

Finding the meaning of words

Name _____ Date _____

Lollygagging with your lexis

According to the Oxford English Dictionary¹, there are around 250,000 words in English! Most native speakers of English know around 20,000-35,000 words², so we usually only scratch the surface when we speak or write.

It is inevitable that you will sometimes find a word that you don't know the meaning of; that's the joy of English. If you don't have a dictionary, or haven't got time to use a dictionary, you can use clues to work out what a new word means.

Using Context Clues

The words you'll find in English texts aren't in isolation: they have a context. You can use this context to determine meaning in four ways.

<p>Synonym: A word or group of words having the same meaning as the unknown word can often be found in the same sentence.</p> <p>Example: <i>I love <u>lollygagging</u> on a lazy Sunday afternoon, relaxing and doing nothing.</i></p>	<p>Antonym: A word or group of words having the opposite meaning of the word can sometimes be found in the sentence.</p> <p>Example: <i>Ms Smith, the geography teacher, <u>elucidated</u> the subject, unlike Ms Brown who left all the students in the dark.</i></p>
<p>Explanation: The word is explained within the sentence.</p> <p>Example: <i>The water in the bay was <u>pellucid</u>, you could see all the way to the bottom clearly.</i></p>	<p>Example: Specific examples in the sentence help to provide a definition.</p> <p>Example: <i>He wore it as a <u>talisman</u>, as one might wear a rabbit's foot, hang a horseshoe up or keep a four-leafed clover.</i></p>

You can also use grammatical clues by analysing the part of speech the word is as this will tell you whether you're dealing with a noun (a thing or a concept) or an adjective (a describing word), a verb (a doing word), or an adverb (describes the verb).

On the next page you'll find some lovely words, try and use the context clues to work out their meaning.

¹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/explore/how-many-words-are-there-in-the-english-language>

² <https://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2013/05/vocabulary-size>

³ Set of steps from Coady & Nation (1988).

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The vampire left the body completely exsanguinated, the body was completely bloodless.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

He walked into the primary school and looked around at the tiny chairs and tables that seemed Lilliputian.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

The beleaguered PM, facing attacks from all sides, held onto her job for a few more days after the report leaked.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

The beautiful picture of a farm set in rolling fields was a masterpiece of bucolic art.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

Like Saul on the road to Tarsus, Arjuna's realisation that Krishna represents the Universe, or the Buddha obtaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, he had an epiphany.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

Her erstwhile business partner, who disappeared a number of years ago, was discovered in the Amazon living with a tribe of cannibals.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

"Ah," said the Farmer, "the smell of Earth after rain!"
"Petrichor," said the farmer's partner.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

As the general surveyed the battlefield, she realised that although the war was won, the loss of life and damage to the country made it a Pyrrhic victory, it wasn't worth it.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

The banquet was sumptuous, there was stuffed peacock, roast swan, and enough food to feed everyone there for a week.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

Sid the snake slid through the grass, I could hear his susurrations, and that told me he was hunting mice.

Part of speech: _____ Definition: _____

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Functional English and GCSE English curriculum mapping

CSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE		Enlarged bold font indicates main coverage.
READING (50% weighting)		
A1	(a) Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. (b) Select and synthesise evidence from different texts.	
A2	Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views	
A3	Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.	
A4	Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.	
WRITING (50% weighting)		
A5	(a) Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. (b) Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.	
A6	Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation (must constitute 20% of the marks for each specification as a whole).	
SPOKEN LANGUAGE (unweighted)		
A7	Demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting.	
A8	Listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback to presentations.	
A9	Use spoken Standard English effectively in speeches and presentations.	

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ENGLISH 2018 (takes effect from September 2019)

Purpose and learning aims of Functional Skills English

Functional Skills English specifications enable students to develop confidence and fluency in, and a positive attitude towards, English. They should be able to demonstrate their competence by using English in real-world situations as well as demonstrating a sound grasp of basic English knowledge and skills. They need to provide assessment of students' underpinning knowledge (i.e. spelling) as well as their ability to apply this in different contexts.

Entry Levels: a qualification to demonstrate the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English and provide the basis for further study at Levels 1 and 2. Students should, with some direction and guidance, be able to apply these (Entry Level) English functional skills to informal and some formal contexts, in familiar situations.

Levels 1 and 2: a qualification for work, study and life. Achievement of the qualification demonstrates the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English, and apply these skills effectively to a range of purposes in the workplace and other real-life situations. Students should be able to communicate with confidence, effectiveness and an increasing level of independence, in a range of formal and informal contexts.

Functional English - Reading

'Reading' within Functional Skills English qualifications is defined as the independent understanding of written language in specific contexts. Can be demonstrated through the use of texts on screen or on paper.

Learning aims for reading

E1, 2 & 3. Acquire an understanding of everyday words and their uses and effects, and apply this understanding in different contexts. Read with accuracy straightforward texts encountered in everyday life and work, and develop confidence to read more widely.

L1-2 Read a range of different text types confidently and fluently, applying their knowledge and understanding of texts to their own writing.

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Curriculum mapping

Subject content - FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ENGLISH 2018

→ = not covered in detail in this resource but included to show progression across levels. ✓ = **content** covered in this resource, although this will vary with the student group and how the resource is used by the teacher (✓✓ = key learning objective). *Content at each level subsumes and builds upon that at lower levels.*

Reading content descriptors

Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2
	E2.10 Use effective strategies to find the meaning of words and check their spelling (e.g. a simple dictionary, spell-checker) →	E3.8 Read correctly words designated for Entry Level 3 → E3.11 Use effective strategies to find the meaning of words (e.g. a dictionary, working out meaning from context; using knowledge of different word types) ✓✓	L1.12 Recognise that language and other textual features can be varied to suit different audiences and purposes ✓ L1.16 Recognise vocabulary typically associated with specific types and purposes of texts (e.g. formal, informal, instructional, descriptive, explanatory and persuasive) ✓ L1.17 Read and understand a range of specialist words in context ✓✓	L2.15 Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (e.g. glossaries, legends/ keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources → L2.17 Analyse texts, of different levels of complexity, recognising their use of vocabulary and identifying levels of formality and bias ✓
Scope of study – learners should read texts that include (<i>text types at each level subsume previous levels</i>)				
short simple texts that inform, describe and narrate.	short straight-forward texts that instruct, inform, describe and narrate.	straightforward texts that instruct, describe, narrate and explain.	straightforward texts on a range of topics and of varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain and persuade.	straightforward and complex texts on a range of topics and varying lengths that instruct, describe, explain and persuade.

References:

Ofqual (2009), *Functional Skills criteria for English: Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, level 1 and level 2*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/functional-skills-criteria-for-english>

Source: DfE (Feb 2018), *Subject content functional skills*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/functional-skills-subject-content-english>

DfE (2013), *English Language GCSE subject content and assessment objectives*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-english-language-and-gcse-english-literature-new-content>

Also covers many L2 Adult Literacy Curriculum elements <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf1286>