

Context Clues: Definition and Restatement

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

context clue: word or phrase near an unfamiliar word that helps readers figure out the new word's meaning

definition clue: word or phrase that gives the meaning of a new word

restatement clue: word or phrase that gives a word's meaning in easier language

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Identify the word. Ask yourself: Which word or words are unfamiliar?

Step 2: Use context. You can often determine a word's meaning from the surrounding words, or context. Look for more familiar words, phrases, or sentences surrounding a new or unfamiliar word.

Step 3: Look for restatement clues. In a restatement clue, the writer says the same thing in a different way.

- **Signal words** for restatement clues include: *this means, that is, in other words*.
- **Punctuation marks** that signal a restatement include: commas and dashes.

Step 4: Look for definition clues. The context gives the word's meaning.

- **Signal words** for definition clues include: *is, are, defined as, meaning*.
- **Punctuation marks** include: commas, dashes, parentheses, and colons.

Step 5: Define the word. Using the clues, and a dictionary if necessary, write the word and its definition in a special notebook. Include a new sentence, using the new word.

EXAMPLE CONTEXT CLUES

Use **restatement and definition clues** to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words in the following passage.

STUDENT LESSON SUMMARY, CONTINUED

Robert Fulghum spent a long time working out a **credo**, or personal statement of his beliefs. At first, Fulghum said his credo was like a Supreme Court **brief**, which is a document that summarizes the facts of a court case. So Fulghum worked to **condense** his credo. But he didn't like the new shortened and simplified version. Sometimes the statements were **cynical** (believing the worst of human nature) or **bland**—not at all stimulating or interesting. But finally Fulghum got his credo down to one page, and it became a well-known essay: *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

Words that may be unfamiliar

credo:

brief:

condense:

cynical:

bland: