



# Reading Techniques

Contextual Clues

# Types of Contextual Clues



Type	Description	Example
definition	A definition of the unfamiliar word is stated directly in the text. SIGNAL WORDS: is, are, means, refers to	An American Goldfinch is a <u>small, yellow bird</u> . OR The American Goldfinch, a <u>small, yellow bird</u> , is common in California.
synonym	Another word or phrase that is similar in meaning is used in the text. SIGNAL WORDS: also, as, identical, like, likewise, same, similarly, too, or	A school, or <u>group</u> , of fish moves in a harmonious pattern through the water.
antonym	Another word or phrase that is opposite in meaning is used in the text. SIGNAL WORDS: but, however, in contrast, instead of, on the other hand, though, unlike	I thought a tomato was a vegetable, <u>but</u> it turns out to be a <u>fruit</u> .
Example	The text includes words or phrases that are examples of the unfamiliar word. SIGNAL WORDS: for example, including, such as	To use less salt in cooking, try fresh herbs, such as <u>basil, oregano, and rosemary</u> .
General	Nonspecific clues are spread over several sentences in a text.	Lacrosse is becoming more popular. <u>Players</u> have to be able to <u>run up and down the field</u> . They also have to use a <u>stick with a little net to throw the ball and make goals</u> .

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**Context Clues**

**Article Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rating Scale:**

- 1—I do not understand this word.
- 2—I understand this word, but can't use it in a sentence.
- 3—I understand this word and can use it in a sentence.

Target Word	Context Clues	I think the word means:	I would rate my understanding of the word as:	After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:
			1 2 3	
			1 2 3	
			1 2 3	



# Exercise 1



**faint:** I thought that I heard a **faint** scratching noise, but I figured that it might just be in my head.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 2



**alternate:** Even though it was a one-player game, the boys figured that they each could play if they **alternated**.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 3



**brisk:** Jamie had a hard time keeping up with her mom, who was walking at a very **brisk** pace.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 4



**trite:** I thought it was a very fresh idea, but the teacher thought it was **trite**.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 5



**gullible:** Stacey was suspicious when the clown handed her the box, but her **gullible** little brother opened it any way.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:



# Exercise 6



**octagon:** We learned about **octagons**, or eight-sided shapes.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 7



**gist:** Although I was unable to understand all the details of the speech, I did get the **gist** of it.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 8



**cutlery:** The store specializes in **cutlery**, such as forks and knives, that has special designs.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 9



**loathes:** My sister **loathes** broccoli, but she loves spinach.

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to:

# Exercise 10



**altruism:** Psychologists have conducted research on **altruism**, which can be defined as “putting the needs and welfare of others above one’s own needs and well-being.”

1. What context clues do you have?
2. What do you think the word means?
3. How would you rate your understanding of the word as: 1, 2, or 3?
4. After looking up the word, I would change my definition to: