Context Clues Chart

Below are the major types of context clues with an explanation and an example of each. Please note that the terminology for the types varies from source to source. Also remember that not all vocabulary is defined in context.

Type of Clue	Explanation	Example
Definition	The unknown word is equated to a more familiar word or phrase usually a form of *to be* is used.	*Entomology* **is** the study of insects.
Restatement or Synonym	The meaning is usually right after the unfamiliar word and often separated from the rest of the sentence with commas, dashes, or parenthesis; sometimes *or, that is* or *in other words* is used.	*Meat eaters, **that is** carnivores*, are at the top of the food chain. The *goslings* – those fuzzy baby geese – waddled after their mother. She enjoyed *biology* (the study of living things).
Contrast or Antonym	The unfamiliar word is shown to be different from or unlike another word and is often an opposite; *but, however, although, otherwise, unless, instead, on the other hand, while, never, no,* or *not* may be used to signal the contrast.	Mike's parrot was *loquacious* **but** Maria's said very little.
Comparison	The unfamiliar word is shown to be the same as or like another word; *too, like, as, similar to,* or *in the same way* may be used as signals.	My brother is *enthralled* by birds **similar to** the way that **I** am fascinated by insects.
Examples	The unfamiliar word is cleared-up by giving an example; *for instance, such as,* and *for example* may be used as signals.	Thew archeologist found different *amulets*, **such as** a rabbit's foor and bags of herbs, near the ancient altar.
List or Series	The unfamiliar word is included in a series of related words that gives an idea of the word's meaning.	North American predators include grizzly bears, *pumas*, wolves, and foxes.
Cause and Effect	The meaning of the unfamiliar word is signaled by and cause-and-effect relationship between ideas in the text.	Due to the *dearth* of termintes, the aadvark starved to death.
Description or Inference	The meaning of an unfamiliar word can be inferred from the description of a situation or experience	The monkey's *vociferous* chatter made me wish I had earplugs.