LEARNING CENTER ENGLISH TUTORING LAB HANDOUT
FIND WORD MEANINGS IN SENTENCES

Graphic marks:
Sentence set off by dashes. --
- Origami-- Japanese paper folding—is interesting.

Sentence set off by parentheses ( ).
- Ecology (the science of the environment) is a growing field.

Sentence set off by commas. ,
- Fibrin, elastic threads of protein, helps blood to clot.

Helping words and phrases
“that is” “is called”

- Mary felt perturbed; that is, she was greatly disturbed by her sister’s meaning.
- One computer drive that stores more data than a diskette is called a zip drive.

Words and phrases that describe the opposite meaning.
“cannot” “not” “but” “although” “however” “on the other hand”

- Parents who constantly spank their children cannot be called lenient.

The opposite description of parents who constantly spank their children is merciful or gentle. That gives the reader a good guess of the meaning of the word “lenient.”
Your own experience

- The cacophonous rattling made Maria cover her ears.

If you cover your ears, it is because a noise is unpleasant and jarring.

Sentences before or after an unknown word.

- Mozart gave his first public recital at the age of six. By age thirteen he had written symphonies and an operetta, a remarkable achievement. He is justly called a child prodigy.

“A remarkable person” explains the meaning of the word prodigy.

- One of the remarkable features of the Nile Valley is fertility of its soil. This supported plant growth that made it possible for Egyptians to thrive in a dry region.

A soil that supports plant growth has to be a rich soil. The reader has to know the definition of thrive to understand the word fertility.

Some sentences give examples

- Select a periodical from among the following: Playboy, Time, Reader’s Digest, or Seventeen.

The sentence doesn't say that give new periodical is a magazine, but the reader can figure that out from the definition.

Some sentences use a word you do know to explain a word you do not.
A formidable enemy is one to be feared.

Formidable means fearful.

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