



# Reading Comprehension Packet

## Worksheets and Assignments

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# Reading Comprehension

## Word Roots

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## **Word Roots**

Every speech language pathologist, teacher, and tutor understands how important a strong receptive lexicon is to comprehension of content, and learning common word roots is one of the best ways to expand vocabulary knowledge. Each of these two worksheets, along with answer keys, provides students with ten word roots, their definitions, and example words. Students must then define other example words contained within sentences, and come up with their own sentences containing either a provided or new word.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Word Roots

Roots:            **act**                    **audio**                    **equi**                    **max**                    **mini**

**Directions:** Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

\***act** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: action, active, actor)

- 1) It's time to activate the machine.
- 2) My cousin is a political activist.
- 3) Activism should always be for a noble cause.
- 4) The activation sequence has begun.
- 5) The gymnast actualized her dreams when she won the gold medal.
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

\***audio** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: audiobook, auditory)

- 1) The police audiotaped the interview.
- 2) My friend, the audio engineer, has worked with lots of musicians.
- 3) Speech language pathologists need to take a couple of audiology classes.
- 4) My sister has to go see an audiologist.
- 5) Your audiovisual presentation was very informative.
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

\***equi** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: equivalent, equator)

- 1) You can't equate money with happiness.
- 2) I want you to draw an equilateral triangle.
- 3) Women and minorities continue to fight for equality.
- 4) Do you feel like that solution is equitable for everyone involved?
- 5) When I got off the roller coaster I realized I had lost my equilibrium!
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

\***max** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: maximum, maximal)

- 1) Putting in extra effort will maximize your results.
- 2) When it comes to designing, he is a maximalist.
- 3) I love your flowing maxi dress.
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

\***mini** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: miniskirt, miniature)

- 1) Politicians are thinking of raising the minimum wage.
- 2) Don't minimize my feelings!
- 3) Sally loves her miniature poodle.
- 4) When it comes to packing for a vacation, I am a minimalist.
- 5) French restaurants are known for serving miniscule portions.
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_



# Word Roots—Answer Key

Roots:            **act**                      **audio**                      **equi**                      **max**                      **mini**

**Directions:** Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

\***act** means to do (examples: action, active, actor)

- 1) It's time to activate the machine.
- 2) My cousin is a political activist.
- 3) Activism should always be for a noble cause.
- 4) The activation sequence has begun.
- 5) The gymnast actualized her dreams when she won the gold medal.
- 6) Gardening is a relaxing activity.

\***audio** means sound (examples: audiobook, auditory)

- 1) The police audiotaped the interview.
- 2) My friend, the audio engineer, has worked with lots of musicians.
- 3) Speech language pathologists need to take a couple of audiology classes.
- 4) My sister has to go see an audiologist.
- 5) Your audiovisual presentation was very informative.
- 6) His whisper was barely audible.

\***equi** means equal (examples: equivalent, equator)

- 1) You can't equate money with happiness.
- 2) I want you to draw an equilateral triangle.
- 3) Women and minorities continue to fight for equality.
- 4) Do you feel like that solution is equitable for everyone involved?
- 5) When I got off the roller coaster I realized I had lost my equilibrium!
- 6) My cousin's house is equidistant from my apartment and my job.

\***max** means greatest (examples: maximum, maximal)

- 1) Putting in extra effort will maximize your results.
- 2) When it comes to designing, he is a maximalist.
- 3) I love your flowing maxi dress.
- 4) The cheetah is going at her maximum speed.

\***mini** means small or less (examples: miniskirt, miniature)

- 1) Politicians are thinking of raising the minimum wage.
- 2) Don't minimize my feelings!
- 3) Sally loves her miniature poodle.
- 4) When it comes to packing for a vacation, I am a minimalist.
- 5) French restaurants are known for serving miniscule portions.
- 6) I'm getting bogged down by all the minutia.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Word Roots—2

Roots:            **bene**            **mal**            **ject**            **geo**            **nov**

**Directions:** Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

\***bene** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: beneficial, beneficiary)

- 1) Each beneficiary will receive \$100,000.
- 2) The teacher told us it would be beneficial if we completed the extra credit assignment.
- 3) The annual charity event benefits the homeless.
- 4) The generous benefactor donated his fortune to charity
- 5) The doctor announced that the tumor was benign with a sigh of relief.
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

\***mal** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: malignant, dismal)

- 1) The children I saw at the homeless shelter appeared malnourished.
- 2) His sense of failure turned him malevolent toward those who were successful.
- 3) She received the heartbreaking news that the tumor was malignant.
- 4) The dismal weather made me want to stay inside all day.
- 5) We don't always see eye to eye, but there's never any real malice between us.
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

\***ject** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: reject, eject)

- 1) The teacher rejected my offer to help her grade tests.
- 2) The computer ejected the disc.
- 3) At the doctor's office, the nurse injected me with insulin.
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

\***geo** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: geography, geology)

- 1) Hank the geologist hates when his wife Marie refers to his minerals as rocks.
- 2) The teacher provided insight into the ways geography has shaped cultures.
- 3) Geothermal power has been around for more than a century.
- 4) In geometry, I am currently learning about angles.
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

\***nov** means \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: renovate, novice)

- 1) It is hard to be the novice on the team.
- 2) My mom wanted to renovate our outdated kitchen.
- 3) The salesman had an innovative idea.
- 4) The novelty of my new car soon wore off.
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_





## Word Roots—2—Answer Key

Roots:            **bene**            **mal**            **ject**            **geo**            **nov**

**Directions:** Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

\***bene** means good or well (examples: beneficial, beneficiary)

- 1) Each beneficiary will receive \$100,000.
- 2) The teacher told us it would be beneficial if we completed the extra credit assignment.
- 3) The annual charity event benefits the homeless.
- 4) The generous benefactor donated his fortune to charity
- 5) The doctor announced that the tumor was benign with a sigh of relief.
- 6) Kindness benefits both the receiver and the giver.

\***mal** means bad (examples: malignant, dismal)

- 1) The children I saw at the homeless shelter appeared malnourished.
- 2) His sense of failure turned him malevolent toward those who were successful.
- 3) She received the heartbreaking news that the tumor was malignant.
- 4) The dismal weather made me want to stay inside all day.
- 5) We don't always see eye to eye, but there's never any real malice between us.
- 6) Mosquito nets significantly decrease the spread of malaria.

\***ject** means throw (examples: reject, eject)

- 1) The teacher rejected my offer to help her grade tests.
- 2) The computer ejected the disc.
- 3) At the doctor's office, the nurse injected me with insulin.
- 4) She always needed to interject her opinions into the conversation.

\***geo** means earth (examples: geography, geology)

- 1) Hank the geologist hates when his wife Marie refers to his minerals as rocks.
- 2) The teacher provided insight into the ways geography has shaped cultures.
- 3) Geothermal power has been around for more than a century.
- 4) In geometry, I am currently learning about angles.
- 5) My cousin is studying geophysics.

\***nov** means new (examples: renovate, novice)

- 1) It is hard to be the novice on the team.
- 2) My mom wanted to renovate our outdated kitchen.
- 3) The salesman had an innovative idea.
- 4) The novelty of my new car soon wore off.
- 5) Given time to think creatively, artists are better able to innovate.





# Reading Comprehension

## Prefixes and Suffixes

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## Prefixes and Suffixes

Learning the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes is another great way to expand one's receptive lexicon. These three worksheets give students practice at adding prefixes and suffixes to words, and then defining the updated meaning. As with the *Word Roots* exercises, students become better able to break unfamiliar words down into chunks of meaning. As they familiarize themselves with common prefixes and suffixes, they will begin to identify meanings more readily.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Prefixes

Prefixes are chunks of meaning that can be added to the beginning of words.

**Examples:** reread, **dis**engage, **un**fair, **pre**view, **int**olerable, **co**dependent

**Directions:** Add one of the following prefixes to each numbered word and give the new definition.

**(Note:** Sometimes the spelling of the new word may need to be changed)

### Prefixes:

**re** = again; **pre** = before; **co** = with or together; **bi** = two;

**multi** = many; **mal** = bad or wrong; **dis**, **un**, **in** = not or opposite

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ write \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ dependent \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ open \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ adapted \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_ reliable \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_ action \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_ view \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_ loyal \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_ worker \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_ colored \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) \_\_\_\_\_ lingual \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) \_\_\_\_\_ cycle \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) \_\_\_\_\_ nourished \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) \_\_\_\_\_ upholster \_\_\_\_\_
- 15) \_\_\_\_\_ happy \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) \_\_\_\_\_ justice \_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Suffixes

Suffixes are chunks of meaning that can be added to the end of words.

**Examples:** agreement, happiness, writer, instructor, beautiful, freedom, quickly

**Directions:** Add one of the following suffixes to each numbered word and give the new definition.

(**Note:** Sometimes the spelling of the new word may need to be changed)

### Suffixes:

**ment** = condition of; **ness** = state of being; **er** and **or** = one who; **ful** = full of;

**dom** = place or state of being; **ly** turns adjectives into adverbs

- 1) write \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) king \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) open \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) contain \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) happy \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) argue \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) bore \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) punish \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) work \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) color \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) engage \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) sad \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) adapt \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) commence \_\_\_\_\_
- 15) silent \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) doubt \_\_\_\_\_





Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Prefixes and Suffixes

**Directions:** Define each of the following words

(Remember: **able** and **ible** are suffixes that mean **able to**  
and **in**, **un**, **non**, and **dis** are prefixes that mean **not** or **the opposite**)

- 1) undependable \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) unreliable \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) disagreeable \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) unattainable \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) unavailable \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) unemployable \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) disable \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) unforgettable \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) unidentifiable \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) inaccessible \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) incomprehensible \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) dishonorable \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) unapproachable \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) nonrefundable \_\_\_\_\_
- 15) nonrenewable \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) intolerable \_\_\_\_\_
- 17) unbeatable \_\_\_\_\_
- 18) unbelievable \_\_\_\_\_
- 19) uneducable \_\_\_\_\_
- 20) unpredictable \_\_\_\_\_





# Reading Comprehension

## Using Context Clues

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## Using Context Clues

These three vocabulary worksheet pages give your middle school and high school students confidence to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar lexicon by using contextual clues. Each new word is contained within two or three sentences in a row, and each successive sentence gives more specific clues. During my speech therapy sessions, I have my students cover up the page, revealing only one sentence at a time, while I encourage them to take guesses. I have seen tremendous progress in building vocabulary skills as my students generalize their willingness and subsequent ability to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words from contextual clues in novel situations, including the presentation of academic content within the classroom.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Using Contextual Clues

Often we will come across a word that we don't know. There are four basic ways to figure out what it means. Obviously, the foolproof way is to look up the definition, but this isn't always practical. A second way is to ask someone – don't be hesitant to ask!! Asking questions is a sign of intelligence! A third way is to try to figure out the definition by noting the word's root, prefixes, or suffixes. The fourth way to figure out a word's meaning is to use contextual clues. The context is what's going on in the sentence containing the unknown word or surrounding sentences. Often you can get some idea of an unfamiliar word's meaning.

**Directions:** Define the underlined word in each sentence. If you're not sure, take a guess. **Only look at one sentence at a time—cover the rest of the paper!**

- 1) Samantha foraged through the cupboards.
- 2) The bear foraged through the forest, looking for something to eat.
- 3) She didn't like to see her brother in such a wretched state.
- 4) After he finished the chemotherapy, his body was in a wretched state.
- 5) They lived in a rural part of the country.
- 6) There were few stores and businesses in the rural Mississippi town.
- 7) She snaps on a pair of disposable gloves.
- 8) I don't have to save that gown; it's disposable.
- 9) There are myriad reasons why I don't want to get married.
- 10) I can't even count the myriad ways that I admire her.
- 11) He was notorious for going out with a different girl every night.
- 12) Al Capone was a notorious gangster in the 1930s.
- 13) I'm eating a miniscule lunch today to try to lose weight.
- 14) Your cell phone is so miniscule it could fit into my smallest pocket.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Using Contextual Clues—Part 2

**Directions:** Define the underlined word in each sentence. If you're not sure, take a guess.

**Only look at one sentence at a time – cover the rest of the paper!**

- 1) Her irrepressible nature often got her into a lot of trouble.
- 2) He was irrepressible and that landed him on the bad side of supervisors who were control freaks.
- 3) Consuming too much sugar is detrimental to your health.
- 4) Last year's dry spell was detrimental to Florida's fruit crops.
- 5) Not putting enough energy into school will be a detriment to your chances of getting into the college of your dreams.
- 6) I was worried at first, but after spending more time with my son's girlfriend I decided she was benign.
- 7) You're lucky your tumor turned out to be benign.
- 8) She was so diminutive that everyone thought she was still in grade school.
- 9) Since he only had a studio apartment, Tom looked for the most diminutive dog at the animal shelter.
- 10) Our staff meetings are always so protracted that I start to fall asleep by the end.
- 11) I thought I'd never get out of there; it was the most protracted dinner of my life.
- 12) He was incredulous when he heard about my strange experiences.
- 13) My father raised me to be incredulous so that I would never get taken by scam artists.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Using Contextual Clues—Part 3

- 1) Sylvia felt enraptured by the heavenly dessert.
- 2) He was so enraptured by her on their first date that he just knew she was the girl for him.
- 3) Winning the lottery was quite a windfall.
- 4) She felt like the luckiest woman on earth; she knew that this job would turn out to be the biggest windfall of her life.
- 5) He wasn't sure if he would be proficient at his new position.
- 6) John practiced for months to become proficient at surfing.
- 7) His proficiency at public speaking helped him become elected to office.
- 8) This paint job is mediocre and I want you to redo it.
- 9) She was afraid that if she didn't pursue her dream of dancing her life would be filled with mediocrity.
- 10) I couldn't get him to divulge his secret.
- 11) Will you divulge the reason that you left without saying goodbye?
- 12) He didn't want to invalidate her feelings, but he just felt he couldn't be bothered.
- 13) Go see that man in the blue cap—he will validate your parking ticket.
- 14) I don't really think that your excuse is valid.
- 15) I want to see another doctor to find out if he'll corroborate your diagnosis.
- 16) Is she going to corroborate your story or will she contradict what you told me?







# Reading Comprehension Obfuscations

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## Obfuscations

Students that groan when asked to work on their vocabulary skills often love to do word puzzles. Just don't tell them the puzzles improve their vocabulary! This activity includes obfuscations of common idioms for students to solve, such as "at the decline of a cranial ornamentation" (at the drop of a hat) and "a portion of drum-shaped confection" (a piece of cake). Next, they are provided with a list of common idioms from which they can create their own obfuscations. Created obfuscations can be enjoyed among fellow students as classmates try to solve each other's concoctions. I have found that students really enjoy both these tasks, while getting substantial practice using a thesaurus and dictionary, and learning the meaning of less familiar idioms. Includes an answer key.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Obfuscations

Definition of obfuscate: To confuse or bewilder, to make obscure or unclear.

**Directions:** Translate the following obfuscations into familiar idioms.

(Note: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus can help!)

**Example:** *"Inquisitiveness murdered the feline"* means *"Curiosity killed the cat"*

At the decline of a cranial ornamentation \_\_\_\_\_

A blazing tuber \_\_\_\_\_

Nonpareil of twain macrocosms \_\_\_\_\_

Consecration in masquerade \_\_\_\_\_

You shouldn't evaluate a tome from its sheath \_\_\_\_\_

Acting as Satan's helping hand \_\_\_\_\_

End the life of a pair of warm-blooded, feathered vertebrae using a singular, small geological specimen \_\_\_\_\_

Upon the balustrade \_\_\_\_\_

A portion of drum-shaped confection \_\_\_\_\_

View ocular organ to ocular organ \_\_\_\_\_

Talk of the supreme spirit of evil \_\_\_\_\_

Overlook the vessel for transport by water \_\_\_\_\_

Your opinion reached on the basis of probability is as splendid as the one belonging to me  
\_\_\_\_\_

On one occasion in a primary color between green and violet in the visible spectrum

Earth's natural satellite \_\_\_\_\_

Now go back and discuss the meanings of each idiom you translated.





Now it's your chance to create your own obfuscations.

(Note: Using a thesaurus and/or dictionary will help tremendously!)

**Directions:** Create obfuscations for the following familiar idioms.

A penny for your thoughts

Actions speak louder than words

Add insult to injury

Back to the drawing board

The ball is in your court

Barking up the wrong tree

The best thing since sliced bread

Bite off more than you can chew

Caught between a rock and a hard place

Costs an arm and a leg

Cross that bridge when you come to it

Don't cry over spilt milk

Don't give up your day job

Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Desperate times call for desperate measures

Elvis has left the building

Every cloud has a silver lining

Feeling a bit under the weather

Give the benefit of the doubt

Heard it through the grapevine

Hit the nail on the head

In the heat of the moment



## **Creating Obfuscations (cont.)**

It takes two to tango

That was the last straw

Let sleeping dogs lie

Let the cat out of the bag

To make a long story short

Method to my madness

Pull the wool over your eyes

A picture's worth a thousand words

Steal someone's thunder

Get a taste of your own medicine

I wouldn't be caught dead

The Devil's in the details

Better late than never

Think outside the box

It's not rocket science

Pull someone's leg

Nothing ventured nothing gained

Now see if others can translate your obfuscations!

And go back and discuss the meanings of each idiom translated.



## Obfuscations—Answer Key

Definition of obfuscate: To confuse or bewilder, to make obscure or unclear.

**Directions: Translate the following obfuscations into familiar idioms.**

(Note: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus can help!)

**Example:** *“Inquisitiveness murdered the feline”* means *“Curiosity killed the cat”*

At the decline of a cranial ornamentation—At the drop of a hat (without any hesitation)

A blazing tuber—A hot potato (a highly controversial issue that’s risky to discuss)

Nonpareil of twain macrocosms—Best of both worlds (all the advantages)

Consecration in masquerade—Blessing in disguise (something good that isn’t recognized at first)

You shouldn’t evaluate a tome from its sheath—Don’t judge a book by its cover (you shouldn’t judge something based solely on its appearance)

Acting as Satan’s helping hand—Playing Devil’s advocate (presenting a counter argument)

End the life of a pair of warm-blooded, feathered vertebrae using a singular, small geological specimen—Kill two birds with one stone (accomplish two different things with one action)

Upon the balustrade—On the fence (stuck between two courses of action when making a decision)

A portion of drum-shaped confection—A piece of cake (simple, easy)

View ocular organ to ocular organ—See eye to eye (agree on something)

Talk of the supreme spirit of evil—Speak of the Devil (the person you have just been talking about arrives)

Overlook the vessel for transport by water—Miss the boat (miss your chance)

Your opinion reached on the basis of probability is as splendid as the one belonging to me—Your guess is as good as mine (to have no idea)

On one occasion in a primary color between green and violet in the visible spectrum earth’s natural satellite—Once in a blue moon (happens very rarely)



Now it's your chance to create your own obfuscations.

(Note: Using a thesaurus and/or dictionary will help tremendously!)

**Directions:** Create obfuscations for the following familiar idioms.

A penny for your thoughts (a way to ask what someone is thinking)

Actions speak louder than words (actions demonstrate intentions better than words do)

Add insult to injury (to worsen an already bad situation)

Back to the drawing board (having to start all over)

The ball is in your court (it's up to you to take the next step)

Barking up the wrong tree (accusing the wrong person, looking in the wrong place)

The best thing since sliced bread (a fantastic idea or invention)

Bite off more than you can chew (take on more than you can handle)

Caught between a rock and a hard place (stuck between two bad situations)

Cost an arm and a leg (absurdly expensive)

Cross that bridge when you come to it (deal with a problem only when necessary)

Don't cry over spilt milk (don't complain about something irreversible or in the past)

Don't give up your day job (you're not that good at something)

Don't put all your eggs in one basket (don't put all your hopes into one thing)

Desperate times call for desperate measures (when you're in a dire situation you need to do something extreme)

Elvis has left the building (it's all over)

Every cloud has a silver lining (every bad occurrence contains some benefit)

Feeling a bit under the weather (feeling ill)

Give the benefit of the doubt (assume the best intentions from someone's actions)

Heard it through the grapevine (hearing rumors but not saying from whom)



Hit the nail on the head (expressing something exactly right)

In the heat of the moment (overwhelmed by something happening right then)

It takes two to tango (both people involved in a situation are responsible)

That was the last straw (the final occurrence that puts someone over the edge)

Let sleeping dogs lie (do not disturb a situation that doesn't need fixing)

Let the cat out of the bag (share a secret or concealed information)

To make a long story short (get to the point, be concise)

Method to my madness (although an approach seems random there is a plan)

Pull the wool over your eyes (to deceive someone)

A picture's worth a thousand words (a visual presentation tells you far more than words)

Steal someone's thunder (to take recognition for yourself away from someone else)

Get a taste of your own medicine (something negative that you've caused to happen to someone else happens to you)

I wouldn't be caught dead (definitely don't want to be seen doing something)

The Devil's in the details (something may look simple at first glance, but will require more effort than you think it will)

Better late than never (it's better to be late than to not arrive/finish at all)

Think outside the box (to think creatively – outside the standard way of thinking)

It's not rocket science (it's not complicated)

Pull someone's leg (to joke with someone)

Nothing ventured nothing gained (you can't expect to achieve something if you don't try)







# Reading Comprehension

## Paraphrases and Meanings

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## **Paraphrases and Meanings**

These worksheets enhance students' comprehension of subtle meanings, consequently improving their ability to paraphrase. Two separate worksheets provide students with pairs and groups of paraphrases, requiring them to identify and discuss subtle differences in meaning between and among the paraphrases. Students must rely on their ability to really break down and comprehend the meanings within sentences conveyed by verb tense, synonyms, adverbs, conceptual relationships such as causality or contrast, and more. Answer keys are included.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Shades of Meaning

**Directions:** Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) I want to always live in a warm, sunny place.  
I don't ever want to live in a cold and rainy place.
- 2) I went ice-skating last week.  
I'd been going ice-skating last week.
- 3) I remembered that I was supposed to pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.  
I didn't pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.  
I picked up my dry cleaning yesterday.
- 4) My hair is getting too long.  
I need to get a haircut.  
I wish I had short hair.
- 5) Susan said she'd let me know if she can come to the party.  
Susan couldn't say yet whether or not she can come to the party.
- 6) I hope it's not raining tomorrow because we're planning a picnic.  
If it rains tomorrow our picnic will be ruined.
- 7) Today I will go to the store.  
Today I hope to get to the store.  
I'm planning on going to the store.
- 8) There are very few things I like about my job but I do like working with sharp knives.  
The only thing I like about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.  
One of the good things about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.
- 9) I hate Thanksgiving.  
I really despise Thanksgiving.  
Thanksgiving is probably my least favorite holiday.
- 10) I can't believe he said that.  
Can you believe he said that?
- 11) The next time you're at the store pick up some chocolate for me, okay?  
Will you get me some chocolate from the store?
- 12) That pasta was the best I've ever had!  
That pasta is the best in the world!



## Shades of Meaning—Answer Key

**Directions:** Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) I want to always live in a warm, sunny place.  
I don't ever want to live in a cold and rainy place.  
(The second speaker could be okay with living in a cold and sunny place or a warm and rainy place, whereas the first speaker would not.)
- 2) I went ice-skating last week.  
I'd been going ice-skating last week.  
(The second statement sounds like the speaker went ice-skating more than once.)
- 3) I remembered that I was supposed to pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.  
I didn't pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.  
I picked up my dry cleaning yesterday.  
(The first speaker may or may not have actually picked up the dry cleaning; for example, she may have remembered but then something prevented her from actually getting it. The second and third speakers' statements are opposites.)
- 4) My hair is getting too long.  
I need to get a haircut.  
I wish I had short hair.  
(The third speaker could be bald, while the second speaker might need a haircut for a reason other than having hair that is too long; for example, maybe she just wants to go from a blunt cut to a layered one.)
- 5) Susan said she'd let me know if she can come to the party.  
Susan couldn't say yet whether or not she can come to the party.  
(In the second statement it's implied that Susan will RSVP, but not definite as in the first sentence.)
- 6) I hope it's not raining tomorrow because we're planning a picnic.  
If it rains tomorrow our picnic will be ruined.  
(In the first statement the picnic will not necessarily be ruined.)



- 7) Today I will go to the store.  
Today I hope to get to the store.  
I'm planning on going to the store.  
(The first statement is the most definite, and the third statement does not specify which day.)
- 8) There are very few things I like about my job but I do like working with sharp knives.  
The only thing I like about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.  
One of the good things about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.  
(The first speaker likes few things, the second speaker likes only one thing, and the third speaker might like many things.)
- 9) I hate Thanksgiving.  
I really despise Thanksgiving.  
Thanksgiving is probably my least favorite holiday.  
(The second speaker has stronger negative feelings than the first, and the third speaker might actually like Thanksgiving, just not as much as the other holidays.)
- 10) I can't believe he said that.  
Can you believe he said that?  
(A statement vs. a question: the second speaker doesn't definitively say whether he believes or not.)
- 11) The next time you're at the store pick up some chocolate for me, okay?  
Will you get me some chocolate from the store?  
(The second speaker makes a stronger request and sounds like he wants it soon.)
- 12) That pasta was the best I've ever had!  
That pasta is the best in the world!  
(In the first statement there could be better pasta somewhere in the world.)





Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Shades of Meaning—2

**Directions:** Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) Yesterday there was an event at the supermarket.  
Yesterday there was an incident at the supermarket.
- 2) The doctor dismissed my symptoms as nerves.  
The doctor said my symptoms were from nerves.
- 3) Sophie quietly yawned.  
Sophie silently yawned.  
Sophie self-consciously yawned.
- 4) Bill reluctantly hung up the phone.  
Bill regrettably hung up the phone.
- 5) The little girl clutched the grocery list.  
The little girl held the grocery list.
- 6) Justin sped down the mountain slope.  
Justin skied down the mountain slope.
- 7) Andrea felt content.  
Andrea felt happy.  
Andrea was amused.  
Andrea felt enthusiastic.  
Andrea was enthusiastic.
- 8) The old guy staggered down the road.  
The old guy walked down the road.
- 9) The robbers chose the house on the corner.  
The robbers targeted the house on the corner.
- 10) Kathy slipped on the ice.  
Kathy skidded on the ice.
- 11) When she was three, Susan had a huge temper tantrum at the park.  
When she was three, Susan had a huge meltdown at the park.
- 12) I misplaced the money for the flea market.  
I lost the money for the flea market.  
I lost the clothes for the flea market.  
I lost the clothes from the flea market.



## Shades of Meaning—2—Answer Key

**Directions:** Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) Yesterday there was an event at the supermarket.  
Yesterday there was an incident at the supermarket. (implies negativity)
- 2) The doctor dismissed my symptoms as nerves. (implies a dismissive attitude)  
The doctor said my symptoms were from nerves.
- 3) Sophie quietly yawned. (could be some sound)  
Sophie silently yawned.  
Sophie self-consciously yawned. (means she felt self-conscious)
- 4) Bill reluctantly hung up the phone.  
Bill regrettably hung up the phone. (implies regret, not reluctance)
- 5) The little girl clutched the grocery list. (implies she was holding on tightly)  
The little girl held the grocery list.
- 6) Justin sped down the mountain slope. (implies speed)  
Justin skied down the mountain slope.
- 7) Andrea felt content. (a milder feeling than happiness)  
Andrea felt happy.  
Andrea was amused. (adds a feeling of slight humor)  
Andrea felt enthusiastic.  
Andrea was enthusiastic. (could imply enthusiastic behavior, more than just feeling)
- 8) The old guy staggered down the road. (implies difficulty walking)  
The old guy walked down the road.
- 9) The robbers chose the house on the corner.  
The robbers targeted the house on the corner. (could imply that the house was already burglarized more so than the 1st statement)
- 10) Kathy slipped on the ice.  
Kathy skidded on the ice. (“slipped” implies actually falling more so than “skidded”)
- 11) When she was three, Susan had a huge temper tantrum at the park. (implies anger)  
When she was three, Susan had a huge meltdown at the park.  
(emotional but not necessarily angry)
- 12) I misplaced the money for the flea market. (speaker may or may not know where it is)  
I lost the money for the flea market. (sounds more like the speaker doesn’t know)  
I lost the clothes for the flea market. (clothes to sell)  
I lost the clothes from the flea market. (clothes that were bought)





# Reading Comprehension

## Conceptual Relationships

Available in the format below:



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## Conceptual Relationships

This two-page worksheet helps middle school and high school students understand conceptual relationships between words and between sentences, including causality, contradiction, elaboration, and specificity. Students are first presented with examples of pairs of words and the conceptual relationship between each pair, and then must determine the conceptual relationship between more pairs of words. Finally, students engage in different fill-in-the-blank exercises to determine relationships and to demonstrate relationships. Understanding conceptual relationships is so important to students' overall comprehension of both written and verbally presented content. Includes an answer key.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Conceptual Relationships

Words have meanings.

Two words have two meanings.

There is a relationship between those meanings.

**Examples:** hot...cold, up...down, fast...slow (opposites)  
teacher...school, cop...precinct (worker and place of work)  
fire...hot, cheetah...fast (noun and adjective describing that noun)

What is the relationship between the following sets of pairs?

1) bird...nest, bat...cave, bee...hive

\_\_\_\_\_

2) doctor...stethoscope, conductor...baton, mechanic...wrench

\_\_\_\_\_

3) window...square, earth...round, movie poster...rectangular

\_\_\_\_\_

4) fruit...apple, vehicle...helicopter, animal...leopard

\_\_\_\_\_

Sentences have meanings; they state ideas or concepts.

Two sentences in a row have a relationship between their ideas/concepts.

The second sentence's concept relates to the first sentence's concept in some way.

For example, the second sentence's concept may contradict, state an effect, state a cause, or give an example of the first sentence's concept.

First sentence: **My cat is getting really fat.**

Second sentence:	He is really losing weight.	(contradicts)
	He can barely get up the stairs.	(states an effect)
	He is eating too much food.	(states a cause)
	He weighs nineteen pounds!	(gives an example)

**Directions:** Write four sentences that have the following relationships to the first.

First sentence: **I am scared of flying.**

Second sentence: \_\_\_\_\_ (contradicts)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (states an effect)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (states a cause)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (gives an example)





## Conceptual Relationships—Answer Key

Words have meanings.

Two words have two meanings.

There is a relationship between those meanings.

Examples: hot...cold, up...down, fast...slow (opposites)  
teacher...school, cop...precinct (worker and place of work)  
fire...hot, cheetah...fast (noun and adjective describing that noun)

What is the relationship between the following sets of pairs?

- 1) bird...nest, bat...cave, bee...hive  
an animal and where it lives
- 2) doctor...stethoscope, conductor...baton, mechanic...wrench  
a worker and an object he or she uses for work
- 3) window...square, earth...round, movie poster...rectangular  
an object and its shape
- 4) fruit...apple, vehicle...helicopter, animal...leopard  
a category and an item within that category

Sentences have meanings; they state ideas or concepts.

Two sentences in a row have a **relationship** between their ideas/concepts.

The second sentence's concept **relates** to the first sentence's concept in some way.

For example, the second sentence's concept may contradict, state an effect, state a cause, or give an example of the first sentence's concept.

First sentence: **My cat is getting really fat.**

Second sentence: He is really losing weight.	(contradicts)
He can barely get up the stairs.	(states an effect)
He is eating too much food.	(states a cause)
He weighs nineteen pounds!	(gives an example)

First sentence: **I am scared of flying.**

(Note: The following answers are examples; many sentences would work.)

Second sentence: <u>I love to fly.</u>	(contradicts)
<u>I have to drive to visit my grandma in Ohio.</u>	(states an effect)
<u>When I was little, my uncle died in a plane crash.</u>	(states a cause)
<u>The last time I flew my hands shook from fear.</u>	(gives an example)



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Conceptual Relationships between Sentences

What does each second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from:

contradicts	(says the opposite)
states an effect	(states a result)
states a cause	(gives the reason)
gives an example	(gives more specific info)

First sentence: **My grandma is really sweet.**

Second sentence: I love going to visit her. \_\_\_\_\_  
She always bakes me cookies. \_\_\_\_\_  
She is super mean. \_\_\_\_\_  
Her parents were very loving. \_\_\_\_\_

First sentence: **I am doing well in algebra.**

Second sentence: I am struggling in algebra. \_\_\_\_\_  
I study an hour every night. \_\_\_\_\_  
I aced the last three tests. \_\_\_\_\_  
My parents are proud of me. \_\_\_\_\_

First sentence: **I love to eat fruit.**

Second sentence: I love sweet, fresh foods. \_\_\_\_\_  
Yuck—I hate all fruit! \_\_\_\_\_  
Nectarines are my favorite. \_\_\_\_\_  
I eat fruit salad every day. \_\_\_\_\_

First sentence: The Summit School is a great place to learn.

Second sentence: The teachers are very helpful and the students are always accepting of each other. \_\_\_\_\_

First sentence: Anthony and his sister never got along.

Second sentence: One time they actually got into a fistfight! \_\_\_\_\_

First sentence: Fall is my favorite season.

Second sentence: I'm always sad to see the leaves falling off the trees and I miss going to the beach. \_\_\_\_\_

First sentence: I am scared of flying.

Second sentence: I had to drive across the country for my new job. \_\_\_\_\_

Third sentence (in relation to second): It took me six days. \_\_\_\_\_



## Conceptual Relationships between Sentences

### Answer Key

What does each second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from: contradicts	(says the opposite)
states an effect	(states a result)
states a cause	(gives the reason)
gives an example	(gives more specific info)

(Note: Some second sentences could fit more than one choice)

First sentence: **My grandma is really sweet.**

Second sentence: I love going to visit her	<u>states an effect</u>
She always bakes me cookies.	<u>gives an example</u>
She is super mean.	<u>contradicts</u>
Her parents were very loving.	<u>states a cause</u>

First sentence: **I am doing well in algebra.**

Second sentence: I am struggling in algebra.	<u>contradicts</u>
I study an hour every night.	<u>states a cause</u>
I aced the last three tests.	<u>gives an example</u>
My parents are proud of me.	<u>states an effect</u>

First sentence: **I love to eat fruit.**

Second sentence: I love sweet, fresh foods.	<u>states a cause</u>
Yuck—I hate all fruit!	<u>contradicts</u>
Nectarines are my favorite.	<u>gives an example</u>
I eat fruit salad every day.	<u>states an effect</u>

First sentence: The Summit School is a great place to learn.

Second sentence: The teachers are very helpful and the students are very kind.  
gives an example/states a cause

First sentence: Anthony and his sister never got along.

Second sentence: One time they actually got into a fistfight! gives an example

First sentence: Fall is my favorite season.

Second sentence: I'm sad to see the leaves falling off the trees and I miss the beach.  
contradicts

First sentence: I am scared of flying.

Second sentence: I had to drive across the country for my new job. states an effect

Third sentence (in relation to second): It took me six days. gives an example





# **Reading Comprehension**

## **Conceptual Relationships**

### **Advanced**

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## **Conceptual Relationships: Advanced**

This worksheet and accompanying answer key continue where the first conceptual relationships worksheet left off, again requiring students to determine and demonstrate conceptual relationships between sentences. However, with this worksheet, students are presented with sentences containing higher-level vocabulary, more complex syntax, and more sophisticated concepts.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Conceptual Relationships: Advanced

What does the second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from: adds specificity

contradicts (says the opposite)

contrasts (says how something else is different)

clarifies (makes clear)

adds to a sequence

states an effect (a result)

states a cause (a reason)

gives an example

- 1) Very often, we publish articles in The Summit Sun that are celebratory and discuss joyful moments.  
But life, though it may be filled with happy moments, also has its moments of grief and tragedy. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) The first time I interviewed Joe, he told me, "If you treat people well and don't shortchange anyone, you can stay in business for a long time."  
Joe lived by these ideas, showing respect for all. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) At first I was skeptical upon seeing trailers for the movie *Mama*.  
My previous experiences with horror movies have been, for the most part, not great.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Since the name Guillermo del Toro was associated with it, I thought it would be good.  
Unfortunately, this was not the case. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) This movie's plot is disappointing.  
It spends an awfully long time on standard horror movie jump scenes.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6) However, *Mama* does have a few positive aspects.  
The special effects are solid and the acting is good enough. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) On Tuesday, President Obama gave his State of the Union Address to Congress, the first one of his second term.  
While covering a wide range of issues, his speech focused primarily on the struggling and uncertain economy. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) While it's likely he'll get sufficient votes to pass new gun legislation, a potential filibuster in the Senate could prevent changes from coming to fruition.  
Thus, Obama begged Congress to at least let the changes come to a vote.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9) Obama also urged Congress to craft legislation to give polluters economic incentive to reduce gas emissions.  
He continued, somewhat controversially stating, "If Congress won't act soon to protect future generations, I will." \_\_\_\_\_



## Conceptual Relationships: Advanced—Answer Key

What does the second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from: adds specificity

contradicts	(says the opposite)
contrasts	(says how something else is different)
clarifies	(makes clear)
adds to a sequence	
states an effect	(a result)
states a cause	(a reason)
gives an example	

- 1) Very often, we publish articles in The Summit Sun that are celebratory and discuss joyful moments.  
But life, though it may be filled with happy moments, also has its moments of grief and tragedy. contrasts
- 2) The first time I interviewed Joe, he told me, “If you treat people well and don’t shortchange anyone, you can stay in business for a long time.”  
Joe lived by these ideas, showing respect for all. gives an example
- 3) At first I was skeptical upon seeing trailers for the movie *Mama*.  
My previous experiences with horror movies have been, for the most part, not great. states a cause
- 4) Since the name Guillermo del Toro was associated with it, I thought it would be good.  
Unfortunately, this was not the case. contradicts
- 5) This movie’s plot is disappointing.  
It spends an awfully long time on standard horror movie jump scenes. states a cause
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While covering a wide range of issues, his speech focused primarily on the struggling and uncertain economy. adds specificity
- 8) While it’s likely he’ll get sufficient votes to pass new gun legislation, a potential filibuster in the Senate could prevent changes from coming to fruition.  
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- 9) Obama also urged Congress to craft legislation to give polluters economic incentive to reduce gas emissions.  
He continued, somewhat controversially stating, “If Congress won’t act soon to protect future generations, I will.” adds specificity





# Reading Comprehension

## Identifying Main Idea

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## Identifying Main Idea

I had always found teaching students how to identify main ideas particularly difficult, until I discovered that providing them with examples works best. Here, I break down the non-fiction article "Friend" by Marjorie Ingall into its ten paragraphs. For each paragraph, students are given three choices for the main idea. One choice is too general, one is too specific, and one is "just right". In this way, students can discover (often through discussion) how the "too general" choice may be true, but is not specific enough to convey the author's intended message; how the "too specific" choice includes extraneous details that are not needed to convey the message; and how the "just right" choice clearly encapsulates the message. In future sessions when my students are tasked with independently identifying main ideas of new content, we can discuss how their guesses may be too general or too specific, and they are then able to make adjustments until they arrive at an accurate statement of the main idea.

# FRIEND

*To My Pal Who Hit Career Gold: You Go Girl (I'll Try to Control My Raging Jealousy)*  
by Marjorie Ingall

## **Paragraph 1**

"We hate it when our friends become successful," Morrissey sang, back in the day. I never thought I'd take emotional cues from a moody British pop star with vertical hair. I'm a generally cheerful American woman. But when a longtime friend did become hugely successful, I was shocked at my dark, seething jealousy.

## **Paragraph 2**

Gayle and I came of age together as writers for teen magazines. She was hilarious and kind. She giggled to me once about chatting with a guy on the subway carrying a wombat in a box. I thought, there are two kinds of people in the world: the kind who strike up conversations with people carrying wombats in boxes, and the kind who don't. She and I, we were wombat people.

## **Paragraph 3**

Years passed I continued to write for magazines and newspapers; she became a struggling novelist. We had kids. We had writing dates and made elaborate yet cheap salads for each other. Her first novel sank without a trace; I tried to console her.

## **Paragraph 4**

And then her second novel became a sensation. It sold millions of copies, was translated into zillions of languages, became a movie. She attended the premiere in Hollywood, wearing a glamorous low-cut black silk tux, as I watched at home, cleaning crayon off the walls.

## **Paragraph 5**

She'd call and share stories of her life, as she always had. I told her of my writer's block. But all the while, my envy lurked in the background like a horror-movie villain. My answers became increasingly curt, our conversation filled with awkward pauses.





### **Paragraph 6**

I hadn't known I was this petty. How could I not be overjoyed for her? She was my friend; she'd worked hard for her success. And I realized something else about myself, something equally unsavory: In the past, when I felt conflicted about a relationship, I'd ghosted. Rather than talking about problems like a grown-up, I'd simply disappear. I'd done it to two different boyfriends and a good friend. They'd call, likely hurt and baffled, and I'd check caller ID and ignore them. There's a difference between being conflict-averse and being a jerk. I was the jerk.

### **Paragraph 7**

So I womanned up and called Gayle. "I'm sorry," I said. "I need to tell you that I feel jealous of you and I don't want to talk to you and I hate myself for it." She expelled a huge breath. "I didn't want to say anything until you did! I'm so glad we're bringing it into the open!" She encouraged me to unload all the ugly stuff I had inside me, and she listened without judgment. It felt purifying.

### **Paragraph 8**

She'd been on the receiving end of friend breakups before, she told me, and didn't want it to happen to us. She made me swear I'd tell her if she started acting like a jerk. (She didn't, though she sometimes got obsessive and self-righteous—flaws she'd always had. And I told her so.) It turns out that friendship, like marriage, requires honest communication even when it's hard. Jeez, who knew?

### **Paragraph 9**

Wealth didn't change her. Her money woes were lessened, true, but she still had legit anxiety about...everything else. I could reassure her. She could reassure me. It's what friends do. As ever, Gayle's my biggest cheerleader.

### **Paragraph 10**

Studies have shown that people who are grateful for their friends tend to be better friends in response, creating, in the words of social psychologists, a "positive-feedback loop." That's us.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Main Ideas – Too General vs. Too Specific vs. Just Right

In order to identify the main idea of a paragraph, an essay, a story, or an article, you must consider: What is the message the author is trying to convey? The main idea must be specific enough to convey the intended message, but should not include unnecessary details.

- Directions:
- 1) Read the article “Friend” by Marjorie Ingall
  - 2) Consider the main message within each paragraph
  - 3) Label the following main ideas as:  
**TG**—too general  
**TS**—too specific  
**JR**—just right

### Paragraph 1

- \_\_\_ I became jealous of a friend’s success
- \_\_\_ People don’t like it when their friends become successful
- \_\_\_ I was shocked by my extreme jealousy of a longtime friend’s huge success because I’m usually an easy-going woman who lives in the United States

### Paragraph 2

- \_\_\_ Gayle and I both were the types who giggle over wombats in the subway
- \_\_\_ Gayle and I were close, longtime friends who shared an outgoing nature and profession
- \_\_\_ Gayle and I were friends

### Paragraph 3

- \_\_\_ Years passed and we remained friends through life changes
- \_\_\_ Life changes as we get older
- \_\_\_ I wrote for magazines while she was a struggling novelist

### Paragraph 4

- \_\_\_ Gayle’s second novel became a movie and she wore a glamorous outfit to the movie’s premiere
- \_\_\_ Gayle’s life and my life moved in different directions
- \_\_\_ Gayle became very successful professionally while my professional life stagnated



**Paragraph 5**

- \_\_\_ My jealousy started to get in the way of our friendship
- \_\_\_ We started to have problems in our relationship
- \_\_\_ She continued to call me, but I had writer's block

**Paragraph 6**

- \_\_\_ I'd ghosted two boyfriends and a good friend in the past when problems developed in those relationships
- \_\_\_ I started to realize that ghosting Gayle because of my jealousy of her was a jerky move on my part
- \_\_\_ My lack of communication was immature

**Paragraph 7**

- \_\_\_ Gayle reacted well when I was honest with her about my jealousy
- \_\_\_ Honesty is always the best policy
- \_\_\_ I womanned up and called Gayle and apologized for being jealous and told her I hate myself for it

**Paragraph 8**

- \_\_\_ Relationships benefit from honest communication, even when it's hard
- \_\_\_ I told Gayle how sometimes she could be obsessive and self-righteous
- \_\_\_ Honesty is good

**Paragraph 9**

- \_\_\_ Friends can reassure each other
- \_\_\_ It turns out Gayle's life isn't perfect, just like mine, and as friends we can be each other's cheerleaders
- \_\_\_ Gayle's wealth didn't change her and she still had anxiety about many things in her life

**Paragraph 10**

- \_\_\_ A positive-feedback loop is when you do something positive for someone who then appreciates it and does something positive for you and so on
- \_\_\_ Many studies investigate friendship dynamics
- \_\_\_ Gayle and I learned to be grateful for our friendship, a dynamic that typically makes for better friendships



## Identifying Main Idea – Answer Key

In order to identify the main idea of a paragraph, an essay, a story, or an article, you must consider: What is the message the author is trying to convey? The main idea must be specific enough to convey the intended message, but should not include unnecessary details.

- Directions:
- 1) Read the article “Friend” by Marjorie Ingall
  - 2) Consider the main message within each paragraph
  - 3) Label the following main ideas as: **TG**—too general  
**TS**—too specific  
**JR**—just right

### Paragraph 1

- JR** I became jealous of a friend’s success  
**TG** People don’t like it when their friends become successful  
**TS** I was shocked by my extreme jealousy of a longtime friend’s huge success because I’m usually an easy-going woman who lives in the United States

### Paragraph 2

- TS** Gayle and I both were the types who giggle over wombats in the subway  
**JR** Gayle and I were close, longtime friends who shared an outgoing nature and profession  
**TG** Gayle and I were friends

### Paragraph 3

- JR** Years passed and we remained friends through life changes  
**TG** Life changes as we get older  
**TS** I wrote for magazines while she was a struggling novelist

### Paragraph 4

- TS** Gayle’s second novel became a movie and she wore a glamorous outfit to the movie’s premiere  
**TG** Gayle’s life and my life moved in different directions  
**JR** Gayle became very successful professionally while my professional life stagnated



### **Paragraph 5**

**JR** My jealousy started to get in the way of our friendship

**TG** We started to have problems in our relationship

**TS** She continued to call me, but I had writer's block

### **Paragraph 6**

**TS** I'd ghosted two boyfriends and a good friend in the past when problems developed in those relationships

**JR** I started to realize that ghosting Gayle because of my jealousy of her was a jerky move on my part

**TG** My lack of communication was immature

### **Paragraph 7**

**JR** Gayle reacted well when I was honest with her about my jealousy

**TG** Honesty is always the best policy

**TS** I womaned up and called Gayle and apologized for being jealous and told her I hate myself for it

### **Paragraph 8**

**JR** Relationships benefit from honest communication, even when it's hard

**TS** I told Gayle how sometimes she could be obsessive and self-righteous

**TG** Honesty is good

### **Paragraph 9**

**TG** Friends can reassure each other

**JR** It turns out Gayle's life isn't perfect, just like mine, and as friends we can be each other's cheerleaders

**TS** Gayle's wealth didn't change her and she still had anxiety about many things in her life

### **Paragraph 10**

**TS** A positive-feedback loop is when you do something positive for someone who then appreciates it and does something positive for you and so on

**TG** Many studies investigate friendship dynamics

**JR** Gayle and I learned to be grateful for our friendship, a dynamic that typically makes for better friendships







# **Reading Comprehension**

## **Leisure Time Language Input**

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## **Leisure Time Language Input Homework Assignment**

So many parents and students believe the only way to expand vocabulary, reasoning skills, language comprehension, and general knowledge outside of the classroom is by reading novels or resource books. I always explain to my students and their parents that there are so many other sources of content that lead to language improvement, including ones that a child or teenager may actually enjoy reading or viewing! This homework handout requires that students read or view a choice of language content sources, and then fill in a brief summary of that content. An included discussion explains the how and why, along with a description of recommended sources. By the way, it's called "Leisure Time Language Input" rather than "Leisure Time Reading" because taking in language auditorily can improve a person's language comprehension and expression just as well as taking it in through reading, and is in fact a more effective means of input for students with decoding deficits.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Due date \_\_\_\_\_

## Leisure Time Language Input Homework

Check one of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ I read an article on digg.com / on \_\_\_\_\_ (circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_ I watched a video on Vsauce / ted.com / digg.com / Nerdwriter1 (circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_ I watched a news / nature / science program / \_\_\_\_\_ (circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_ I watched a documentary on \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Author(s) / Presenter(s) / Director(s):

Summary:

One interesting thing I learned:

One question I would ask the author(s) / presenter(s) / director(s):



## Leisure Time Language Input: Discussion

So often parents of my high school students will ask what reading their children can do during leisure time to improve their language skills. I always tell them that the truth is their child doesn't have to read a novel or a textbook to improve his or her language skills. Any time they are exposed to language input that's somewhat intelligent they are improving their vocabulary, their syntax, their comprehension, their inferencing skills, their conceptual understanding, and their reasoning skills. Motivation is key! There are plenty of sources of intelligent discourse, including family discussions at the dinner table, in which a teenager could be interested. Forcing children to read, listen to, or watch material that doesn't interest them will only turn them off from learning.

As a speech language pathologist working at a Regents high school, I infrequently give my students homework, and when I do I give homework that requires little effort. I know that they receive tons of homework from their academic courses. But I talk to them about the benefit of taking in language during their leisure time on topics that interest them. And then I give them the preceding homework assignment after presenting them with a description (or showing them examples on my laptop) of the following sources:

digg.com—Has tons of interesting articles and videos on a variety of topics. Students can use the search bar to zero in on the topics that interest them the most. Articles vary significantly in length, so students who struggle with decoding have the option of choosing a video or a shorter article.

Nerdwriter1—My son turned me on to this one! The Nerdwriter presents video essays on his YouTube channel Nerdwriter1. His videos range in length from about 6-12 minutes, and present interpretations, analyses, and reviews of art, literature, television, and cinema, with titles including “How Emily Dickinson Writes a Poem”, “The Problem with DC Action Scenes”, and “Seinfeld: What Nothing Really Means”. These videos present interesting ideas using sophisticated language, but at a slower pace and accompanied by tons of visuals—making them terrific for students with any language deficits.

Vsauce—Also discovered by my son, a science lover. Michael Stevens is the creator and host of Vsauce, a YouTube channel comprised of short videos, usually 5-25 minutes, on a variety of science topics, including “Why is Yawning Contagious?”, “The Science of Awkwardness”, “The Most Dangerous Place on Earth”, “Which Way is Down?”, and “What if the Earth Stopped Spinning?” I'm not a science lover, yet I find these videos fascinating!

ted.com—I believe most people are familiar with TED Talks. This website has an immense collection of inspirational, educational, and thought-provoking videos of various lengths on a practically endless variety of topics. As with Digg, students can search for their favorite topics.

**Note:** I give my students the option of watching videos rather than reading content, since whichever way is easiest for them to take in language is fine.

Lastly, I discuss with my students sources of interesting programs, including PBS, science shows, nature shows, HBO and Netflix documentaries, C-Span, news shows, political debates, etc. Any time they are exposed to intelligent discussion they are improving their language skills.

