enamored** with them even during challenging moments.

5. The word **contrary** means
  - a. stubborn
  - b. cooperative
  - c. friendly
  - d. large
6. Identify the context clue you use for number 5.
  - a. synonym
  - b. antonym
  - c. general context
  - d. example
7. **Frustration** has two parts. The suffix is *-tion*. The root is *frustra*, which means "failure." **Frustration** means
  - a. success
  - b. the feeling that comes from success
  - c. failure
  - d. the feeling that comes from failure
8. **Enamored** has three parts. The prefix is *en-*. The suffix is *-ed*. The root is *amor*, which means "love." *Enamored with* means
  - a. discovered the secret of.
  - b. caused to love.
  - c. became disgusted with.
  - d. chatted with.
9. Which word from the first paragraph means "silent?"
  - a. cooed
  - b. talk
  - c. mute
  - d. speak

ANSWERS: 1. B, 2. A, 3. A, 4. B, 5. A, 6. C, 7, 8, 9. C