

# Using Dictionaries and Thesauruses Effectively

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ / 10



## Quick Review

Match the TOOL to the question. A **dictionary** gives definitions, pronunciation, part of speech, and example sentences — use it when you need to know what a word means or how to say it. A **thesaurus** gives synonyms and antonyms — use it when you have a word but want a more precise or vivid one. A **glossary** lives at the back of a textbook and defines special terms as that book uses them. When a dictionary lists more than one meaning, use the **part of speech** and the **context of the sentence** to pick the right entry. With a thesaurus, never grab the first synonym — always check that it actually fits your sentence.

## PRACTICE

Choose the **BEST** answer for each item about using reference materials.

1. Imagine this dictionary entry:

**resolve** /rɪˈzɒlv/ *verb* 1. to make a firm decision about something. 2. to settle (a dispute) by agreement. 3. (technical) to separate into clear parts, as a lens resolves an image.

Which definition **BEST** fits this sentence? *After hours of argument, the two neighbors finally **resolved** their dispute over the fence.*

- A. definition 1
- B. definition 2
- C. definition 3
- D. none of the definitions

2. You wrote: *The room was nice.* A thesaurus offers these synonyms for **nice**: *pleasant, polite, cozy, respectable.* Which would **BEST** replace **nice** if you want to suggest a warm, comfortable feeling?

- A. pleasant
- B. polite
- C. respectable
- D. cozy

3. You are reading a sixth-grade science textbook and find the word **photosynthesis** in bold for the first time. To find the meaning the textbook expects you to know, the **BEST** place to look **FIRST** is —

- A. an online encyclopedia.
- B. a general thesaurus.
- C. the book's glossary.
- D. a printed dictionary.



4. Imagine this dictionary entry:

**bank**<sup>1</sup> *noun* 1. a place that holds money. 2. a row of similar things (a bank of computers).

**bank**<sup>2</sup> *noun* the land along the side of a river or lake.

**bank**<sup>3</sup> *verb* to tilt a vehicle when turning.

Which entry fits this sentence? *The pilot had to **bank** the small plane sharply to clear the mountainside.*

- A. bank<sup>3</sup>
- B. bank<sup>1</sup>, definition 1
- C. bank<sup>1</sup>, definition 2
- D. bank<sup>2</sup>

5. Lin wants a more vivid word than *walked* in this sentence: *After winning the race, Daniel **walked** to the trophy table.* Her thesaurus lists: *strode, trudged, shuffled, limped.* Which BEST fits the situation?

- A. trudged
- B. strode
- C. shuffled
- D. limped

6. Which question is BEST answered by a **dictionary** rather than a thesaurus?

- A. What is a more vivid word for *happy*?
- B. Is *cold* an antonym of *hot*?
- C. How is *colonel* pronounced?
- D. What is another way to say *begin*?

7. Imagine this dictionary entry:

**refrain** /rɪˈfreɪn/ 1. *verb* to hold back from doing something. 2. *noun* a line or phrase that is repeated, especially in a song.

In which sentence does **refrain** match **definition 1**?

- A. Please **refrain** from talking during the concert.
- B. The song's **refrain** repeats after every verse.
- C. We all joined in on the **refrain**.
- D. She added a new **refrain** to the chorus.

8. Anjali wrote: *The villain was a really bad person.* She wants a more powerful synonym for **bad**. Her thesaurus lists: *unwell, naughty, mistaken, wicked.* Which best fits the sentence?

- A. unwell
- B. naughty
- C. mistaken
- D. wicked



9. Imagine you are reading and meet this sentence: *The senator made one final **address** before stepping down.* A dictionary lists three meanings for *address*: (1) the place where someone lives (noun); (2) a formal speech (noun); (3) to direct words to someone (verb). Which numbered definition fits the sentence, and how do you know? Use the PART OF SPEECH and the SENTENCE CONTEXT in your answer.

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10. Your friend wrote this sentence: *The puppy was very small.* Her thesaurus lists these synonyms for **small**: *tiny, petite, miniature, runty.* (a) Which would you recommend to make the sentence sound warm and affectionate? (b) Which would make the puppy sound weak or unhealthy? (c) Explain in one sentence why a writer should not just grab the first synonym from a thesaurus.

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# Answer Keys

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Explanations	
<b>1. B</b>	The sentence describes two neighbors ending a dispute by agreement, which is exactly <b>definition 2</b> . A is the <i>make a decision</i> sense (no decision is described here). C is the technical optics sense (no lens). D ignores a clear match.
<b>2. D</b>	<b>Cozy</b> carries the warm, comfortable feeling for a <i>room</i> . A ( <i>pleasant</i> ) is correct but generic. B ( <i>polite</i> ) describes a person's manners, not a room. C ( <i>respectable</i> ) describes social standing, not comfort. This is the classic thesaurus trap: every word is a synonym for <i>nice</i> in some sense, but only one fits the context.
<b>3. C</b>	A textbook's <b>glossary</b> defines key terms with the exact meaning the book uses, often shorter and more focused than a general source. A may give too much detail and may not match the textbook. B gives synonyms, not a definition. D gives a general definition but might miss how the textbook frames it.
<b>4. A</b>	In the sentence, <i>bank</i> describes what the pilot DOES to the plane — it is a verb meaning <b>to tilt when turning</b> , matching <b>bank</b> <sup>3</sup> . B (money place) and C (row of things) are noun senses with no fit. D (river bank) is also a noun and doesn't describe an action by the pilot.
<b>5. B</b>	Winning the race gives Daniel confidence, so <b>strode</b> (walked with long, confident steps) fits perfectly. A <i>trudged</i> = walked heavily as if tired or unhappy — the opposite of how a winner feels. C <i>shuffled</i> = dragged the feet — lazy or weak. D <i>limped</i> = walked because of an injury. All four are real synonyms for <i>walked</i> , but only one matches the context.
<b>6. C</b>	A <b>dictionary</b> gives pronunciation (here, /nɪkʰr.nɪl/), so C is the right tool. A and D ask for synonyms — a thesaurus is the right tool. B asks for an antonym — also a thesaurus job. The line between the two tools is the key idea of this lesson.
<b>7. A</b>	<b>A</b> uses <i>refrain</i> as a verb meaning <b>hold back from doing something</b> — the part of speech and the context both match definition 1. B, C, and D all use the noun sense (a repeated song line), so they fit definition 2 instead.
<b>8. D</b>	<b>Wicked</b> matches the meaning <i>morally bad</i> that fits a villain. A <i>unwell</i> means sick. B <i>naughty</i> is mild and used for misbehaving children. C <i>mistaken</i> means in error, not evil. Every choice is a real synonym for <i>bad</i> in SOME sense, but only one captures the right shade for a villain.
<b>9.</b>	<b>Answer:</b> Definition <b>2</b> fits: <i>here is a noun meaning a formal speech</i> . The clue <i>made one final</i> tells you the word is a noun (you can <i>make a speech</i> ) and the context — a senator stepping down — points to a formal speech, not a home address (1) or the verb sense (3).
<b>10.</b>	<b>Answer:</b> (a) <i>Tiny</i> (or <i>petite</i> ) sounds warm and affectionate — it suggests <i>cute and small</i> . (b) <i>Runty</i> suggests weak or unhealthy — the smallest of a litter, often used as criticism. (c) A writer should not grab the first synonym because synonyms share a DENOTATION but differ in <i>connotation</i> and context fit; the wrong synonym can change the meaning or tone of the whole sentence.



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