

Using Synonyms and Explanations as Context Clues

Exercise C

Explanations and definitions that are provided by the author are an important source of information about new words and phrases. Practice using these context clues when you do Exercise C.

Read the news article carefully and answer the questions which follow.

Tricks of the Trade

Jungle cats leap through hoops of fire. Horses prance in a circle, nose to tail, then fall into place for a dance. Trained chimps perform alongside clowns and acrobats. To the audience, it's a wonder. To the trainer, it's the end result of a long education that began when the animals were young. The process is called *behavior modification*, because the trainer is *modifying*, or changing, the animal's behavior.

It starts with one small, easy lesson. A tiger cub, for instance, is taught to make a

very short leap. A meat treat, lots of petting, and words of praise follow. These are known as *positive rewards*—good things that happen when an animal does what it's supposed to. The next time the tiger is encouraged to make a longer leap. Gradually the leaps become even longer and higher. Soon you hold out something for the tiger to jump through, like a hoop.

Of course, there are always problems along the way. The tiger may decide to jump around the hoop instead of through it. When this happens, the trainer gives the

animal a few sharp taps with the side of a stick. This is an example of a *negative reward*—something unpleasant that follows a wrong move. The important thing is not to lose your temper. It only sets back the learning process. "I may lose my temper with my kids," says one top trainer, "but never with my animals."

As soon as the animal corrects its mistake, the praise and treats begin again. It can take up to two years. But one day it all comes together. And the wonder of it is—it looks so easy!

1. When you modify something, you (circle one)
 - a. mistreat it
 - b. ignore it
 - c. change it
 - d. introduce it
2. The meaning of the term "positive reward" is provided by the author in the context of the article. Find the meaning and write it below. _____

3. The term "negative reward" is also defined in context. Write its meaning on the lines below.

Using Synonyms and Explanations as Context Clues

Practice Using Your Newspaper

1. Choose an article in your newspaper that deals with either medicine or science and do the following:
 - a. Find a word relating to medicine or science that is explained in the context of the article. Write down the word and the definition you find. _____

 - b. In the same article, find a word whose meaning you are not sure of, and that is not explained in context. Look up its meaning in a dictionary. Then write a sentence you could insert in the article that defines this word for readers.
Word: _____
Dictionary definition: _____
Sentence explaining this word that you could insert in the article:

2. Locate a gardening article or an article about the weather, and do the following:
 - a. Circle as many adjectives as you can find. (Adjectives describe things—bright, colorful, icy, foggy, are examples of adjectives.)
 - b. For each adjective, think of another word which has a similar or related meaning (a synonym).
 - c. Re-write the sentence containing the adjective, this time adding the second adjective you chose.
Example: “Keep *harmful* insects away from your vegetable garden by planting *pungent* marigolds at the ends of each row.” “Keep harmful, *damaging* insects away from your vegetable garden by planting pungent, *strong-smelling* marigolds at the ends of the rows.”

Now Try Your Newspaper

Start one or more lists of words that belong to special vocabularies. These, you will recall, are words that apply mainly to one subject—sports, medicine, science, government, and so on. Keep each list on a separate sheet in your notebook. Whenever you read the newspaper, watch for words to add to your list. Enter them on the proper sheet, followed by a short definition. For example, your sports sheet might start something like this:

Sports Words

playoff—when two winning teams play against each other.

turnover—when possession of the ball changes from one team to the other.