



# NSW Centre for Effective Reading

Middle Years



## Vocabulary- Using Context and Word Parts

### Introduction

Once students have been taught about word parts and context clues, they can be taught how to combine these two strategies into a system, or routine, for working out the meaning of unknown words. The goal is for students to use this strategy independently and in a variety of settings.

The following teaching steps are adapted from Denton, C., Bryan, D., Wexler, J., Reed Deborah and Vaughn, S. (2007) *Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties: The Reading teacher's Sourcebook*. University of Texas: Austin.

### Purpose

Students will use the Vocabulary Strategy worksheet (Baumann, Font, Edwards & Boland, 2005) to guide them through the process of using word parts and context clues to work out the meaning of unknown words.

### Materials

- Vocabulary Strategy Chart
- Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet transparency, chart or notebook file and student copies
- Sample text with vocabulary words
- Dictionaries
- Text

### Teaching steps

#### 1. State Objective/Purpose

*You have already learned several different ways to work out unknown words by yourself as you are reading. Today I am going to show you how to think through using both word parts and context clues to figure out the meaning of unknown words as you read. What might happen if you just skip over words that you don't know?*

Accept responses. *That's right, you probably won't understand what you are reading. The strategy we are going to learn will help you use your knowledge of word parts and context clues to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.*

## 2. Model and teach to whole class

- Present the following chart to the class and read through each step.

### The Vocabulary Strategy Chart.

If you read a word that you do not understand:

1. Look for **CONTEXT CLUES**. Reread the sentence and the surrounding sentences.
2. Can you break the **WORD** into **PARTS**? (If not, go to Step 3.)
  - ❖ Is there a **PREFIX**? What does it mean?
  - ❖ Is there a **SUFFIX**? What does it mean?
  - ❖ Is there a **ROOT WORD**? What does it mean?
  - ❖ Put the meaning of the word parts together. What is the meaning of the whole word?
3. **GUESS** what the word means.
4. **INSERT** your meaning into the original sentence to see whether it makes sense.
5. If needed, use the **DICTIONARY** to confirm your meaning.

*Baumann, J. F., Font, G., Edwards, E. C., & Boland, E. (2005).*

*This chart is going to guide your thinking as you work through trying to find out what an unknown word means. Eventually, I would like for you to be able to go through this thinking process on your own. But for now, this chart is going to be our guide.*

- Choose a passage from a text and display it on the overhead. Provide students with their own copy of the text.

*As I read this passage aloud, follow along and read the last word of every sentence. Follow along with your finger as you read.*

Continue in this way until you have read the entire passage.

- Model using the process described in the chart to work out the meanings of two or three words from the text.

## 3. Guided Practice with partners

- Introduce the guided practice activity.

*Today I am going to show you how to use the Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet to guide you through the process of using word parts and context to work out the meaning of unknown words.*

Give each student two copies of a blank Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet and project a blank worksheet on the overhead or interactive whiteboard (IWB).

Fill in the first blank on the worksheet by writing the target word selected from the text.

Fill in the second blank by writing the context sentence/s from the text.

*Now when I look at the rest of the worksheet, I can see that there are five main boxes and that each one leads me through the steps on the Vocabulary Strategy Chart.*

### The Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet

Word -

Context sentence -

#### 1. Look for context clues

Reread the sentence, looking for signal words and punctuation.

Signal words and punctuation

Reread the sentences before and after the sentence with the word in it.

Context clues

#### 2. Look for word parts you know. Tell what each word part means.

Prefix

Suffix

Root

Put the parts together. What does this mean?

3. What do you think the word means?

4. Try your meaning in the context sentence. Does it make sense?

5. Check the word in a dictionary if you need to. Remember many words have more than one meaning, so look for the one that goes with the sentence in the book.

6. Were you right?

Denton, C., Bryan, D., Wexler, J., Reed Deborah and Vaughn, S. (2007)

- Continue to guide students as they complete the chart in partners. Focus first on context clues.

*The first step tells us to reread the context sentence and surrounding sentences. With your partner, I want you to reread the sentence, looking for context clues. If you find any signal words or punctuation, write them here (point to the Signal Words box), and if you see any clues, write them here (point to the Context Clue box).*

Review signal words and punctuation if necessary.

Allow partners 3–5 minutes to reread and write any context clues or signal words/punctuation. Circulate around the room and be available to help.

- Proceed in the same way as you focus on word part clues.

*Step 2 asks whether we can break the word into parts.*

*Is there a prefix? Write prefix or put a / if there is no prefix.*

*Is there a suffix? Write suffix or put a /if there is no suffix).*

Discuss the meanings of the prefix and/or suffix.

*Put up your hand if you can tell me the root word. Accept responses.*

Write the root word. Discuss the meanings of all the word parts put together.

- Guide students through Step 3 of the strategy.

*Step 3 asks us what we think the word means. With your partner, use the context clues and word part clues to come up with a definition. Write your answers under Step 3.*

Allow students a few minutes to discuss and write.

*Put up your hand if you can give me a definition.*

Accept responses.

- Guide students as they complete Step 4, trying the word in a sentence to see whether it makes sense.

*Read the sentence with our definition inserted. Does that make sense?*

- Have students verify their answer using a dictionary.
- Following the same procedure as above, lead the students through each step of the worksheet, one section at a time. This time students will find the meaning of a second word. Make sure that students understand that each worksheet is used to find the definition for one word.

#### **4. Independent practice with partners**

- Choose a selection from the students' text.  
Highlight or write 2–4 words that may be unknown to your students.
- Working with a partner, have the students read the text and determine the meaning of the unknown words. Ask pairs to follow the Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet and complete one worksheet for each word.
- Circulate around the room and be available for support.

## 5. Generalisation

Discuss with students how they can use this strategy for working out unknown words when reading in other Key Learning Areas. Students don't have to use the worksheet but they do need to remember to look for *both* word part clues and context clues. Students can be encouraged to share their experiences using the strategy with the rest of the class.

## References

Baumann, J. F., Font, G., Edwards, E. C., & Boland, E. (2005). Strategies for teaching middle-grade students to use word-part and context clues to expand reading vocabulary. In E.H. Hiebert & M.L. Kamil (eds), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice* (pp 179-205). Mahwah, N.J.:Erlbaum.

Denton, C., Bryan, D., Wexler, J., Reed Deborah and Vaughn, S. (2007) *Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties: The Reading teacher's Sourcebook*. University of Texas: Austin.

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4. If needed, use the **DICTIONARY** to confirm your meaning.

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## Appendix 2 – The Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet

### The Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet

**Word -**

**Context sentence –**

**1. Look for context clues**

Reread the sentence, looking for signal words and punctuation.

Signal words and punctuation

Reread the sentences before and after the sentence with the word in it.

Context clues

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