



## Ambiguity : Worksheet

Aristotle once observed the ambiguity of certain words. Depending on just how one word in a sentence is applied, the entire statement can take on a new meaning. Aristotle used the term “healthy” as an example. Usually “healthy” is applied to living creatures and describes them as being in good physical condition. But “healthy” can also be used to describe things that positively affect the health of such a creature. So exercise can be “healthy.” Even though exercise *itself* can’t be in good health, it lets *you* be in good health. Furthermore, something can be “healthy” in an entirely different way. A “healthy” weight neither possesses the quality of good health nor enables you to be in good health, but it instead signals your state of health.

**Your Turn:** Think of another word that, like ‘healthy,’ means different things in at least three different contexts. For each context, write a sentence demonstrating what that word means in that context. Then, for each sentence, think of a word that can replace the original word and more precisely convey the meaning of the sentence.

Chosen word:

Different meanings in three contexts:

Context 1.

Example sentence:

Word replacement:

Context 2.

Example sentence:

Word replacement:

Context 3.

Example sentence:

Word replacement:



**Pair Up:** After you've finished the above activity, pair up with a partner and do the following, in turns:

1. Share the word you've come up with and the different meanings it could have.
2. Share the word you've come up with to replace it in each context.
3. Discuss with your partner whether the replacement is more or less ambiguous than the original, come to an agreement, and defend the answer in a short explanation.
4. Share with the class and allow other students to agree or disagree, explaining their reasoning for either response.