

Six Kinds of Context Clues

1. Definition: The term will be defined or sufficient explanation given within the sentence for the meaning to be available.

His succinct style made for a difficult reading; that is, he compressed so much information into a few words that it was difficult to get the full meaning.

Succinct must mean _____

The general public apparently thought tranquilizers would be a panacea to banish all cares.

Panacea means a _____

2. Analysis: The parts used to construct the word can be a direct clue to meaning. The first three units of this program have offered practice in using the elements most commonly found to construct English words.

The nature of the Secret Service precludes public recognition of a member for outstanding achievement.

Precludes means _____

For Mary, her mother's illness was the coming true of a terrible premonition.

Premonition means _____

3. Experience: Either from a direct experience or one that is easily imagined the meaning is made clear.

We walked warily across the ice-covered bridge.

Warily means _____

Early treatment of cancer by surgery or radiation can save a life or at least alleviate much suffering.

Alleviate means _____

4. Contrast: By contrasting terms, you may find that one term will help to clarify or explain another. This assumes, of course, that you know one of the terms.

Clearly the infection with the weakened bacteria had equipped the chickens with a defense against the fully potent bacteria.

Another word for potent is _____

At the turn of the twentieth century a French bacteriologist observed that although typhus was rife in the city, no one in the hospital caught it.

Rife means _____

5. Inference: Sufficient clues are available for you to make an educated guess at the meaning.

The guard gave only a perfunctory glance at the forged I.D. card and James breathed easily again.

Perfunctory means _____

The General Assembly of the United Nations was required to meet in plenary session for this important decision

Plenary means _____

6. Combination of analysis with one of above: Modern usage may have grown away from literal meanings of prefixes and roots, but clues within the passage will enable you to start with a basic meaning and tease out the modern meaning.

When gentler methods fail, drastic treatment must be used to make severe mental patients tractable.

Tractable means _____

A colloquial style of writing is out of order in a term paper.

Colloquial means _____

PRACTICE WITH THE SIX CLUES

It was incredible that Bob – of all people – had stolen the money.

Incredible means _____

The mild disagreement between the two delegates grew into an altercation that could be heard at the end of the hallway.

Altercation means _____

Mr. Fields repositioned the chairs after the committee met so that the room would be ready for English class.

Repositioned means _____

For several years I was a heavy smoker but not that I have learned to eschew cigarettes I feel much better.

Eschew means _____

With the demise of Grandmother Brown, the family estate was turned over to the city for development as a public park.

Another word for demise is _____

His lecture was filled with vapid remarks; they were so uninteresting that students avoided taking his course whenever possible.

Another word for vapid is _____

The students were admonished against cheating on the exams.

Admonished means _____

Contact lenses, first introduced around 1888, may someday make ordinary glasses obsolete.

Obsolete means _____

There was a reciprocal arrangement made between the two countries regarding students.

Reciprocal means _____

When we're young we can adjust easily and yield to conditions, but as senility sets in we become more obdurate.

Senility means _____

Obdurate means _____

The writing of Voltaire was so vitriolic that he seemed to have dipped his pen in acid.

Vitriolic means _____

The first golf game in the spring proved immediately how flaccid muscles can become during an idle winter.

Another word for flaccid is _____

Many an amateur artist has discovered that he had latent talent once he started to paint.

Latent means _____

Teaching can be studied as an independent behavior separated from considerations of didactics, that is, the science or art of teaching.

Didactic means _____

We have discussed the compressibility of gases as stated in Boyle's law; now let us adduce several examples to see how this principle operates.

Adduce means _____