Guessing Word Meanings

Context can help you understand new words. You read the context (the sentences) around the new word. Then you make a guess about the meaning.

In these exercises, you can learn to guess from the context. When you are doing the exercises, do not use a dictionary. Do not ask your teacher or your classmates.

After you finish each exercise, you can check the meanings. Then you can use a dictionary or ask your teacher.

Example:

1. We have a little white cat. She is always hungry. We give her milk in a *bowl* on the kitchen floor. She drinks all the milk in a very short time. Then she wants more!

   What is a *bowl?* It's a large cup.

Exercise 1

➤ ***Write the answers in English or in your own language. Or you can draw a picture.***

1. My friend Raymond is a very *lazy* person. He doesn't like to work. He doesn't like to play sports. He likes to sit and watch television. And he likes to sleep.

   What is a *lazy* person? _____

2. Can you see the *nest* in that tree? There are four baby birds in it. They are calling for their mother. Look! Now the mother is coming. She has some food for her babies.

   What is a *nest?* _____

3. Quick! Call the police! There is a man near my house. He has a *mask* on his face. You can see only his eyes. His clothes are all black.

   What is a *mask?* _____

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4. I live in a tall building in Chicago. My home is on the sixth floor. But I don't use the *elevator* often. I don't like elevators. They are too small! They are too slow! I like to walk up to the sixth floor.

   What is an *elevator?* _____

5. The new store was often empty. This morning there was only one *customer.* She was a young woman. She wanted to buy some Levi's jeans. She didn't like the jeans in the store. So she went away.

   What is a *customer?* _____

6. There is a terrible *traffic jam* on the road to London. All the cars are stopped. You can't go left or right. You have to wait for a long time!

   What is a *traffic jam?* _____

Exercise 2

Write the answers in English or in your own language. Or you can draw a picture.

1. These bananas are beautiful. But they are not *ripe.* They are still very green. We can't eat them today. Please put them away. We can eat them next week.

   What is *ripe* fruit? _____

2. Roger often wakes up in the night. Sometimes he wants to drink some water. But sometimes he has a *nightmare.* He sees terrible things. He hears bad things. Then he can't go back to sleep.

   What is a *nightmare?* _____

3. There is a *beggar* in front of the store. Poor woman, she doesn't have a coat. It's very cold today. She is asking people for some money. Some people give her money. Other people don't want to look at her.

   What is a *beggar?* _____

4. After all the rain, the river water was brown. It was full of *trash.* There was lots of paper. There were bags and bottles. There were old chairs and televisions.

   What is *trash?* _____

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5. This is not my *glove!* It doesn't go on my hand. It's Tenko's glove. She has very small hands. But where is my glove? I can't find it! My hands are getting cold.

   What is a *glove?* _____

6. Lily wants to get a *pet*. Her mother says she can't have a dog. Lily asks, "What about a cat?" But Lily's father doesn't want a cat. "What about a bird?" Lily asks. "Okay," say her mother and father. So Lily is going to get a bird.

   What is a *pet?* _____

Exercise 3

➤ ***Write the answers in English or in your language. Or you can draw a picture.***

1. We are going to England for a month. We can go to many cities and towns by train. Then we want to drive to some villages. So we want to *rent* a car. Does it cost a lot in England?

   What does *rent* mean? _____

2. Joel is reading a *poem* by Emily Dickinson. It is a very short poem—25 words. He says it is not easy to read but is very beautiful and sad.

   What is a *poem?* _____

3. My wife and I want to buy a new car, but we don't have much money. We can't ask my father for help. He doesn't have much money. We must go to the bank. They can give us a *loan*.

   What is a *loan?* _____

4. Please do not *shout!* I am not old, and my ears are still good. I am here next to you, and I can hear you very well.

   What does *shout* mean? _____

5. There is a terrible *mess* in the yard! There is paper and food on the grass. The table and chairs are on the ground. Your dog did it! I don't want your dog in my yard again!

   What is a *mess?* _____

6. Estelle's house was *huge*. It had 25 large rooms. There was also a large and beautiful garden. Some people wanted to buy the house and make a hotel. But Estelle said no. She liked her big house, and she did not want to move.

   What is a *huge* house? _____

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Exercise 4

Write your answers in English or in your language. Or you can draw a picture.

1. I am going to the *bakery* now. Do you want some bread? They make very long French bread, and it's very good. They also make very good cakes and cookies. We often get their chocolate cake.

   What is a *bakery?* _____

2. I am not going to go to that restaurant again! The food was *awful!* The pizza was black, the vegetables were old, and the coffee was terrible!

   What is *awful* food? _____

3. We must go to the animal doctor with the cat. The cat must not run and jump in the car. We must put her in a *cage*. Then we can put the cage in the car and go to the doctor.

   What is a *cage?* _____

4. Do you want to go up the mountain? You must go on that *path*. It is a small path. You can't drive the car on it. You must park the car here and walk up the path.

   What is a *path?* _____

5. Please do not *push!* You must all wait here. You must stand in line. It is still early. The film doesn't start now. It starts in 15 minutes. Then you can go in.

   What does *push* mean? _____

6. Julie is a very *smart* girl. She always has the right answers for the teacher. She does her homework fast. She never has any wrong answers in her homework. Sometimes she helps the other students.

   What is a *smart* girl? _____

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