**Building a strong vocabulary**

To read well, you need a strong vocabulary. To build a strong vocabulary, you need read well.

These sentences are a paradox-that is, they seem to express opposite points but, nevertheless, are both true. Together, they state the challenge facing anyone trying to improve their reading skills. In order to read confidently, you have to know many words and you have to know how to figure out the meanings for new words that you discover as you read. Yet the best way to expand your knowledge of words is to read often and in varied content areas. Reading and vocabulary are deeply connected. As you improve your skills in one, you improve your skills in the other.

However, you will get difficulties in reading text with many unrecognized words. There are some keys to recognize word meaning:

1. Sentence Clue
2. Word clue
3. Dictionary

Sentence Clue

We can guess the meaning of the unrecognized words from context clue. Context clue are hints provided by the words and sentences surrounding the unfamiliar word.

1. Some sentences set off the definition for a difficult word by means of punctuation, such as dashes ( - ), parentheses ( ), brackets { }, commas.

Example:

To read well, you need a strong vocabulary. To build a strong vocabulary, you need to read well. These sentences are a ***paradox***-that is, they seem to express opposite points but, nevertheless, are both true.

The dash (-) and the words in the following is introduced a definition of paradox.

1. Sometimes helping words, along with punctuation, provide important clues. Some helping words are: *that is, meaning, such as, or, is called*.

Example: Mary felt perturbed; that is, she was greatly disturbed by her sister’s actions.

1. Some sentences tell the opposite of what a new word means. From its opposite, you can figure out the meaning of the word.

Example: Parents who constantly spank their children can hardly be called lenient.

Explanation: If you are lenient you do not often punish your children. Merciful or gentle would be a good guess for the meaning of lenient.

1. Sometimes you can use your own experiences to figure out the definition of a word.

Example: The cacophonous rattling made Maria cover her ears.

A noise that would make you cover your ears would be **unpleasant** or **jarring**.

1. Sentences before or after a sentence containing a difficult word sometimes explains the meaning of the word.

Example: Mozart gave his first public recital at the age of six. By age thirteen he had written symphonies and an operetta. He is justly called a child **prodigy**.

It would certainly take a remarkably talented person to do a public recital and written symphonies at a very early age. Thus, ‘prodigy’ can be defined as **an extraordinary person**.

1. Some sentences are written just to give the definitions of difficult words-words that the reader will need to know in order to understand what they are reading.

Example: one of the remarkable features of the Nile valley is fertility of its soil. This rich earth that supported plant growth made it possible for Egyptians to thrive in a dry season.

The second sentence, which tells you that the soil was rich and that is supported plant growth, explains fertility.

1. Because some sentences give examples for a new word, you can build a definition.

Example: Select a ***Periodical*** from among the following: Playboy, Time, Reader’s Digest, or Seventeen.

The sentence doesn’t say that a periodical is a magazine, but you can figure out that out from the examples

1. Some sentence use a word you do not know to help explain a word you do not know.

Example: A ***formidable*** enemy is one to be feared.

Formidable - through the clues in this sentence - means *fearful* or *dreadful*.

Words Part Clue

Occasionally, two words may be put together to form a new word that is not familiar to you. If you look at each word unit, though, you can sometimes recognize the new word. Then you can try to understand the meaning. For example, look at these words:

Rawhide (raw + hide)

Gentleman (gentle + man)

Backstage (back + stage)

Broomstick (broom + stick)

Paperwork (paper + work)

Words new to you may contain certain groups of letters that have meanings you can learn. If you don’t know what the word itself means, these groups of letter may help you reach a definition.

The root (stem) is the basic part of a word. We add prefixes or suffixes to some roots and create new words.

Example: Introspective

* The root : Spect means “lock”
* The prefix intro means “within” or “inward”
* The suffix -ive means “to tend to” or “to lean toward”

Exercises

1. After many weeks of work scraping off old paint and varnish that had been applied through the years, we managed to ***renovate*** the old desk.
2. At exam time Carl’s hands shook and sweated so much that he could not hold a pen. His heard ***pounded*** and his stomach ***churned***, even though he knew the subject very well. He knew the subject very well. He really had a strange***Phobia*** about taking test.
3. It was clear that he did not care whether they stayed or whether they went home. Such ***indifference*** made them feel terrible.
4. The class covers only most important philosophical ideas of the nineteenth century, not the ***trivial*** ones.
5. Many fast-food restaurants operate by means of franchises. A ***franchise*** is permission to sell product that manufacturer grant to a dealer.
6. The reporter ***misreported*** the incident.
7. There are twenty-five students in the classroom, but there are only eighteen chairs. There is a **shortage** of chair for this class.
8. My friend wakes up 06.30 every the morning, runs for two miles, and eat breakfast at 08.00. This **pattern** never changes. He does the same thing every morning.
9. An optimist believes that life is good but a pessimist believes **the contrary**, that life is bad.
10. He loved to read. When I visited him one day, he was sitting on his sofa **surrounded** by books. There were books on the sofa, books on the table beside him, and books on the floor.