

DEFINITIONS

PART 1

STRUCTURE OF DEFINITIONS

1. Match the words given below with these definitions:

1. A/anis somebody who has stopped growing except around the waist.
2. A/anis somebody you know well enough to borrow money from, but not well enough to lend money to.
3. A/anis a set of holes tied together with a string.
4. A/anis somebody whose career is in ruins.
5. A/anis something one generation buys, the next generation gets rid of, and the following generation buys again.
6. A piece ofis something everybody gives but few take.
7. A/anis a mechanical device for waking up people who do not have children.
8. A/anis somebody who thinks twice before saying nothing.
9.is the only thing money cannot buy.

antique - diplomat - net - archaeologist - alarm clock - acquaintance - adult - poverty
- advice

What is a good definition?

$$T = G + (d_a + d_b + d_c + \dots d_n)$$

where T equals the thing to be defined

= equals be

G equals a general class word

$d_a, d_b,$ etc. are the properties which distinguish T from the other members of the general class

Example:

A catalyst (T) is a substance (G) which alters the rate at which a chemical reaction occurs (d_a), but is itself unchanged at the end of the reaction (d_b).

i.e., $T = G + d_a + d_b.$

EXERCISES

I. The definitions below have been mixed up. Write them correctly:

An X	is a/an	class word	wh-word
A machine	device	which		converts one form of energy into another.
A dynamo earth.	device	which		attracts bodies towards the centre of the
A triangle	machine	which		measures temperature.
Gravity	figure	which		generates electricity.
A thermometer	device	which		has three sides.
An engine	force	which		enables us to use forces more conveniently.

A device can be broken down into these general class words:

1. An apparatus is a number of devices which are put together for a particular purpose as in physics or chemistry experiments.
2. An instrument is a device which is used in doing something, often of a sensitive nature. Typical examples are a microscope and an ammeter.
3. A machine is a mechanical device which is used to provide power.
4. A tool is a simple device, often without any moving parts. Examples are a hammer and a spanner.
5. Instrumentation is a group or collection of instruments, usually ones that are part of the same machine.
6. Equipment comprises the tools, machines, or other things necessary for a particular job or activity.

II. Choose the correct general class words:

1. A screwdriver is a (an) tool/apparatus which tightens or loosens screws.
2. A drill is an instrument/apparatus which bores holes.
3. A condenser is a (an) equipment/tool which converts vapour into liquid.
4. An ammeter is a (an) machine/instrument which measures electrical current.
5. A fan is an instrument/apparatus which circulates air.
6. A generator is a (an) apparatus/machine which produces electricity.

III. Change the following descriptive statements into definitions. Use these class words:
a device, an instrument, a piece of furniture, a form of energy.

1. A table has a flat horizontal surface supported by legs, and is used to sit at for meals, for working, etc.
2. A watch is used for measuring and indicating time.
3. A calculator can carry out number operations, but usually has no memory.
4. A telegraph receives or sends messages along wire by means of electric signals.
5. Electricity is used for heating and lighting and to provide power for machines in houses and factories.

PART 2

TYPES OF DEFINITIONS

T - the word to be defined

G – general class word

DF – defining feature (distinguishing the T from the others of the same class; it states its use, function, size and shape, material, composition, structure, properties, etc.)

A/an T	is is defined as may be defined as	a/an G	DF
A/an T	is a name for is a name applied to	a/an G	DF
The name T term T	denotes refers to may be applied to	a/an G	DF
By a/an T	is meant is understood	a/an G	DF
A/an G	DF	is called may be called	a/an T

Examples:

1. A loudspeaker is a device used for converting variations of electric energy into corresponding variations of acoustic energy, i.e. sound.
2. E-mail is a name applied to a software application which allows people to communicate via the Internet.
3. The term ultrasonics (or supersonics) refers to sound vibrations whose frequencies are beyond auditory limit.
4. By noise is understood sound consisting of a mixture of air-borne vibrations which is completely irregular with regard to sound intensity, frequency, and phase.
5. The force with which the earth attracts an object, i.e., the gravitational force exerted upon it, is called weight.

I. Reformulate the following definitions:

1. A switch is a general name for a device used for effecting the completion and interruption of an electric circuit.
2. "Dry ice" is a name sometimes applied to compressed carbon dioxide, i.e., solid carbon dioxide with a temperature of -79°C .
3. The name "radar" denotes a method of scanning the surrounding space by means of high frequency radio waves, which are sent out from a powerful transmitter and are reflected by any object which they encounter. The name has been derived from the initial letters of the phrase "radio detecting and ranging".
4. Fiction refers to books or stories about people and events invented by the author, rather than books about real events and things.
5. The science of determining the position and course of ships and aircraft is called navigation.

II. Form definitions of different kinds:

1. Biology studies living things.
2. Physics is concerned with the study of matter and natural forces, such as light, heat, movement, etc.
3. A watch is used for measuring and indicating time.
4. A calculator can carry out number operations, but usually has no memory.
5. A telegraph receives or sends messages along wire by means of electric signals.
6. A telephone receives or sends sound, especially speech over long distances by electric means.
7. A computer can store and recall information and make calculations at very high speed.
8. Ecology is concerned with the study of the pattern of relationships of plants, animals, and people to their surroundings.
9. A bed consists of a flat rectangular surface about 2 metres long with a leg at each corner. It is used for sleeping.
10. The function of a thermometer is to measure temperature.
11. The function of an air-conditioning system is to keep the temperature and humidity of the air in rooms at values which provide a sense of comfort for human beings.
12. The function of a seismograph is to record the strength of earthquakes and the distance away from the epicentre.

Expressing distinctive features		
1. Purpose and function	A T is a G (which is)	used for doing used to do
	A T is a G	<i>prepositional phrase</i> (examples: <i>A wrench is a metal tool <u>for holding and turning objects.</u></i> <i>Physiology is the scientific study <u>of the normal function of living things.</u></i>
2. Material	A T is a G (which is)	made from/of produced from obtained from prepared in the laboratory
3. composition and structure	A T is a G (which is)	composed of
	A T is a G	consisting of containing
4. General appearance	G which is G which is	
	A T is a G	having

TASK

Work in pairs. Think of three ordinary object you use or see every day. For each of them write two kinds of definition (starting with the name of the object / starting with a class word). Test them on another student by blanking out the "thing defined" word and see whether he or she knows what you have defined.

Example: A writing instrument which consists of a long thin piece of wood with a piece of graphite in the middle is called (a pencil)

ad 2. Material

MADE OF X MADE FROM / OUT OF

Observe:

This table is made of wood. Most of these buildings are made of bricks.	<i>We are talking about material.</i>
Petrol is made from oil. Paper is made from /out of wood.	<i>We are talking about a process.</i>

Fill in the correct preposition:

1) Most plastics are made _____ oil. 2) All of these decorations are made _____ paper. 3) This shirt is made _____ cotton. 4) Glass fibre is a cloth made _____ short thin threads of glass. 5) Glassware is objects made _____ glass, for example bowls, drinking containers, and ornaments. 6) Porridge is a thick, sticky food made _____ oats cooked in water or milk and eaten hot, especially

for breakfast. 7) Most wind instruments are made _____ brass. 8) He made a chair _____ bits of wood.

ad 3. General appearance

AS x LIKE

AS		Examples
1. talking about the job, function, status, age, role or use of a person or thing <i>(in Czech: jakožto)</i>	+ nouns/ pronouns ing-forms	<i>Over the summer she worked as a waitress. He went to the party dressed as a big strawberry. We all work together as a team.</i>
2. used in comparisons asas	adjective/adverb	<i>He is as good at mathematics as his classmates.</i>
3. used in expressions not so... as* the same (...) as		<i>He wouldn't go so far as that. He is the same age as me.</i>
4. talking about similarity <i>(in Czech: stejně jako)</i>	+ a clause with a verb prepositional expression	<i>His colleagues spoke and thought <u>as he did</u>. He admired her, as he admired her mother. In France, as in Italy, they speak a Romance language.</i>

LIKE		Examples
1. talking about similarity	+ nouns/ pronouns ing-forms	<i>I am very like my father. The garden looked like a jungle. Like other people, he values his privacy. His colleagues spoke and thought <u>like him</u>.*</i>

* Compare the sentences (the meaning is the same).

* "Not as... as" is also considered correct today.

Observe:

He worked like a slave. He worked as a slave.	= very hard indeed = he was a slave
He spoke like the President of the United States. He spoke as the President of the United States.	= in a similar manner = he was the president

Fill in **as** or **like**, as appropriate:

- 1) We used an empty plastic shopping bag _____ a wastepaper basket.
- 2) _____ a historian, I cannot agree with this interpretation.
- 3) I saw a dog _____ ours on the beach.
- 4) He's _____ a little baby.
- 5) The sudden change came _____ a shock to the community.
- 6) She was known to her neighbours _____ a kind old lady.
- 7) It was a small pocket flashlight shaped _____ a fountain pen.
- 8) I never expected to earn my living _____ an artist.
- 9) My watch said four o'clock but it looked _____ early evening.
- 10) This fruit tastes _____ a mango.
- 11) It was a story she had heard many times _____ a girl.

OTHER MEANINGS OF "AS" (conjunction)

Observe:

As there was nothing to do, he went home.	as = because
He counted them as they arrive.	as = when, while

Decide which meaning has **as** in the following sentences:

- 1) I saw him as he was getting off the bus.
- 2) He saw her, as they were both getting off the bus at the same time.
- 3) She stayed at home as she was not feeling well.
- 4) As I've never met the man, I can't tell you what he looks like.
- 5) As he stood there he saw two men enter the shop.
- 6) As this book is written in simple English, it is suitable for beginners.
- 7) As he was posting the letter, he suddenly realized that he hadn't put a stamp on the envelope.
- 8) As we were tired after the long walk, we went to bed early.

PART 3

VARIATIONS IN DEFINITIONS

Expanded definition

- a definition can be expanded by giving an example of the use of the object or idea being defined
- the relationship between the definition and its use can be made explicit by using an appropriate linking expression
- for instance, the use which is an effect of the definition, can be marked by linking expressions **therefore, consequently, as a result** etc.

Examples:

Aluminium is a metal which is light in weight. Consequently, it is used in the manufacture of aircraft.

..... *Therefore, it is used...*

..... *As a result, one of its main uses is....*

EXERCISES

1. Use the pattern described above to expand the following definitions:

- 1) Glass is a substance which has the property of being transparent.
- 2) Stainless steel is an alloy which is resistant to corrosion.
- 3) Sugar is a substance, often in the form of white or brown crystals, which has the property of being sweet.
- 4) Cotton is a soft natural fibre with a good level of absorbency and good insulating properties.

Reduced definitions

Observe:

1. A thermometer is an instrument **which is used for** measuring temperature.
2. A thermometer is an instrument **used for** measuring temperature.
3. A thermometer is an instrument **for** measuring temperature.

1. A telescope is an optical instrument **which consists of** a combination of lenses and mirrors which make distant objects appear closer.
2. A telescope is an optical instrument **consisting of** a combination of lenses and mirrors which make distant objects appear closer.

Use this pattern to reduce the following definition:

- 1) A watch is an instrument which is used for measuring and indicating time.
- 2) A person who studies living things is called a biologist.
- 3) A vegetable is a plant which is eaten either raw or cooked.
- 4) Electricity is a form of energy used for heating and lighting.