

Context Clues

TYPE OF CLUE	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE
Definition	The unknown word is connected to a more familiar word or phrase; usually a form of <i>to be</i> is used.	Entomology is the study of insects
Restatement of Synonym	The meaning is usually right after the unfamiliar word and often separated from the rest of the sentence with commas, dashes, or parentheses; sometimes <i>or</i> , <i>that is</i> , or <i>in other words</i> is used.	Meat eaters, or carnivores, are at the top of the food chain. She enjoyed biology (the study of living things).
Contrast or Antonym	The unfamiliar word is shown to be different from or unlike another word and is often an opposite; <i>but</i> , <i>however</i> , <i>although</i> , <i>otherwise</i> , <i>unless</i> , <i>instead</i> , <i>on the contrary</i> , <i>on the other hand</i> , <i>while</i> , <i>never</i> , <i>no</i> , or <i>not</i> may be used to signal the contrast.	Mike's parrot was <i>loquacious</i> but Maria's said very little.
Comparison	The unfamiliar word is shown to be the same as or like another word; <i>too</i> , <i>like</i> , <i>as</i> , <i>similar to</i> , or <i>in the same way</i> may be used to signal the comparison.	My brother is <i>enthralled</i> by birds in the same way that I am fascinated by insects.
Example	The unfamiliar word is cleared up by giving an example: <i>for instance</i> , <i>such as</i> , and <i>for example</i> may be used as signals.	The archeologist found different <i>amulets</i> , such as a rabbit's foot and bags of herbs, near the ancient altar.
List or Series	The unfamiliar word is included in a series of related words that give an idea of the word's meaning.	North American predators include grizzly bears, <i>pumas</i> , wolves, and foxes.
Cause and Effect	The meaning of an unfamiliar word is signaled by a cause-and-effect relationship between ideas in the text.	Due to a <i>dearth</i> of termites, the aardvark starved to death.
Description or Inference	The meaning of an unfamiliar word can be inferred from the description of a situation or experience.	The monkeys' <i>vociferous</i> chatter made me wish I had earplugs.