

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rooting Out the Meaning

If you didn't know the meaning of the word *herpetologist* before reading "Killer Croc," you probably used context clues to figure out that a herpetologist is someone who studies reptiles. There is another way you could have guessed the meaning of that word: You could have used its *root*.

A root word is a word that you can make new words from by adding beginnings (prefixes) and endings (suffixes).

Many root words are easy to spot. For example, look at the following group of words:

action, acting, acted, inaction

The root word of this group is "act." Notice that all of the words' meanings are related to "act."

Some root words are harder to spot. Many roots used in English words come from Greek and Latin, so their meanings aren't familiar. But with a little practice, you can learn to spot all kinds of root words *and* figure out their meanings. Then you can use those roots to help figure out the meanings of yet more words! The following exercises will show you how.

See if you can find the root in each group of words and write it on the line provided.

children
childlike
childish
childhood

mistake
overtaking
mistaken
partake

delight
lightening
enlighten

Root: _____

Root: _____

Root: _____

incorrect
correctly
correctly

usable
useless
misuse
user

Root: _____

Root: _____

Continued ▶▶

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rooting Out the Meaning page 2

Now let's take another look at the word *herpetologist*. Its suffix, or ending, is “ologist,” meaning someone who studies. What other words can you think of that end with “ologist”? Write three of them in the boxes below. (Don't worry about the lines under them yet.) We did one as an example.

herpetologist

Root: herpe

Root: _____

Root: _____

Root: _____

Means: reptiles

Means: _____

Means: _____

Means: _____

Now fill in the roots and guess what you think their meanings are. It's simple. The root is the part of the word that is not the suffix (“ologist”). The root's meaning, in this case, is the thing that the person studies. So for *herpetologist*, the root was “herpe” and its meaning is reptiles, because a herpetologist is a person who studies reptiles. Don't worry if you don't get the roots or meanings exactly right—just see what you can guess based on your knowledge.

Finally, take a look at the roots and their meanings listed below. For each one, write down as many words as you can think of that contain that root. We started the first one for you.

rupt: break

interrupt
rupture

spect: look

aud: hear

port: carry

dent: tooth

