

Word meaning detective

Vocabulary development | Suggested grades 3-8 | Reusable with any appropriate text

Learner code: _____ Date: _____

Text title / paragraph

Word and exact sentence where it appears

Clue: definition, example, contrast, or surrounding idea

My proposed meaning and why it fits

Replace the word in the sentence; does the meaning hold?

Check with a dictionary or educator; revise if needed

Vocabulary model and quick check

Educator guide | Original example

Original sentence: "The cardboard bent in the rain, but the sturdy wooden sign stayed firm."

Think-aloud: The sentence contrasts cardboard that bends with wood that stays firm. Sturdy probably means strong or firm. Replacing it with strong keeps the meaning. I should check whether that meaning fits the rest of the passage.

New practice sentence

"Leena was hesitant to open the unfamiliar box; she reached toward it, then pulled her hand away." What might hesitant mean? Identify the clue and explain.

Educator key

Hesitant means unsure or reluctant to act. Reaching and then pulling away supports that meaning. Award 2 for meaning plus a relevant clue explained; 1 for a reasonable meaning with incomplete support; 0 for no accurate understanding.

For older learners, ask how a different plausible word would change the tone. For younger learners, invite an oral explanation before writing. Record support.

From evidence to explanation

Writing practice | Suggested grades 3-8 | Adjust response length to the learner

Learner code: _____ Date: _____

Text title and question I am answering

My claim: a direct answer

Evidence: relevant words or a paraphrased detail

Explanation: how my evidence supports the claim

Revision: combine my ideas into a clear response

Model a response that explains

Educator guide | Short original practice text

"Tariq packed the broken kite away. Then he borrowed a ruler, cut a new support, and returned to the field."

Prompt

What can you infer about Tariq? Use evidence and explain.

Model

Tariq is persistent. After packing the broken kite away, he builds a new support and returns to the field. Those actions show he keeps trying rather than abandoning the activity.

Why this works

The claim answers the prompt. The evidence points to specific actions. The explanation connects those actions to persistence. Other traits can earn credit if supported; a response need not match these exact words.

Quick feedback

2: clear claim + relevant evidence + connection.

1: reasonable claim with missing evidence or connection.

0: no accurate response.

Next revision prompt: "How does that detail show your idea?"