

How to Use Word-Part Clues to Define Words

- 0:00 **Owl:** Welcome to How to Use Word-Part Clues to Define Words, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.
-
- 0:12 Unfamiliar words can pose a serious problem for reading comprehension.
-
- 0:16 Therefore, in order to improve your ability to understand what you read, you will need to expand your vocabulary.
-
- 0:22 There are a couple of things you can do when you encounter a word you don't understand.
-
- 0:27 You can look it up!
-
- 0:29 Sometimes a text will provide definitions for key words, either in the text or in a sidebar or glossary.
-
- 0:35 Otherwise, you can look up unfamiliar words in a paper or electronic dictionary.
-
- 0:40 Another thing you can do is look for clues in the word or text that can help you decipher its meaning.
-
- 0:46 There are two types of clues you can look for: context clues and word-part clues.
-
- 0:52 In this video, I'll explain how to look for and use word-part clues to decipher the meaning of unfamiliar words.
-
- 0:59 This will help you grow your vocabulary and improve your reading comprehension.
-
- 1:04 I'll discuss context clues in another video.
-
- 1:08 Word parts are the building blocks that form words.
-
- 1:11 If you understand how to identify and make sense of word parts, you can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words while you read.
-
- 1:18 There are three different word parts: the Root, the Prefix, and the Suffix.
-
- 1:25 The Root is the base word that has its own meaning.
-
- 1:28 The Prefix is attached to the beginning of the root and modifies its meaning.
-
- 1:33 The Suffix is attached to the end of the root and also modifies its meaning.
-
- 1:38 Let's look at an example.
-
- 1:40 Here's the word "autobiography."
-
- 1:43 If we take it apart into its word parts we have: auto | bio | graphy.
-
- 1:50 The root word is "bio," which means "life."
-
- 1:54 The prefix is "auto," which means "oneself."
-
- 1:57 The suffix is "graphy," which means "writing."

- 2:01 We can translate the literal meaning into this working definition: “self-writing about one’s life.”
-
- 2:08 Now, try out your definition in the original sentence.
-
- 2:11 Replace the original word with your working definition and see if the sentence makes sense:
-
- 2:17 In his “self-writing about his life,” Frederick Douglass describes his escape from slavery and transformation into a prominent abolitionist.
-
- 2:25 It’s a good idea to check your working definition against the actual definition of the word in a dictionary.
-
- 2:32 In this case, the dictionary tells us that the word autobiography means “a history of a person’s life written or told by that person.”
-
- 2:41 That’s pretty much the working definition that we discovered using word parts!
-
- 2:45 You can improve your ability to identify and interpret word parts by becoming familiar with the most common word parts.
-
- 2:51 Use your search engine to find free lists of the most common word parts and their definitions online.
-
- 3:01 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on How to Use Word-Part Clues to Define Words!
-
- 3:07 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.

