



1

PART • ONE

Warm-Up

CHAPTERS IN PART ONE

- 1 Determine the Meaning of an Unfamiliar Word through Context
- 2 Analyze Word Structure

CHAPTER 1

Determine the Meaning of an Unfamiliar Word through Context



THE SKILL

DETERMINE THE MEANING OF AN UNFAMILIAR WORD BY USING THE CONTEXT

College textbooks contain many words and terms that will be new to you. In addition to many general “college-level” words, you will encounter important technical terms. You’re not going to want to stop and look them up in the dictionary, although there will be times when you must do that. So how can you determine the meaning of most of these words? You figure them out by using context clues. **Context clues** consist of words in a sentence or paragraph that enable readers to reason out the meaning of unfamiliar words. “Context” is whatever surrounds something else. In this case, the context of an unfamiliar word is the rest of the sentence and the rest of the paragraph in which it appears.

Authors build in these clues to help you understand the material you are reading. Textbook authors usually define specialized terms, and they expect you to learn those important definitions. They also expect you to know, figure out, or find out the meaning of other words that they use. When you are reading and you encounter an unfamiliar word, ask yourself, “What would this word have to mean *in order for it to make sense in this sentence?*” Then look for clues that enable you to reason out or infer the meaning of the word.

By the way, do you know that even skilled readers—including your professors—encounter unfamiliar words? When they need to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word, the first strategy they try is to use the context. Context clues are not always perfect clues, of course, but more often than not, they enable readers to make a correct, educated guess about a word’s meaning.

THE TECHNIQUE

USE FIVE TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

To determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word, ask yourself, “What would this word have to mean for it to make sense in this sentence?” Authors give you a great deal of help in answering this question. There are five common types of context clues. In this section, you will learn what they are and how to use each of them. I think you’ll be pleased at how straightforward and logical they are.

CLUE 1: DEFINITION OR SYNONYM CLUE

Sometimes a *definition* or *synonym* in the sentence serves as the context clue. This is the easiest type of context clue because the author simply *tells* readers what a word means. Authors often alert readers that a definition is coming by introducing it with phrases such as *is defined as*, *means*, *is known as*, *the term*, and *is called*. Sometimes the definition or the term is set off by punctuation marks, such as commas or dashes. The definition may also follow a colon (:) or it may be enclosed in parentheses () or brackets []. Sometimes the definition or term appears in quotation marks.

Because textbook authors want to make sure readers pay attention to important terms, they often put them in special print, such as **bold print**, *italics*, or **color**. Watch for words in special print, and take advantage of definitions and synonyms authors include for them.

These sentences illustrate how special print, clue words, and punctuation can function as definition clues. Explanations are in brackets.

- **Deceptive advertising** is defined as any ad that contains a misrepresentation, omission, or other practice that can mislead a significant number of reasonable consumers to their detriment. [The term is in bold print; the definition follows the phrase *is defined as*.]
- An important aspect of tort law involves ***product liability***—businesses’ legal responsibility for any negligence in the design, production, sale, and consumption of products. [The term is in bold italics; the definition follows a dash.]
- “Victimless crimes” is the term for crimes in which the offenders’ illegal actions do damage to themselves rather than to others. [The term is in quotation marks; the definition follows the clue words *is the term for*.]
- Virtually every business transaction is carried out by means of a **contract**, a mutual agreement between two or more parties that can be enforced in a court if one party chooses not to comply with the terms of the contract. [The term is in bold print and color; the definition follows a comma.]
- As late as the early 19th century in England, the death penalty (or *capital punishment*) was available for about 200 offenses, most of them property crimes. [The formal term is in italics in parentheses, following the more common expression *death penalty* and introduced by the clue word *or*.]

Synonyms are words or phrases that mean the same thing (such as *big* and *large*); they are similar to definitions. Authors typically introduce the synonym with *or*, *in other words*, *that is*, *by this we mean*, *that is to say*, and *also known as*. A synonym can also be an expression (such as an abbreviation, phrase or symbol)

that serves as a symbolic substitute for another expression. Here are examples of synonyms as definition clues:

- A last resort for individuals or businesses that cannot fulfill their financial obligations is **bankruptcy**, or legal insolvency. [The phrase *or legal insolvency* indicates that it is equivalent in meaning to *bankruptcy*. Note that you would have to do further work if you do not know the word *insolvency*. Be sure you know what the synonyms mean!]
- Masters of business administration (MBA) programs have been shortened and businesspeople are being given credit for on-the-job experience so that completion of the program goes faster. [The abbreviation *MBA* appears in parentheses directly after the term it stands for; in the rest of the paragraph and chapter, the author would use that common abbreviation instead of writing out *master of business administration*.]
- The White House announced today that it plans to lower taxes. [Obviously, a building cannot make an announcement or lower taxes. The author uses *White House* as synonymous with the president, the person who occupies the White House.]

CLUE 2: CONTRAST CLUE

A *contrast clue* consists of a word or phrase that means the opposite of the word you are trying to figure out. Watch for words that signal a contrast: *but, however, on the other hand, nevertheless, yet, in contrast, some . . . others*, to name a few. Find the word or words in the sentence that mean the opposite of the word whose meaning you are trying to deduce, and then think of the opposite of *that* word. This sounds complicated, but the following example will make the strategy clear. Suppose you were unsure of the meaning of *unscrupulous* in this sentence:

- A few advertisers are unscrupulous, but most are honest. [Unscrupulous advertisers are contrasted with honest advertisers, so you can reason out that unscrupulous is the opposite of honest. Therefore, *unscrupulous* means *dishonest* or *not following ethical principles*.]

CLUE 3: EXAMPLE CLUE

Example clues consist of one or more examples that authors include to *illustrate* the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Examples are typically introduced by *for example, to illustrate, for instance, such as, and like*. Remember, though, that an example is not the same as the definition. Rather, the example is simply a clue that can help you reason out the meaning of an unknown word. If there is more than one example, try to determine what the examples have in common. Look at the examples of *carbohydrates* that are given in the following sentence:

- Many Americans include too many servings of potatoes, rice, pasta, bread, and other carbohydrates in their diet. [*Potatoes, rice, pasta, and bread* are given as examples of *carbohydrates*. What they have in common is that they are all starches. Therefore, carbohydrates refers to “starchy foods.” Although this is not the technical, scientific definition of carbohydrates, it is enough to allow you to comprehend the general meaning and keep reading.]

CLUE 4: GENERAL SENSE OF THE SENTENCE

The *general sense* of the sentence can also help you figure out the meaning of an unknown word. In this case, you call on your own prior knowledge and experience. When readers ask themselves, “What does this word have to mean in order to

make sense in this sentence?”, they can usually draw on information they already know to help them answer that question. For example, you can use the general sense of the sentence to figure out the meaning of *equestrian*:

- The equestrian center received a donation of 25 horses, as well as saddles and other new equipment for the riding team. [From the general sense of the sentence—the references to *horses*, *saddles*, and the *riding team*—you can deduce that *equestrian* pertains to *horseback riding* and *horseback riders*.]

CLUE 5: CLUE FROM ANOTHER SENTENCE

Sometimes authors include information in another sentence in the paragraph that allows you to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word. The other sentence can come before or after the one with the unknown word, so it’s a good idea to keep reading when you encounter an unfamiliar word. Look at the following example: In the first sentence, there are no context clues as to the meaning of the word *ribald*. The sentence that follows it, however, contains a helpful clue.

- That comedian has a ribald sense of humor. Two television networks have canceled his show because viewers complained about his lewd language and vulgar jokes. [From the second sentence, you can conclude that *ribald* means vulgar, coarse, or off-color. The clue is that many viewers complained about his *lewd* language and his *vulgar* jokes.]

That’s it. Those are the five types of context clues. How are you doing? Take a minute to stretch and yawn to get your circulation going. Drink a glass of water. All these simple actions help your brain. Look over the list of the five types of context clues, then close your eyes and try to say them out loud. (You’re going to have to write them from memory in a few minutes, so take advantage of the opportunity to get ready for that. Reviewing as you go is an excellent habit to develop.)

THE TRAINER

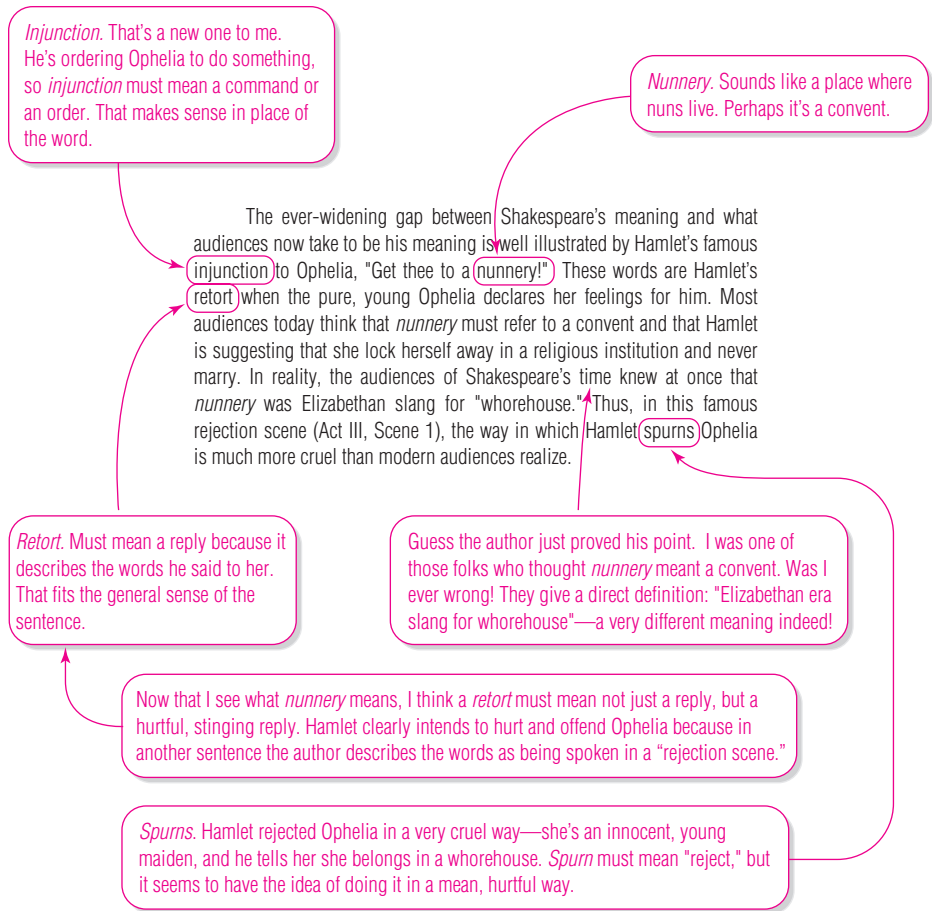
OBSERVE THE SKILL OF USING CONTEXT CLUES

Now “peek inside the head” of an efficient reader who encounters some unfamiliar words in context to see how this person uses context clues to deduce their meaning. The efficient reader’s “thoughts” appear in color.

One of the things you’ll discover when you read The Trainer sections is that even skilled readers don’t automatically comprehend everything instantly, accurately, or perfectly as they are reading something for the first time. They continually reassess as they read, and they sometimes have to go back and reread. Like pro athletes who monitor their performance (by keeping training records and watching tapes of their performances or games, for example), effective readers monitor their comprehension. They know when they’re “getting it” and when they’re not. If they are confused, they try to figure out the source of the problem so that they can take steps to correct it. In other words, they see progress as a process of making adjustments to fine-tune their skills.

By the way, when you read a difficult passage, it may help you to read it aloud and then talk your way through it aloud. In other words, say your thoughts out loud as you move through the material and mentally process it. Being aware of your own thought process is called *metacognition*, and it can be a powerful aid in helping you understand what you read.

In The Trainer section that follows, the reader reasons out the meaning of the words *injunction*, *nunnery*, *retort*, and *spurn*. Notice that the person goes down the wrong trail at first, then, as more information is obtained, is able to correct a misimpression. Read the paragraph first, and then go back and read the “thoughts.”



THE EDGE

POINTERS ABOUT USING CONTEXT CLUES

■ **Test your definition.**

When you think you have determined the meaning of an unfamiliar word from the context, substitute your definition in the sentence. Does it make sense? If so, then you have probably figured out its meaning. If it doesn't, then it's back to the drawing board!

■ **Some "context clues" can be misleading.**

One of the five clues described earlier will almost always help you determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word. However, context clues do not always provide perfect clues to a word's meaning. A sentence may appear to contain context clues when, in fact, it does not. These false "clues" can be misleading. Read this sentence, for example, and try to deduce the meaning of *bridled*: "The actress *bridled* at the idea that all women should be married by the time they are 30." *Bridled* may sound as if it has something to do with brides or that the woman decided to get married because she was approaching the age of 30. However, *bridled* means to take offense or to be offended by something; the actress was *offended* by the idea that all women should be married by the age of 30.

■ **Context clues may not always be complete.**

I hate to say it, but sometimes there are not sufficient context clues in a sentence to allow you to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Even if

you have to look an unfamiliar word up in the dictionary, there is still an important way that the context will help you. It can help you determine *which* dictionary definition to use: the one that makes sense in that sentence. Most words have more than one meaning, so it is important to consider all the definitions and select the one that fits the context. Look at these three sentences that contain the word *plastic*:

1. The shoe salesman had the *plastic* smile of a bored game show host.
2. That new restaurant accepts both cash and *plastic* in payment.
3. While children are young, their personalities are still quite *plastic*.

Among the definitions for *plastic*, the dictionary gives these:

1. artificial or superficial
2. slang for credit cards
3. easily influenced; impressionable

If you substitute each definition in each sentence, it is clear that only the definition with the same number as the example sentence makes sense in that sentence. The context of the sentences makes it clear which dictionary definition is appropriate.

■ **Be sure that you understand the definition or synonym given in the sentence.**

Even if you locate a definition or a synonym for an unfamiliar word, it doesn't mean that you'll automatically understand it. Suppose that you read the sentence, "**Isotonic movements** consist of concentric and eccentric muscle contractions." It's simple to find the definition of *isotonic movements*: it's the rest of the sentence. But unless you know the definition of *concentric* and *eccentric* as they are used in that sentence, you cannot understand what isotonic movements are. Sometimes, folks, you just have to go to the old dictionary.

■ **If context clues prove inadequate, you should use other ways to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word or term.**

This is obvious, but I'm going to say it again: If there are no context clues or if the context clues are insufficient, you should pursue the meaning of the term until you understand it. If you need to go to the dictionary, do it. If you need to look up an unfamiliar word that appears in the dictionary definition, do that too. Look in the glossary in the back of your textbook. Ask someone knowledgeable. In short, do whatever you need to do to find out the meaning of the word. Then write down both the word and its definition! That's the way you learn and remember important words and terms.

■ **Use word structure clues to confirm your educated guess based on context clues.**

Combining context clues with a knowledge of roots, prefixes, and suffixes (word structure clues) is a powerful way to "attack" an unfamiliar word. (Chapter 2 is about word structure analysis. Also, Appendix 1 lists common Latin and Greek word parts, their meanings, and example words.) You might, for example, deduce from the context of this sentence that *credible* means "believable": "Because the man gave details of the crime that could only be known by someone who was present, the police felt that he was a *credible* witness." By knowing that the root word *cred* means "believe" or "belief," you can confirm that your educated guess using context clues was correct.

■ Learning words in context helps you remember their definition.

You will discover that learning words in context helps you remember the meaning of the words. For example, the word *travesty* means “a parody,” “a badly distorted imitation,” or “a debased imitation.” By itself, that word might be difficult to understand. Suppose, however, that you are reading about a trial of a political prisoner in a country run by a dictator. The author describes the trial as a “travesty of justice” because the prisoner was never given a chance to defend himself, he had no attorney to represent him, and the judges had already decided he was guilty before the trial began. In other words, the trial was just an imitation or parody of a real trial, with no true justice. If you associate the word *travesty* with the phrase “a *travesty* of justice,” then you will be much more likely to remember the meaning of the word.

And you will remember the definition forever if you put the word in the context of a *personally* meaningful phrase. For example, if you received a traffic ticket and felt that the judge did not give you a fair hearing, then you might make that mental association: “the way the judge handled my ticket was a *travesty* of justice.” Then repeat the phrase out loud. Association and oral repetition are powerful memory tools. If you are like most people, you will discover that from now on, you will remember the meaning of *travesty* used in this example. The reason? You applied the memory devices of placing the word in context, making mental associations with your own experience or information you already know, and repeating the word or phrase out loud. Powerful stuff!

■ Pay attention to specialized or technical terms because professors will ask you their definitions on tests.

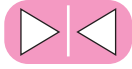
Every college subject has important terms that you must know. You cannot, for example, understand economics unless you learn *inflation*, *gross national product*, *recession*, and *depression*. Notice that *inflation* and *depression* have more than one definition; you would need to learn the definition specific to economics. *Depression* means something altogether different in economics than it does, say, in psychology or in a science course. Because technical, specialized terms are so important, you should make vocabulary cards for them on index cards. Writing them down helps you learn them, and at the same time, you’re creating a great review tool for tests.

The chart on the next page summarizes the five types of context clues, what to look for in the sentence or paragraph, and an example of each type.

SUMMARY CHART: TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

Type of Clue	What to Look For	Example
Definition/Synonym Clue	A definition introduced by phrases such as <i>is defined as</i> , <i>means</i> , <i>is known as</i> , <i>refers to</i> ; a term in special print or color. A synonym (word that means the same thing), phrases introduced by <i>in other words</i> , <i>that is</i> , <i>by this we mean</i> , <i>or</i> , etc. The definition or synonym may be set off by commas, parentheses, a colon, dashes, or brackets.	Among the most extreme of personality types is the psychopath or sociopath , an individual who lacks not only self-control, but also the capacity to experience guilt or a sense of caring, responsibility, or obligation to others. Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz has been arguing for years that mental illness is a myth or fictitious construct.
Contrast Clue	An antonym (opposite word) for the unfamiliar word; words and phrases that indicate opposites: <i>but</i> , <i>in contrast</i> , <i>however</i> , <i>on the other hand</i> , <i>although</i> , <i>instead of</i> , etc.	Depressants have the opposite effect of stimulants.
Example Clue	Examples that illustrate the meaning of the unfamiliar word, often introduced by <i>for example</i> , <i>to illustrate</i> , <i>such as</i> , and <i>like</i> .	Opiates (such as alcohol, morphine, codeine, and heroin and other narcotics) are extremely addictive and require regular and increasing dosage to avoid withdrawal symptoms.
General Sense of the Sentence	Based on your general knowledge and experience, determine what the word would have to mean to make sense in that sentence.	When employees in an energy-efficient, airtight building begin having headaches, nausea, and eye, nose, and throat irritation, investigators suspect sick building syndrome as the cause.
Clue from Another Sentence	Information in another sentence that helps explain the unfamiliar word.	Different parts of the culture change at different speeds. Half a century ago William Ogburn suggested that technological changes in a society often occur faster than social changes. He referred to this disequilibrium as cultural lag .

THE REPLAY



REMEMBER THE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FROM THE CHAPTER

To remember information, you must rehearse it by saying it aloud or writing it—or preferably, doing both. Take a minute to review the five types of context clues, then try to say them out loud. When you are ready, try to write them from memory in the following space. If you prepared for this a bit earlier by reciting them (as suggested on page 6), then you should be in good shape to complete this review. Describe each type of context clue, and then tell what kinds of things you might find in the sentence that could help you determine the meaning of the unfamiliar word.

Definition of Context Clue

Question You Should Ask Yourself

Five Types of Context Clues

1. Definition or Synonym Clue

Description of the clue: _____

What to look for: _____

2. Contrast Clue

Description of the clue: _____

What to look for: _____

3. Example Clue

Description of the clue: _____

What to look for: _____

4. General Sense of the Sentence

Description of the clue: _____

What to look for: _____

5. Clue from Another Sentence

Description of the clue: _____

What to look for: _____

If there were things you could not remember, look back at The Technique section. Use the information in it to fill in any gaps in The Replay.

How are you doing at this point? So far, so good? Take a minute and describe the extent to which you believe you understand the material in Chapter 1:

If you feel confused, what strategies do you think you could use to help yourself? Do you need to read more carefully? Spend more time on the material? Get some help? Don't write, "I don't know." That kind of attitude invites failure, and you're a stronger person than that!

- _____ 4. The manic pace of Saigon is evident even in the streets, where swarms of motorbikes zip through intersections.
- happy; upbeat
 - excessively active; intense
 - violent; destructive
 - leisurely; relaxed
- _____ 5. The cast of the television series is currently enjoying a three-month hiatus, but they will start work again in the fall.
- break
 - strike
 - call
 - probation
- _____ 6. There has been a dramatic increase in the sales of cosmeceuticals (cosmetics plus pharmaceuticals that are more potent than cosmetics, but not so powerful that the Food and Drug Administration needs to regulate them like drugs).
- cosmetics whose sales have increased dramatically
 - cosmetics that are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration
 - cosmetics plus pharmaceuticals that are more potent than cosmetics, but not potent enough to require regulation by the Food and Drug Administration
 - new brands of cosmetics
- _____ 7. Both twins are extremely talented and intelligent. One has aspirations of obtaining a master's degree and becoming a social worker; the other has aspirations of attending graduate school, and then becoming a concert pianist.
- ambitions
 - unrealistic expectations
 - false hopes
 - frustrations
- _____ 8. But what is most remarkable about golfer Tiger Woods is his relentless drive for what the Japanese call kaizen, or continuous improvement.
- relentless drive
 - remarkable ability
 - Japanese trait
 - continuous improvement
- _____ 9. Certain college courses are compulsory for all students who wish to receive a degree; however, there are also elective courses, and students can choose whichever of those they prefer.
- difficult
 - required
 - unpleasant
 - enjoyable

- _____ 10. It is not lawful to practice medicine without first obtaining a valid medical license.
- received as an honor
 - updated
 - legal
 - difficult to obtain
- _____ 11. At the formal dinner party, the employee made an embarrassing faux pas when he drank the water in the finger bowl instead of rinsing his fingertips in it.
- international incident
 - illegal action
 - grammatical error
 - social blunder
- _____ 12. By age four-and-a-half, boys usually display better spatial skills than girls do. Although biology does play a role, so does nurture. In daily play, girls are not encouraged as much as boys to engage in spatially oriented activities such as playing with blocks and puzzles.
- pertaining to or involving space
 - pertaining to gender differences in boys and girls
 - pertaining to blocks and puzzles
 - pertaining to biology and nurture



Exercises: Vocabulary in Context

Use the five types of context clues to reason out the meaning of the underlined words. These sentences contain slightly more challenging words, and this time there are no multiple-choice answers. However, there are *fewer* items. Write the *complete* definition on the line provided. Remember to ask yourself, “What does this word have to mean in order to make sense in *this* sentence?” (*Coach’s tips*: First do the ones that seem easy, then go back and tackle the others. Look at the ones that seemed hard for you: did all of them involve the same type of context clue? If so, that’s a type of clue that you need to pay special attention to. Also, continue to mark clues in the sentences if you find it helpful.)

1. The difference between a good athlete and a great one is often simple tenacity. The great ones are champions because of their steadfast persistence in pursuing their goals.

Definition: _____

2. Most illnesses last for a relatively short, limited period of time, yet nearly three-quarters of all deaths among those 18 and older are the result of chronic diseases.

Definition: _____

3. Economist John Maynard Keynes said that government should engage in deficit spending—spending more than it gets in taxes—which can be accomplished by the borrowing and printing of money.

Definition: _____

4. Some criminal acts of violence are premeditated; others are “crimes of passion” committed on impulse or on the emotion of the moment.

Definition: _____

5. “Halfway houses” often face objections from the communities in which they are located. This is understandable. Even though the offenders are considered ready to be reintroduced into society, have jobs, and are carefully supervised, no one wants these “ex-cons” living in their neighborhood.

Definition: _____

6. Along with a rape victim’s testimony, there must be corroborating evidence, such as semen, torn clothes, bruises, or eyewitness testimony.

Definition: _____

7. Many communities hold referendums so that voters can decide local issues.

Definition: _____

8. It is hard to concentrate when there is any type of interference such as noise, an uncomfortably hot or cold room, a headache, even worries or daydreams.

Definition: _____

9. The fear of strangers, typically called stranger wariness, is a predictable feature of a baby's first year of life and is a major landmark of emotional development.

Definition: _____

10. There are several psychological explanations of the compulsive nonstop talker's need to monopolize every conversation.

Definition: _____



Exercises: Vocabulary in Context

Now that you are warmed up, try this final set of vocabulary in context exercises. They're a little more challenging, but there are only eight "reps." Use the context clues to help you determine the meaning of each underlined word. As always, ask yourself, "What would this word have to mean in order to make sense in *this* sentence?" The definitions of terms in college textbooks can be lengthy, so be sure you find all of the definition. (*Coach's tips:* Take a deep breath and relax if you find yourself feeling frustrated with an item. Or, skip an item that seems difficult and come back to it later. Just remember to come back to it. Otherwise, I will send you to the penalty box!)

1. Many business schools are now revamping their existing curriculum by integrating international examples into all of their courses and emphasizing the use of technology.

Definition: _____

2. In Cuba and China, young adults are conscripted into military service and are then required to serve for a specified number of years.

Definition: _____

3. Social movements, or political movements, as they are sometimes called, refer to broad efforts to achieve change by citizens who feel that government is not properly responsive to their interests.

Definition: _____

4. In business a variable cost, an expense that varies directly with the quantity of the product produced and sold, is in direct contrast to a fixed cost.

Definition: _____

5. After listening to a classmate's speech, you should give constructive criticism. Unless your criticism provides suggestions for improvement, the recipient will not be able to make progress.

Definition: _____

6. A famous adage in retailing is, "Three things are crucial for the success of a business: location, location, and location."

Definition: _____

- 7. The class-action lawsuit charged the securities firm with fraud after its stock suffered a precipitous decline and investors experienced huge financial losses.

Definition: _____

- 8. Although some managers empower employees by allowing them to participate in decision making, autocratic managers do not permit this.

Definition: _____