



Thesaurus Skills

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructor: _____

Course: _____

About This DLA

Important Note

All the activities (4) in the DLA must be completed in their entirety before meeting with a tutor and receiving credit. Where indicated, complete your work on this sheet. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, return this form to him or her with the tutor's signature included.

Learning Outcome

Through computer and other independent work, this activity will familiarize you with skills needed for the effective use of thesauruses, which will increase your vocabulary and help you choose correct words for different contexts.

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Thesaurus Basics

Pronounced: [THə'sôrəs]

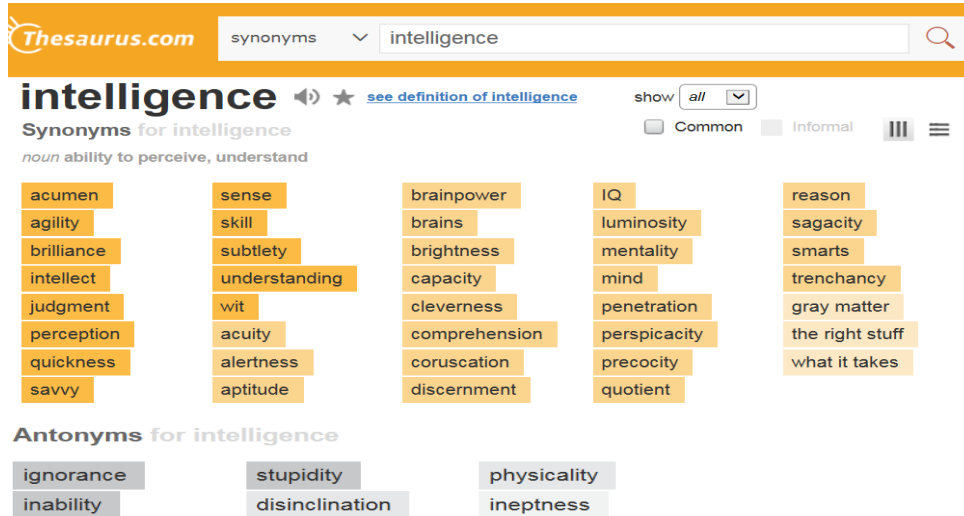
What is a thesaurus and how is it different from a dictionary?

- A thesaurus, like a dictionary, uses alphabetical order to list words. Although most thesauruses provide a brief definition of each word, they are different from dictionaries in that they are focused on synonyms (words that have the same meaning) and antonyms (words that have the opposite meaning).
- If you would like to avoid repeating words, or you would like to replace some of your words with more precise or more academic words, you can look up your word in a thesaurus and find a list of synonyms.
- If you want to find an antonym for a word you have used, you can look up your word in a thesaurus and find a list of antonyms.
- Thesauruses can help you expand your vocabulary since you are able to learn a variety of synonyms and antonyms for different contexts.
- **Important note: You should always keep in mind that synonyms are usually not used in the same contexts, and their connotations* may vary greatly. See the next section. →**

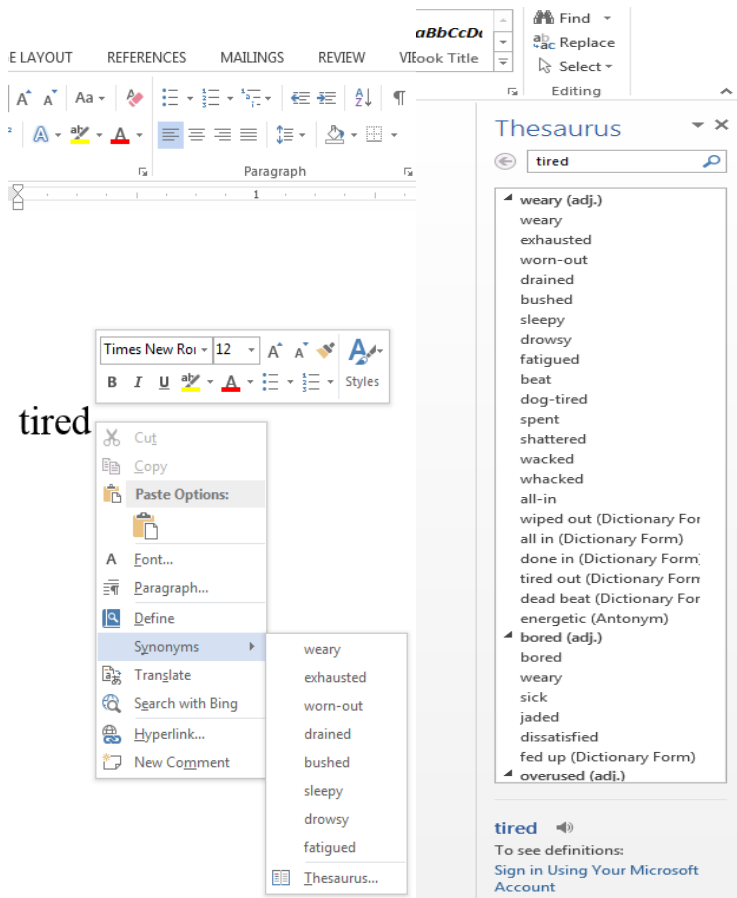
[Thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com/) at <http://www.thesaurus.com/> is a good online thesaurus.

[Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online](http://www.ldoceonline.com) at <http://www.ldoceonline.com> is a good online dictionary for English learners.

Here is a picture of an entry on Thesaurus.com:



Microsoft Word© also has a feature that helps you find synonyms and sometimes even antonyms. To find this feature, simply type a word, right click, select "Synonyms," and then you can see a list of similar words. To see more options, click on the "Thesaurus" field. A box with synonyms will appear to the right of your screen.





Choosing the Right Synonym

When you find synonyms in a thesaurus, the next step is to look at the definitions of each word so that you can understand the slight differences between each one. You can also look for examples of how the word is used in sentences in similar contexts to the one you are using it in. See how others have used it in sentences they wrote so that you understand whether the word generally carries either a negative, neutral, or positive connotation and whether or not it has the exact meaning you want to express. If you find that the word has the right definition but not the correct connotation you want, then search for a new synonym in your thesaurus and follow the above process again to find out if your new word has the correct meaning and connotation.

(*For more information on connotations of words, please refer to our "Connotation and Denotation" DLA.)

For example, which word would be the best synonym for *middle* in the following sentence?

→Do not eat the *middle* of an apple.

middle² /'mɪdl/ *noun*  **middle** 

the part of something that is farthest from all the edges of an area or object. You use **middle** especially about the part that is halfway between two sides:

- Gary swam toward the **middle of** the lake.
- She placed the flowers **in the middle of** the table. → You can also use **middle** to talk about the part of something that is halfway between the beginning and the end: *I fell asleep in the middle of the movie.*

▼ **center** 

center means the same as **middle**. You use **center** especially about the part that is exactly in the middle:

- Draw a line through the **center of** the circle.
- She placed the flowers **in the center of** the table.

▼ **heart** 

the middle of an area, town, or city:

- The hotel is located **in the heart of** Manhattan.

▼ **core** **AWL** 

the central part of the Earth, an object, such as a fruit:

- The Earth has a solid inner core which is 2,500 kilometers in diameter.

For the previous sentence, a better synonym for *middle* would be the word *core* because this word is related to the central part of a fruit. Make sure you look at the difference in meaning before choosing a synonym.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. Thesaurus Skills Review

What are the benefits of using a thesaurus?

What is similar and what is different between a thesaurus and a dictionary?

Similar:

Different:

2. Online Quiz

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/ThesaurusSkillsDLAQuiz> and take the [Thesaurus Skills DLA Quiz](#). You must score at least 80% on the exercises before seeing a tutor. After you complete the task, **PLEASE ASK A LAB TUTOR TO PRINT THE PAGE THAT HAS YOUR SCORE. DO NOT EXIT THE PROGRAM UNTIL THE TUTOR HAS PRINTED THIS PAGE (FREE OF CHARGE)**. If you have any other questions, do not hesitate to ask a lab tutor.

3. Thesaurus Word-Level Practice

Go to www.thesaurus.com for [Thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com) find and write down 3 synonyms and 1 antonym for the word **flexible**.

Synonyms: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Antonym 1. _____

Using a thesaurus from the Writing Center (located on the shelves by the couches in our tutoring area), find and write down 3 synonyms for the word **yell**.

Synonyms: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Using Microsoft Word©, find and write down 3 synonyms for the word **party**.

Synonyms: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Choose 4a or 4b Below

4a. Review Your Own Writing

Collect some of your written work. Find 3 words that you would like to replace with more precise words. Then, use one of the Writing Center's thesauruses or the following links to choose the appropriate replacement and write your sentences below.

[Thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com/) at <http://www.thesaurus.com/>

[Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online](http://www.ldoceonline.com/) at <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

1a. Original Sentence

1b. New Sentence

2a. Original Sentence

2b. New Sentence

3a. Original Sentence

3b. New Sentence

If you do not have sentences from your own writing to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (4b).

4b. Thesaurus Sentence-Level Practice

Using a thesaurus, find the best synonym for the **bolded** word in each sentence.

1. At summer camp, Laura felt **sad**, for she had been away from her family and friends for two weeks.

Best synonym:

Explain your choice:

2. I have a major **problem**; I can't decide whether I should keep my terrible job and have money or quit and be unemployed with no money.

Best synonym:

Explain your choice:

3. Grace has this silly **idea** that chewing gum will help her hair grow longer!

Best synonym:

Explain your choice:

4. Jim was so **shocked** when he heard the news that he stayed silent for a whole minute.

Best synonym:

Explain your choice:

5. Kim **jumped** across the big puddle of water so that she wouldn't get her new shoes dirty.

Best synonym:

Explain your choice:

6. We **immediately** knew that something was wrong when we saw the look on her face.

Best synonym:

Explain your choice:

7. Michael quickly **ran** out the door and down the street to catch the ice cream truck.

Best synonym:

Explain your choice:

5. Review the DLA

Go to <https://mtsac2.mywconline.com> and use the [Mt. SAC Writing Center Appointment System](#) to make a DLA appointment, or sign-up to see a tutor on the “**DLA Walk-in**” list in the Writing Center.. During your session with a tutor, explain your work to demonstrate your understanding of thesaurus skills. Refer to your own graded writing (or the completed activity) and explain to the tutor the strategies that you used to improve your diction (choice of words) in your writing.

Student’s Signature: _____

Date: _____

Tutor’s Signature _____

Date: _____

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center’s website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

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