

Vocabulary Power



Lesson 20 Using Reference Skills

Using a Dictionary: Multiple Meanings

Many words in the dictionary have more than one definition. When you look up a word, you must decide which definition fits the meaning of the sentence in which the word is being used. The following procedure will help you determine which meaning is most appropriate for your purpose.

1. Read all the definitions in an entry.
2. If there is more than one entry for a word, read each entry completely. Some words are **homographs**—they are spelled the same way but are completely different in meaning, origin, and, sometimes, pronunciation. Homographs have separate dictionary entries, each printed with a raised number. For example, suppose that you do not know what *barrage* means in this sentence.
A barrage of criticism greeted Anthony as he entered the room.
 When you look up *barrage* in the dictionary, you will find that it is a homograph.
¹**barrage** (bär' ij) *n.* An artificial obstruction built in a watercourse to increase its depth or to divert its flow.
²**barrage** (bə räzh') *n.* **1 a:** A heavy curtain of artillery fire directed in front of allies to protect them **b:** rapid, concentrated missile discharge **2** An overwhelming outpouring, as of words.
3. Read the sentence in which you found the word, substituting each definition for the word. The one that makes the most sense is the correct definition:
 An overwhelming outpouring, as of words, greeted Anthony as he entered the room.

EXERCISE

In a dictionary, find the appropriate definition of the italicized word in each of the following sentences. First, write the definition; then, write a sentence of your own in which you use the definition.

1. Not even a new stuffed animal could *console* Damita, who had dropped her stuffed seal out the car window.

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

2. Dad keeps change, maps, and pens in the narrow *console* between the car seats.

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

3. When Sasha is overtired, the dark circles under her eyes stand out against her *pallid* face.

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

4. I used to enjoy that writer's fiction, but his prose has become *pallid* and his characters boring.

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____



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Review: Unit 5

EXERCISE

Circle the letter of the phrase that best completes each sentence.

- You might expect a **superlative** meal to be _____.
 - mediocre in ingredients and preparation
 - superior in quality and taste
 - high in fat and carbohydrates
 - skimpily with only a few dishes
- Someone might feel sorry for the **underdog** because he or she _____.
 - is not expected to win
 - lacks the stamina and courage to win
 - doesn't know how the game is played
 - has no desire to win
- A **fractious** person might be expected to _____.
 - be good at cooking
 - leave a party well before it is over
 - make friends easily
 - be hard to get along with
- If you have been **confounded** by a math problem, you _____.
 - cannot understand the problem
 - did not try to solve it
 - finished it quickly
 - can explain it to others
- A **diligent** person tends to _____.
 - give up easily
 - lose his or her temper frequently
 - work hard at a challenging task
 - tell stories to entertain others
- An **infraction** of the rules at the community center may lead to _____.
 - more food service
 - the perpetrators losing privileges
 - global warming
 - the opening of additional centers
- You might use the statistics of a favorite baseball player as the **benchmark** to _____.
 - rate other players
 - understand why he entered professional sports
 - make a lot of money
 - see the contrast between baseball and football
- If your club plans to **defray** its operating costs, it intends to _____.
 - spend them on other necessities
 - conduct a bake sale to earn money
 - collect charitable contributions
 - pay the money for those costs
- An ice cream store would **tantalize** you because _____.
 - the prices are so expensive
 - the employees are helpful
 - of all the delicious flavors
 - you are allergic to ice cream
- An example of a **gridlock** would be _____.
 - a city map
 - a distracting noise
 - one move from winning a chess game
 - a traffic jam