

Understanding Hard Words

When most people come across a hard word, they first try to figure it out by the sounds of the letters. Then they look it up in the dictionary. If those two methods don't always work for you, **try out these ideas:**

USE THE PARTS OF THE WORD

Use the beginning (**prefix**), middle (**root**), and end part (**suffix**) of the word to try and figure it out. For example: **antidote**.

The first part of the word, **anti** is a prefix. **Anti** means "against or opposed to." **Antidote** is a remedy "given against" poison.

So if you just knew the prefix **anti**, you would be closer to getting the meaning of the word in a sentence like this: The doctors gave the woman a strong antidote, so she survived the deadly snake bite.

USE SURROUNDING WORDS

Think of what the story or sentence is about. What would make sense as a meaning? Make a few guesses. For clues, look for words around the unknown word.

Synonyms: Words that have a similar meaning

For example: You can stop berating me. I have been scolded enough.

Antonyms: Words that have opposite meanings.

For example: Her berating me was a shock. Usually she praised and complimented me.

Cause and Effect: What happens before, what happens after.

For example: I had made a careless and unnecessary mistake and was berated.

(Did you guess? **Berate** means "to scold.")

AMID

What does **amid** mean? See if you can figure it out from the following sentence.

"Tita made her entrance into this world amid the smells of simmering noodle soup, thyme, bay leaves, and cilantro, steamed milk, garlic, and, of course, onion."

Mid is a part of the word. If you know what **mid** means, use it to help you figure out the entire word.

Amid means: _____

THYME AND CILANTRO

What words follow and come before **thyme** and **cilantro** in the sentence? That should give you a hint as to their meanings.

Thyme means: _____

Cilantro means: _____

UNTRUTH

What does **untruth** mean in this sentence: You have to be able to tell truths from untruths.

Break down **untruth** into its word parts. Use **un** and **truth** to figure it out.

Untruth means: _____