

COMPETENCY 1.0 UNDERSTANDS THE MEANING OF GENERAL VOCABULARY WORDS**Skill 1.1 Determines the meaning of commonly encountered words presented in context**

Context clues help reader determine the meaning of words they are not familiar with. The context of a word is the sentence or sentences that surround the word.

Read the following sentences and attempt to determine the meanings of the words in bold print.

The **luminosity** of the room was so incredible that there was no need for lights.

If there was no need for lights then one must assume that the word luminosity has something to do with giving off light. The definition of luminosity is: the emission of light.

Jamie could not understand Joe's feelings. His mood swings made understanding him somewhat of an **enigma**.

The fact that he could not be understood made him somewhat of a puzzle. The definition of enigma is: a mystery or puzzle.

Familiarity with word roots (the basic elements of words) and with prefixes can also help one determine the meanings of unknown words.

Following is a partial list of roots and prefixes. It might be useful to review these.

<u>Root</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
aqua	water	aqualung
astro	star	astrology
bio	life	biology
carn	meat	carnivorous
circum	around	circumnavigate
geo	earth	geology
herb	plant	herbivorous
mal	bad	malicious
neo	new	neonatal
tele	distant	telescope

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
un-	not	unnamed
re-	again	reenter
il-	not	illegible
pre-	before	preset
mis-	incorrectly	misstate
in-	not	informal
anti-	against	antiwar
de-	opposite	derail
post-	after	postwar
ir-	not	irresponsible

Reading in your spare time - newspapers, magazines, novels - can also help to increase your overall vocabulary.

Skill 1.2 Identifies appropriate synonyms or antonyms for words

Synonyms are words that have similar meanings. Sometimes, synonyms can be used in place of another word to make a draft more appealing or descriptive. Teachers should encourage their students to utilize appropriate synonyms when drafting or revising their work to expand the interest and imagery of a written work. Paper or computer thesauruses are helpful in incorporating synonyms into one's writing.

Examples of synonyms:

Happy – gay, joyful, ecstatic, content, cheerful

Angry – irritated, fuming, livid, irate, annoyed

Beautiful - gorgeous, attractive, striking

However, teachers should also alert students that sometimes one word can not be simply replaced by another just because it was listed as a synonym. Sometimes the meaning or the connotation will vary somewhat. For example, in the sentence "Harold was angry when his brother spilled finger paint on his book report." Replacing "angry" with "fuming" would be a better choice than "annoyed" as the words describe the situation a little differently. As teachers work with students, they can help students expand their vocabularies so students know which synonyms to use.

Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. As with synonyms, thesauruses will help students identify words that are antonyms.

Examples of antonyms:

Sad – cheerful, delighted

Angry - calm, content

Beautiful – ugly, repulsive, hideous

Skill 1.3 Recognizes the correct use of commonly misused pairs of words (e.g., their/there, to/too)

Students frequently encounter problems with homonyms—words that are spelled and pronounced the same as another but that have different meanings such as *mean*, a verb, “to intend”; *mean* an adjective, “unkind”; and *mean* a noun or adjective, “average.” These words are actually both homonyms and homographs (written the same way).

A similar phenomenon that causes trouble is heteronyms (also sometimes called heterophones), words that are spelled the same but have different pronunciations and meanings (in other words, they are homographs that differ in pronunciation or, technically, homographs that are not homophones). For example, the homographs *desert* (abandon) and *desert* (arid region) are heteronyms (pronounced differently); but *mean* (intend) and *mean* (average) are not. They are pronounced the same, or are homonyms.

Another similar occurrence in English is the capitonym, a word that is spelled the same but has different meanings when it is capitalized and may or may not have different pronunciations. Example: *polish* (to make shiny) and [*Polish*](#) (from Poland).

Some of the most troubling homonyms are those that are spelled differently but sound the same. Examples: *its* (3d person singular neuter pronoun) and *it's* (“it is”); *there*, *their* (3d person plural pronoun) and *they're* (“they are”).

Others: *to*, *too*, *two*;

Some homonyms/homographs are particularly complicated and troubling. Fluke, for instance is a fish, a flatworm, the end parts of an anchor, the fins on a whale's tail, and a stroke of luck.

Common misused words:

Accept is a verb meaning to receive or to tolerate. **Except** is usually a preposition meaning excluding. Except is also a verb meaning to exclude.

Advice is a noun meaning recommendation. **Advise** is a verb meaning to recommend.

Affect is usually a verb meaning to influence. **Effect** is usually a noun meaning result. Effect can also be a verb meaning to bring about.

An **allusion** is an indirect reference. An **illusion** is a misconception or false impression.

Add is a verb to mean to put together. **Ad** is a noun that is the abbreviation for the word advertisement.

Ain't is a common nonstandard contraction for the contraction aren't.

Allot is a verb meaning to distribute. **A lot** can be an adverb that means often, or to a great degree. It can also mean a large quantity.

Allowed is used here as an adjective that means permitted. **Aloud** is an adverb that means audibly.

Bare is an adjective that means naked or exposed. It can also indicate a minimum. As a noun, **bear** is a large mammal. As a verb, bear means to carry a heavy burden.

Capitol refers to a city, and capitol to a building where lawmakers meet. **Capital** also refers to wealth or resources.

A **chord** is a noun that refers to a group of musical notes. **Cord** is a noun meaning rope or a long electrical line.

Compliment is a noun meaning a praising or flattering remark. **Complement** is a noun that means something that completes or makes perfect.

Climactic is derived from climax, the point of greatest intensity in a series or progression of events. **Climatic** is derived from climate; it refers to meteorological conditions.

Discreet is an adjective that means tactful or diplomatic, **discrete** is an adjective that means separate or distinct.

Dye is a noun or verb used to indicate artificially coloring something. **Die** is a verb that means to pass away. Die is also a noun that means a cube-shaped game piece.

Effect is a noun that means outcome. **Affect** is a verb that means to act or produce an effect on.

Elicit is a verb meaning to bring out or to evoke. **Illicit** is an adjective meaning unlawful

Emigrate means to leave one country or region to settle in another. **Immigrate** means to enter another country and reside there.

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Horde is a verb that means to accumulate or store up. **Horde** is a large group.

Lead is a verb that means to guide or serve as the head of. It is also a noun that is a type of metal.

Medal is a noun that means an award that is strung round the neck. **Meddle** is a verb that means to involve oneself in a matter without right or invitation. **Metal** is an element such as silver or gold. **Mettle** is a noun meaning toughness or guts.

Morning is a noun indicating the time between midnight and midday. **Mourning** is a verb or noun pertaining to the period of grieving after a death.

- **Past** is a noun meaning a time before now (past, present and future). **Passed** is the past tense of the verb "to pass."
- **Piece** is a noun meaning a portion. **Peace** is a noun meaning the opposite of war.

Peak is a noun meaning the tip or height to reach the highest point. **Peek** is a verb that means to take a brief look. **Pique** is a verb meaning to incite or raise interest.

Principal is a noun meaning the head of a school or an organization or a sum of money. **Principle** is a noun meaning a basic truth or law.

Rite is a noun meaning a special ceremony. **Right** is an adjective meaning correct or direction. **Write** is a verb meaning to compose in writing.

Than is a conjunction used in comparisons; **then** is an adverb denoting time. That pizza is more than I can eat. Tom laughed, and then we recognized him. **Than** is used to compare; both words have the letter a in them. **Then** tells when; both are spelled the same, except for the first letter.

There is an adverb specifying place; it is also an expletive. Adverb: Sylvia is lying there unconscious. Expletive: There are two plums left. **Their** is a possessive pronoun. **They're** is a contraction of they are. Fred and Jane finally washed their car. They're later than usual today.

To is a preposition; **too** is an adverb; **two** is a number.

Your is a possessive pronoun; **you're** is a contraction of you are.

Strategies to help students conquer these demons: Practice using them in sentences. Context is useful in understanding the difference. Drill is necessary to overcome their misuses.

To effectively teach language, it is necessary to understand that, as human beings acquire language, they realize that words have denotative and connotative meanings. Generally, denotative words point to things and connotative words deal with mental suggestions that the words convey. The word skunk has a denotative meaning if the speaker can point to the actual animal as he speaks the word and intends the word to identify the animal. Skunk has connotative meanings depending upon the tone of delivery, the socially acceptable attitudes about the animal, and the speaker's personal feelings about the animal.

Problem Phrases

Correct	Incorrect
Supposed to	Suppose to
Used to	Use to
Toward	Towards
Anyway	Anyways
Couldn't care less	Could care less
For all intents and purposes	For all intensive purposes
Come to see me	Come and see me
En route	In route
Regardless	Irregardless
Second, Third	Secondly, Thirdly

Other confusing words

Lie is an intransitive verb meaning to recline or rest on a surface. Its principal parts are lie, lay, lain. **Lay** is a transitive verb meaning to put or place. Its principal parts are lay, laid.

Birds lay eggs.
I lie down for bed around 10 PM.

Set is a transitive verb meaning to put or to place. Its principal parts are set, set, set. **Sit** is an intransitive verb meaning to be seated. Its principal parts are sit, sat, sat.

I set my backpack down near the front door.
They sat in the park until the sun went down.

Among is a preposition to be used with three or more items. **Between** is to be used with two items.

Between you and me, I cannot tell the difference among those three Johnson sisters.

As is a subordinating conjunction used to introduce a subordinating clause; **Like** is a preposition and is followed by a noun or a noun phrase.

As I walked to the lab, I realized that the recent experiment findings were much like those we found last year.

Can is a verb that means to be able. **May** is a verb that means to have permission. They are only interchangeable in cases of possibility.

I can lift 250 pounds.
May I go to Alex's house?

COMPETENCY 2.0 UNDERSTANDS THE STATED MAIN IDEA OF A READING PASSAGE

Skill 2.1 Identifies the stated main idea of a passage

A **topic** of a paragraph or story is what the paragraph or story is about.

The **main idea** of a paragraph or story states the important idea(s) that the author wants the reader to know about a topic.

The topic and main idea of a paragraph or story are sometimes directly stated.

There are times, however, that the topic and main idea are not directly stated, but simply implied.

Look at this paragraph.

Henry Ford was an inventor who developed the first affordable automobile. The cars that were being built before Mr. Ford created his Model-T were very expensive. Only rich people could afford to have cars.

The topic of this paragraph is Henry Ford. The main idea is that Henry Ford built the first affordable automobile.

Skill 2.2 Identifies the topic sentence of a passage

The **topic sentence** indicates what the passage is about. It is the subject of that portion of the narrative. The ability to identify the topic sentence in a passage will enable the student to focus on the concept being discussed and better comprehend the information provided.

You can find the main ideas by looking at the way in which paragraphs are written. A paragraph is a group of sentences about one main idea. Paragraphs usually have two types of sentences: a topic sentence, which contains the main idea, and two or more detail sentences which support, prove, provide more information, explain, or give examples.

You can only tell if you have a detail or topic sentence by comparing the sentences with each other.

Look at this sample paragraph:

Fall is the best of the four seasons. The leaves change colors to create a beautiful display of golds, reds, and oranges. The air turns crisp and windy. The scent of pumpkin muffins and apple pies fill the air. Finally, Halloween marks the start of the holiday season. Fall is my favorite time of year!

Breakdown of sentences:

Fall is the best of the four seasons. (TOPIC SENTENCE)

The leaves change colors to create a beautiful display of golds, reds, and oranges. (DETAIL)

The air turns crisp and windy. (DETAIL)

The scent of pumpkin muffins and apple pies fill the air. (DETAIL)

Finally, Halloween marks the start of the holiday season. (DETAIL)

Fall is my favorite time of year! (CLOSING SENTENCE – Often a restatement of the topic sentence)

The first sentence introduces the main idea and the other sentences support and give the many uses for the product.

Tips for Finding the Topic Sentence

1. The topic sentence is usually first, but could be in any position in the paragraph.
2. A topic is usually more "general" than the other sentences; that is, it talks about many things and looks at the big picture. Sometimes it refers to more than one thing. Plurals and the words "many", "numerous", or "several" often signal a topic sentence.
3. Detail sentences are usually more "specific" than the topic, that is, they usually talk about one single or small part or side of an idea. Also, the words "for example", "i.e.", "that is", "first", "second", "third", etc., and "finally" often signal a detail.
4. Most of the detail sentences support, give examples, prove, talk about, or point toward the topic in some way.

How can you be sure that you have a topic sentence? Try this trick: Switch the sentence you think is the topic sentence into a question. If the other sentences seem to "answer" the question, then you've got it.

For example:

Reword the topic sentence “Fall is the best of the four seasons” in one of the following ways:

”Why is fall the best of the four seasons?”

”Which season is the best season?”

”Is fall the best season of the year?”

Then, as you read the remaining sentences (the ones you didn’t pick), you will find that they answer (support) your question.

If you attempt this with a sentence other than the topic sentence, it won’t work

For example:

Suppose you select “Halloween marks the start of the holiday season,” and you reword it in the following way:

”Which holiday is the start of the holiday season?”

You will find that the other sentences fail to help you answer (support) your question.

Skill 2.3 Recognizes introductory and summary statements of a passage

The introductory statement should be at the beginning of the passage. An introductory statement will provide a bridge between any previous, relevant text and the content to follow. It will provide information about, and set the tone and parameters for, the text to follow. The old axiom regarding presenting a body of information suggested that you should always “tell them what you are going to tell them; tell it to them; tell them what you just told them.” The introductory statement is where the writer will tell the readers what he or she is going to tell them.

The summary statement should be at or near the end of the passage, and is a concise presentation of the essential data from that passage. In terms of the old axiom, the content portion (the main body of the narrative) is where the writer will “tell it to them.” The summary statement is where the writer will tell the readers what he or she has just told them.