

# Authentic Learning

*Denotation vs. Connotation in Media Headlines*



## Links

[Blog Post](#)

[YouTube Video Lesson](#)

[Vimeo Video Lesson](#)

[Google Slides](#)



## Denotation vs. Connotation in Media Headlines

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Headlines often use

to grab attention or shape how you feel.

Here are four ways to tell denotation and connotation apart.

### Look up the word's definition.

*That's the \_\_\_\_\_.*

### Think about how the word makes you feel.

*That's the \_\_\_\_\_.*

Ask: Does the word sound positive, negative, or neutral?

### Ask: Why did the writer choose this word?

*It might be to influence your opinion.*

## Connotation in Media

For each pair below, underline the word that changes the tone. Then, write your own version of the sentence using a word with a different connotation.

### Neutral vs. Negative

City Spends Money on New Park

vs.

City Wastes Money on New Park

### Example Positive Connotation

**City invests in new park to improve community spaces.**

### Positive vs. Neutral

Students Celebrate Earth Day

vs.

Students Participate in Earth Day

### Example Negative Connotation

**Students are required to attend Earth Day activities.**

### Strong vs. Soft

Leader Admits Mistake

vs.

Leader Clarifies Statement

### Example Neutral Connotation

**Leader acknowledges oversight in previous remarks.**

Read each sentence and explain how the bold word changes the tone or message.

Company **Invests** in New Jobs

\_\_\_\_\_

Company **Cuts** Jobs

\_\_\_\_\_

Company **Adjusts** Jobs

\_\_\_\_\_

Circle the word with the strongest connotation. Then explain what feeling or idea it adds.

School **Criticizes** New Dress Code Policy

School **Questions** New Dress Code Policy

School **Slams** New Dress Code Policy

**Your response:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mayor **Defends** Budget Plan

Mayor **Explains** Budget Plan

Mayor **Promotes** Budget Plan

**Your response:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Challenge Task: Flip the Tone

### Original:

Government Delays Relief Funding

Positive : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Negative: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Neutral: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** A school introduces a new homework policy.

Positive : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Negative: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Neutral: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Denotation vs. Connotation in Media Headlines

Words have two kinds of meaning.

*Denotation* is the \_\_\_\_\_ definition.

*Connotation* is the \_\_\_\_\_ or idea the word gives you.

## Quick Reference

Example: "cheap"

→ Denotation: \_\_\_\_\_

→ Connotation: \_\_\_\_\_

Headlines often use connotation to grab attention or shape how you feel.

"Here are four ways to tell denotation and connotation apart."

## Look up the word's definition.

*That's the* \_\_\_\_\_.

## Think about how the word makes you feel.

*That's the* \_\_\_\_\_.

Ask: Does the word sound positive, negative, or neutral?

## Ask: Why did the writer choose this word?

*It might be to influence your opinion.*

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Company **Cuts** Jobs

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Circle the word with the strongest connotation. Then explain what feeling or idea it adds.

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School **Slams** New Dress Code Policy

**Your response:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mayor **Defends** Budget Plan

Mayor **Explains** Budget Plan

Mayor **Promotes** Budget Plan

**Your response:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Challenge Task: Flip the Tone

## Original:

Government Delays Relief Funding

Positive : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Negative: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Neutral: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** A school introduces a new homework policy.

Positive : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Negative: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Neutral: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Denotation vs. Connotation in Media Headlines

Words have two kinds of meaning.

*Denotation* is the dictionary definition.

*Connotation* is the feeling or idea the word gives you.

Quick Reference Example: "cheap"

→ Denotation: low cost

→ Connotation: low quality (negative)

Headlines often use connotation to grab attention or shape how you feel.

Here are four ways to tell denotation and connotation apart.

### Look up the word's definition.

*That's the denotation.*

### Think about how the word makes you feel.

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Ask: Does the word sound positive, negative, or neutral?

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Leader Clarifies Statement

### Example Neutral Connotation

Leader acknowledges oversight in previous remarks.

Read each sentence and explain how the bold word changes the tone or message.

Company **Invests** in New Jobs

positive, forward-thinking action

Company **Cuts** Jobs

negative connotation

Company **Adjusts** Jobs

neutral

School **Criticizes** New Dress Code Policy

School **Questions** New Dress Code Policy

School **Slams** New Dress Code Policy

**Your response:** Slams adds a harsh, emotional tone. It suggests outrage or strong disapproval, making the school seem aggressive or combative.

Mayor **Defends** Budget Plan

Mayor **Explains** Budget Plan

Mayor **Promotes** Budget Plan

**Your response:** Defends implies the plan is under attack or controversial. It adds tension and suggests the mayor is trying to protect or justify something.

## Challenge Task Flip the Tone

### Original:

Government Delays Relief Funding

### Positive version:

Government Reschedules Relief Funding to Ensure Proper Distribution

### Negative version:

Government Stalls Relief Funding Despite Urgent Need

### Neutral version:

Government Postpones Relief Funding until Next Quarter

**Topic:** A school introduces a new homework policy.

### Positive:

School Launches Innovative Homework Policy to Support Student Success

### Negative:

School Imposes Strict Homework Rules that Increase Student Stress

### Neutral:

School Announces Changes to its Homework Policy



## Headline Comparison

Read each pair of headlines. Notice how the **denotation** (dictionary meaning) stays mostly the same, but the **connotation** (emotional “flavor”) changes.

### Extension Option:

Have students rewrite one “neutral” headline into two new versions:

Positive spin

Negative spin

(Example: “Cafeteria Introduces New Menu” → “Healthy Meals Delight Students” vs. “Bland Choices Disappoint Kids”)

## Play the “Ad Agency” Game Extension









Check out my blog post titled

### [RAFT Writing Strategy](#)

for some additional ideas for using advertising to teach language arts skills. This post contains a video lesson on using alliteration in advertising that pairs well this Authentic Learning post.

# Headline Comparison

Read each pair of headlines. Notice how the **denotation** (dictionary meaning) stays mostly the same, but the **connotation** (emotional “flavor”) changes.

<p><b>Neighborhood Dog Roams the Street</b>  <b>Dangerous Stray Threatens Community</b></p>	<p><b>Students Express Concerns About School Lunches</b>  <b>Kids Revolt Against Cafeteria Food</b></p>
<p><b>Local Team Loses Game by One Point</b>  <b>Home Team Chokes in Final Seconds</b></p>	<p><b>Mayor Plans to Adjust City Budget</b>  <b>Mayor Slashes Community Funding</b></p>
<p><b>New Tech Company Opens in Town</b>  <b>Startup Invades Small Community</b></p>	<p><b>Teacher Assigns 10 Pages of Reading</b>  <b>Students Buried Under Mountains of Homework</b></p>
<p><b>Concert Draws Large Crowd</b>  <b>Chaos Erupts as Mob Floods Stadium</b></p>	<p><b>School Implements Dress Code Policy</b>  <b>Administration Cracks Down on Student Freedom</b></p>

# Book Trailer Planner

**Hook Your Audience**

What's one exciting, mysterious, or emotional moment you can hint at without spoiling the story?  
What question could you ask that makes viewers curious?

**Introduce the Book**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Author: \_\_\_\_\_  
Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

**Summarize (Without Spoilers!)**

Who is the main character?  
What problem or challenge do they face?  
What's at stake if they fail?  
How can you sum this up in 2-3 sentences?

**Highlight Themes & Big Ideas**

What important message or theme should readers take away?  
Which character traits or relationships stand out the most?

**Persuade Your Audience!**

Why should someone pick up this book instead of another?  
Which persuasive words/phrases will you use to make it sound exciting?  
Will you aim for suspense, humor, inspiration, or another tone?

**Plan the Visuals**

What images, colors, or symbols represent the story?  
Any quotes from the book you want to flash on screen?  
Music or sound effects idea: \_\_\_\_\_

**Wrap It Up**

What call-to-action will you end with? ("Read it today!" "Discover the truth inside...")  
Trailer length goal: \_\_\_\_\_ (usually 30-60 seconds)

# Ad Campaign Planning Organizer

## 1. Product Basics

What everyday object are you advertising?

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What problem does this object solve?

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Who is your target audience (kids, teens, teachers, parents, athletes, etc.)?

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## 2. Slogan Brainstorm

Write 3 short slogan ideas (hint: keep it catchy, memorable, and under 10 words).

Circle your best one.

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## 3. Persuasive Techniques

Which persuasive appeals will you use? (Check all that apply)

- Bandwagon (“Everyone is using it...”)
  - Testimonial (celebrity, expert, or peer endorsement)
  - Emotional appeal (happiness, fear, pride, nostalgia, humor)
  - Repetition (words, images, or sounds)
  - Rhetorical question
  - Statistics or facts
- Draft one example line for your ad using your chosen technique(s):

## 4. Figurative Language & Tone

Write one simile or metaphor comparing your object to something powerful, exciting, or useful.

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What tone will you use in your ad? (funny, serious, inspiring, bold, dramatic, etc.).

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Circle a few strong descriptive words that fit your tone.

## 7. Call-to-Action

How will you end your ad? (Examples: “Get yours today!” “Don’t miss out!” “Upgrade your life with...”)

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Final version of your call-to-action:

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## 6. Visuals

What images, colors, or symbols will make your ad stand out?

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Where will your slogan appear?

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Will you add a mascot, logo, or character?

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## 5. Ad Copy (Persuasive Writing)

In 3–4 sentences, write the “voiceover” or main text for your ad:

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# Vacation Planner



# The Vacation Planner

Description:

You are to plan a week long vacation for four people to either

Disney World in Orlando, Florida

Williamsburg, Virginia

Atlanta, Georgia

Washington, D. C.

You will be given \$3000.00 for travel expenses, food, hotels, entertainment, souvenirs, etc. The tasks below will help you plan the trip. Have fun!!!

Tasks

1. Go to this [link](#) and run off worksheets and an expense log to help you keep track of your expenses.
2. Choose one of the places listed below for your vacation. Remember the longer your drive the less time you will have visiting your destination.

## **Washington, D.C.**

[Washingtonian](#)

[10 Things to Do with Kid in Washington, D.C.](#)

## **Orlando, Florida**

[Disney World](#)

[Family Vacation](#)

## **Atlanta, Georgia**

[7 Things To Do In Atlanta With Kids](#)

[Top 10 things for Families to Do in Atlanta](#)

## **Williamsburg, Virginia**

3. Plan your route.

4. Determine the amount of money you will need to put aside for gasoline. Note: You must determine the type of car you will be driving first. <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/>

5. Hotel

6. Entertainment -- Tickets

# Worksheet (Gas to and from Vacation Spot)

1. I am planning a vacation to \_\_\_\_\_ .

2. I will stay at the \_\_\_\_\_ hotel.

The address of my hotel is

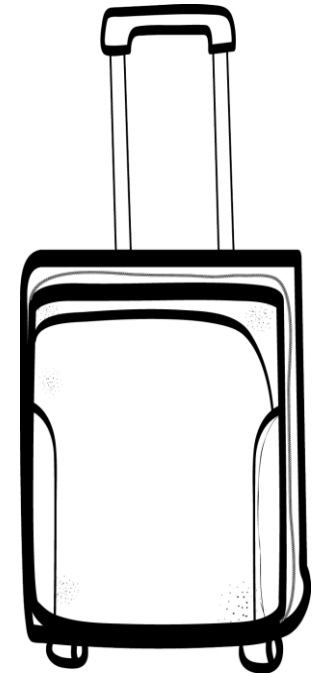
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Go to the link called **Driving Directions**. Find out how many miles from your home to your motel. I will be traveling \_\_\_\_\_ miles.

4. What size car do you have? Go to the link called **Trip Expenses**. After you get to this page click on the link called **Cost of Driving**. My car gets \_\_\_\_\_ miles to a gallon of gas.

5. To determine the amount of money you will need to get to your motel follow the steps below.

# of miles traveled	
divided by	÷
# of miles your car can travel on one gallon of gas	
multiplied by	X
the cost of one gallon of gas	



6. Write this amount on both Sundays on your Expense Log.

# Worksheet (Gas During the Week)

The address of my hotel is

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Go to the link called **Driving Directions**. Find out how many miles from your hotel to each event you will be visiting.

Note: The **Planner** has the addresses for many places you will be visiting.

Total # of Miles to Entertainment Spot \_\_\_\_\_

Multiply the total by two for your return trip.                      X 2

I will be traveling \_\_\_\_\_ miles.

What size car do you have? Go to the link called **Trip Expenses**. After you get to this page click on the link called **Cost of Driving**. My car gets \_\_\_\_\_ miles to a gallon of gas.

To determine the amount of money you will need to get to your motel follow the steps below.  
the cost of one gallon of gas

# of miles traveled	
divided by	÷
# of miles your car can travel on one gallon of gas	
multiplied by	X
the cost of one gallon of gas	

Write this amount on your Expense Log.

# Worksheet (Gas During the Week)

	# of Miles to Place Visited from Hotel	# of Miles to Place Visited from Hotel
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Total		

# Entertainment Expenses

Plan your entertainment. Where are you going each day?

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Where						
Cost	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Where						
Cost	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

# Meals

Use the chart below to estimate the cost of meals. Don't forget there are four of you. You each buy a T-shirt or a sweat shirt on this trip.

<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Supper</b>
\$8.00	\$10.00	\$15.00

<b>T-shirts</b>	<b>Sweat shirts</b>
\$20.00	\$30.00

How much do you have to spend on souvenirs?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Dining at Disney-Learning to Read a Chart

Go to the following link (Dining Finder):

<http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/wdw/dining/diningFinder?id=DiningFinderPage>

This link tells you all about the restaurants in all of the Disney Attractions. We will only be using the first of five pages! Answer the following questions by searching this page. Remember, using your cut and paste features (when possible) will save you time.

According to this chart, what does this symbol mean?: \$\$\$

What does this symbol mean?: \$\$\$\$

If you have \$25 per person to spend, can you afford to eat at Artist's Point?  
Why or why not?

“Cuisine” means a style or kind of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(hint: dictionary.com is a good source)

Which restaurant offers German cuisine?

“Character Dining” means you get to eat your meal with a Disney Character.  
If you wanted to do this, list two restaurants where you could do this.

What's the name of the restaurant at Disney's Blizzard Beach?

How many of the restaurants on this page would be good if you are in a hurry?

Just under the Pricing Key at the top of the page is a field to “Filter This List By.” That means that instead of seeing All Resorts on the page, you can choose one park to search instead. Change the “All Resorts” box to Typhoon Lagoon and click “Go.” How many restaurants are at Typhoon Lagoon?

## Dining at Disney-Learning to Read a Chart Answer Key

Go to the following link (Dining Finder):

<http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/wdw/dining/diningFinder?id=DiningFinderPage>

This link tells you all about the restaurants in all of the Disney Attractions. We will only be using the first of five pages! Answer the following questions by searching this page. Remember, using your cut and paste features (when possible) will save you time.

According to this chart, what does this symbol mean?: \$\$\$

**Meals cost \$15-\$25**

What does this symbol mean?: \$\$\$\$

**Meals cost over \$76 per person**

If you have \$25 per person to spend, can you afford to eat at Artist's Point?

Why or why not?

**Not. Meals there are \$26-\$75 per person**

"Cuisine" means a style or kind of \_\_\_\_\_.

(hint: dictionary.com is a good source)

**A style of cooking**

Which restaurant offers German cuisine? **Biergarten Restaurant**

"Character Dining" means you get to eat your meal with a Disney Character.

If you wanted to do this, list two restaurants where you could do this.

**1900 Park Fare, Akurshus,**

What's the name of the restaurant at Disney's Blizzard Beach?

**Avalunch**

How many of the restaurants on this page would be good if you are in a hurry?

**Three**

Just under the Pricing Key at the top of the page is a field to "Filter This List By." That means that instead of seeing All Resorts on the page, you can choose one park to search instead. Change the "All Resorts" box to Typhoon Lagoon and click "Go." How many restaurants are at Typhoon Lagoon? **Two**

# Situation Cards

Bad News-Your car suddenly died in the middle of traffic!  
Here's what happened:

**\*If you had AAA Insurance**, you made a call and they came and towed your car to a garage for no charge. The garage learned that it was only a minor problem. For \$50, you were soon on your way. (Subtract \$50 from your funds and attach your AAA card to this note.)

**\*If you did not have AAA**, you had to pay to have your car towed. That cost \$75. At least the problem turned out to be minor. After another \$50 to the garage, you are on your way. (Subtract the TOTAL AMOUNT from your funds.)



Bad/Good News: While stopped at a gas station to pick snack and use the restroom, your wallet is stolen. You had \$200.00 in it! The good news is, you had Travelers Checks, so all you have to do is call the number on the original paperwork, and the bank will replace the checks! Aren't you glad you planned for emergencies like this?

Bad News! Your dad got a speeding ticket! Subtract \$100 from your funds.



Great News! You stopped to visit old family friends, and they not only invited you for dinner, but they insisted that you spend the night! This means that you saved money on dinner and hotels for one day! Add \$30 and the price of one night hotel stay to your available funds. (And don't forget to write a thank-you note when you get back home!)

Bad news! You left your swimsuit at the hotel you stayed in two days ago! You had to run to Target and buy another one. Subtract \$20 from your funds.



It's your lucky day! On your way out of the restaurant, you looked down and found \$20! Add this to your funds.

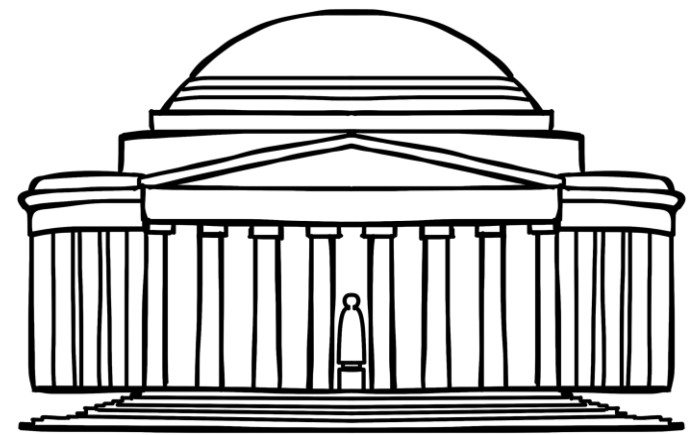


# Expense Log

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
gasoline	\$	Get your total from 'Gas During the Week' Worksheet.						\$
motels	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	NA
tickets	NA	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	NA
meals	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
T-shirts/ sweat shirts	NA	NA	NA	\$	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total for the Day	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

# Washington, D.C. Planner

Attraction	Address
National Zoo	3001 Connecticut Avenue Northwest, Washington, DC
DC Monuments Washington Monument Lincoln Memorial Jefferson Memorial	
National Museum of Natural History	10th St NW Washington, DC 20004
National Air & Space Museum	Independence Avenue Southwest & 6th St SW Washington, DC 20024
Discovery Theater – Ripley Center	1100 Jefferson Drive, SW Washington, DC 20024
Smithsonian National Museum of American History	14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C.
Bureau of Engraving and Printing U.S. Department of the Treasury	14th and C Streets, S.W. Washington, DC 20228
Glen Echo Park	Bethesda, Maryland
Six Flags America	13710 Central Avenue Bowie/ Mitchellville, MD 20721
Imagination Stage	4908 Auburn Avenue Bethesda, MD 20814-2629
Wolf Trap Farm Park	1645 Trap Road Vienna, Virginia 2218
Reston Zoo	1228 Hunter Mill Road Vienna, VA 22182-1300
Smithsonian National Postal Museum	2 Massachusetts Avenue Northeast Washington, DC 20002



# Disney Planner

## Attraction

## Address

Disney World

Orlando, Florida

Universal Studios

6000 Universal Boulevard

Sea World

7007 Sea World Drive

Wet n Wild

International Drive #6200

Ripley's Believe It Or Not

International Drive #8201

Holy Land Experience

4655 Vineland Road

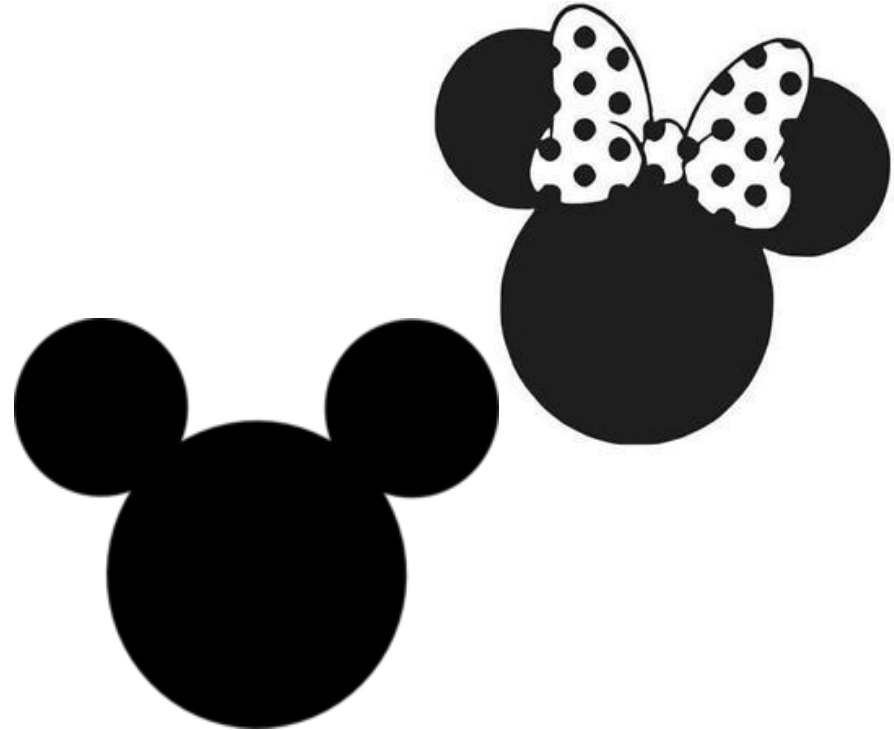
Discovery Cove

6000 Discovery Cove Way

Gatorland

14501 S Orange Blossom Trail

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# Atlanta Planner

## Attraction

## Address

Turner Stadium (Braves)

Capitol Ave. Atlanta, GA 30305

Stone Mountain

Stone Mountain, GA 30086

Zoo Atlanta

800 Cherokee Avenue S.E. Atlanta GA 30315

Six Flags Over Georgia

Interstate 20

White Water and American Adventures

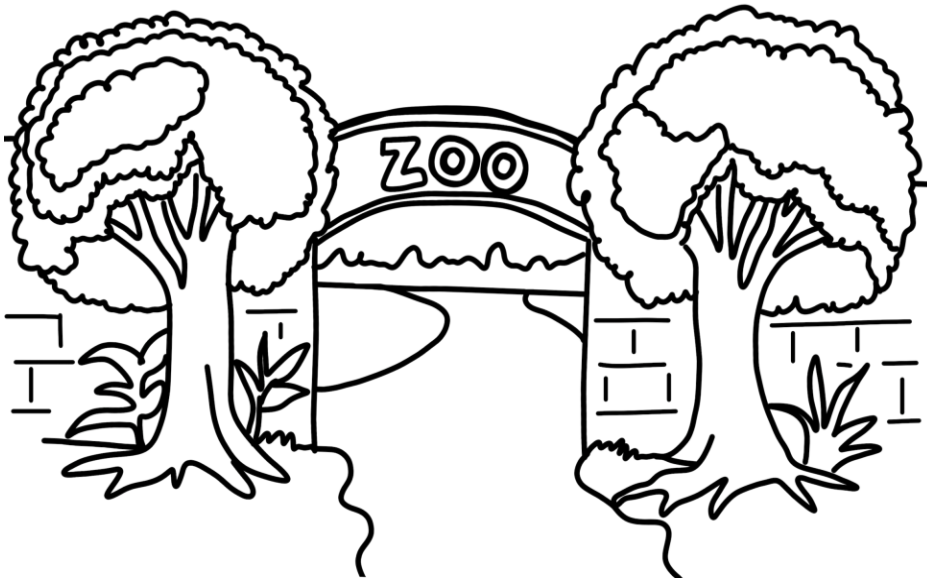
Cobb Parkway North, Marietta 30062-3503

Fox Theatre

660 Peachtree Street NE Atlanta, GA

Georgia Dome (Falcons)

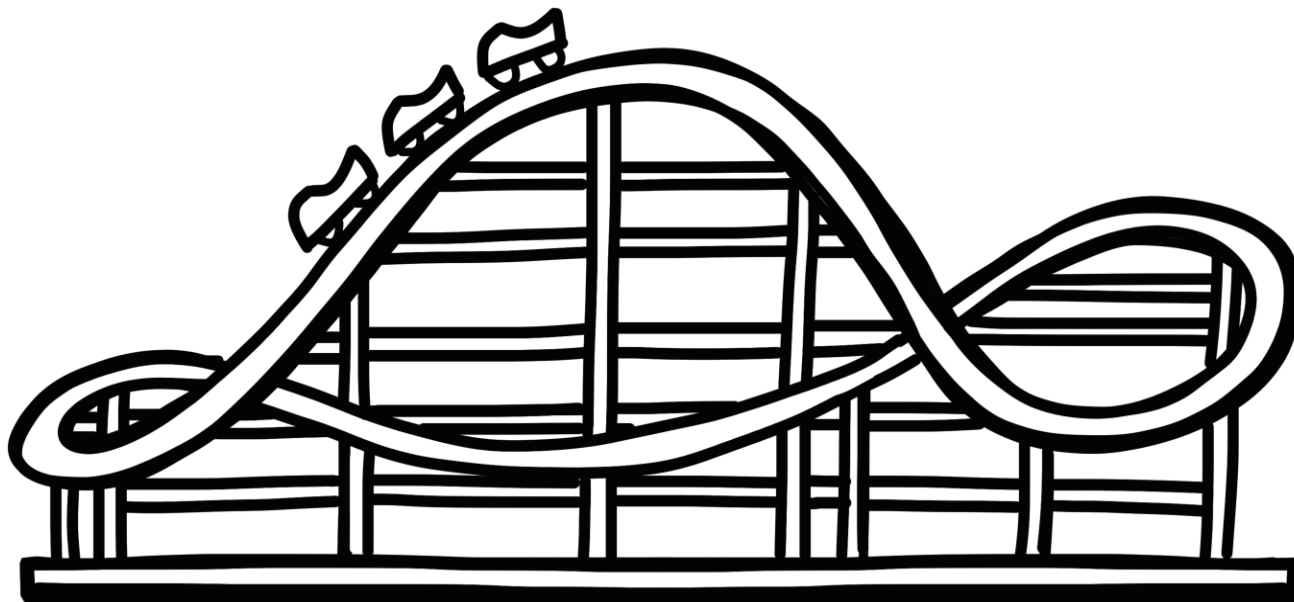
One Georgia Dome Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30313



# Williamsburg Planner

Attraction	Address
Busch Gardens	8550 Richmond Road
Go-Karts Plus	6910 Richmond Road
Water Country USA	Route 99
Jamestown Settlement	10 miles from the historic district
Colonel Williamsburg	Williamsburg, VA
Yorktown Victory Center	Yorktown, VA 23693

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# VACATION SAMPLER CHECKLIST

## Grades

\_\_\_\_\_ Vacation Sampler-Directions  
(Save to U-Drive under "Trip")

No credit

\_\_\_\_\_ Travel Planning Worksheet  
(Save to U-drive under "Trip 2")

\_\_\_\_\_ of 15 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Worksheet 1-Gas to Vacation  
(Save to U-drive under "Gas")  
Enter results on Worksheet 6

\_\_\_\_\_ of 10 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Worksheet 3-Entertainment Cost  
(Save to U-drive under "Entertainment")  
Enter results on Worksheet 6

\_\_\_\_\_ of 10 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Worksheet 2-Gas During Week  
(Save to U-drive under "Gas2")  
Enter results on Worksheet 6

\_\_\_\_\_ of 10 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Chart Reading Practice  
(Save to U-drive under "Restaurants")  
Answer questions using the link.

\_\_\_\_\_ of 11 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Worksheet 4-Meal Expenses  
(Save to U-drive under "Food")  
Enter results on Worksheet 6  
Answer questions on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page.

\_\_\_\_\_ of 50 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Worksheet 5-Postcards

\_\_\_\_\_ of 10 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Worksheet 6-Expense Log  
(Save to U-drive under "Expenses")

\_\_\_\_\_ of 50 pts

\_\_\_\_\_ Evaluation

\_\_\_\_\_ of 10 pts

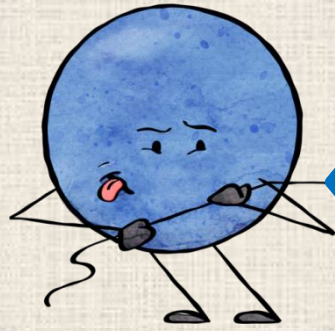
A special thanks to Barbara J. Forsberg [bjforsberg@pulaski.k12.wi.us](mailto:bjforsberg@pulaski.k12.wi.us) for her contribution to this unit.

Barbara says, "Another thing I did was to come up with "Life's Little Unexpected Emergencies". I plan to have a set of each good/bad news item for each student and have them draw one per week. I also came up with another activity using Disney's restaurant guide.



# Credits

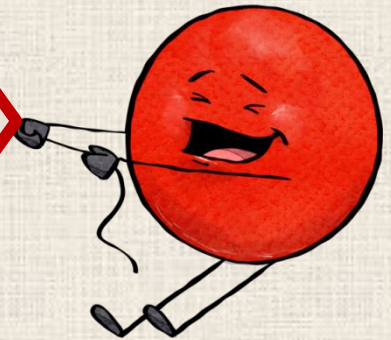




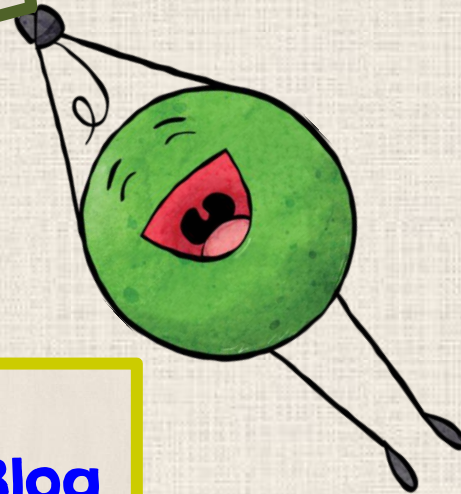
[Book Units Teacher Website](#)

[Gay Miller's Teachers Pay Teachers Store](#)

[Pinterest](#)



[YouTube](#)



[Book Units Teacher Blog](#)

