

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

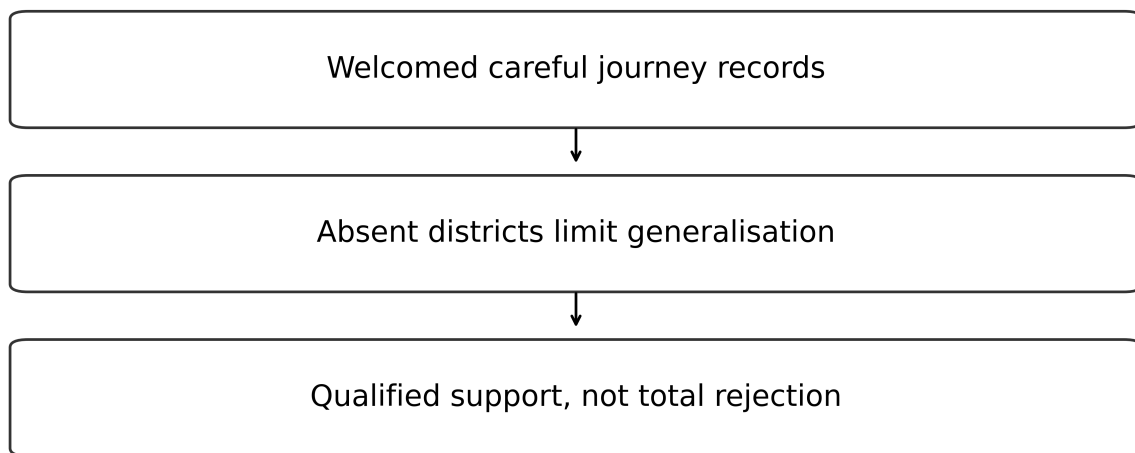
A familiar word may have several senses. Substitute a simple paraphrase into the sentence and test whether it preserves the relationship. Context, rather than the first dictionary meaning, determines whether check means inspect, restrain or mark a response.

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]
