A **circular definition** is a [definition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Definition) that uses the [term](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terminology)(s) being defined as a part of the [definition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Definition) or assumes a prior understanding of the term being defined. There are several kinds of circular definition, and several ways of characterising the term: [pragmatic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pragmatics), [lexicographic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lexicographic) and [linguistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic).

Circular definitions may be unhelpful if the audience must either already know the meaning of the key term, or if the term to be defined is used in the definition itself.