

# Context Clues

Making a good guess  
to improve vocabulary

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# Two Types of Clues

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## 1. Direct Clues

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

## 2. Sense of sentence or surrounding sentences

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# Context Clues: Direct

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## Signal words

- # Such as
- # Like
- # For example
- # Is
- # Or
- # Is called
- # But

## Signal Words

- # Although
  - # Not
  - # However
  - # Yet
  - # Is similar to
  - # Is defined as
  - # Who/which/that is
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# Context Clues: Direct

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## Types

- # Definition or Synonym
- # Example
- # Comparison/Contrast

## Steps

1. Look for signal words.
  2. Substitute the answer choices for the word being defined.
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# Context Clue: Synonym/Definition

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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.

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# Context Clues: Example

## What does nefarious mean?

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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
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# And the Answer Is

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## **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.

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# Context Clue: Comparison/Contrast

## What does futile mean?

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\_\_\_\_\_ 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
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# And the Answer Is

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## **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.

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# Context Clues: Sense of Sentence

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

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

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# Context Clue: Sense of Sentence

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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?**

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# Context Clues from the Sentence(s)

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# 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.

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**So the answer is**

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**c. Wise**

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# Context Clues: Review

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- 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.**
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# Use Context Clues and Improve Your Vocabulary

