

## Use Context

When you come across a word you don't know, you can often figure out its meaning from the other words in the sentence. The other words form a familiar context, or setting, for the unfamiliar word. Looking closely at the surrounding words will give you clues to the meaning of the new word.

*When you come to a word you don't know...*

1. Look for a synonym – a word or words that have the same meaning as the unknown word.

**Sara had an ominous feeling when she woke up, but the feeling was less threatening when she saw she was in her own room.** (An *ominous* feeling is a threatening one.)

2. Look for an antonym – a word that has the opposite meaning as the unknown word.

**Boniface had always been quite heavy, but he looked gaunt when he returned from the hospital.** (*Gaunt* is the opposite of heavy.)

3. Look for a comparison or contrast.

**Riding a mountain bike in a remote area is my idea of a great day. I wonder why some people like to ride motorcycles on busy six-lane highways.** (A *remote* area is out of the way, in contrast to a *busy* area.)

4. Look for a definition or description.

**Manatees, large aquatic mammals (sometimes called sea cows), can be found in the warm coastal waters of Florida.** (An *aquatic* animal is one that lives in the water.)

5. Look for words that appear in a series.

**The campers spotted blue jays, chickadees, and indigo buntings on Saturday morning.** (An *indigo bunting*, like a *blue jay* or *chickadee*, is a bird.)

6. Look for a cause and effect relationship.

**The amount of traffic at 6<sup>th</sup> and Main doubled last year, so crossing lights were placed at that corner to avert an accident.** (*Avert* means “to prevent.”)