# Using Context Clues

| Name: _____ | Date: _____ | Score: _____ / 10 |
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## Quick Review

When you meet an unfamiliar word, slow down and read the words AROUND it. Writers often plant clues: a **definition** right after the word, a **synonym** joined by *or*, an **antonym** signaled by *unlike* or *but*, **examples** introduced by *such as*, or a **general situation** that points to the meaning. Match the clue type to the answer that fits BOTH the clue and the sentence as a whole.

## PRACTICE

*Read each sentence carefully. Use the context clue to choose the answer that best fits the meaning of the bold word.*

**1.** Read the sentence: *The detective was **meticulous**, examining every fiber on the carpet and labeling each photograph before leaving the room.*
The word **meticulous** most likely means —

**A.** quick and casual in his work.

**B.** easily distracted by small details.

**C.** extremely careful and precise about details.

**D.** uninterested in finishing the job.

**2.** Read the sentence: *Unlike his usual **verbose** explanations, Coach Avery's halftime speech was just three short sentences.*
The word **verbose** most likely means —

**A.** using far more words than necessary.

**B.** delivered in a strong, angry tone.

**C.** easy for the team to remember.

**D.** spoken in a foreign language.

**3.** Read the sentence: *Many marsupials — pouched mammals such as kangaroos, koalas, and opossums — carry their young in **abdominal** pouches on the front of the body.*
The word **abdominal** most likely means —

**A.** located on the back near the spine.

**B.** made from soft fur and skin.

**C.** used only by very young animals.

**D.** located on the belly or front of the body.

**4.** Read the sentence: *Marisol showed remarkable **tenacity**, or persistence, finishing the science fair project even after two of her models collapsed.*
The word **tenacity** most likely means —

**A.** skill at building physical models.

**B.** the quality of refusing to give up.

**C.** willingness to ask for help from others.

**D.** fear of being judged by the judges.

**5.** Read the sentence: *The lighthouse stood **conspicuous** against the gray cliffs, its red and white stripes visible to ships miles out at sea.*
The word **conspicuous** most likely means —

**A.** weather-worn from years of storms.

**B.** perched on a dangerously high cliff.

**C.** easy to notice; standing out clearly.

**D.** shorter than the cliffs around it.

**6.** Read the sentence: *The new principal urged students to **abstain** from sugary drinks during the school day; she asked them to choose water instead.*
The word **abstain** most likely means —

**A.** to choose to hold back from doing something.

**B.** to complain loudly about a rule.

**C.** to drink something quickly without tasting it.

**D.** to share a drink with another person.

**7.** Read the sentence: *The senator was praised for her **candor**: she answered every question honestly, even when the truth was uncomfortable.*
The word **candor** most likely means —

**A.** the ability to win an argument easily.

**B.** open and honest expression.

**C.** kindness toward political opponents.

**D.** skill at avoiding difficult questions.

**8.** Read the sentence: *The professor's lecture was praised for its **brevity**; she covered three centuries of history in under twenty minutes.*
The word **brevity** most likely means —

**A.** depth of historical research.

**B.** the use of vivid examples.

**C.** a slow and careful speaking style.

**D.** the quality of being brief or short.

**9.** Read the sentence: *The hikers grew **despondent** as the trail grew steeper, the rain harder, and the summit no closer than it had been an hour ago.*
What does **despondent** most likely mean? Name the type of clue (definition, synonym, antonym, example, or general context) and explain how it points to the meaning in 2–3 sentences.

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**10.** Read the sentence: *The audience was **captivated**, or completely held by attention, as the magician revealed his final card.*
(a) What does **captivated** mean in this sentence? (b) Name the type of context clue the writer used. (c) Write one new sentence of your own that uses **captivated** correctly.

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# Answer Keys

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | B | **C** | D | 6 | **A** | B | C | D |
| 2 | **A** | B | C | D | 7 | A | **B** | C | D |
| 3 | A | B | C | **D** | 8 | A | B | C | **D** |
| 4 | A | **B** | C | D | 9 | See below | | | |
| 5 | A | B | **C** | D | 10 | See below | | | |

## Explanations

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| **1. C** | The general-context clue (*examining every fiber*, *labeling each photograph*) shows behavior that is **extremely careful and precise**. A is the opposite (*quick and casual* contradicts the careful examination). B grabs the word *details* from the right answer but flips the meaning (the detective USES details, not loses focus on them). D contradicts the evidence that he is doing thorough work. |
| **2. A** | *Unlike* signals an **antonym clue**: the halftime speech was *just three short sentences*, so a *verbose* explanation must be the opposite — **using far more words than necessary**. B trades meaning for tone, a different category entirely. C describes a quality of the SHORT speech, not the long one. D guesses based on the Latin look of the word without using the antonym clue. |
| **3. D** | The phrase *on the front of the body* works as a **definition clue** placed right beside the word. A names the opposite location (back, not front). B describes what the pouch is made of, not where it is. C confuses WHO uses the pouch with WHERE the pouch sits. |
| **4. B** | The word *or persistence* after the comma is a textbook **synonym clue**; *tenacity* means **the quality of refusing to give up**. A is a related skill the sentence shows but not what the word means. C names a different helpful trait (asking for help) that doesn't fit *persistence*. D names an emotion that isn't supported anywhere in the sentence. |
| **5. C** | The general-context clues — *red and white stripes* and *visible to ships miles out at sea* — show the lighthouse is **easy to notice and standing out clearly**. A latches onto *gray cliffs* and invents weather wear that isn't there. B grabs the location detail but not what the word means. D contradicts *visible miles out at sea*: a shorter lighthouse would be harder, not easier, to see. |
| **6. A** | The follow-up clue (*choose water instead*) shows that *abstain* means **to hold back from** sugary drinks. B sounds like a student reaction to the rule but isn't the word's meaning. C describes a way of drinking, not a choice to avoid drinking. D confuses *abstain* with sharing — the opposite of holding back. |
| **7. B** | The colon introduces a **definition clue**: *answered every question honestly, even when the truth was uncomfortable* = **open and honest expression**. A swaps honesty for persuasion. C names a virtue the sentence doesn't mention. D is the OPPOSITE of what the senator did (she answered every question, didn't dodge them). |
| **8. D** | The clue *three centuries of history in under twenty minutes* shows **brevity = the quality of being brief or short**. A grabs *history* from the sentence but names research, not length. B names another way a lecture might be praised, but the sentence emphasizes time. C is the OPPOSITE of brief — a slow style would lengthen the lecture. |

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| **9.** | **Answer:** Despondent most likely means discouraged or losing hope. The general-context clue does the work: the trail grows steeper, the rain harder, and the summit is no closer — a string of disappointments that would naturally drain a hiker's hope. Substituting discouraged back into the sentence keeps the meaning intact. |
| **10.** | **Answer:** (a) Captivated means held completely by attention; fascinated. (b) The writer uses a synonym clue set off by or: the phrase completely held by attention directly restates the meaning. (c) Sample sentence: The first-graders were captivated by the storyteller's voice and didn't move for the entire half hour. |

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