

STRATEGIES FOR DECODING AND PRONOUNCING UNFAMILIAR WORDS



Here are two strategies that can help you pronounce a word that seems unfamiliar.

Guidelines for Using Clues in the Text

- Skip the word and read to the end of the sentence. Now reread the sentence and see if you can say the word.
- Carefully look at the beginning, middle, and end of the word. Use your knowledge of letter-sound relationships and the sentence's meaning to try to pronounce it.
- Reread the sentence containing the word you don't know along with the sentences that come before and after it. Try to find context clues in those sentences; they can also help you figure out how to pronounce the word.

Guidelines for Using Clues in the Word

- Look closely at the beginning, middle, and end of the word.
- If the word has a prefix, try to say it, then take it off.
- If the word has a suffix, try to say it, then take it off.
- Look at the base or root word that's left. Does it look like another word that you know? For example, in *felony*, the base word *felon* reminds me of *melon*.
- Try saying the base word and blending all the word parts together.
- Reread the sentence. See if the word makes sense now and if you understand what it means.

A *base word* is a complete word after removing prefixes and suffixes, such as *true* from *untrue*. A *root* or *stem* is not a complete word such as *venin* from *antivenin*.

If None of the Above Strategies Work . . .

- Write the word and page it's on in your journal. After reading, ask a classmate or adult for help.
- Look up the word in the dictionary, carefully selecting the relevant definition.