

## HOW TO...

# IMPROVE YOUR READING SKILLS: dealing with unknown vocabulary

Reading authentic English texts (where none of the language has been simplified) can be difficult, especially when there are a lot of unknown words or phrases.

Do you stop to check every new word in a dictionary or continue without really understanding the sentence? Building a good vocabulary range is important, but so is the ability to deal with unknown vocabulary as you read. Here are some tips to help you:



### 1. Know your 'parts of speech':

When teachers talk about 'parts of speech' they are referring to **VERBS, NOUNS, ADJECTIVES, PREPOSITIONS, ADVERBS** etc. that are used to create sentences in spoken and written language. Sometimes the same word can be a different part of speech depending on its use and position in the sentence. For example: the word **play** can be a **verb** – *I play tennis/guitar*, or a **noun** – *We saw a play at the theatre*. **Even if you don't know the meaning of a word you can often guess the 'part of speech' from other clues in the sentence by looking at the words before and after the unknown word.** Here's an example of a "word" in a sentence. What part of speech do you think it is? *'I'd like to buy a **dinglebrot** please.'* (The 'a' before the word indicates it will be a **noun**. Also, we usually buy 'a thing', also indicating a **noun** here).

### 2. Look for more 'clues' to the meaning of the unknown word:

**Of course, we need more 'context' if we are going to guess what a dinglebrot could be – or any other unknown word. We can usually find clues from information and other known words in the rest of text.**

- **The situation (where and when something is happening).**
- **The topic of the text in general: there will be other known words related to the topic, and probably synonyms for the unknown words.**

**These clues can help you 'work out' an approximate meaning of the unknown word. More importantly, don't 'get stuck' on the word, keep reading!**