Guessing is a part of the educational process for students. As students learn new material, they try to apply it to the things they are learning, or even to other areas of knowledge. For example, a student may have just learned that all plants need sunlight, air, water, and soil to live. When asked which might be more important, the student may guess that sunlight, air, and water are more important than soil because they know that some plants live on tree bark, like orchids.

Within narrative texts, characters may experience the same educational process of guessing as students in the classroom do; although, the context may not be within a classroom. For example, a character may guess what is for dinner or guess which road is the safer road to travel on, neither use of guessing takes place at a school.

Guess can be used as both as noun and as a verb. As a verb, to guess means to form an opinion or answer to a question or situation that the person isn’t sure of. For example, a princess may say, “I’m guessing this apple is poisonous and I will not eat it.”

Guess used as a noun in a reply is used to show that the person isn’t sure of their answer. For example, a prince may say, “I guess we should take this road because it looks like the safer road to travel on.”

Follow-Ups
- How is guessing on a test question different from knowing the answer?
- When a person says, “I’m guessing it’s 3pm,” how likely is it that it’s 3pm?

The Spanish Connection
The word guess comes from the Middle Dutch word gisse. The Spanish word for the verb guess is adivinar. Guess and adivinar are not cognates, but there are synonyms and related words that have Spanish cognates. For example, conjetura is the Spanish word for conjecture.

Word Changes
When scientists and other professionals make a guess in their work they do so with thought and consideration. That is because most often scientists and other professionals may be asked to explain their guess.

An interesting thing to note is that some synonyms of the verb guess are morphological or derivational family members of synonyms of the noun guess. For example, a person can speculate on an experiment’s outcome, or a person can form a speculation on an experiment’s outcome—speculate and speculation are derivational family members.

“To take a stab (in the dark)” is guess when you have no idea of the accurate answer. It was first used in an American magazine in 1895 to mean, “to make a blind attempt to answer a question.” The meaning is still the same today. The mental image is that of a person in a dark room bumping into furniture and walls to find something they can’t see.
Guess

Guess as in to give an unsure reply (verb)
- theorize
- estimate
- surmise
- speculate

Guess as in to give an unsure reply (noun)
- assumption
- opinion
- conjecture
- speculation
- supposition
- surmise

COMMON PHRASES
- Keep them guessing
- Guess what
- Anyone's guess
- Take a guess
- Educated Guess

IDIOMS
- Take a stab in the dark
- Wild guess
- Take a gander

SPANISH CONNECTIONS
- theorize / teorizar
- estimate / estimar
- speculate / especular
- conjecture / conjetura
Guess

- Guess as in to give an unsure reply (verb)
- Guess as in a response that is based on opinion, not fact (noun)

Common Phrases

Idioms

Spanish Connections
Guess

Inflected Endings
• guessed\(v\)
• guesser\(n\)
• guessers\(n\)
• guesses\(^{n,v}\)
• guessing\(^v\)

Derivational Prefixes & Suffixes
• guessable
• unguessable

Compound Words
• guesstimate
• guesswork
• second-guess

Morphological Family for Guess

\(^n\) Guess used as a noun
\(^v\) Guess used as a verb
Guess

Inflected Endings

Derivational Prefixes & Suffixes

Compound Words

Morphological Family for Guess

* Guess used as a noun

✓ Guess used as a verb