

Skills for Guessing Unfamiliar English Words

猜词技巧

(修 订)

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中山大学出版社

· 广州 ·

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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

猜词技巧 = Skills for Guessing Unfamiliar English Words/邱若深
编著. —广州: 中山大学出版社, 1993. 4 (2007. 2 重印)

ISBN 978 - 7 - 306 - 00573 - 1

I. 猜… II. 邱… III. 英语—词汇—自学参考资料
IV. H313

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2007) 第 006621 号

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出版发行: 中山大学出版社

编辑部电话: (020) 84111996, 84113349

发行部电话: (020) 84111998, 84111160

地 址: 广州市新港西路 135 号

邮 编: 510275

传 真: (020) 84036565

印 刷 者: 广州市新明光印刷有限公司

规 格: 880 × 1230 1/32 9.5 印张 288 千字

版 次: 1993 年 4 月第 1 版

印 次: 2007 年 2 月修订 2007 年 2 月第 2 次印刷

定 价: 20.00 元 印数: 8001 - 16000

本书如有印装质量问题影响阅读, 请与承印厂联系调换

内 容 提 要

猜词技巧是阅读技巧的重要组成部分。本书较系统地介绍常用的猜词技巧——上下文分析法和词素分析法。

根据中国人学英语的特点，本书把上下文分析法贯串于全书始末，并将其细分为推理、经历、H、实例、同义、反义、定义与解释等七法；把词素分析法贯串于词根、前缀和后缀三部分之中，以分析词根为重点。各部分分别按意义分门别类，便于读者学习和记忆。

本书内容丰富，编排新颖，叙述简明扼要，精选的例题和练习适当，针对性强，能有效地帮助读者扩大英语词汇量，提高阅读速度和理解能力，是一本实用性较强的好书。

本书适合具有大学二年级以上水平的读者使用。

修 订 说 明

《猜词技巧》初版于 1993 年，甫一面世便得到英语学习者的好评。为了满足广大英语读者的需求，特推出修订的《猜词技巧》。

今天的英语学习者人数之众多，学习热情之高涨，学习途径之宽广，学习内容之丰富，远非十多年前可比。猜测英语生词词义技巧也在中学、大学的英语教学中更为广泛地介绍和应用，有些测试单位还把它列入测试的一项内容。

修订本对旧版本做了较大程度的修改，增加了若干练习题，其中 100 题取自全国英语专业四级考试（1997—2006）、大学英语四级考试（2001—2006）和大学英语六级考试（2001—2006）中的词汇测试试题。选用这些试题的目的，是想让在校大学生进一步提高学习猜测英语生词词义技巧的兴趣，加深对教学大纲要求掌握的部分词汇的理解和印象，在日常阅读实践中更加有意识地运用猜词技巧；同时也想为中学、大学的英语教师增添一点适时的教学内容。

本书自出版以来得到许多教师和同学的关注，谨此表示感谢。

编著者

2006 年 11 月

序

记得当学生时读的第一部英文原著是哈代的名作《还乡》。刚打开书时兴致勃勃，可是读下去就发现几乎每行都有好几个生词。怎么办呢？还是照老习惯一个词一个词地去查字典吧。足足用了一个晚自修的时间才把第一页上的生词查完，但对通篇意思的了解还是像雾里看花，朦朦胧胧。更糟糕的是，开始时那股热乎劲都不知跑到哪里去了。没办法，只好合上书睡觉。直到一个月以后才重新鼓起勇气打开书本读下去。这件事给我印象极深，至今犹历历在目。相信许多学外语的人也或多或少有过类似的经历。问题出在哪里呢？我想，除了读物选得不合适以外，就是阅读方法不对头了。

学外语的人从一开始就好像跟字典结下了不解之缘，遇到生词就要去查，时间长了就成了习惯，不查总觉得心里不踏实。查字典有时是必要的，但有些情况下并非必需，甚至也不可能。例如，小说、报纸之类，要快读，没有许多时间去翻字典，也没有必要去查每个生词；又如，考试时就不允许查字典。那么，遇到生词怎么办呢？要靠猜，靠上下文或词的构造去猜生词的意思。用这个办法，一般生词的意思就可以猜个八九不离十了。

可惜，这种知识和技巧老师过去在课堂上很少传授，国内好像也没有书系统地做过介绍。邱若深同志根据他多年的教学经验编写了这本《猜词技巧》，填补了这个空白。我相信这本书一定会有助于读者培养良好的阅读习惯，提高英语阅读能力和扩大词汇量。

欣喜该书的出版，特为之序。

张信威

1992年6月

前 言

对于有一定英语基础的读者来说，生词仍然是阅读的拦路虎。碰到拦路虎，读者通常有三种不同的反应，因此也有三种不同的效果。一是“见虎色变”，慌了手脚。由于心慌意乱，所以虽硬着头皮读几遍，仍然不得要领。二是拿出看家本事，靠字典“制虎”。结果虽知所云，却影响阅读速度和整篇理解。三是冷静下来，不依赖工具书，而是利用生词本身及上下文线索猜测词义，“伏虎”清障。有些词虽猜不出其意思，但只要不影响总体领会，便大胆“越虎”而过，从而获得最佳效果。

本书较系统地向读者介绍常用的猜词技巧——上下文分析法和词素分析法。根据中国人学英语的特点，从大学生的实际出发，以上下文法贯串全书始末。全书分为两部分：第一部分把上下文法分为推理、经历、**H**、实例、同义、反义、定义与解释七法，编成7课。每课均先提供例子，再配以40道练习题。习题由浅入深，从易到难，先设计例句后引述原著。第一部分复习题有句、段、短文，检查读者综合运用的能力；第二部分把词素分析法贯串于词根、前缀、后缀三小部分共18课之中，以学习、分析词根为重点。常用的68个词根按意义分为静态、动态、称谓三类；57个前缀分为否定、数量、位置与方向、程度与大小四种；58个后缀按构词功能分为名词、动词、形容词及副词后缀三类，然后分别按意义分成若干组。每一小部分的复习都附有一览表，所学内容一目了然，容易记忆。第二部分最后是复习题，内容摘自英语原著。为方便读者自学，书末附有参考答案。

本书的编排和分类基于两种目的，一是为了学习和记忆的方便，二是想为读者提供一条思路。读者可以对各项内容加以增补或重新归纳分类，使之更加切合自己的实际，能取得更大成效。

“猜词技巧”，顾名思义，倘使用词典，就无所谓“猜”；不做大量练习，就成不了“技”，更谈不上“巧”；不在阅读实践中应用，就无从巩固和提高。如何使用本书，编者还有另一建议。在做第二部分练习时，要尽量不看课文，不往前翻，这样才能得益。

全书用英文编写，其中绝大多数例句出自英美作家手笔。主要部分已几经试用，适合于大学二年级以上学生和同等英语水平的读者使用。

刘世舟副教授和林连书教授先后审阅了全稿并提出宝贵的修改意见；澳籍教师 Cherie Hingee 和 Gail Parr 校阅了全部课文、练习及答案；张信威教授为本书作了序，特此表示衷心的感谢。

由于编者水平有限，时间仓促，错漏之处在所难免，恳请读者指正。

编著者

1992 年 10 月

Part I | Context Clues

You have probably learned the saying “unable to see the forest for the trees”. It refers to a time when a person gets so caught up in looking at the details of a situation (“the trees”) that he misses the sense of the whole picture (“the forest”). Similarly, in reading, the reader may let a few unfamiliar words in a passage act as “trees” that keep him from seeing “the forest” —the meaning of the passage as a whole, and he is possibly not aware that to see the trees well, he has to look at the forest.

Context is a group of words—a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph—in which a word is located. In using the context to determine the meaning of a new word you have to use your knowledge of grammar and your understanding of the author’s ideas; in other words, you should look at what part of speech the new word is and what the sentence or paragraph talks about. Here is an example:

The car was making a funny noise, so I got out, opened the bonnet, and took out the *dipstick* to check the oil level.

If you are a driver or an observant passenger, you may guess immediately from your experience what the italicized word means. For an ordinary reader, this sentence provides two clues. First, “dipstick” is a noun. Second, this sentence talks about checking or measuring; the words “car” and “bonnet” and the phrase “to check the

oil level” help you get this idea. From these clues you can figure out that a dipstick is some kind of tool, or rather, a stick or rod, that is used for measuring the oil level in a car engine.

Guessing the meaning of an unfamiliar word from its context is a very useful skill in reading. It reduces dependence on a dictionary, saves time, and promotes reading efficiency. Although you cannot always expect to use it to discover the exact meanings of all the unknown words you will encounter in a passage or a text, you can often get a vague idea of some of the new words. And this is enough to understand the passage as a whole in many reading situations.

Ways to look at the forest (the context) when you want to see the trees (unfamiliar words) can be classified into seven clues: inference clues, experience clues, cause and effect clues, example clues, synonym clues, antonym clues, and definition and explanation clues.

Lesson 1 Inference Clues

Getting meaning from inference means that you infer, or guess, meaning from the clues provided by the context—the sentence or passage in which the word appears. There are four steps. First, decide what part of speech the unfamiliar word is. Next, make out what the sentence or passage is about. Then, find out the words or phrases that help you get the idea. Finally, use these clues to guess the meaning of the word.

Example 1

The soldiers were ordered to *fire* at the enemy.

Questions:

1. What part of speech is “fire”? _____.
2. Does the sentence talk about war, business, or a blaze?
_____.
3. What words in the sentence helped you answer Question 2?
_____ and _____.
4. Fire means _____.
 - a) to let someone go from a job
 - b) to shoot
 - c) red-hot flames

The sentence contains two clues to the meaning of “fire”. First, “fire” is a verb. Second, the sentence talks about war; the words

“soldiers” and “enemy” help you understand this. You can immediately eliminate the choice “red-hot flames”, since it is a noun answer that refers to a blaze. Although the choice “to let someone go from a job” is a verb answer, it refers to business and should be eliminated. The choice “to shoot” is a verb answer that talks about fighting; it is the correct answer.

Example 2

They lit a *fire* using only flint and wood.

Questions:

1. What part of speech is “fire”? _____.
2. Does the sentence talk about war, business, or a blaze?
_____.
3. What words helped you answer Question 2 ? _____,
_____ and _____.
4. Fire means _____.
 - a) to let someone go from a job
 - b) to shoot
 - c) red-hot flames

In this example “fire” is a noun in a sentence that talks about a blaze. You can immediately eliminate choices a) and b), verb answers that talk about business and fighting. Choice c), “red-hot flames”, is a noun answer that refers to a blaze; it is the correct answer.

Here is another example selected from a letter of congratulation.
What does the word “criteria” mean?

I was very impressed to hear that Knitwear Industries had won the

Roseberry Award this year. Having been on the panel of judges for the Roseberry Foundation in past years, I am aware that the *criteria* for their decision are very strict. To have been judged the winner confirms your superiority in the manufacture of knitted goods.

In this example you know that “criteria” is a plural noun in a passage that talks about some kind of judging. In order to judge, you need standards, thus “criteria” means “standards of judgement”. You can prove the meaning of the word from another clue—the criteria are very strict.

Exercise 1

Consider the context of each italicized word. Write its part of speech on the line provided, and then choose the correct meaning for the italicized word.

1. The workers gathered *cane* in the fields.

In this sentence, cane is (an) _____. It means _____.

- a) a stick used as support in walking
- b) sugar stalks
- c) to hit with a piece of wood
- d) to weave wood pieces, as in a chair

2. The *chair* recognized each speaker at the meeting.

In this sentence, chair is a (an) _____. It means _____.

- a) a piece of furniture
- b) to take one's seat
- c) a leader
- d) to direct a session

3. Rice is considered a *staple* in many countries.

In this sentence, staple is a (an) _____. It means _____.

_____.

- a) a basic food substance
- b) to fasten papers
- c) a metal clip used to attach items
- d) to supply with food

4. Alex *pilfered* money and goods from his company for several years before the losses were discovered.

In this sentence, *pilfered* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

- a) thieves
- b) stole
- c) taking
- d) plundered

5. The *cryptic* message made the agents wonder whether or not their code had been revealed.

In this sentence, *cryptic* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

- a) hiding
- b) mysteries
- c) vague
- d) mysterious

6. Do we need laws that prevent us from *running risks* with our lives?

In this sentence, “*running risks*” is a (an) _____. It means _____.

- a) unwise
- b) taking chances
- c) moving quickly
- d) dangerous

7. The government once passed a law closing all liquor stores, bars, and *breweries* in this country.

In this sentence, *breweries* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

- a) places where liquor is made

b) to brew beer

c) processing liquor

d) alcohol or ale

8. The boys quickly hid the *stuff* under the seats of the car.

In this sentence, *stuff* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

a) items

b) nonsense

c) completely filled

d) packing firmly

9. The *banister* runs up the stairway and then curves around next to the bedrooms.

In this sentence, *banister* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

a) steps

b) inclining

c) hand rail

d) a person

10. In the upstairs hallway was a little *cranny* built into the wall to hold a telephone.

In this sentence, *cranny* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

a) a hole

b) to sit in a booth

c) indented

d) a receiver

Exercise 2

Read each sentence carefully and write the part of speech for the italicized word, and then write a definition for it on the line provided.

1. The elderly patient used a *cane* to help her walk.

In this sentence, *cane* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

2. New material gave the *chair* a refreshing look.

In this sentence, *chair* is a (an) _____. It means _____.

_____.

3. “Randy, can you *staple* these papers so that they won’t fall apart?” asked Anita.

In this sentence, staple is a (an) _____. It means _____.

4. Captain Edwards *logged* the ship’s mileage in his book and added a description of the weather conditions.

In this sentence, logged is a (an) _____. It means _____.

5. The newly cut *log* burned brightly in the fireplace.

In this sentence, log is a (an) _____. It means _____.

6. The soldiers left their *base* to patrol the countryside.

In this sentence, base is a (an) _____. It means _____.

7. For an hour, the cat *meticulously* cleaned the kitten’s paws, face, and body.

In this sentence, meticulously is a (an) _____. It means _____.

8. The snake *slithered* through the grass.

In this sentence, slithered is a (an) _____. It means _____.

9. Birds have an *innate* ability to fly.

In this sentence, innate is a (an) _____. It means _____.

10. The flood water *penetrated* every home in the valley.

In this sentence, penetrated is a (an) _____. It means _____.

Exercise 3

Read each of the following sentences carefully, and then write a definition, synonym, or description of the italicized word on the line provided.

1. We watched as the cat came quietly through the grass toward the bird. When it was just a few feet from the victim, it gathered its legs under itself, and *pounced*.

Pounced means _____.

2. In spite of the fact that the beautiful *egret* is in danger of dying out completely, many clothing manufacturers still offer handsome prices for their long, elegant tail feathers, which are used as decorations on ladies' hats.

Egret means _____.

3. Early magicians frequently wore a large apron with many pockets in which they could carry their *props*.

Props means _____.

4. Sometimes canals have to be built across deep valleys. Bridges or *aqueducts* are constructed for this purpose.

Aqueducts means _____.

5. In a series of bold moves, government attorneys attacked the *mammoth* auto industry, saying that the size of the business endangered the financial freedom of the individual buyer.

Mammoth means _____.

6. The following Monday, when the president *convened* the second meeting of the committee, we all sat down quietly and waited for him to begin.

Convened means _____.

7. Instead of complaining to me that you're *ailing*, you should see a doctor to find out what's wrong with you.

Ailing means _____.

8. Although he really did not want to open the mysterious drawer again, his curiosity *compelled* him to take one last look.

Compelled means _____.

9. When you come across a bear and do not have time to run away, you'd better *simulate* death.

Simulate means _____.

10. When you visit a foreign country, many of the familiar psychological signals that help an individual to function in society are suddenly *withdrawn* and replaced by new ones.

Withdrawn means _____.

Exercise 4

Read carefully each of the following passages taken from textbooks and guess from inference the meaning of the italicized word.

1. No other trees can put up such a terrific fight for life. When a big tree falls, it takes years for its needlelike leaves to *wither*. The wood never seems to decay or become rotten. (from *California's Giants* by Irving Robert Melbo)

2. It [the runaway train] plunged toward a door leading into a waiting room crowded with people. . . Just as its headlight reached the door, its weight made the concrete floor of the concourse collapse. Hissing like a wounded and dying animal, the engine *plummeted* into the basement of the station. It pulled one car down with it. (from *Runaway Train* by Hal Butler)

3. The day after his rescue, Michels was still critically ill. He