

This Free E-Book is brought to you by [Natural-Aging.com](http://Natural-Aging.com).

**100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**

**How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read**

**By Frank Gerace**

Vocabulary Building and Reading Comprehension The meaning of unknown words which you

come across in your reading sometimes can be known by their surroundings, that is, their contexts. The context of the sentence can tell us the part of speech of the unknown word. Using the context of the paragraph to define unknown words can also help.

Although it takes practice, it is the easiest and most efficient way to identify words. Often, using the context is the only way to figure out the meaning of the word as it is used in the sentence, passage, or chapter.

Consider the word "bar". Bar is a common word. But without surrounding words, you don't know if it describes soap, a place that serves beer, a sand formation at the beach, a way to lock the door, or...

Readers often have trouble because they identify the literal but incorrect meaning of a word when they should identify the way it was used in the passage. The following sections will give you more explanation and some exercises on how to get help on the meaning of unknown words by checking their part of speech and their place in context.

A. Using The Part of Speech of the unknown word as a help in reading.

One consideration in using the context is to determine the unknown word's part of speech. The words around the unknown word give you clues. Once you know if the word is a noun or if it is an adjective, it often is enough for you to continue reading intelligently without having to stop to look up the meaning of the word. After coming across the word a few more times, you will know its meaning more firmly than if you had just looked it up.

In the following sentences, identify the part of speech of the italicized words by writing N if the word is a noun, V if the italicized word is a verb, Adj if the italicized word is an adjective, or Adv if the italicized word is an adverb.

Example: She liked to wear red and always wore jewelry made of carnelian. Ans. N

## How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

1. The dirty old man gave the young woman a salacious look.
2. The president prayed for the sagacity to make the right decision in the face of many alternatives.
3. The man looked at the rusty old gadget and wondered how its mechanism worked.
4. The dying man designated his son to receive his property.
5. The brindled dog barked loudly.
6. The father caressed his crying child with great tenderness.
7. "Don't patronize us; we are not children!" said the angry indigenous leaders to the politicians.
8. John was a good emanuensis, always taking dictation correctly and typing up all of his employer's correspondence.
9. The boy was disappointed by the paltry amount he received as an inheritance when his grandfather died.
10. The young boy ran clumsily down the hill with his arms and legs flapping all over.

### B. USING OTHER CLUES GOTTEN FROM THE TEXT ITSELF

Knowing the part of speech of the unknown word is not the only way to figure out its meaning. There are other clues to the meanings of unknown words. They are found directly within a sentence, paragraph, passage, or chapter. Being able to recognize these clues helps you define new words in context. These clues are found right in the text and can be words or punctuation marks or specific words or phrases.

You use them to compare words or to identify unknown words that mean the same or the opposite of words you already know. The clues can also be used to define unknown words that are examples of a group.

There are five other clues that will help you: 1. Punctuation clues, 2. Definition clues, 3. Contrast clues, 4. Comparison clues, and 5. Example clues.

Of these types, the most important are the Contrast clues and the Comparison Clues. The other clues are very obvious and are given here just for the sake of completeness. The reader should concentrate on the Contrast and the Comparison clues.

The five text based clues are useful but the most powerful tool is the Framework based clue. This is the use of information from your own experience, common sense, and the context in which you find the difficult word. There will be examples of this tool at the end of the paper.

## How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

### 1. Punctuation Clues

Punctuation clues are given when the unknown word is set off by commas, parentheses, brackets, or dashes. The information contained within the punctuation marks sometimes means the same or nearly the same as the unknown words. Or, the unknown word might be set off from its meaning by punctuation marks. Information set off by punctuation marks may clarify rather than define the word. Finding these clues is not foolproof.

Example of Punctuation Clue: Nicotine, a colorless and oily drug in tobacco, stains the teeth of chain smokers. Explanation: The words between the commas—a colorless and oily drug in tobacco—define nicotine .

Punctuation Exercise: Underline the punctuation clue that tells you the meaning of the italicized word.

1. The soldiers advanced down the small deep-sided gulch (a narrow valley) into an ambush.
2. The philosopher Descartes helped to establish dualism (the separation of mind and body).
3. Metamemory –knowledge about one's memory processes—is helpful in helping us store and recall

information.

4. Adjunct aids—techniques used to assist students' comprehension of reading materials—have been found to be quite useful.
5. The deluge, a flood of rain, threatened to drown the little town.

2. Definition Clues Definition clues join the unknown word with the word(s) that rename it or tell its meaning. The clues precede or follow words that are or act like linking verbs. A linking verb shows no action but indicates being.

Examples of these verbs are: is, was, are, means, i.e. (that is), involves, is called, that is, or resembles.

For example: The mansion's piazza resembled a large uncovered patio. Explanation: The word resembled joins piazza with its meaning so it is a clue that lets us know that a piazza is a large uncovered patio.

Definition Exercise: Use definition text-based clues to find the meaning of the italicized word. Underline the word (or words) that tells you the meaning of the italicized word.

1. The art, science, or profession of teaching is called pedagogy.
2. Divergent thinking is generating many different ideas in order to solve a problem.
3. Conservative behavior involves cautious or conventional actions.

## How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

4. The seasonal wind of the Indian Ocean and southern Asia is a monsoon.

5. Criterion means a standard or rule by which a judgment is formed.

6. A souk is an open-air marketplace in North Africa.

### 3. Contrast Clues

With contrast clues, you use the opposite of known information to determine the unknown word. Connecting words like however, yet, on the other hand, instead of, but, while, and although join the unknown word with another word that is its opposite.

Example of Contrast Clue:

My sister is extremely neat in appearance while she is slovenly in her housekeeping.

Explanation: The word "while" indicates that slovenly means the opposite of neat. Thus, slovenly means sloppy or messy.

Contrast Exercise: Determine the meaning of the italicized word by using contrast text-based clues.

Exercise Example: Although the patron asked for a solemn poem, the poet wrote doggerel.

1. The tumor was benign; nevertheless, the doctor decided to treat it as if it could injure the patient.

2. Some business disputes can be settled out of court; on the other hand; others require litigation.

3. At first the labor union leaders and the factory owners argued about pay schedules and benefits; however, they finally came to a compromise.

4. Gina's leg muscles continued to atrophy because of her injury, but she exercised to build up their strength. 5. Carlos acquiesced to Jane's demands instead of standing his ground and defending his viewpoint.

### 4. Comparison Clues

Comparison clues indicate that two or more things are alike. A comparison is possible because the known and unknown words have similarities. Words like similarly, as well as, both, and likewise show you that comparisons can be made.

Examples of Comparison Clue:

Miss Johnson is a prim, modest woman; likewise, many of her friends are very proper.

Explanation: Likewise is used to compare prim to proper. Proper means respectable. Thus, prim has a similar meaning.

## How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

1. The Greek vase was made of alabaster; similarly, the Roman lamp was also of a translucent, white stone. 2. Taking out the garbage was an onerous task; likewise, washing dishes can be a hard job.

3. Repartee, as well as other kinds of humorous conversation, kept the talk show from becoming boring. 4. Birds are oviparous; similarly, fish and reptiles lay eggs that hatch outside of the body.

5. Both accountants and CPA's are necessary for a large company's financial office.

6. The old chair was protected by both handmade antimacassars and other coverings.

### 5. Example Clues

Example clues tell you an example of an unknown word follows. You derive the meaning of the unknown word by determining what the examples have in common. Example clues are usually introduced by the following words and phrases: such as, such, other, for example, and like.

Example of "Example" Clue: Potentates—such as kings, queens, and emperors—are very powerful and wealthy people. Explanation: Since kings, queens, and emperors are the rulers of countries, potentates are rulers.

"Example" Clue EXERCISE: Underline the words that explain the italicized words.

Canines, such as collies, pugs, and poodles, are good pets.

Edifices, such as skyscrapers and condominiums, are found in cities.

Various means of conveyance—for example, cars, subways, and ships are used worldwide.

Nickels, dimes, dollars, and other kinds of legal tender are used to purchase goods.

Many people enjoy eating mollusks, like clams and snails.

Fiduciaries, like lawyers and bankers, were chosen to manage the young heir's money.

### Framework Based Clues

To find meanings from text-based clues (like contrast clues, comparison clues, definition clues, example clues), you looked for clues in the sentence itself. A second kind of clue does not rely on specific words or punctuation marks to indicate meaning. This kind of context clue is called framework-based

Your knowledge of the meanings of surrounding words helps you discover the meaning of a word or of a sentence. The background information you find in these frameworks helps you get the meanings of new words. Common sense and your knowledge of the parts of speech also help in defining unknown words. You combine your experience with what the text contains to determine meaning.

## How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

Framework Based Clue Example: The angry driver shouted vehemently during his fight with the other driver. What does vehemently mean? You know what angry means, and you know how people feel when they argue. From this, you can figure out that vehemently has something to do with strong emotion or intense feeling. This is an example of using framework-based context to find the meanings of new words. The meaning you find comes from your personal experience.

Sometimes it takes a bit more detective work to puzzle out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. In such cases, you must draw conclusions based on the information given with the word. Asking yourself questions about the passages may help you make a fairly accurate guess about the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Each of the sentences below is followed by a question. Think about each question; using your common sense and asking yourself a question about the sentence you should be able to know the correct meaning of the italicized word.

1. A former employee, irate over having been fired, broke into the plant and deliberately wrecked several machines. (What would be the employee's state of mind?)
2. John always praised his bosses; he always agreed with what they said. He said he was just a good employee but his friends said he was a sycophant. (What behaviors were his friends describing with the word they put on John?)
3. The car wash we organized to raise funds was a fiasco –it rained all day.

(How successful would a car wash be on a rainy day?) The first sentence provides enough evidence for you to guess that irate means very angry. Sycophant in the second sentence means sweet-talker. And a fiasco is a complete disaster. (These are not exact dictionary definitions of the words. But by using context clues, but you will often be accurate enough to make good sense of what you are reading. And the good thing is that you save time in your reading because you don't have to look up every word!)

Try to answer the question that follows each item of the list on the other side of this page. Then use the logic of each answer to help you circle the letter of the meaning you think is correct. Note that some of these sentences have been taken from college textbooks. This should prove to you that your new skills in reading will help you in your college studies. In the future you will be able to make up your own questions to help you.

1. Jamal didn't want to tell Tina the entire plot of the movie, so he just gave her the gist of the story. (What would Jamal say to Tina?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

## How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

2. The lizard was so lethargic that I wasn't sure if it was alive or dead. It didn't even blink. (How active is this lizard?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

3. After the accident, I was angered when the other driver told the police officer a complete fabrication about what happened. He made it seem that I was the only person at fault. (How truthful was the other driver's information?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

4. The public knows very little about the covert activities of CIA spies. (What kind of activities would the CIA spies be involved in that the public wouldn't know much about?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

5. Whether or not there is life in outer space is an enigma. We may never know for sure until we are capable of space travel or aliens actually land on our planet. (What would we call something to which we have no answer?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

6. Suicide rates tend to fluctuate with the seasons, with much higher rates in the winter than in the summer. (What happens to the suicide rate from season to season?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

7. Human beings are resilient creatures—they can often bounce back from negative experiences and adjust well to life. (What point is the author making about the nature of human beings ? Answer the question:.....)

.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

8. A major accomplishment of the field of sociology is dispelling the myths and prejudices that groups of people have about each other. (What would teachers of sociology do to "myths and prejudices" that could be considered a "major accomplishment"?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

9. When he first heard the news that he had lost the job, Peter showed a pugnacious attitude. But later when other alternatives were explained to him, he became less hostile. (What attitude would you feel when you lose your job?)

Answer the question:

.....  
.....

Meaning of the word:

.....  
.....

Frank Gerace Ph.D has lived and worked in Latin America on Educational and Communication Projects. He currently teaches English in New York City at La Guardia College/CUNY. He provides help to parents wanting to have their children speak Spanish at:

<http://www.bookslibros.com/SpanishForNinos.htm>

### **Ten Tips to Simplify Your Business Correspondence**

**By Linda Elizabeth Alexander**

#### **Ten Tips to Simplify Your Business Correspondence by Linda Elizabeth Alexander**

You write to express, not to use every word in the dictionary. Here are ten tips for using those words to make your writing clearer.

1. Simplify language Avoid using big or vague words. Use fewer words, but make them count.
2. Shorten sentences Business people don't have time to read 10–page letters. Cut out run–on sentences. Eliminate extra words as long as it doesn't change the meaning. You can also combine a short and a longer sentence into one to remove extra words.
3. Use active voice Instead of, "A good time was had by all," say, "We had a good time." This changes the subject from "good time" to "we." It also puts emphasis on the verb, making the statement stronger.
4. Use present tense Stick to the present tense wherever you can. Also make sure you don't switch tenses in the middle of a sentence.
5. Use bullets where appropriate Since people have little time to read, put important points in a numbered or bulleted list. This makes it easier to scan so your readers get the meaning without reading every word.
6. Never use exclamation points in business writing! Unless you're writing an advertisement or an excited letter to a friend, skip the wow factor! It doesn't belong in a memo, report, letter, or other serious–toned business writing!
7. Eliminate jargon Avoid it at all costs if your audience will not understand it. It will be like a foreign language to them,

## How To Find The Meaning Of Words As You Read

and your point is to make your writing clearer – not more complicated.

8. Avoid fragments and one word sentences A fragment. Is an incomplete sentence. No subject or no verb. Really. A complete sentence has both a subject and a verb and contains at least two words. "She walked" is a sentence because it meets all three criteria.

9. Proofread your writing You know to use your spelling and grammar checkers. But you should also go over your writing yourself — the spell checker cannot distinguish between "to" and "too" or "their" and "there." It can't tell you if you said "and" where you meant "an." If possible, get somebody else to read it before handing it in. Two sets of eyeballs are better than none.

10. Avoid repetition and redundancy!

Use these tips every time you write and you will avoid ten common mistakes that cloud your writing.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander is a business writer and marketing consultant based in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Improve your writing skills at work! Subscribe to her FREE ezine. Write to the Point at [lalexander@write2thepointcom.com](mailto:lalexander@write2thepointcom.com) or visit <http://www.write2thepointcom.com/articles.html>.



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by [Natural-Aging.com](http://Natural-Aging.com).

**[100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment](#)**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**