

Using context clues

Sometimes when you read, you may come across a word that is not familiar. You can use the words before or after the unfamiliar word, or words in nearby sentences, to help you figure out the word's meaning. These clues to a word's meaning are called **context clues**. Different types of context clues are shown on this chart.

Definition or explanation	Example	Synonym
<p>A definition or explanation directly states or explains a word's meaning.</p> <p>'Some species of frogs have become extinct. <u>They have completely disappeared from the face of the Earth.</u>'</p>	<p>An example provides samples in the same category.</p> <p>'A sloth moves so slowly that its predators, such as <u>jaguars and leopards</u>, often do not notice it.'</p>	<p>A synonym gives other, often simpler, words with the same meaning.</p> <p>'Many animal adaptations involve changes to behaviour, or <u>the way an animal acts.</u>'</p>

Read about animal adaptations. Use context clues to help you understand the information.

What is an adaptation? An adaptation is a feature or way of behaving that makes a plant or an animal more likely to survive. In every species, some individuals are better at surviving than others. These individuals live long enough to mate, have babies and pass on their genetic characteristics. Adaptation does not occur during one animal's lifetime. It is a long, slow process that happens over many generations. However, results of adaptation can be seen in individual animals.

For example, the toucan's colourful and lightweight beak is specially adapted for grasping fruit from the branches of rainforest trees.



Underline the words in the article that give **an example** context clue for the word *adaptation*.

Underline the words in the article that form **a synonym** context clue for the phrase *over many generations*.

Tip

Context clues are word clues that can help you figure out the meaning of an unknown word. They may be in the same sentence as an unfamiliar word, or in nearby sentences.

Which context clue helped you work out the meaning of the word *surviving*? What type of clue is this?

Read about some of the animal adaptations that have to do with appearance. Look for context clues that help you understand unfamiliar words and phrases.



by Alice Cary

Camouflage

No matter where they live, animals have to eat. Some eat plants, while others hunt insects and other animals. Animals must also try to avoid being eaten by other animals. An adaptation called *camouflage* helps them accomplish these goals.

There are several kinds of camouflage. Many animals that are hunted have colour patterns that make it hard for their predators to see them. Some animals that hunt also use camouflage to hide from their prey, the animals they stalk for food.

One type of camouflage is called *concealing colouration*. This kind of camouflage hides the animals because their colours match or blend with their surroundings. Chameleons, polar bears and sloths are animals with concealing colouration.

A zebra standing alone on the plains of Africa is easy for predators to see, while a zebra standing in a herd is difficult to see. The zebra in the herd is hard to see because all of the stripes blend together in a way that is confusing to predators.

The zebra's stripes are an example of a kind of camouflage called *disruptive colouration*. It is called disruptive because it disrupts—or breaks up—the outline of the animal. It makes an individual animal hard to see. So a lion may see a herd of zebras, but it cannot pick out an individual animal to attack.



Animals with the kind of camouflage called *disguise* look like something else. A vine snake looks very much like the part of the plant it clings to. This disguise often fools the frogs and lizards that are its prey.

Animals that use the kind of camouflage called *mimicry* often look like a different animal. A hoverfly mimics, or looks like, a bee. One big difference between the two insects is that the hoverfly is harmless, while the bee has a sting. Predators that have been stung by a bee will not try to eat a hoverfly. Hoverflies that look most like bees have a better chance of surviving.



Hoverfly



Bee

Understanding the text

- 1 What are four different types of camouflage adaptations that animals have?

- 2 How can animals such as zebras be hidden when they live out in the open?

- 3 What is the main difference between *disguise* and *mimicry*?

Developing comprehension skills

Find these words in the article. Write the meaning of each one in the second column. Then tick the box to name the type of context clue given in the article.

Word	Meaning	Type of context clue
4 prey	<hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/> definition or explanation <input type="checkbox"/> example <input type="checkbox"/> synonym
5 disrupts	<hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/> definition or explanation <input type="checkbox"/> example <input type="checkbox"/> synonym
6 disguise	<hr/> <hr/>	<input type="checkbox"/> definition or explanation <input type="checkbox"/> example <input type="checkbox"/> synonym

- 7 Go to the third paragraph of the article and find the phrase *concealing colouration*. What context clues are given for this phrase? Underline the words that give you a **definition** context clue. Then, in a different colour, underline the words that give you **examples** as a context clue.

8 Write the meaning of the phrase *concealing colouration* in your own words.

9 Look for context clues for the words *mimics* and *mimicry* in the final paragraph. Underline the words that give a **synonym** context clue. In a different colour, underline the words that form an **example** context clue.

10 Write the meaning of the word *mimicry* in your own words.

11 Which dictionary definition matches the word *hide* as used in this article?

- to keep secret
- to place oneself so as to be unseen
- an animal's skin, especially when used for leather
- a covered place from which to watch wildlife without being seen

Working with words

Write the verb from the box that is a synonym for the phrases below.

accomplish attack avoid blend confuse outline try

12 to keep away from, to escape _____

13 to draw around, to summarise _____

14 to combine, to mix _____

15 to attempt, to aim to _____

16 to raid, to charge _____

17 to achieve, to finish _____

18 to muddle up, to jumble up _____

Making
the reading
and writing
connection



Writing about camouflage

Research an animal that uses camouflage either to hunt its food or to avoid being eaten. Write a short article about this animal, explaining what type of camouflage it uses and how.