

Stuck on a Word?

Get Clues ... Context Clues!

Sometimes we misunderstand a sentence because it contains a key word that we don't know. When that happens, we can try using the context clues, or words around the unfamiliar word, to help us figure out the meaning. How do we do that? Read the boxes below slowly.

For busy adults, learning new words may seem daunting, or discouraging. However, many people find that learning the meaning of new words and expanding what they know are enlightening experiences that make them more aware of the world's ideas.

Do you know what the words **daunting** and **enlightening** mean? If not, how could you figure them out? Try looking at the **context clues** — the surrounding words or phrases that give hints about the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Check the explanation below.

For busy adults, learning new words may seem *daunting*, or discouraging. However, many people find that learning the meaning of new words and expanding what they know are *enlightening* experiences that make them more aware of the world's ideas.

In the first sentence, the phrase "or discouraging" comes right after *daunting* to explain its meaning. Another word for *daunting* is *discouraging*.

How do you figure out what *enlightening* means? The context clues "expanding what they know" and "more aware of the world's ideas" can help you. Based on those surrounding phrases, *enlightening* must mean adding new knowledge to your life.

YOUR TURN

Each sentence below contains at least one word in italics that you may not know. To figure out the unfamiliar word, first read the entire sentence. Then decide what part of speech the word is: Is it a **noun** — a person, place, or thing? Is it a **verb**, that shows action? Is it an **adjective**, or describing word? Circle the type of word you think it is. Next, underline the **context clues**, the surrounding words that point to the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Finally, circle the definition that makes sense to you.

For example:

After winning the state lottery, the elated mother cheered and hugged her children.

How is the word used? noun adjective verb

Elated probably means: a. depressed

b. worried

c. very happy

1. If the landlord breaks his promise to the tenant, the rent will *abate* until the problem is fixed.

How is the word used? noun adjective verb

Abate probably means: a. increase

b. stay the same

c. be reduced or not be charged

2. In angry crowds, most people think it is better to be on the *periphery* than to be right in the middle.

How is the word used? noun adjective verb

Periphery probably means: a. the center of something

b. happy most of the time

c. the boundary or outermost part

3. The stereo was on so low that the sound was barely *audible*.

How is the word used? noun adjective verb

Audible probably means: a. modern music

b. able to be heard

c. attractive