

What do you need to know?

Synonyms are words that mean the same thing as each other. For example, 'happy' and 'glad' are synonyms because they are both adjectives that describe someone as 'feeling delighted'.

In lots of different verbal reasoning questions you'll need to be able to **identify synonyms**. Synonyms can replace one another in a sentence without the meaning of the sentence changing:

'I was **happy** to be invited to the party'

'I was **glad** to be invited to the party'

In **synonym questions**, you'll either be asked to find the synonym of a given word or be given **two groups of words** and be asked to identify the **pair of synonyms**.

What is the synonym of word?

word, **synonym** | synonym, word

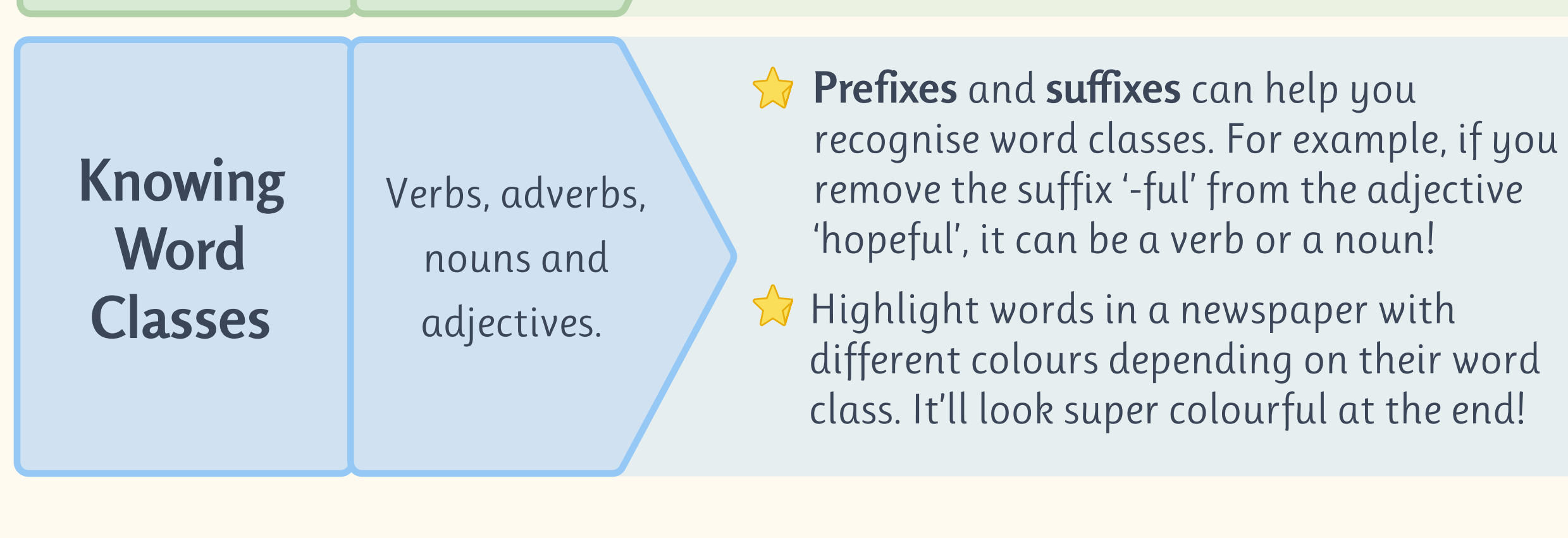
word, **synonym**, word | synonym, word, word

If you are given two groups of words, your job is to work out which word from one group means the **same thing** as a word from the other group.



Key Skills:

There are some key skills that you will need to be able to recognise antonyms:



Approach:

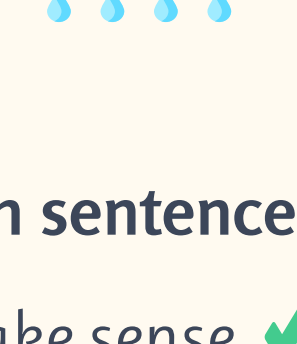
Start by reading through all the words to see if you **recognise** any pairs straightaway. If you don't recognise any, then you will need to **compare words**.

To find a **synonym** of a word you can follow **three simple steps**:

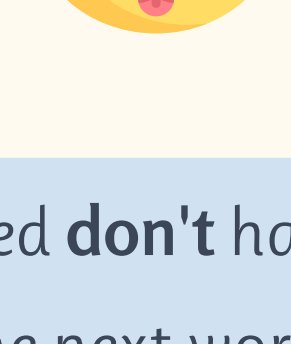
1- Identify: start by identifying the word class of the words you are comparing. We know that synonyms are **always in the same word class**, so the matching word will be too. See if you can find any nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs!

2- Define: we know that **synonyms mean the same thing as each other**. If we don't know what a word means, we can look at its root or its prefixes and suffixes to try and work out its meaning. But **watch out**, just because two words have similar letters doesn't mean they have the same meanings.

3- Double check: once we think we've found a pair of synonyms, we can double check by using them to replace one another in the same sentence. For example:



The rain made the cat **wet**.

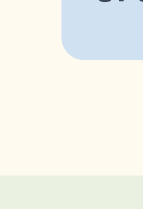


The rain made the cat **soggy**.

Both sentences:

- make sense ✓

- mean the same thing ✓

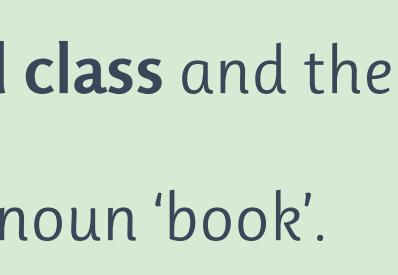


If the two words you have compared **don't** have the same meaning, then move onto the next word in the group and repeat the steps.

Word class	Definition
★ Noun	A noun identifies a place or a thing, like trophy , award and prize .
★ Verb	A verb describes an action or state, like jump and leap .
★ Adjective	An adjective is a word that describes a noun, like weak and frail .
★ Adverb	An adverb describes the manner in which, the time when, or the place where an action (verb) takes place. Like the antonyms happily and merrily .

Let's see this in action!

This picture is of a boring book. Which word in the list below is the synonym of 'boring'?



reading

dull

interesting

magazine

writing

Let's start by identifying the **word class** and the **meaning** of 'boring'.

- It's an **adjective**: it describes the noun 'book'.

- It's a **negative** word that means 'not interesting'.

So its synonym will also be a **negative adjective** with the **same meaning**.

Let's compare 'boring' to our answer options. There are only two adjectives: 'dull' and 'interesting'. As 'boring' and 'interesting' have **opposite** meanings this means 'dull' must be our **synonym**!

We can double check this by using 'dull' and 'boring' to replace each other in a sentence:

This book is really **boring**. ✓

This book is really **dull**. ✓

★ Both sentences make sense. ✓

★ Both sentences mean the same thing. ✓

What other adjectives can you think of that are synonyms of 'boring'?

bland

uninteresting

tedious

repetitive

uneventful

How to work out a word's meaning

Sometimes, we might not know the meaning of all the words in a question. We can often look at **prefixes** and **suffixes** to work out **word classes**, as well as whether the word is **positive** or **negative**.

★ Prefixes like **'un-', 'in-'** or **'im-'** mean 'not' and are usually added to **adjectives**. For example, **'unkind'** means 'not kind'.

★ The suffixes **'-ous'** and **'-ful'** are both added to **adjectives** and mean 'full of'. For example, **'joyful'** describes something as 'full of joy'!

★ Prefixes like **'dis-', 'un-'** and **'mis-'** also mean 'not' and are usually added to **verbs**. For example, to **'misspell'** means to 'not spell a word correctly'.

★ **'-Ly'** is a suffix that's added to **adverbs**. **'Quickly'**, **'happily'** and **'finally'** are all adverbs.

★ For example, we might not know the meaning of **mistrust**, but we know:

- The prefix **'mis'** means **'not'**

- And we know the meaning of trust

So we know that **mistrust** means to **'not trust'**. A synonym of mistrust is 'doubt'.

Let's take a look at a another example...

Choose the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

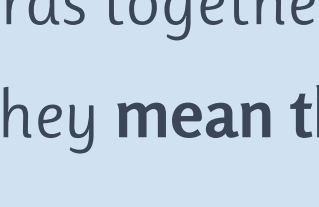
hurtful, amusement, waiting | boring, rollercoaster, mean

Let's start with the first word of the first group and compare it to the words in the second group. We might not know the meaning of **'hurtful'**, but we know it has the **suffix '-ful'**. This means it's an **adjective** that means 'full of something'.

The adjectives in the second group are **'boring'** and **'mean'**. If something is full of hurt, it means it's mean. Therefore **'hurtful'** and **'mean'** are **synonyms**! Let's double check this by using them both in the same sentence:

His comments were **hurtful**. ✓

His comments were **mean**. ✓



'Amusement' and **'rollercoaster'** are nouns that might be used together (you go on a rollercoaster at an amusement park). Sometimes you might link words together, but that doesn't mean they're synonyms. They are **only synonyms** if they **mean the same thing**.

Watch out!

Homonyms are words that **sound the same** and are **spelled the same** but have **different meanings**.



Spring is a homonym. It can be a noun referring to the season before summer, or a coiled piece of metal or a verb meaning to 'jump up suddenly'. Look out for homonyms when you're answering questions so you don't miss out on possible meanings.



Let's try one more!

Select the two words, one from each group, that are the closest in meaning.

cash, pound, money | pay, beat, rich

Let's start with the first word in the left-hand group: **'cash'**. We need to compare it to the words in the second group. None of these words have the same meaning as **'cash'**! You might be **'rich'** if you have lots of **'cash'** but these words are only linked. So we move onto the second word, **'pound'**.

Watch out! **'Pound'** is a **homonym**. It can be a **noun** that refers to a weight, or the British unit of money. It can also be a **verb** that means 'to hit'.

Let's hold all these meanings in our head, and look at the words in the second group: **'pay'** and **'beat'** are the only words in the same class!

'Beat' is also a **homonym**! It can be a **noun** that refers to the rhythm of a song, or a **verb** that means 'to defeat someone' or 'to hit' which is the same meaning as **'pound'**. We have found our synonym! Remember we can always double check this by using them in a sentence.

Watch out!

Sometimes, there will be synonyms in the **same group**, like 'cash' and 'money' in the previous example. But remember, the question asked us to find **one synonym from each group**, not two from the same group. Make sure you always **read the question**!

Tips!

★ Synonyms are always in the **same word class**! Look for verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs.

★ Synonyms always have the **same meaning**! Work out if the words are positive or negative, and how positive and negative they are.

★ **Double check** your answers by replacing one of the synonyms for the other in the same sentence: if they are synonyms, the sentence will mean the same thing regardless of which word is used.

★ Use **suffixes** and **prefixes** to help you identify word classes and meanings.

★ Watch out for **homonyms**!

★ Always **read the instructions** in the question carefully.