Context Clues

Making a good guess to improve vocabulary

Two Types of Clues

1. Direct Clues

- Definitions and Synonyms and Examples and Comparison/Contrast
- Signal Words

2. Sense of sentence or surrounding sentences

Context Clues: Direct

Signal words

- **■** Such as
- **■** Like
- **■** For example
- **I**IS
- **Or**
- **■** Is called
- **■** But

Signal Words

- **■** Although
- **■** Not
- **H** However
- **■** Yet
- **■** Is similar to
- **■** Is defined as
- **■** Who/which/that is

Context Clues: Direct

Types

- **■** Definition or Synonym
- **Example**
- **■** Comparison/Contrast

Steps

- 1. Look for signal words.
- 2. Substitute the answer choices for the word being defined.

Context Clue: Synonym/Definition

My mother suffers from bursitis, which is an inflammation of an area in the joint that contains a lubricating fluid.

Note the signal words: "which is."

The definition is directly stated: an inflammation of an area in the joint that contains lubricating fluid.

Context Clues: Example What does nefarious mean?

The evil doers had many **nefarious** plans, **such as** robbing the bank, kidnapping the banker's daughter, and locking the bank employees in the safe.

- a. kind, helpful
- b. extremely wicked
- c. stubborn
- d. a plan to achieve a purpose

And the Answer Is

Extremely wicked

Note: The examples after "such as" point to evil deeds; therefore, A and C are out.

Note: After substituting the two remaining choices, "extremely wicked" is the obvious answer.

Context Clue: Comparison/Contrast What does futile mean?

- _____1. My brother thought the trip was **futile**, **but** my sister remained sure that we would reach our goal.
 - a. ineffective; useless
 - b. exact; precise
 - c. to listen carefully
 - d. well planned

And the Answer Is

Ineffective; useless

The signal word "but" indicates that "futile" means the opposite of the idea that follows.

The opposite of remaining sure of reaching a goal is believing your efforts are ineffective or useless.

Context Clues: Sense of Sentence

Step One: Look for clues within the sentence and in surrounding sentences.

Step Two: Substitute each possible answer for the word being defined.

Context Clue: Sense of Sentence

Because of his sage advice, I solved my problems. He is definitely intelligent.

- a. confused
- b. listening carefully
- c. wise
- d. courage

Which words could give you clues?

Context Clues from the Sentence(s)

- **■** solved my problems
- **#** definitely intelligent
- "Wise" best matches the word clues.
- Next, substitute wise for "sage" in the sentence.
- Because of his **wise** advice, I solved my problems.

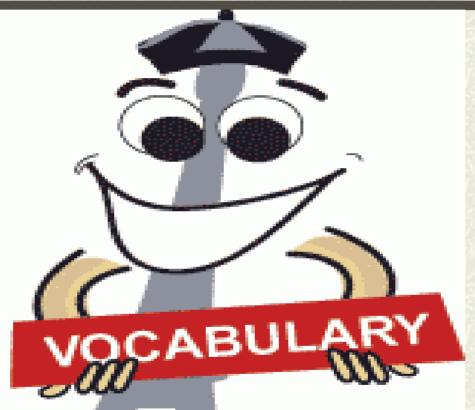
So the answer is

c. Wise

Context Clues: Review

- 1. Look for signal words before synonyms/definitions; examples; comparison/contrast.
- 2. Find word clues, if you need to rely on sentence sense.
- 3. Substitute your best choices for the word being defined.

Use Context Clues and Improve Your Vocabulary



word french belternel rean