

# Verifying Word Meaning

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

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

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



## Quick Review

Context clues and root analysis give you a **preliminary guess** about a word's meaning. Smart readers VERIFY that guess before they rely on it. Four good verification moves: (1) **Substitute** your guess back into the sentence — does the sentence still make sense? (2) **Look it up** in a dictionary to confirm the definition AND the part of speech. (3) **Read on** — the next sentence often confirms or corrects your guess. (4) **Check another use** of the same word in a different sentence — does your meaning hold? If any check fails, revise your guess.

## PRACTICE

Choose the **BEST** way to verify or revise the word-meaning guess in each item.

- Read the sentence: *The athlete's **stamina** impressed everyone in the gym.* Jamal guesses that *stamina* means *strength*. Which step would **BEST** help Jamal verify his guess?
  - Count how many syllables *stamina* has.
  - Check if *stamina* looks like a Spanish word.
  - Read the next sentence to see whether *strength* still fits.
  - Ask a friend to guess what the word means.
- Mei reads: *The classroom was **chaotic**: papers flew, students shouted, and the gerbil ran loose.* She guesses *chaotic* means *completely disorderly*. The **BEST** way to verify her guess is to —
  - substitute *completely disorderly* back into the sentence and check if it still makes sense.
  - look for the word *chaotic* in the index of the textbook.
  - underline every adjective in the paragraph.
  - ask whether the word came from Greek or Latin.
- Tomas reads sentence 1: *The hikers reached the **summit** and gazed at the valley below.* He guesses *summit* means *the top of the mountain*. Then he reads sentence 2 from a news article: *World leaders gathered for a climate **summit** in Geneva.* What should Tomas conclude?
  - His guess is wrong; *summit* means *news article*.
  - Sentence 2 has no useful information about the word.
  - Both sentences use the word the same way.
  - Summit* has at least two related meanings; his first guess fits sentence 1 but a related meaning — a top-level meeting — fits sentence 2.



4. Read the sentence: *The teacher's gentle voice was a **balm** after a stressful test.* Olivia guesses that *balm* means *warning*. Which check would BEST help her see her guess is WRONG?
- A. Counting how often the word appears in the chapter.
  - B. Substituting *warning* back into the sentence and asking whether it makes sense.
  - C. Asking what part of speech *balm* is.
  - D. Looking at the cover of the book for clues.
5. Mara reads: *The new policy was hailed as a **panacea** for the city's traffic.* She has no idea what **panacea** means. She looks it up in a dictionary and finds: *panacea, noun, a solution that is believed to fix every problem.* Which step should she do NEXT to confirm she understands the word IN THIS SENTENCE?
- A. Memorize the dictionary entry word-for-word.
  - B. Look up a different word from the sentence.
  - C. Substitute the dictionary's definition back into the sentence and check that the sentence still makes sense.
  - D. Stop reading the article.
6. Read this passage:  
*Diego thought **fastidious** meant 'fast.'* Then he read the next line: *'Mrs. Pereira was so fastidious that she lined up her pencils by size before every class.'*  
What should Diego do?
- A. Revise his guess; *fastidious* likely means *extremely careful about details*, not *fast*.
  - B. Keep his original guess because *fast* sounds like *fastidious*.
  - C. Skip the word and stop reading.
  - D. Decide the author used the word incorrectly.
7. Read the sentence: *The judge's **impartial** ruling satisfied both teams.* Lucas guesses *impartial* means *fair to both sides*. Which check would give him the STRONGEST confirmation?
- A. Counting the letters in *impartial*.
  - B. Checking a dictionary, which defines *impartial* as *not favoring one side over another*.
  - C. Asking if anyone has heard the word before.
  - D. Comparing *impartial* with *important*.
8. Read these two sentences with the same word:  
1) *The carpenter used a fine **plane** to smooth the wood.*  
2) *The pilot flew the small **plane** through the clouds.*  
Mia first thinks **plane** means *a flying machine*. What should she conclude?
- A. Sentence 1 has a typo and should say *plate*.
  - B. Both sentences use the word the same way.
  - C. Her guess is wrong everywhere and the word means something else entirely.
  - D. Her guess fits sentence 2, but in sentence 1 **plane** is a different word — a woodworking tool that smooths surfaces.



9. Read the sentence: *The musician's **melancholy** tune left the audience in tears.*

(a) Make a preliminary guess about what **melancholy** means. (b) Describe ONE specific verification step you could take and what result would CONFIRM your guess. (c) Describe ONE result that would make you REVISE your guess.

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10. Read these two sentences:

1) *The orchestra played a single, sustained **note** for three full seconds.*

2) *Please leave a **note** on the door for the next visitor.*

Eli thinks **note** means *a sound played by an instrument*. Test his guess against BOTH sentences. Where does it hold? Where does it fail? What should he conclude in 1–2 sentences?

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# Answer Keys

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Explanations	
<b>1. C</b>	Reading on is a powerful verification step: the next sentence often confirms or refines the meaning. A counts syllables, which has nothing to do with meaning. B confuses spelling with definition. D outsources verification rather than using the text.
<b>2. A</b>	<b>Substitution</b> is one of the quickest verification moves: <i>The classroom was completely disorderly: papers flew, students shouted...</i> reads naturally, so the guess holds. B confuses an index (which finds page numbers) with a glossary or dictionary. C is a grammar task, not a meaning check. D is interesting trivia but does not test her current guess.
<b>3. D</b>	Verifying across multiple uses shows when a word has more than one meaning. <b>Summit</b> literally means the highest point of a mountain (sentence 1) and figuratively means a top-level meeting of leaders (sentence 2). A throws out a correct guess. B ignores useful evidence. C misses the shift from literal to figurative.
<b>4. B</b>	Substitution would give <i>The teacher's gentle voice was a warning after a stressful test</i> — which doesn't fit <i>gentle</i> or <i>after a stressful test</i> . The substitution failure shows the guess is wrong. A is a frequency check, not a meaning check. C narrows the part of speech but doesn't catch the meaning error. D is unrelated to the word.
<b>5. C</b>	A dictionary check is a strong start, but the final verification step is <b>substitution back into the original sentence</b> : <i>The new policy was hailed as a solution that fixes every problem for the city's traffic</i> . The sentence still makes sense, so the meaning holds. A memorizes without checking. B detours from the word in question. D abandons the task instead of finishing it.
<b>6. A</b>	The new sentence shows behavior that has nothing to do with speed and everything to do with careful attention to detail. Diego should <b>revise his guess</b> . B falls into the sound-alike trap ( <i>fastidious</i> just begins with <i>fast</i> ). C abandons the work of verification. D blames the writer for the reader's mistake.
<b>7. B</b>	A dictionary check confirms both Lucas's meaning and that no key nuance is missing. A counts letters — unrelated to meaning. C is a popularity poll, not a definition check. D is the classic sound-alike trap ( <i>impartial</i> shares only the first three letters with <i>important</i> and they share no meaning).
<b>8. D</b>	Verifying across two contexts can REVEAL that a word has more than one meaning. Mia's guess fits sentence 2 (a flying machine), but sentence 1 must use a different meaning — <i>plane</i> as a carpenter's smoothing tool. A invents a typo to protect a wrong guess. B ignores the clear difference in context. C overcorrects and discards a correct meaning.



9.	<b>Answer:</b> (a) Preliminary guess: <b>melancholy</b> probably means <i>deeply sad</i> &mdash; the tune left the audience in tears. (b) Verification step: <b>substitute</b> <i>deeply sad</i> into the sentence &mdash; <i>The musician's deeply sad tune left the audience in tears</i> &mdash; or <b>look it up</b> in a dictionary. A confirming result is a dictionary entry such as <i>melancholy: a feeling of pensive sadness</i> . (c) A revising result would be discovering that <i>melancholy</i> actually meant <i>cheerful</i> or <i>loud</i> &mdash; either would make my guess fail when I read on or check a dictionary.
10.	<b>Answer:</b> Eli's guess holds in <b>sentence 1</b> : an orchestra plays musical notes. His guess fails in <b>sentence 2</b> : a <i>note on the door</i> is not a sound &mdash; it is a short written message. Eli should conclude that <b>note</b> has at least two distinct meanings, and he must use context in each new sentence to pick the right one.



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