



Uplift. Upskill. Upgrade.

AEIS English

Lesson 3 — Word Power

Context clues · word building · connotation · collocation · confusables

Secondary 2 · Student

A complete lesson on working out and choosing the right word — reading context clues, breaking words into roots and affixes, weighing shades of meaning, and pinning down confusables — with AEIS-style practice for the Secondary 2 paper.

90-minute lesson · Notes + Worksheet + Homework

Aligned to MOE AEIS (Secondary) · Part 2 Vocabulary & Cloze

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START HERE

How to use this booklet

Notes, worksheet and homework for one 90-minute lesson

What is inside

- **Section A — Diagnostic.** A short vocabulary check you do first, before any teaching, so you can see what you already control.
- **Section B — Notes.** Five strategies: reading context clues, taking words apart, choosing the right shade of meaning, using natural word partners, and telling look-alike words apart.
- **Section C — Worksheet.** Six exercises, from meaning-in-context to editing confusables.
- **Section D — Worked decoding.** Three hard words taken apart step by step, so you can see the strategy in action.
- **Section E — Homework.** AEIS-style vocabulary and cloze practice, plus word-building.

How the AEIS paper tests this

In the AEIS Secondary paper, **Part 2** is 50 multiple-choice questions. The **vocabulary** section (10 items) and the two **cloze** passages (15 items) reward exactly this skill: read the whole sentence, weigh four near-synonyms, and pick the one that fits both the meaning and the grammar. You are tested on the level **below** your entry year — so a Secondary 2 applicant is examined on strong Secondary 1 vocabulary. This lesson pushes to the harder end of that band.

Study tip

Keep a vocabulary log. Each time you meet a new word here, write down the whole sentence it lived in — not just the definition. You will remember a word far better in context than on a bare list.

SECTION A · WARM DIAGNOSTIC

Diagnostic test

12 items · do this BEFORE the notes

Part 1 — Closest in meaning

Read each sentence. Circle the option closest in meaning to the word in bold. (6 marks)

1. Despite the coach's encouragement, Ravi remained **reluctant** to try the high dive.
(A) eager (B) unwilling
(C) confident (D) careless
2. The detective was **meticulous**, checking every corner of the room twice.
(A) hasty (B) forgetful
(C) extremely careful (D) cheerful
3. Water was **abundant** during the monsoon but scarce in the dry months.
(A) plentiful (B) filthy
(C) costly (D) rising
4. She tried to **conceal** her disappointment behind a bright smile.
(A) express (B) hide
(C) explain (D) increase
5. Their attempts to bail out the sinking boat proved **futile**.
(A) successful (B) dangerous
(C) useless (D) tiring
6. As the exam approached, a wave of **apprehension** washed over him.
(A) excitement (B) anxiety
(C) boredom (D) relief

Part 2 — Confusable check

Circle the word that correctly completes each sentence. (6 marks)

7. The new rule had little _____ on attendance.
(A) affect (B) effect
8. She refused to lie; it was against her _____.
(A) principal (B) principle
9. The bus remained _____ for ten minutes at the depot.
(A) stationary (B) stationery
10. A crisp salad would _____ the rich curry nicely.
(A) complement (B) compliment
11. The committee announced _____ decision this morning.
(A) its (B) it's
12. Everyone finished the task _____ Sara.
(A) accept (B) except

SECTION B · NOTES

Five ways to attack a word

Context · word parts · connotation · collocation · confusables

1. Read the whole sentence — the context clue

You almost never need to know a word in isolation. The sentence around it is built to help you, if you slow down and read it. Four kinds of clue turn up again and again in AEIS passages.

Clue type	How it helps	Signal words & example
Definition	the sentence explains the word directly	is, means, that is — “an arid , or dry, region”
Contrast	an opposite nearby points the other way	but, unlike, however — “Water was abundant in June but scarce by August.”
Example	examples show the word’s range	such as, like — “ Nocturnal animals such as owls and bats hunt at night.”
Cause / effect	the result hints at the meaning	so, because — “The path was so treacherous that two hikers slipped.”

2. Break the word apart — prefix, root, suffix

Long words are usually short words in disguise. A **root** carries the core meaning; a **prefix** at the front bends that meaning; a **suffix** at the end fixes the word’s job (its part of speech). Learn a handful of each and you can unlock hundreds of words.

Common roots

Root	Meaning	Words
spect	look	spectator, inspect, circumspect
port	carry	portable, transport, export
dict	say	predict, dictate, verdict
struct	build	construct, structure, destruction
ject	throw	eject, inject, reject
scrib / script	write	describe, inscribe, manuscript
aud	hear	audible, audience, auditorium
vis / vid	see	visible, vision, evident

Common prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
un- / in- / dis-	not, opposite of	unable, invisible, dishonest
re-	again, back	rebuild, return, review
mis-	wrongly, badly	misjudge, mislead, misuse
pre-	before	preview, predict, prevent
circum-	around	circumspect, circular, circumference
mal- / bene-	bad / good	malfunction, malice · benefit, benevolent

Suffixes tell you the word's job

Suffix	Word's job	Example
-ous, -ible, -able, -ful	adjective (describes)	courageous, sensible, remarkable
-tion, -ment, -ness, -ity	noun (a thing/idea)	decision, movement, kindness
-ise, -ify, -en	verb (an action)	modernise, clarify, strengthen
-ly	adverb (how)	quietly, bravely, swiftly

Put it together: **un·friend·ly** = not (un) + friend + in-a-way (ly) → “in a way that is not friendly”. The parts tell you the meaning *and* that it is an adverb.

3. Mind the shade — connotation

Many words share the same basic meaning but carry a different feeling. **Slender** and **scrawny** both mean thin, yet one flatters and one insults. The examiner often gives you four words of the same meaning and asks for the one whose **feeling** fits the sentence.

Neutral	Positive shade	Negative shade
thin	slender, slim	scrawny, gaunt
confident	assured, self-assured	arrogant, cocky
careful with money	thrifty, economical	stingy, miserly
smell	aroma, scent	stench, reek
curious	inquisitive, interested	nosy, prying
unusual	unique, distinctive	weird, odd

Match the shade to the writer's **attitude**. If the sentence admires someone, a negative synonym is wrong even when it means the same thing.

4. Words travel in pairs — collocation

Some words simply belong together, and swapping in a synonym sounds wrong to a native ear. You **make** a mistake — you do not “do” one. Learn the natural partner, not just the word.

Idea	Natural partner ✓	Not this ✗
a crime	commit a crime	do a crime
a mistake	make a mistake	do a mistake
attention	pay attention	put attention
homework	do your homework	make your homework
a photo	take a photo	make a photo
progress	make progress	do progress

5. Watch the look-alikes — confusables

A short list of word pairs causes most of the easy marks lost in AEIS language items. Learn the memory hook and you will never mix them up again.

Pair	Quick meaning	Memory hook
affect / effect	affect = to change (verb); effect = a result (noun)	Action = A ffect; End result = E ffect
principal / principle	principal = head / main; principle = a rule or belief	the principal is your pal
stationary / stationery	stationary = not moving; stationery = paper & pens	stationery = e nvelope
complement / compliment	complement = completes; compliment = praise	compliment = “ I like it!”
accept / except	accept = to take in; except = apart from	e xcept = e xclude
its / it's	its = belonging to it; it's = it is	it's always = it is

The strategy ladder — in this order: (1) read the whole sentence for a context clue → (2) break the word into parts → (3) check the shade of feeling → (4) test each option back in the blank and read it aloud in your head.

SECTION C · GUIDED PRACTICE

Worksheet

Six exercises, meaning-in-context to editing

Exercise 1 — Meaning in context

Circle the option closest in meaning to the word in bold. Use the whole sentence as your clue.

1. The old bridge had **deteriorated** so badly that the council closed it.
 (A) improved (B) worsened
 (C) widened (D) vanished
2. A **prudent** shopper compares prices before buying.
 (A) reckless (B) wealthy
 (C) sensible (D) generous
3. The witness gave a **candid** account, holding nothing back.
 (A) dishonest (B) honest
 (C) confused (D) brief
4. Monsoon clouds gathered, **ominous** and grey, over the harbour.
 (A) cheerful (B) threatening
 (C) distant (D) harmless
5. Years of drought had left the reservoir **depleted**.
 (A) overflowing (B) polluted
 (C) emptied (D) frozen
6. The volunteers were **tenacious**, refusing to give up on the search.
 (A) lazy (B) persistent
 (C) cheerful (D) nervous
7. Her **versatile** talent let her act, sing and dance with ease.
 (A) limited (B) adaptable
 (C) famous (D) fragile
8. The general's **audacious** plan startled even his own officers.
 (A) cowardly (B) dull
 (C) bold (D) secret

Exercise 2 — Word formation

Change the word in CAPITALS into the right form to fill the blank. Mind the spelling.

Sentence — change the word in CAPITALS	Your word
1. The museum guide was remarkably _____ about ancient pottery. (KNOWLEDGE)	
2. A good captain shows _____ in a crisis, staying calm under pressure. (COMPOSE)	
3. The instructions were so _____ that nobody could follow them. (CONFUSE)	
4. We admired the _____ of the climbers who reached the summit. (BRAVE)	
5. His close _____ to detail made him a superb proofreader. (ATTEND)	
6. The charity relies on the _____ of ordinary people. (GENEROUS)	
7. She spoke with such _____ that the whole hall fell silent. (CONFIDENT)	
8. Engineers tested the _____ of the new bridge before opening it. (STRONG)	

Exercise 3 — Roots and meanings

Each word is built on a Latin root. Match it to its meaning by writing the correct letter (A–H) beside the number.

Words

#	Word	Letter
1	spectator	
2	portable	
3	audible	
4	predict	
5	construct	
6	eject	
7	visible	
8	inscribe	

Definitions

	Definition
A	to build something
B	loud enough to be heard
C	a person who watches an event
D	to throw or force something out
E	to say in advance what will happen
F	able to be carried
G	to write or carve words onto a surface
H	able to be seen

Exercise 4 — Choose the right shade

The four options mean almost the same thing, but each carries a different feeling. Circle the one whose connotation fits the sentence.

- Grandpa was _____ with money — he saved for years to send us all to school.
 (A) stingy (B) miserly
 (C) thrifty (D) tight-fisted
- The new intern was so _____ that he brushed aside everyone's advice.
 (A) assured (B) self-confident
 (C) arrogant (D) poised
- The dancer was tall and _____, moving across the stage with grace.
 (A) skinny (B) scrawny
 (C) slender (D) bony
- Stop being so _____ about other people's private letters!
 (A) interested (B) inquisitive
 (C) curious (D) nosy
- The kitchen filled with the warm _____ of freshly baked bread.
 (A) stench (B) reek
 (C) aroma (D) odour
- The toys were _____ and fell apart within a week.
 (A) inexpensive (B) affordable
 (C) shoddy (D) economical

Exercise 5 — Word partners (collocation)

Some words simply belong together. Circle the word that partners naturally with the rest of the sentence.

- The researchers _____ an experiment to test the theory.
 (A) made (B) did
 (C) conducted (D) built
- Please _____ attention to the safety instructions.
 (A) give (B) pay
 (C) make (D) do
- The new evidence will _____ serious doubt on his story.
 (A) throw (B) put
 (C) cast (D) lay
- A sudden noise _____ her concentration.
 (A) broke (B) cut
 (C) stopped (D) cracked
- The company hopes to _____ a profit this year.
 (A) do (B) make
 (C) gain (D) build
- A handful of volunteers truly _____ a difference in the village.
 (A) did (B) made

(C) gave

(D) took

Exercise 6 — Confusables: one slip per line

Each line uses the *WRONG* word from a confusable pair. Underline it and write the correct word in the box.

# Line (one confusable slip each)	Correction
1. The heavy rain did not effect our weekend plans.	
2. She gave me some good advise about revising.	
3. They past the old temple on the way home.	
4. Make sure you bring you're passport to the airport.	
5. The desert was so delicious that we ordered another.	
6. He was to tired to finish his homework.	
7. The team lost there final match of the season.	
8. I would rather walk then wait an hour for the bus.	

SECTION D · WORKED DECODING

Take the word apart

Three unfamiliar words, decoded step by step

Watch the two big strategies work together. For each word, read the sentence for a clue, then break the word into parts — and the meaning falls out.

incorrigible · adjective

The puppy was **incorrigible** — no amount of scolding could make it stop chewing our shoes.

- **Context clue.** The dash spells it out: “no amount of scolding could make it stop.” The behaviour simply cannot be corrected.
- **Word parts.** in- (not) + **corrig** (from *correct*) + **-ible** (able to be) = “not able to be corrected”.
- **Best meaning.** impossible to correct, change or reform.

circumspect · adjective

After being cheated once, Mrs Rao grew **circumspect** about every new business offer she received.

- **Context clue.** “After being cheated once” tells you she is now wary — she thinks carefully before trusting anyone.
- **Word parts.** circum- (around) + **spect** (look) = “looking around” you before you act.
- **Best meaning.** cautious; weighing everything carefully before acting.

benevolent · adjective

The **benevolent** stranger paid for the family’s groceries and slipped away before they could thank him.

- **Context clue.** He pays for their food and wants no thanks — the sentence is describing plain kindness and goodwill.
- **Word parts.** bene- (good, well) + **vol** (wish) + **-ent** (adjective) = “wishing good” to others.
- **Best meaning.** kind, generous and wishing others well.

SECTION E · HOMEWORK

Homework

AEIS-style vocabulary, cloze and word-building

Homework 1 — Vocabulary (AEIS multiple-choice)

Circle the option closest in meaning to the word in bold. (10 marks)

1. The hikers were **ravenous** after the long climb.
(A) extremely hungry (B) exhausted
(C) cheerful (D) thirsty
2. With the border closed, another clash now seemed **inevitable**.
(A) unlikely (B) unavoidable
(C) distant (D) welcome
3. The auditor **scrutinised** every figure in the report.
(A) approved (B) examined closely
(C) ignored (D) copied
4. The villagers **lamented** the loss of their harvest.
(A) celebrated (B) mourned
(C) forgot (D) recorded
5. Their **frugal** lifestyle let them save half of what they earned.
(A) wasteful (B) luxurious
(C) thrifty (D) careless
6. The alley was **notorious** for pickpockets.
(A) praised (B) well known for bad reasons
(C) quiet (D) newly built
7. A **diligent** student, Mei revised a little every evening.
(A) clever (B) lazy
(C) hard-working (D) cheerful
8. By dawn the storm had begun to **abate**.
(A) strengthen (B) lessen
(C) return (D) spread
9. They exchanged **cordial** greetings at the door.
(A) brief (B) cold
(C) warm and friendly (D) formal
10. Months of training **culminated** in the national finals.
(A) began (B) reached a high point
(C) failed (D) paused

Homework 2 — Cloze passage (AEIS multiple-choice)

Read the passage. For each numbered blank, circle the option (A–D) that best fits the meaning. (8 marks)

For weeks, the coastal town had watched its old lighthouse (1) _____ into ruin. The paint had peeled, the great lamp had gone dark, and sailors now had to (2) _____ their way by the stars alone. When a wealthy visitor offered to pay for the repairs, the mayor could hardly (3) _____ his delight. Volunteers (4) _____ in from every corner of the district, some carrying ladders, others balancing tins of paint. The work was (5) _____; the salt wind fought them at every turn, and the narrow stairs left little room to move. Yet nobody complained. By the final evening the tower stood (6) _____ once more, its fresh white walls gleaming. As the switch was thrown, a beam of light swept the (7) _____ sea, and a great cheer (8) _____ from the watching crowd.

1. (A) rose (B) fell (C) drifted (D) bloomed
2. (A) lose (B) risk (C) navigate (D) block
3. (A) contain (B) show (C) express (D) share
4. (A) vanished (B) poured (C) retreated (D) hid
5. (A) effortless (B) gruelling (C) pleasant (D) brief
6. (A) crooked (B) tall (C) hidden (D) silent
7. (A) darkening (B) boiling (C) shrinking (D) frozen
8. (A) fell (B) rose (C) sank (D) faded

Homework 3 — Word formation

Change the word in CAPITALS into the right form to complete each sentence.

Sentence — change the word in CAPITALS	Your word
1. The scientist's _____ finally led to a major breakthrough. (PERSIST)	
2. We were grateful for the _____ of the mountain guides. (EXPERT)	
3. The ancient manuscript was of great _____ to historians. (SIGNIFY)	
4. His _____ manner put the nervous patients at ease. (REASSURE)	
5. The council ignored the repeated _____ of the residents. (OBJECT)	
6. A _____ breakfast sets you up for the whole day. (NUTRITION)	