

CONTEXT CLUES & SIGNAL WORDS

Context clues are the hints provided in text, which lead the reader to meanings of words. Context clues come in several categories, as many as ten, but there are five that are most commonly used. They are **Definition**, **Synonym**, **Antonym**, **Example**, and **Mood**.

Context Clues in Meanings

When readers come across an unfamiliar word, they often look in different places in the text for clues to the meaning. These clues can be found before, within, or after the sentence with the unfamiliar word. Also, there are signal words associated with the context clues. These signal words will point out the type of context clue being used. Once the reader is able to identify the type of context clue being used, then the meanings of unfamiliar words become clear.

Types of Context Clues and Their Signal Words

The verb "**to be**" is a signal indicating that the definition of the word may be in the sentence. A form of the verb "**to be**" is located between the unfamiliar word and its meaning.

A *carnivore* is an animal that feeds only on meat.

The word "**or**" is a signal word indicating that the definition is in the sentence.

A *biographer*, or one who writes about people's lives, is an example of an author.

Synonym

The word "**like**" is a signal word indicating synonym which means there is a word of similar meaning in the sentence.

The *harlequin*, like the circus clown, was a fool who loved to perform.

Antonym

The word "**but**" is a signal word indicating antonym which means there is a word of opposite meaning in the sentence.

Jerry is very clumsy, but his sister Jenny is *adroit*.

Example

"**Such as**," "**for instance**," and "**for example**" indicate examples.

The student was suffering from *anxiety*. For example, when he first saw the test, he began to tremble.

Mood

Mood uses metaphors to paint a picture of a setting or feeling.

The image of children eating garbage and worms showed how *despoiled* life becomes in the face of starvation.