



Reading Skill: Using a dictionary to find out the meaning of words

Learn together!

Some questions test your ability to understand the meaning of an unfamiliar word by using the information in a dictionary entry, such as the word's definition(s), its part(s) of speech and example sentences. There are four steps to answering such questions:

- 1 Read the question and locate the word in the text.
- 2 Read the sentence with the word to figure out its part of speech and usage in the text.
- 3 Read the nearby sentences to get some contextual clues.
- 4 Look at the definition in each option carefully. Also, compare the usage of the word in all the example sentences with the one in the text to find a match.

Give it a try!

e.g. In the job advertisement, what does the word '**command**' mean?

command *n.*

1. an order that one must obey
'We must obey the captain's commands without question.'
2. a great knowledge of a subject and an ability to use that knowledge
'This company hires Leon because of his good command of computer skills.'

command *v.*

3. to give someone an order
'The General commanded the army to fire.'
4. to deserve something good
'Many people think he commands an award for his incredible acting.'

- A. 1 B. 2 C. 3 D. 4

The word 'command' is used as a **noun** in the job advertisement. First read the nearby words (i.e. 'spoken Cantonese, English and Mandarin') and the subheading (i.e. 'Requirements') in the text. You can understand that the company wants candidates with good **language skills**. Then look at the options and pay attention to the example sentence of the second definition. You can understand that Leon is hired for his good **computer skills**. The word 'skill' means 'an **ability** to do a job well'. By comparing the usage of the word in the text with that in the example sentences, you can get the answer easily.