23 Words in context: meaning, polarity and collocation

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 13 marks**

KEY WORDS contextual meaning • word in context • collocation • evidence • proposal • syntax • colon

Objective

- Infer a word's intended meaning from its sentence and nearby logic
- Use contrast and explanation to determine a missing word
- Choose a word fitting syntax , degree and collocation

Original public practice; marks below are classroom self-check points, not official criteria.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

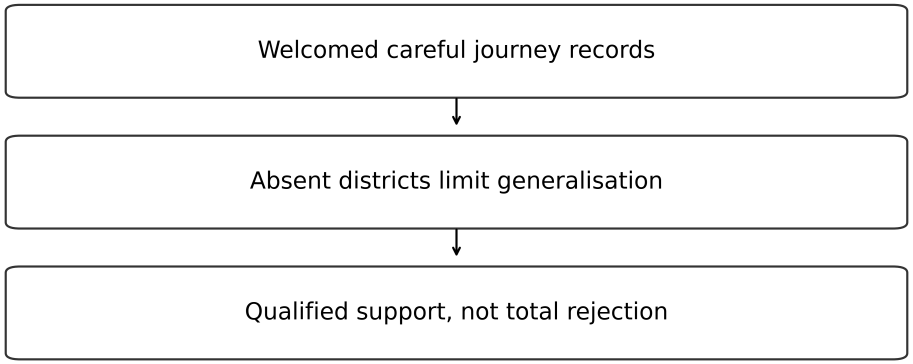
A familiar word may have several senses. Substitute a simple paraphrase into the sentence and test whether it preserves the relationship. Context, rather than the first dictionary meaning, determines whether check means inspect, restrain or mark a response.

For a blank, decide the needed meaning and polarity before looking at choices. A contrast introduced by but may reverse an expectation; an explanation after because can narrow the intended sense. If the sentence says evidence is promising yet incomplete, a word meaning cautious or provisional is more plausible than certain.

Check grammatical fit and collocation as well as meaning. A verb must work with its object and complement; an adjective must modify the intended noun. A near synonym can fail if it implies a stronger degree, a different subject or a relationship the passage does not establish.

Avoid treating difficult vocabulary as a contest to choose the most impressive word. Use a neutral paraphrase, eliminate options of the wrong polarity and then compare remaining shades of meaning. Keep a record of words learned in their full phrase, because context and typical combinations help later retrieval.

A word in context must fit the relationship, not just a dictionary entry. In "The evidence is thin, so the conclusion remains provisional", provisional means open to revision. It does not mean temporary employment or physical thinness. Paraphrase before choosing.



Worked steps: Welcomed careful journey records → Absent districts limit generalisation → Qualified support, not total rejection

Worked example. Original sentence: "The committee gave the proposal qualified support: members approved its aim but requested a smaller trial before expansion." Here qualified means limited or conditional, not certified or skilled. Original blank: "Because the observations were few, the author described the conclusion as _____ rather than definitive." Provisional fits the explicit contrast with definitive.

■ Practice material

Passage. The reviewers welcomed the survey's careful record of individual journeys, but they gave its city-wide conclusions only qualified support. The routes had been chosen for convenience, and several districts were absent. One reviewer called the record illuminating: it made previously overlooked travel difficulties easier to understand. Another cautioned that extending the conclusions would require a broader sample. The authors accepted this reservation and proposed a second survey.

2 Practice

2.1 "The new fence checked the spread of the plants." Checked means: [1]

- **A** Ticked a box beside
- **B** Paid for
- **C** Praised
- **D** Restrained

2.2 “The result was ____: later measurements might change it.” Choose: [1]

- **A** Tentative
- **B** Irreversible
- **C** Unrelated
- **D** Certain

2.3 Support with stated limits is _____ support. [1]

2.4 A word’s first dictionary sense is always correct in a passage. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

Use the complete original case context in section 1.

3.1 Explain qualified, illuminating and reservation in this passage. Quote a clue for each. [3]

3.2 Compare “The reviewers dismissed the survey” with “The reviewers endorsed its conclusions without reservation”. Why does neither fit? [3]

3.3 Replace illuminating with revealing, dazzling or visible. Which best preserves meaning and why do the others fail here? [3]

Solutions

Accept equivalent correct methods and supported interpretations. The marks check reasoning; they are not an official grade.

2.1 D – The object spread makes restraining the growth the relevant sense. A uses the inspection/marking sense, B a payment sense and C praise; none fits restraining the spread of plants.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.2 A – Might change implies a provisional result. B and D exclude the stated possibility of revision; C says nothing about revisability and disconnects result from context.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.3 qualified – Qualified can mean conditional or limited in this phrase.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.4 False – Nearby meaning selects the relevant sense.

Correct response linked to the given case.

3.1 Qualified means limited or conditional, supported by absent districts and a need for broader sampling. Illuminating means revealing or clarifying, supported by difficulties becoming easier to understand. Reservation means a concern or limitation, supported by caution about extending conclusions; it is not a booked seat.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.

3.2 Dismissed ignores their welcome for its careful records. Endorsed without reservation erases the sampling concern. The attitude combines appreciation of the records with limited support for broader conclusions.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.

3.3 Revealing preserves the idea that the record makes difficulties understood. Dazzling introduces brilliance or admiration beyond the stated clarification. Visible describes perceptibility, not the survey's explanatory contribution. This is a contextual meaning decision, not a rule that those words are always wrong.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.