

Contextual clues

Clue	Signs that indicate the clue (examples)
1 Direct description	<i>mean, is, that is</i>
2 Indirect description	N.A.
3 Contrast/comparison	<i>but, however, in contrast</i>
4 Synonym	<i>too, also, similar sentence structure</i>
5 Appositive	:(colon), --(dash)
6 Modification	<i>which, who, where</i>
7 Restatement	<i>or, in other words, similar sentence structure</i>
8 Cause/effect	<i>because, so, since, therefore, thus</i>
9 Words in series	<i>and</i>
10 Reference	<i>it, this, that</i>
11 Association	verb+noun, adjective+noun
12 Example	<i>for example, such as</i>

The twelve contextual clues are based on nine previous studies that attempt to classify contextual clues (Ames, 1966; Artley, 1943; Deighton, 1959; Dulin, 1970; Johnson & Pearson, 1984; McCullough, 1945; Seibert, 1945; Spache & Berg, 1955; Walters, 2006).

Here are examples of the clues. **The bold, underlined words** are difficult words to be guessed, *the italicised words* are contextual clues that may help guess the meanings of the bold, underlined words, and words in a box are signs that indicate the clues.

1. Direct description

Their **hutch** was big enough for them *to live in*.

Note: The subject *hutch* is explained in the predicate (to live in).

2. Indirect description

When it reaches the **zenith** at this age, it *begins to go down*.

Note: There is no explicit sign that indicates a contextual clue, but *zenith* may be inferred from the context that follows it.

3. Contrast/comparison

Before she left she had gone into her kitchen, **ostensibly** to lock the back door, but *in fact* to look at her new food-mixer.

Note: *Ostensibly* must be the opposite of *in fact*.

4. Synonym

It is natural to feel better if you feel you *look good*; even in nature, cats **preen** themselves **too**.

Note: *Preen* must be similar in meaning to *look good*.

5. Appositive

It is likely that the published works themselves are **mutable**; they might now *look different*.

Note: The sentence including *mutable* is explained by the sentence that follows the colon.

6. Modification

The **refectory** **where** *food was served* was still a bit uncomfortable for her.

Note: *Refectory* is explained by the relative clause that follows it.

7. Restatement

When she heard his words, her head **lolloped** in the chair. She *went to sleep immediately*.

Note: There is no explicit sign that indicates a contextual clue, but may be inferred from the context that follows it.

8. Cause/effect

The famous trees **languished** **because of** the *terrible heat*.

Note: *Terrible heat* caused trees to *languish*.

9. Words in series

The view was really beautiful as the light began to appear on the wide range of the sea; *ahead*, **astern**, **and** *on either side of us*.

Note: *Astern* must be related to *ahead* and *on either side of us*.

10. Reference

She had bought a new **trilby** for him. As soon as she gave it to him, he was very happy and *put it on his head*.

Note: A *trilby* is something that is put on one's head.

11. Association

I **averted** my eyes from the sight of it.

Note: The meaning of *averted* may be derived by the phrase that follows it.

12. Example

The show is held about various ways of having **beverages** such as *tea and coffee*.

Note: *Tea* and *coffee* are examples of *beverages*.

References:

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