To figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word that you come across while reading:

1. **Look for Context Clues** in the Words, Phrases, and Sentences Surrounding the Unfamiliar Word

2. **Look for Word-Part Clues** Within the Unfamiliar Word
   A. Try to Break the Word into Parts. (If you can't, skip to Step 3.)
   B. Look at the Root Word. What does it mean?
   C. Look at the Prefix. What does it mean?
   D. Look at the Suffix. What does it mean?
   E. Put the Meanings of the Word Parts Together. What is the meaning of the whole word?

3. **Guess the Word's Meaning** (Use Steps 1 and 2.)

4. **Try Out Your Meaning in the Original Sentence** to Check Whether or Not It Makes Sense in Context

5. **Use the Dictionary**, if Necessary, to Confirm Your Meaning

TYPES OF HELPFUL CONTEXT CLUES

Type	Description	Example Sentence
Definition	The author provides a direct definition of an unfamiliar word, right in the sentence. • SIGNAL WORDS: *is, are, means, refers to*	A <u>conga</u> is a barrel-shaped drum.
Appositive Definition	A type of definition clue. An appositive is a word or phrase that defines or explains an unfamiliar word that comes before it. • SIGNAL WORD: *or* • SIGNAL PUNCTUATION: set off by commas	At night you can see <u>constellations</u>, or groups of stars, in the sky.
Synonym	The author uses another word or phrase that is similar in meaning, or can be compared, to an unfamiliar word. • SIGNAL WORDS: *also, as, identical, like, likewise, resembling, same, similarly, too*	My dog Buck travels everywhere with me. My friend's <u>canine</u> buddy travels everywhere with him, too.
Antonym	The author uses another word or phrase that means about the opposite of, or is in contrast with, an unfamiliar word. • SIGNAL WORDS: *but, however, in contrast, instead of, on the other hand, though, unlike*	I thought the movie would be exciti ~~weird~~, but it turned out to be totally <u>mundane</u>.
Example	The author provides several words or ideas that are examples of an unfamiliar word. • SIGNAL WORDS: *for example, for instance, including, like, such as*	In science we are studying <u>marine mammals</u> such as whales, dolphins, and porpoises.
General	The author provides some nonspecific clues to the meaning of an unfamiliar word, often spread over several sentences.	Einstein rode his bike everywhere. He thought driving a car was way too <u>complicated</u>.