ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Understanding unfamiliar vocabulary

Difficulty level: Intermediate

English, Literacy, and Communication

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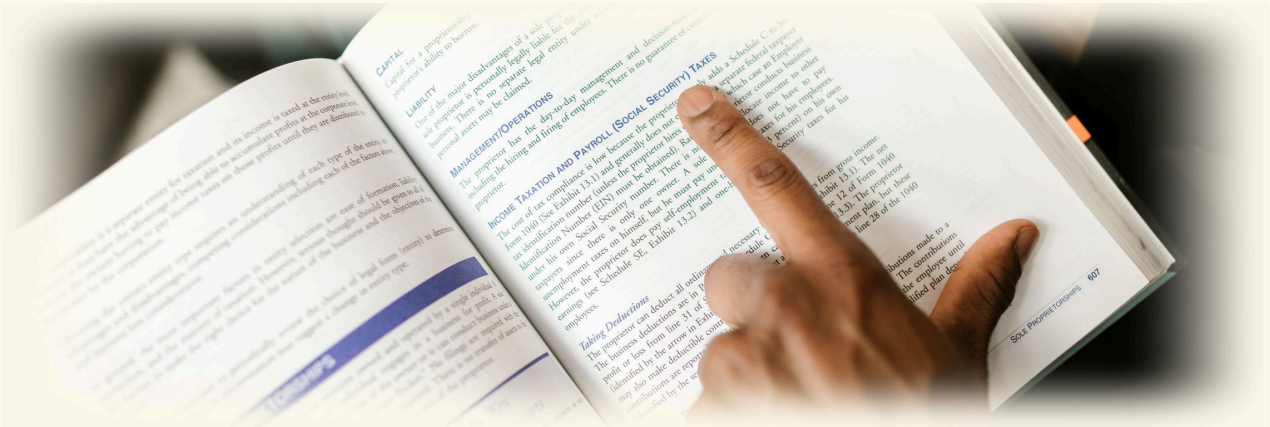
Overview of the concept

This is how you work out new words from context, word parts, and a dictionary, like tackling a tricky word in a textbook, instead of skipping every word you do not know. A new word often carries clues in its parts, a prefix or a root you have seen before, and the sentence around it gives you more. Putting those clues together usually gives you a good sense of the meaning, and a dictionary can confirm it. That is how you keep reading a textbook or an article without getting stuck on every unfamiliar word.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Work out 'unhappy' using word parts.

SOLUTION

Split the word: un plus happy.

The prefix un means not.

So 'unhappy' means not happy.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Work out 'preview' using word parts.

SOLUTION

Split the word: pre plus view.

The prefix pre means before, and view means to see.

So 'preview' means to see before (the main event).

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Practice questions

1 Work out 'rewrite' using word parts. (re means again)

- A To write again
- B To write before
- C To write without
- D One who writes

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2 Work out 'careless' using word parts. (less means without)

- A Full of care
- B One who cares
- C Without care
- D To care again

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3 Work out 'teacher' using word parts. (er means one who)

- A To teach again
- B One who teaches
- C Without teaching
- D Full of teaching

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4 Work out 'dislike' using word parts. (dis means not)

- A To like again
- B To like before
- C Full of liking
- D To not like

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5 Work out 'helpful' using word parts. (ful means full of)

- A Without help
- B Full of help
- C One who helps
- D To help again

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6 Work out 'quickly' using word parts. (ly means in a way)

- A In a quick way
- B Without quickness
- C One who is quick
- D To be quick again

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7 Work out 'preheat' using word parts. (pre means before)

A To heat again

B Without heat

C One who heats

D To heat before

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8 Work out 'fearless' using word parts. (less means without)

A Full of fear

B To fear again

C Without fear

D One who fears

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9 Work out 'reader' using word parts. (er means one who)

- A One who reads
- B To read again
- C Without reading
- D Full of reading

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10 Work out 'unfair' using word parts. (un means not)

- A Fair again
- B Not fair
- C Fair before
- D Full of fairness

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ANSWER KEY

1. To write again

2. Without care

3. One who teaches

4. To not like

5. Full of help

6. In a quick way

7. To heat before

8. Without fear

9. One who reads

10. Not fair

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