

# Rutgers Learning Centers

At Camden Campus

## READING: NEW VOCABULARY

*What do you do when you come across an unfamiliar word in your reading?*

1. **Decide if you need to understand the sentence that contains the word.** Often, you can bypass a sentence in the middle of a paragraph if you are able to understand the main point of the paragraph. Is the sentence important to your understanding of the paragraph that it is in? Does it contribute any unique and necessary information? Is it just one of several examples?
2. **Decide if you need to know the meaning of the word.** Sometimes, you can understand the sentence without knowing the meaning of the word.
3. **Can you figure out the meaning of the word from the context?**

What job does the word perform? Does it modify something? Does it answer the question, "what?" Does it seem to be some sort of action? Nouns (especially those used as subjects) and verbs are what the sentence is primarily about, so they tend to be more important than modifiers or adjectives.

Difficult words are often parts of long sentences made up of more than one independent clause. In these cases, the conjunction that connects two clauses, can tell you the relationship between the two clauses.

- Words like *but, though, nevertheless, and however* indicate contrasting information. Example: Donna and Mary are sisters, though they don't look alike at all.
- Words like *because, so, consequently, and therefore* signal that one occurrence is the cause or root of another. Example: Because the evidence is conclusive, we find you guilty.
- Words like *additionally, furthermore, and moreover* suggest that more, similar information is being presented. Example: I can't go to the concert because I can't afford it. Furthermore, I don't have that evening free.

*see other side for more >>>>>*

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Sometimes surrounding words or the overall meaning of the sentence can help you to figure out what the word means. For instance, consider the following sentence:

Socrates liked to consider himself as merely fulfilling the function of an intellectual *midwife*, facilitating the birth of ideas already conceived in the mind of the other person.

In this case, in the second half of the sentence, the authors explain that by the term *intellectual midwife*, they mean someone who facilitates the birth of ideas. You can infer from this, by isolating the references to intellectualism and ideas, that a midwife is someone who facilitates births.

#### 4. Can you figure out the meaning of the word by examining its parts?

Suffixes can provide clues as to what part of speech words are.

- Words that end with the following are usually nouns: “-ion,” “-ness,” “-ment,” “-ism,” “-nce,” “-ity.”
- Words that end with the following are usually verbs: “-ate,” “-ize.”
- Words that end with the following are usually adjectives: “-ive,” “-ent,” “-ous,” “-ory,” “-ic,” “-ble,” “-ful.”
- Words that end with “-ly” are usually adverbs.

Also, look at each of the parts of the word. You probably have never encountered the word *neoculturation* before, but you can figure out its meaning by looking at all of its components:

- *neo* = new
- *cultur* = culture
- *ation* = making, doing

So *neoculturation* has something to do with the creation of a new culture.

5. **If all else fails, check a dictionary!** Don't waste time consulting a dictionary until you've tried the other strategies first.