Vocabulary and Oral Language Development

Kindergarten Teacher Reading Academy

Teacher Reading Academies™

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Oral Language Accomplishments of Monolingual Five-Year-Old Children

Typical five-year-olds entering kindergarten:

- Have an expressive speaking vocabulary of around 2,200 words
- Have a receptive listening vocabulary of more than 20,000 words
- Have mastered 90% of most basic grammar rules for their home language, though they tend to overgeneralize certain rules, producing English words such as *foots* and *bringed*
- Can understand the use of words like *before* and *after* or *yesterday, today, and tomorrow* to describe a sequence of events
- Can ask and answer questions that begin with *who, what, where, when, why, and how*
- Can discuss feelings, and use language to converse and entertain
- Can tell simple stories and describe familiar objects and situations, though they are likely to tell narratives using only “*and then*” to establish time sequence
- Can define the function of familiar objects and explain the relationship between objects or events
- Can engage in word play and games
- Have generally adult-like pronunciation, though a few sounds may remain difficult
- Are aware that words can have more than one meaning

Five-year-olds are still learning:

- Vocabulary: 3000+ new words a year
- Definitions
- Pragmatic skills for effective communication, such as ways to connect sentences and ideas when they talk
- Use of non-literal language (irony, metaphor, sarcasm)
- Complex social uses of language (jokes, invitations, speeches, formal greetings, etc.)
- How to talk to individuals in different social positions (how to talk to a teacher, a police officer, a friend)
- How to talk politely
- Literate discourse: language used in books

## Features of Language Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 3</th>
<th>Student 4</th>
<th>Student 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Pragmatics</td>
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# Steps for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Tips</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have students <strong>say</strong> the word.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide a definition of the word using <strong>student-friendly</strong> explanations and <strong>visuals</strong>.</td>
<td>Use a sticky note to help plan your instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Have students discuss what is <strong>known</strong> about the word.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Provide <strong>examples</strong> and <strong>nonexamples</strong> of the word.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Engage in <strong>deep-processing activities</strong> by asking questions, using <strong>graphic organizers</strong>, or having students act out the word.</td>
<td>Choose a deep-processing word from the box. Using a sticky note, plan questions and/or activities that incorporate the word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Scaffold students to <strong>create powerful sentences</strong> with the new word.</td>
<td>Remember the <strong>“Seven-Up” Rule:</strong> Powerful sentences are seven words and up!</td>
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### Deep Processing Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare</th>
<th>Decide</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categorize</td>
<td>Justify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Create</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Verify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Imagine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend</td>
<td>Predict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pasos</td>
<td>Ideas</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Pedir a los estudiantes que digan la palabra.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proveer una definición de la palabra usando explicaciones a nivel de los estudiantes e ilustraciones.</td>
<td>Pueden usar una nota adherible para ayudar a planear su instrucción.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pedir a los estudiantes que discutan lo que saben sobre la palabra.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dar ejemplos y contraejemplos de la palabra.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 5. Utilizar actividades de procesamiento intensivo; haciendo preguntas, usando organizadores gráficos, o dramatizando la palabra. | Escoge una palabra. Usando una nota adherible, planea preguntas y/o actividades que incorporen la palabra.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palabras de procesamiento intensivo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorizar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseñar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrastar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calificar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recomendar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 6. Ayudar a los estudiantes a crear oraciones poderosas con la palabra nueva. | Acordarse de la regla “Siete o Más”

¡Las oraciones poderosas tienen siete palabras o más!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell us a story about your photo?</td>
<td>Ummm . . . [Child has difficulty beginning.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Wait 5–10 seconds] Can you tell us what was happening here?</td>
<td>[No response]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Wait 10 seconds] Who is that in the picture?</td>
<td>This is me . . . and my Mom . . . and my grandma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Questions and prompts)</td>
<td>Outside, behind my house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where were you when this was taken? (Questions and prompts)</td>
<td>It was my grandma’s birthday. We made her a big cake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I see that you were outside, on the patio, and it was a beautiful sunny day. (Recasts and expands)</td>
<td>Chocolate. With little flowers and it said her name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were you all doing?</td>
<td>Rose. It said “Happy Birthday Rose.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That was very thoughtful of you. It looks delicious! What kind of cake was it? (Provides feedback; uses questions and prompts)</td>
<td>My grandmother . . . [Hesitates to tell more.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate? Yum. That’s my favorite flavor! So you decorated the cake with flowers and wrote a name on it. Whose name did you write? (Recasts and expands)</td>
<td>Yes. I made it with my Mom. We went to the store and got all the stuff to put in it and I helped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose? Who is Rose? (Requests clarification)</td>
<td>Yes. And it fell on the floor and made a big mess!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You said before that you baked your grandmother’s birthday cake. Can you tell us how you did that? (Questions and prompts)</td>
<td>Ummm . . . well . . . I was mixing the ‘gredients and Spot . . . Spot’s my dog, he came by and scared me and I jumped . . . and . . . and the flour fell down and got all over the floor and . . . and it got on Spot’s nose and my Mom laughed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, I know you’re a great helper. I’ll bet you mixed the ingredients together. Am I right? (Recasts and expands; adding new vocabulary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmmm. I’m not sure I understand. Can you tell us exactly what happened? (Requests clarification)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a great story! I like how you told us that Spot is your dog . . . that helped us understand a lot better. (Provides feedback) Boys and girls, would any of you like to ask [name] a question about her photo? (Promotes questions and conversation among children)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Guión para apoyar y guiar la expresión oral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maestra/o</th>
<th>Estudiante</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>¿Nos puedes contar una historia sobre tu foto?</td>
<td>Ummmm . . . (Muestra dificultad para empezar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Espere 5–10 segundos] ¿Nos puedes contar qué está pasando en la foto?</td>
<td>(No hay repuesta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Dónde estaban cuando tomaron esta foto?</td>
<td>Afuera, atrás de mi casa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sí, ya veo que están afuera . . . en el patio, y era un hermoso día soleado.</td>
<td>Era el cumpleaños de mi abuelita. Le hicimos un pastel grandote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eso fue un muy bonito detalle de su parte. ¡El pastel se ve delicioso! ¿Qué clase de pastel era?</td>
<td>De chocolate. Tenía florecitas chiquitas y decía su nombre arriba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿De chocolate? Mmmm. ¡Ese es mi sabor favorito! Entonces decoraron el pastel con flores y escribieron el nombre arriba. ¿Qué nombre escribieron?</td>
<td>Elena. Decía “Feliz Cumpleaños Elena.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Elena? ¿Quién es Elena?</td>
<td>Mi abuelita . . . (No dice más)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tú nos dijiste antes que le habían hecho un pastel a tu abuelita. ¿Nos puedes contar cómo hiciste eso?</td>
<td>Sí. Lo hice con mi mamá. Fuimos a la tienda y compramos todas las cosas para ponerle y yo ayudé.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yo sé que eres muy buen ayudante. Te apuesto que mezclaste los ingredientes muy bien. ¿Verdad que sí?</td>
<td>Sí. Y luego se cayó en el piso y se hizo un mugrero . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmm. No entendí. ¿Nos podemos contar qué fue lo que pasó?</td>
<td>Ummmm . . . bueno . . . es que yo estaba mezclando los ingredientes y Duque, Duque es mi perro, vino y me asustó y yo salté . . . y . . . y la harina se cayó y cayó arriba de toda la comida y también le cayó a Duque en la nariz y mi mamá se rió.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Qué buena historia! Me gustó como nos dijiste que Duque era tu perro . . . eso nos ayudó a entender mucho mejor. Niños y niñas, ¿quisiera alguien preguntar algo sobre la foto?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Literacy Lessons

Book Partners

Objective: Students interact with peers as they retell familiar books
Topic: Oral language
Materials: Favorite books

Directions:
• Provide a selection of predictable, repetitive storybooks for students to “pretend read.”

• Pair students with classmates. Pair more able students with less able students.

• Have students retell the story to each other or have students take a book home to retell to a family member.

• Provide instructional support while students work together in pairs.

Scaffolding Strategies:
Begin with strategies that offer less support (e.g., ★) and increase support (e.g., ★★★★★) as needed to help each student successfully complete the task.

★
Ask students to describe illustrations in the book: “What do you see? What happened?”

Help students think about their listeners: “Do you think Jason understood that?”

★★
Ask students to clarify information: “Tell us who drove the school bus.”

★★★
Model how to make connections using the pictures: “The monkey is crying. The picture on the page before this shows why she is crying.”

Provide prompts to help students sequence events: “What happened first? Next?”

Encourage students to use pictures to help them sequence their retellings.
★ ★ ★
Repeat-read books and include books with repetitive phrases or rhymes to help students recall events.

Ask questions that give students choices: “Did the teacher move away or did she go to visit her parents?”

Use books and stories that are familiar to students.

Provide additional opportunities for students to look through and “pretend read” familiar stories and books.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Model how to expand responses: “Yes, that’s a butterfly. It is a monarch butterfly.”

Encourage peer interactions: “Tell Becky how a tadpole becomes a frog.” “Ask Amy if she can tell you about hibernation.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ask specific questions about pictures in the story: “What is the bear eating in this picture?”

Practice retelling books before asking students to read them with a classmate: “Remember, the girl couldn’t find her mitten. Now, you tell me what happened.”

Model how to use one picture at a time to recall events in a story.

Lecciones de lecto-escritura

Compañeros de libros

Objetivo: Los estudiantes interactúan con sus compañeros al recontar historias ya conocidas.

Temas: El concepto de la letra escrita, la percepción fonológica y el lenguaje oral.

Materiales: Libros favoritos

Instrucciones:
• Proporcione libros predecibles y repetitivos a los estudiantes para que “pretendan” leer.
• Organice a los estudiantes en parejas.
• Ponga a estudiantes más hábiles con estudiantes menos hábiles.
• Pidales a los estudiantes que se cuenten la historia unos a otros.
• Pidales a los estudiantes que se lleven un libro a casa para que cuenten la historia a otro miembro de la familia.

Estrategias de apoyo
Empiece con estrategias que ofrecen menos apoyo (ej., ★) y vaya incrementando el apoyo (ej., ★★★★★) gradualmente si se necesita para ayudar a cada niño a completar la actividad satisfactoriamente.

★
Pida a los estudiantes que describan las ilustraciones del libro: “¿Qué ves en el libro? ¿Qué pasó?”

Invite a los estudiantes a pensar en las personas que los escuchan: “¿Tú crees que Alberto entendió eso?”

★★
Pida a los estudiantes que sean claros y precisos: “Dinos quién manejó el camión escolar.”
Modele cómo hacer conexiones en la lectura utilizando los dibujos: “El conejo está llorando. La ilustración de la página anterior nos muestra porqué está llorando.”

Proporcione ayuda específica a los estudiantes para poner en orden los eventos: “¿Qué pasó primero? ¿Qué pasó después?”

Aliente a los estudiantes a utilizar las ilustraciones para ayudarse a contar en orden sus historias.

Lea los libros varias veces e incluya libros con frases repetitivas o rimas que ayuden a los estudiantes a recordar los eventos.

Haga preguntas que presenten opciones a los estudiantes: “¿La maestra se mudó a otra ciudad o fue a visitar a sus padres?”

Utilice historias y libros conocidos por los estudiantes.

Provea oportunidades adicionales para que los estudiantes vean y “pretendan” leer historias y libros conocidos.

Modele cómo ampliar las respuestas dando más detalles: “Sí, es una mariposa. Es una mariposa monarca.”

Aliente las interacciones entre los estudiantes: “Pregúntale a Claudia si ella te puede decir algo sobre el invierno.”

Haga preguntas específicas acerca de las ilustraciones en la historia: “¿Qué está comiendo el oso en la ilustración?”

Practique el recontar un libro antes de pedir a los estudiantes que lo lean con alguien más: “Acuérdense, la niña no podía encontrar su guante. Ahora, díganme qué pasó.”

Modele cómo utilizar una ilustración para recordar los eventos de la historia.

Literacy Lessons

**Different Ways to Say It**

**Objective:** Students learn that objects, people, and events can be represented in different ways depending on language and culture

**Topics:** Print awareness, phonological awareness, and oral language

**Materials:** Paper, markers and/or crayons, objects in the classroom

**Directions:**

- Discuss different ways of saying and writing common words (e.g., yes, hello).
- Have students who speak languages other than English translate the words into their languages.
- Label objects in the classroom with the different languages.
- Display products and books that contain print in more than one language.
- Discuss other countries, cultures, and traditions.
- Ask students to bring articles and objects from other countries or cultures.

**Scaffolding Strategies:**

Begin with strategies that offer less support (e.g., ★) and increase support (e.g., ★★★★★★) as needed to help each student successfully complete the task.

★

Ask questions: “What did you see when you visited your grandparents in Germany? How do they say hello in German?”

Encourage students to think about what words in different languages mean: “What do you think ____ means?”

★★

Provide prompts to help students sequence events: “First, you mix the masa. What is the next step?”

Help students understand that the same objects can have different names in different languages.
Engage students in conversations about familiar objects in the classroom or playground.

Encourage peer interactions: “Now, let’s all say ___. What does ___ mean in English?”

Have students bring books and objects from home.

Use pictures, objects, and maps to help students understand the meanings of words in another language.

Ask specific questions: “How do you say yes in French?”

Have students name an object or picture. Then ask others to repeat the name: “This is ___. What’s this?”

Incorporate opportunities to practice using words in other languages.

Provide prompts and have students repeat words in different languages: “The French say oui. How do you say yes in French?”

Talk about your own culture and experiences: “I remember my father telling me about the books his mother read to him in Korea.”
Oral Language Lessons
Lesson One

Objective: Help students use extended discourse
Grouping: Large or small group
Materials: Sharing Hand planning guide; Sharing Hand poster

Procedures:
• Model how to use the Sharing Hand. Use your hand (make a happy face on the palm of your hand) and/or use the Sharing Hand poster. Point to each finger for the wh-questions and the palm of your hand for the how question.

• Explain: “If you include the who, what, when, where, why, and how when you share, it helps those who are listening understand. That’s why a happy face is placed in the palm of the hand.”

• Retell a simple event and then ask the Sharing Hand questions (e.g., Who is it about? What is happening? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Why did it happen? How did it happen?). As you ask each question, point to the appropriate finger and to your palm for how.

• Ask individual students to tell a story or personal narrative. Model and have the other students point to their fingers and to their palm when they hear the who, what, when, where, why, and how.

• Use the Sharing Hand congratulation (e.g., high five or handshake) each time a child includes most or all of this information.

• Give students practice using the Sharing Hand as a guide as they share personal narratives or explanations with partners.

• Ask each of the wh-questions as you point to the corresponding finger on your hand to assist students who have difficulty telling about an event.

• Have students who are having difficulty with all of the questions focus on only two or three of the questions (e.g., who, what, when). Gradually add questions one at a time.

• Use the Sharing Hand planning guide when preparing lessons for listening to storybooks, information books, or a shared writing activity in which the group tells about an event or describes a classroom project.

Home Link:
Provide a copy of the Sharing Hand for parents to use with their students when discussing events or storybooks at home.
“The Sharing Hand” Planning Guide

Before a Sharing Hand lesson, write your questions.

| Who? |  
| --- | --- |
| ![Person](image) |  

| What? |  
| --- | --- |
| ![Gift](image) |  

| When? |  
| --- | --- |
| ![Clock](image) |  

| Where? |  
| --- | --- |
| ![Location](image) |  

| Why? |  
| --- | --- |
| ![Question Mark](image) |  

| How? |  
| --- | --- |
| ![Smiley](image) |  

Oral Language Lessons
Lesson Two

Objective: Help students learn part-whole relationships including labels and functions
Grouping: Small or large groups
Materials: Everyday objects in the classroom and pictures

Procedures:

• Before the lesson begins, identify two- to four-part objects. Objects for teaching part-whole relationships include a chair (legs, back, seat, rungs); a table (top, legs); a pencil (shaft, point, eraser); a desk (top, legs, drawers); a bookcase (shelves, top, sides); a flower (petals, stem, leaves); and a tree (branches, trunk, leaves). Later, use pictures or toy models of objects that have many parts, such as cars, bicycles, trucks, and houses.

• Place a chair in front of the group. Ask students to name the object.

• Point to each part of the chair (the back, the seat, the legs, and if appropriate, the rungs) and encourage students to name each part using complete sentences: “A chair has legs. A chair has a back. A chair has a seat.”

• Immediately provide the name of any parts students don’t know.

• Have students practice naming the parts until they can name all of them. Then ask them to say the name of the whole object.

• Point to the back of the chair, and ask, “Why does a chair have a back?” Provide scaffolding to help students state clear and concise answers. Repeat with each part of the chair.

• Play the “What if?” game. Ask: “What if a chair didn’t have a back?” Help students clarify their responses. Repeat with each part of the chair, and then ask a final question: “Why do we have chairs?”

• Encourage students to determine if other chairs in the room have the same parts as the model chair.

• For other part-whole lessons, begin with a review and have students name the parts, their functions, and play the “What If?” game.

• Discuss objects that don’t have common names for all of the parts. For example: A cup has a handle, but the other part does not have a common name. Have the students suggest a name.

• When working with objects with many parts, help the students learn three or four parts one day and then add more parts the next day.
• Whenever possible, show students the connection between the names of parts of objects and the names of parts of the body. For example: “People have legs, and tables and chairs have legs. People have eyes, and a needle has an eye.”

• Play the “Do You Know What I Am Thinking Of?” game. Name a part or parts that students have learned. For example: “I am thinking of legs and a back.” After students respond, ask, “How do you know?”

• Have the students work in pairs. Each member of the pair draws pictures with missing parts. For example: A chair with missing legs or a toothbrush with missing bristles. Then partners exchange pictures and draw and name the missing parts of the pictures.

**Home Link:**

• Ask students to look around their house for objects with parts that they have been learning about. Have them notice whether or not the objects at home have the same parts.

• Have the students bring objects or toys with parts from home.
Oral Language Lessons
Lesson Three

Objective: Help students learn the concept of opposite and expand vocabulary as they learn words with opposite relationships

Grouping: Small group or whole class

Materials: Everyday objects in the classroom and pictures

Procedures:

• Assemble sets of classroom objects, toys, and pictures that look the same, but differ in some way. Begin with one or two opposite pairs in a lesson. Examples: Size (big-little); feel (soft-hard); weight (heavy-light); condition (full-empty).

• Tell students: “We’re going to learn to use an important word, opposite. Let’s all say that word.”

• Model the relationship between two opposite concepts, such as full and empty.

• Fill one of two identical glasses with water from a pitcher. Do not put water in the other glass.

• Point to the glass with water and say: “This glass is full.”

• Point to the glass that has no water in it and say: “This glass is not full—it is empty.”

• Then pour the water from the full glass into the empty glass and ask: “Which glass is full? Which glass is empty?” Encourage students to use complete sentences to describe each glass.

• Fill a glass half-full of water and ask: “Is this glass full? Is this glass empty?” Then ask a student to fill one of the glasses. Then ask: “Is this glass full?” Possible responses include: “It’s not full and it’s not empty.”

• Introduce the term opposite. After discussing full and empty, explain: “Full is the opposite of empty, and empty is the opposite of full.”

• Ask the questions: “What is the opposite of empty? What is the opposite of full?”
• Have students describe objects that are full and objects that are empty. For example: “The box of blocks is full.” “The waste basket is empty.” “The bookcase is full.” “The toy shelves are full.”

• Present similar lessons with other pairs of opposite words. Be sure to review previously introduced words.

• Encourage students to find other words that have opposite relationships. For example: Tall and short, open and shut, sad and happy, sick and well, hot and cold.

• Play the “I'm thinking of a …” game with words the students have learned. For example: “I'm thinking of a jar that is not empty. What do you know about that jar?” Encourage students to ask the questions and call on others to respond to their questions.

• Have students sort pictures of objects and people into the categories that have been studied. For example: Hot and cold.

• Have students draw pictures that illustrate opposite relationships. They can describe their pictures during circle time or small-group instruction.

Home Link:

• Encourage students to find opposites in their home and play the “I'm thinking of a …” game with a family member.
Oral Language Lessons
Lesson Four

Objective: Help students learn the vocabulary of school, such as numbers, shapes, directions, categories

Grouping: Small group or whole class

Materials: None

Procedures:

• Model the language of giving directions, so students learn to follow and give them.

• Select prepositions that are important to the instructional language used in school. Examples: On, over, in, under, near, far, in front of, in back of, between.

• Introduce two prepositions, such as on and over.

• Say: “We're going to watch, listen, do some actions, and talk about what we do.”

• Demonstrate the prepositions on and over by placing your hand on your head. Say: “Look, my hand is on my head.” Then hold your hand over your head and say: “My hand is not on my head. My hand is over my head.”

• Say: “Hold your hand on your head.” Then ask: “Where is your hand?”

• Say: “Hold your hand over your head. Now, where is your hand?”

• Ask students: “Hold your hand over your knee. Where is your hand?” Repeat the sequence with “…on your knee.”

• Quickly move through the action sequences. Expand responses to complete sentences. For example: “My hand is over my head.”

• Alternate what you ask students to do so they are unable to predict your next action.

• Emphasize target words. After demonstrating the meanings of words, do not reveal the answers by giving additional demonstrations. Have students respond to the words in your directions.

• Preview previously introduced words and concepts before teaching new words and concepts.

• Include different parts of the body in the directions. For example: “Hold your hand under your chin. Hold your hand in front of your chest.” Responses help target words that students need to learn.

• Use objects or pictures for some demonstrations. For example: Use a box or a paper bag to demonstrate the preposition in.
• Incorporate other concepts: Students’ clothing ("Put your hand in your pocket."); singular and plural directions ("Touch your ear. Touch your ears."); words describing spatial relationships ("Sam is first in the line. Maria is last in the line. Sam comes before Jim."); words describing quantities ("Hold up all your fingers. Hold up some of your fingers."); descriptions of how things can be the same and different ("I’m touching my head. You do the same thing I am doing.").

• Emphasize the targeted words and sentences at different times during the school day (e.g., read alouds, art activities, play).
Lecciones para el desarrollo del lenguaje oral  
Lección 1

Objetivo: Los estudiantes utilizarán el lenguaje oral al identificar y discutir sobre los distintos componentes de un cuento.

Grupo: Grupo grande o pequeño

Materiales: Guía de planeación de la Mano para Compartir; póster de la Mano para Compartir

Procedimiento:

- Modele cómo usar la Mano para Compartir. Utilice su mano (dibuje o pegue una carita feliz en la palma de su mano) y utilice el póster de la Mano para Compartir. Señale cada dedo para mostrar la pregunta indicada y señale la palma de su mano para mostrar la pregunta ¿Cómo?

- Explique: “Si al compartir o decirle algo a alguien ustedes incluyen el quién, qué, cuándo, dónde, por qué y cómo de la historia, esto ayudará a los oyentes a entender mejor. Por esto una carita feliz está en la palma de la mano.”

- Cuente una historia corta y haga las preguntas de la Mano para Compartir (ej., ¿De quién se trata? ¿Qué está pasando? ¿Cuándo pasó? ¿Dónde pasó? ¿Por qué pasó? ¿Cómo pasó?). Conforme haga cada pregunta, señale el dedo apropiado y señale la palma de la mano para la pregunta ¿Cómo?.

- Invite a cada estudiante a contar una historia personal. Modele cómo señalar el dedo correspondiente y/o la palma de la mano cuando se diga el quién, qué, cuándo, dónde, por qué y cómo de la historia.

- Cada vez que el estudiante incluya la mayoría o toda esta información, utilice la felicitación de la Mano para Compartir (ej., un apretón de mano o “high five”).

- Aliente a los estudiantes a utilizar la Mano para Compartir como guía cuando compartan historias personales o explicaciones con un compañero/a.

- Para ayudar a los estudiantes que tienen dificultad al contar un evento o historia, usted puede hacerles cada pregunta mientras señala los dedos de su mano.

- Si a los estudiantes se les dificulta manejar todas las preguntas, enfóquese en sólo dos o tres preguntas (ej., ¿quién?, ¿qué?, ¿cuándo?).

- Utilice la guía de planeación para preparar lecciones en las cuales los estudiantes escucharán historias leídas en voz alta y/o libros de información. También se puede utilizar para una actividad de escritura general en la cual el grupo escriba sobre un evento o describa un proyecto del salón de clases.
Enlace con la casa:
Proporcione a los padres de familia una copia de la Mano para Compartir para que la utilicen con sus hijos en casa cuando conversen sobre situaciones, eventos o libros.
"Mano para Compartir"
Guía de planeación

Antes de una lección, escriba las preguntas.

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<td>¿Cómo?</td>
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¿Dónde?
¿Cuándo?
¿Qué?
¿Por qué?
¿Cuándo?
¿Quién?
Lecciones para desarrollar el lenguaje oral
Lección 2

Objetivo: Los estudiantes explicarán la relación entre el entero y sus partes incluyendo nombres y funciones.

Grupos: Grupos pequeños o el grupo completo

Materiales: Objetos de uso común y fotografías

Procedimiento:

• Antes de empezar la lección agrupe objetos que tengan de dos hasta cuatro partes para enseñar la relación entre un entero y sus partes. Ejemplos:
  - una silla = patas, asiento, respaldo, barrotes
  - una mesa = cubierta, patas
  - un lápiz = punta, borrador
  - un escritorio = cubierta, patas, cajones
  - un librero = repisas, paredes
  - una flor = pétalos, tallo, hojas
  - un árbol = ramas, tronco, hojas
  Más adelante, utilice fotos de objetos que tengan más partes como carros, bicicletas, camiones y casas.

• Ponga una silla enfrente del grupo. Pídales a los estudiantes que nombren el objeto.

• Señale cada parte de la silla (el respaldo, el asiento, las patas y, si existen, los barrotes entre las patas) y aliente a los estudiantes a nombrar cada parte del objeto usando oraciones completas: “Una silla tiene patas. Una silla tiene un respaldo. Una silla tiene un asiento.”

• Mencione inmediatamente el nombre de las partes que ellos desconozcan.

• Permita que los estudiantes practiquen los nombres de las partes hasta que ellos puedan decirlas solos. Después pídales que digan el nombre del objeto.

• Señale una parte de la silla y pregunte “¿Por qué tiene la silla un respaldo?” Ayude a los estudiantes a dar respuestas claras y concisas. Repita el proceso con cada parte de la silla.

• Organice el juego “¿Qué pasaría si …?”
  Pregunte: “¿Qué pasaría si la silla no tuviera un respaldo?” Ayude a los estudiantes a formar respuestas claras. Repita el proceso con cada parte de la silla y haga la pregunta final: “¿Para qué tenemos sillas?”

• Pídales a los estudiantes que determinen si las otras sillas en el salón tienen las mismas partes que la silla modelo.
• Para otras lecciones de un entero y sus partes, empiece con un repaso de un objeto visto anteriormente y haga que los estudiantes nombre las partes, sus funciones y jueguen el juego “¿Qué pasaría si …?”

• Hable también de objetos que no tienen nombres para todas sus partes. Por ejemplo: Una taza tiene un asa pero la otra parte no tiene un nombre específico. Pídales a los estudiantes que sugieran un nombre.

• Cuando trabajen con objetos que tienen muchas partes, ayude a los estudiantes a aprender tres o cuatro partes en un día y añadir más nombres posteriormente.

• Cuando sea posible muéstrelas a los estudiantes la relación que existe entre los nombres de las partes de los objetos y los nombres de las partes del cuerpo. Por ejemplo: “Las personas tienen ojos y una aguja tiene un ojo. Las personas tienen piernas y las sillas y las mesas tienen patas.”

• Organice el juego “¿Saben en lo que estoy pensando?” Nombre una parte o partes de un objeto para que los estudiantes descubran el objeto completo. Por ejemplo: “Estoy pensando en unas patas, un asiento y un respaldo.” Después de responder “una silla”, pregúntele a los estudiantes: “¿Cómo supieron?”

• Pídales a los estudiantes que trabajen en parejas. Cada miembro de la pareja dibuja un objeto con partes faltantes. Por ejemplo, una silla sin algunas de sus patas o un cepillo de dientes sin todas las cerdas. Los estudiantes se intercambian los dibujos para dibujar y nombrar las partes faltantes.

Enlace con la casa:

• Pídales a los estudiantes que busquen en su casa objetos similares a los que ellos han estudiado. Pídales que noten si los objetos en casa tienen o no tienen las mismas partes.

• Pídales a los estudiantes que traigan de sus casas objetos o juguetes con partes.
Lecciones para desarrollar el lenguaje oral

Lección 3

Objetivo: Los estudiantes identificarán el opuesto de una serie de artículos y conceptos conocidos.

Grupo: Grupo pequeño o grupo completo

Materiales: Objetos de uso común o dibujos

Procedimiento:

- Forme grupos de objetos que sean similares pero que difieran en algún aspecto. Empiece con uno o dos pares de opuestos. Ejemplos: tamaño: (grande-pequeño); textura (suave-duro); peso (pesado-liviano); condición (lleno-vacío).
- Dígales a los estudiantes: “Vamos a aprender una palabra nueva, opuesto. Vamos a decírla todos juntos.”
- Explique la relación entre dos conceptos opuestos, como por ejemplo lleno y vacío.
- Llene con agua uno de dos vasos idénticos. Deje el otro vaso vacío.
- Señale el vaso con agua y diga: “Este vaso está lleno.”
- Señale el vaso vacío y diga: “Este vaso no está lleno—está vacío.”
- Vierta el agua del vaso lleno al vaso vacío y pregunte: “¿Cuál vaso está lleno? ¿Cuál vaso está vacío?” Aliente a los estudiantes a utilizar oraciones completas para describir cada vaso.
- Llene un vaso hasta la mitad con agua y pregunte: “¿Está este vaso lleno? ¿Está este vaso vacío?” Después pídale a un estudiante que llene uno de los vasos. Pídales a los estudiantes que comparen los vasos y que describan cómo están los vasos.
- Introduzca el término opuesto. Después de discutir lleno y vacío explique: “Lleno es el opuesto de vacío y vacío es el opuesto de lleno.”
- Pregunte: “¿Cuál es el opuesto de vacío? ¿Cuál es el opuesto de lleno?”
- Pídales a los estudiantes que describan objetos del salón que están vacíos y objetos que están llenos. Por ejemplo: “La caja está llena de crayones. El basurero está vacío. El librero está lleno de libros.”
- Presente lecciones similares con otras palabras opuestas. Repase palabras que se han enseñado.
- Aliente a los estudiantes a encontrar otras palabras que representen opuestos. Por ejemplo: alto y bajo; abierto y cerrado; contento y triste; enfermo y sano; caliente y frío.
• Organice el juego “Estoy pensando en …”
  Diga: “Estoy pensando en un bote que no está vacío. ¿Qué me pueden decir de ese bote?”

• Pídale a los estudiantes que agrupen dibujos de objetos y personas de acuerdo a categorías que han estudiado. Por ejemplo, los estudiantes pueden agrupar cosas que están vacías y cosas que están llenas.

• Pídale a los estudiantes que dibujen ilustraciones de cosas opuestas. Después ellos pueden describir sus dibujos durante discusiones de grupo.

Enlace con la casa:

Aliente a los estudiantes a encontrar opuestos en sus casas y jugar “Estoy pensando en …” con un miembro de su familia.
Lecciones para desarrollar el lenguaje oral
Lección 4

Objetivo: Los estudiantes utilizarán vocabulario escolar como números, formas, instrucciones y categorías.

Grupo: Grupo pequeño o grupo completo

Materiales: Ninguno

Procedimiento:

- Modele el lenguaje utilizado para dar y seguir instrucciones.
- Seleccione preposiciones que son importantes al dar instrucciones en la escuela. Ejemplos: arriba, sobre, en, cerca, lejos, enfrente, atrás, adelante, entre, en medio, al lado.
- Introduzca dos preposiciones como por ejemplo sobre y al lado.
- Demuestre el significado de las preposiciones sobre y al lado poniendo una mano sobre su cabeza. Diga: “Miren, mi mano está sobre mi cabeza.” Después coloque su mano al lado de su cabeza y diga: “Mi mano no está sobre mi cabeza. Mi mano está al lado de mi cabeza.”
- Diga: “Pongan una mano sobre su cabeza.” Después pregunte: “¿Dónde está su mano?”
- Diga: “Pongan su mano al lado de su cabeza. ¿Dónde está su mano ahora?”
- Pídales a los estudiantes: “Pongan su mano sobre las rodillas. ¿Dónde está su mano?” Repita pidiéndoles a los estudiantes que pongan su mano al lado de su rodilla.
- Cambie de una acción a otra rápidamente. Amplíe las repuestas de los estudiantes para hacer oraciones completas. Por ejemplo: “Mi mano está sobre mi cabeza” en lugar de “sobre mi cabeza.”
- Alterne lo que le pide a los estudiantes hacer para que no puedan adelantarse a sus palabras.
- Enfatice palabras clave. Después de demostrar el significado de las palabras no dé pistas adicionales que puedan dar la respuesta a los estudiantes (ej., movimientos). Los estudiantes responderán a las palabras de sus instrucciones.
- Repase conceptos y palabras que ya ha enseñado antes de enseñar nuevos conceptos y palabras.
- Incluya diferentes partes del cuerpo en las instrucciones. Por ejemplo: “Pongan su mano debajo de su barbilla. Pongan su mano enfrente de su pecho.”
- Utilice objetos y dibujos para algunas demostraciones. Por ejemplo, utilice una caja o una bolsa de papel para demostrar la preposición adentro.
- Añada otros conceptos: Ropa (“Pongan su mano adentro de su bolsillo.”); singular y plural (“Toquen un oído. Tóquense los dos oídos.”); palabras que describan relaciones espaciales (“Paco es el primero de la fila. Susana es la última de la fila. Paco está antes que Daniel.”); palabras que describan cantidades (“Levanten los dedos. Levanten algunos de sus dedos.”).

- Enfatice las palabras claves y las oraciones en diferentes momentos durante el día (ej., al leer en voz alta, en el recreo, en actividades artísticas).
# Oral Language Checklist

Student Name:____________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the student use complete sentences?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the student use new words and sentence patterns when talking?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the student express clear relationships between events in personal narratives and story retells?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the student respond to questions and requests for information?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the student adapt to the listeners' needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the student use extended language in a variety of settings?</td>
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Promoting Vocabulary Development

Components of Effective Vocabulary Instruction
Introduction

Reading is central to learning—in school, in the workplace, and in everyday life. How well children learn to read sets the foundation for their future success. The Texas Reading Initiative began in 1996 in response to then-Governor George W. Bush’s challenge to all Texans to focus on the most basic of education goals—teaching all children to read. The goal the Governor set was clear: every child, each and every child, must learn to read.

The Texas Education Agency, in response to Bush’s challenge, has worked on a multifaceted effort aimed at providing information, resources, and knowledge to assist parents, educators, school board members, administrators, public officials, and business and community leaders as they seek to meet this goal. The Initiative has been built on years of demonstrated leadership and commitment of the Texas State Board of Education in the areas of reading development and reading difficulties. The Initiative has relied on the convergence of reading research from the past several decades that illuminates the way children learn to read and how to enhance that process.

In 1997, TEA first published the document, Beginning Reading Instruction, Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program, also known as the “red book.” This booklet described important aspects of effective reading instruction, as well as elements of classroom and administrative support for effective instruction.

Since its initial publication, over 260,000 copies of Beginning Reading Instruction have been printed and distributed. It has served as the basis for professional development, the development of curriculum standards and instructional materials, as well as the establishment of research-based reading programs in schools. The purpose of the booklet was to provide information which can be used to guide decisions as local school districts and educators worked toward then-Governor Bush’s stated goal, “all students will read on grade level or higher by the end of the third grade and continue reading on or above grade level throughout their schooling.”

After the initial distribution of Beginning Reading Instruction, several projects were undertaken to develop companion documents to the “red book.” These first companion documents: Spotlight on Reading, A Companion to Beginning Reading Instruction; Beginning Reading Instruction: Practical Ideas for Parents; and Instrucción Para Comenzar a Leer: Ideas Prácticas Para Padres de Familia, were published. In addition to these documents, the Agency, in collaboration with the University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, has worked on additional booklets that provide information on reading topics such as vocabulary development, comprehension, and content-area reading.

Governor Rick Perry continues to support the goal that all children will learn to read. This “Red Book Series” serves as a resource to our schools and all stakeholders interested in meeting the Governor’s goal.

This booklet, Promoting Vocabulary Development, would not be possible without the contributions of the consultants and staff of the University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts and the staff of the Texas Education Agency. A special thanks goes to Jean Osborn, Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, and Fran Lehr.
Promoting Vocabulary Development

Why a booklet about vocabulary development? Because words are the tools we use to access our background knowledge, express ideas, and learn about new concepts. Students’ word knowledge is linked strongly to academic success. Specifically, word knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension, and determines how well students will be able to comprehend the texts they read in the upper elementary grades, in middle and high school, and in college.

Although it is true that comprehension is far more than recognizing words and remembering their meanings, it is also true that if a reader does not know the meanings of a sufficient proportion of the words in the text, comprehension is impossible.

Poor readers often lack adequate vocabulary to get meaning from what they read. Consequently, reading is difficult and tedious for them, and they are unable (and often unwilling) to do the large amount of reading they must do if they are to encounter unknown words often enough to learn them. This situation contributes to what are called “Matthew Effects,” that is, interactions with the environment that exaggerate individual differences over time, with “rich get richer, poor get poorer” consequences. Good readers read more, become even better readers, and learn more words; poor readers read less, become poorer readers, and learn fewer words. Indeed, the vocabulary problems of students who enter school with poor or limited vocabularies only worsen over time.

Yet in spite of its obvious importance to academic success, vocabulary development has received little instructional attention in recent years. So to return to our question: Why a booklet about vocabulary development? Simply because words are the very foundation of learning. Finding ways to increase students’ vocabulary growth throughout the school years must become a major educational priority. The purpose of this booklet is to help you make vocabulary development an important part of instruction.

The booklet is divided into three parts. In the first part, we look at some of the obstacles that can make vocabulary development a difficult task. In the second part, we provide an overview of the components of effective vocabulary instruction and discuss how these components can help students overcome the major obstacles to vocabulary growth. In part three, we describe some specific techniques that are especially useful in teaching word meanings as concepts, particularly in the content areas.


First, however, we need to clarify what we mean by vocabulary. There are several types of vocabulary. For example, our listening vocabulary is made up of all the words we hear and understand. Our speaking vocabulary includes all the words we use in everyday speech. Our reading vocabulary is made up of the words in print that we recognize or can figure out. As we use vocabulary in this booklet, the term refers to the reading vocabulary—the body of words students must know if they are to read increasingly demanding text with fluency and comprehension. We do not address issues of decoding and of acquiring sight words; our focus is on how students acquire meanings—and, more importantly, understandings—of new words and concepts. Those issues are, however, covered in the booklet, Beginning Reading Instruction: Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program.

Some Obstacles to Vocabulary Development

Helping students to develop a strong reading vocabulary requires more than having them look up words in a dictionary. Rather, students need instruction that will help them acquire new word knowledge and develop strategies to enable them to increase the depth of that knowledge over time. To help students develop word knowledge in breadth and depth, we must first recognize four fundamental obstacles, and then develop teaching practices to address those obstacles:

- **The size of the task.** The number of words that students need to learn is exceedingly large.

- **The differences between spoken English and written, or “literate” English.** The vocabulary of written English, particularly the “literate” English that students encounter in textbooks and other school materials, differs greatly from that of spoken, especially conversational, English. Students—both English language learners and those for whom English is the first language—may have limited exposure to literate English outside of school.

- **The limitations of sources of information about words.** The sources of information about words that are readily available to students—dictionaries, word parts, and context—pose their own problems. Each can be difficult to use, uninformative, or even misleading.

- **The complexity of word knowledge.** Knowing a word involves much more than knowing its dictionary definition, and simply memorizing a dictionary definition does not guarantee the ability to use a word in reading or writing. Adding to the complexity is the fact that different kinds of words place different demands on learners.

The Size of the Task

Although there is still debate over exactly how many and what words are essential for students to learn so as to become skillful readers, there is no question that skillful readers learn words by the thousands. There is also no doubt that without instructional intervention, the vocabulary gap between more and less skillful readers continues to widen over time.

We know that, on average, students add 2,000–3,000 words a year to their reading vocabularies. This means that they learn from six to eight new words each day—an enormous achievement. Individual differences in vocabulary size also involve large numbers. Some fifth-grade students may know

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thousands more words than other students in the same classroom. As a teacher, you know the difference this can make: students who know the meanings of many words catch on to and understand new ideas and concepts much faster than do those students with limited vocabularies.

Early in children’s lives, differences in word knowledge levels begin to appear. This, in part, is due to the varying range of words children are exposed to within their homes and communities. Exposure to new words can differ dramatically among the children of families from different socioeconomic classes. It has been shown, for example, that young children of parents with jobs classified as “professional” can be exposed to 50 percent more words than are children of parents classified as “working class,” and to twice as many words as children of parents who receive welfare support. This finding does not mean that all, or even most children from low SES backgrounds are condemned to lives of linguistic poverty. Rather, it underscores the importance of finding ways to provide children with more activities that promote language development and vocabulary growth, beginning in the earliest days of school. Children whose homes have not prepared them for the variety of English necessary for educational success can learn to master this language through well-designed school experiences.

The Differences Between Spoken English and Written English

Most spoken language, and especially the language of face-to-face conversation, is less rich and varied in vocabulary use than is written language. This is partly because speakers have a variety of communicative tools at their disposal—gestures, tone of voice, and facial expression—that are not available to writers. In addition, conversations between friends involve shared knowledge, which makes precise communication possible without precision in wording; “You know who” can identify the subject of a remark as precisely as a detailed physical description. In conversation, accuracy of communication depends more on feedback from listeners than on getting what is said exactly right.

In writing, and especially in literate writing, the primary communicative tool is precision in word choice. In fact, a conversation among college-educated adults contains, on average, less rich and varied vocabulary than does a typical children’s book. The language of television is sometimes more varied than everyday conversation, but it seldom matches the level of language used in children’s books.

The differences between spoken and written English can pose major problems for students learning English, whose vocabulary difficulties sometimes can be disguised by their conversational fluency. For example, children of immigrant parents can become proficient in everyday conversation in less than two years. However, it may take a longer period of time for these children to become proficient in literate English. If teachers are not aware of the difference in the time it takes to achieve conversational fluency and proficiency with written English, they might diagnose as learning or reading disabled a conversationally proficient English language learner who has trouble understanding textbooks.

Learning the vocabulary of literate English can be a problem as well for students for whom English is the first language. Words such as *renovate, restore, delve,* and *elude,* which might appear in a story from a fifth-grade textbook, are rarely encountered in everyday speech. We cannot assume that children will be familiar with all the words they encounter in school and in textbooks just because they come from English-speaking homes or just because they are proficient in conversational English.

**Limitations of the Sources of Information About Words**

Learning on their own or as part of a lesson, students have three main sources of information about words: dictionaries, word parts, and context. All of these are important, but each is also problematic.

**Dictionaries.** Although dictionary use is a main feature of most vocabulary instruction, many students do not receive the kind of instruction they need to learn how to use a dictionary effectively. Traditional instruction in dictionary use focuses on having students look up words and use information from the definitions they find to write sentences. This kind of instruction appears to produce only a superficial understanding and rapid forgetting of a word. Young students often have difficulty interpreting the information in definitions, especially when it comes to how the word is used in a sentence. This is true even when the definitions have been rewritten to make them more user-friendly. In fact, after examining the errors made by students who wrote sentences based on dictionary definitions of new words, the examiners concluded that this activity is “pedagogically useless.”

Young students also often have difficulty choosing the appropriate meanings from a dictionary entry for an unknown word. Dictionary definitions that might be accurate for adults are often too convoluted for children to understand, and the simplified definitions found in school dictionaries and glossaries often fail to adequately describe the word’s meaning.

**Word parts.** Students’ ability to use word parts—prefixes, suffixes, and roots—to interpret new words can contribute greatly to their vocabulary growth. Nevertheless, word parts are not a completely reliable source of information about word meanings. To illustrate, consider pairs of words such as the following, which share recognizable parts, but which are not clearly related in meaning: *casual/casualty, emerge/emergency, sign/resign, sign/design, awe/awful.*

**Context.** Students can acquire a great deal of vocabulary knowledge as they pick up the meanings of words from context as they read widely in appropriately challenging texts. However, the benefits of context are primarily long-term—a matter of gradually accumulating partial information about words as they are encountered repeatedly; the chance of learning the meaning of any particular word from one encounter with that word in context is rather slim.

14 Anglin, 1993.
Finally, to use dictionary definitions, word parts, and context effectively requires awareness of words and flexible thinking—metacognitive and metalinguistic sophistication that many students do not possess. In fact, the students who are most in need of vocabulary growth are likely to be the ones least effective at using these sources of information.

The Complexity of Word Knowledge

What does it mean to know a word? Conventionally, when we talk about knowing a word, we mean knowing its definition. But knowing a word’s definition is not the same thing as being able to use that word in speech and writing or to understand a text in which the word appears. People are able to use and to recognize in print words such as at, the, and so, but very few can give a formal definition for them. Definitions are ways we talk about word meanings, but are different from word meanings.

In the conventional form of a definition, the definition first identifies the category to which a word belongs, and then describes how the word differs from other members of that category. A conventional definition of fissure, taken from a widely used dictionary, reads as follows: “a narrow opening [class] produced by cleavage [differentiation].”

The problem with conventional definitions is that they do not always help students to learn word meanings. Indeed, the shortcomings of using such definitions to learn words can be seen in the sentences students write after they have read them. Given the following definition of redress: “set right; repair, remedy,” one student wrote the following sentence: “The redress for getting well [when] you’re sick is to stay in bed.”

Subtle misunderstandings such as this one suggest that for many students, a word’s “meaning” is not captured fully in a description of its logical relations to other words. To know a word, students need to encounter it in context and see how its meaning relates to the words around it, and how it relates to the other words that might have been used in its place. They need to understand that worry and fret are ways of showing concern, or that galleon, schooner, and dinghy are all types of boats. In addition, they need to understand how the meanings of words shift and change as words are used in different contexts. For example, look at changes in meaning for the word gave, as it appears in different contexts:

John gave Frank five dollars.
John gave Mary a kiss.
The doctor gave the child an injection.
The orchestra gave a stunning performance.

Although all of these examples involve an act of transmitting, with a giver, a recipient, and something given, each act differs greatly from the others. Students cannot learn this information from a dictionary definition alone. Instead, they need to see the word in many different contexts, to see how the word’s meaning changes and shifts.

17 See, for example, Scott & Nagy, 1997.
Adding to the complexity of word knowledge is the fact that all words are not the same. Vocabulary contains function words and content words. Function words are words that have a syntactic function, that are used to alert a reader or speaker to the structure of the sentence. The previous sentence without the words are, that, a, to, or, the, and of reads as follows: Function words words have syntactic function, used cue reader speaker structure sentence. Without function words the sentence is unintelligible.

Most speakers of English learn function words readily, in the first stages of language development. There are a relatively small number of such words, with approximately 100 accounting for almost 50 percent of the words used in written English. However, the number of content words is virtually unlimited. Content words are the nouns, verbs, and adjectives that carry information in a text. Content words can be more or less concrete or abstract. Concrete words have a perceptible referent—for example, things, colors, sounds. Abstract words are more difficult to picture, feel, or hear. Not surprisingly, abstract words are more difficult to learn than are concrete words. In vocabulary instruction, the meanings of concrete words can be tied to an object, or shown, whereas the meanings of abstract words have to be taught through examples and non-examples.

Other content words are infrequently used synonyms for words that are already known, such as longevous (long-lived), abattoir (slaughterhouse), and paranomasia (pun). These words may represent different shades of meaning from their synonyms, but knowing the meaning of the more frequent synonym usually gets a reader through a text containing the less frequent word. The reader learns the different shades of meaning though continued exposure.

More often than not, content words represent not just a new term, but a new concept, a new way of organizing ideas and experiences. For example, concepts such as logarithm or photosynthesis need to be learned in the context of other mathematical or biological concepts. We learn concepts through repeated encounters with them in a number of different contexts. Because learning word meanings as concepts is vital to vocabulary development—and content-area learning—we have made it the sole focus of part three of this booklet.

The Components of Effective Vocabulary Instruction

To be effective, a program of vocabulary instruction should provide students with opportunities for word learning by:

- encouraging wide reading;
- exposing students to high-quality oral language;
- promoting word consciousness;
- providing explicit instruction of specific words; and
- providing modeling and instruction in independent word-learning strategies.

In this part of the booklet, we discuss how each of these components contributes to helping students overcome the major obstacles to vocabulary growth. These components extend the vocabulary development ideas presented in the booklet, *Beginning Reading Instruction: Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program*.

What To Do About the Size of the Task: Wide Reading

We know that the volume of students’ reading is strongly related to their vocabulary knowledge. Students learn new words by encountering them in text, either through their own reading or by being read to. Increasing the opportunities for such encounters improves students’ vocabulary knowledge, which, in turn, improves their ability to read more and more complex text. In short, the single most important thing you can do to improve students’ vocabularies is to get them to read more.

Remember, to keep up, students need to learn at a rate of 2,000–3,000 words per year; to catch up, they need to exceed this rate. Can wide reading really be enough to help students learn so many words? Evidence indicates that it can. First, there is the evidence of those avid readers who acquire large vocabularies largely apart from any type of explicit instruction in vocabulary. Second, there is a growing body of research showing that, although the odds of learning any particular word from context are small, the cumulative effects of learning from reading can be large. Consider the following argument for the effects of wide reading:

- If, over a school year, a fifth-grade student reads for an hour each day, five days a week (in and out of school), at a conservative rate of 150 words per minute, the student will encounter 2,250,000 words in the course of reading.

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If 2 to 5 percent of the words the student encounters are unknown words, he or she will encounter from 45,000 to 112,500 such words.

We know that students learn between 5 and 10 percent of previously unknown words from a single reading. This accounts for at least 2,250 new words the student learns from context each year.

The figure 2,250 new words learned a year is based on the lowest points of the estimated ranges. Even this conservative figure suggests that reading is a powerful influence on students' vocabulary growth.

What kinds of reading are necessary to produce such vocabulary growth? Whereas some argue that almost any reading ultimately will have powerful benefits for students, others say that if students consistently select texts below their current reading levels, even wide reading will not result in measurable vocabulary growth. Nor is reading text that is full of unfamiliar words likely to produce large gains in word knowledge.

To help students get the most out of reading, you should encourage them to read at a variety of levels—some text simply for enjoyment, which should benefit their fluency if nothing else—and some text that challenges them. You should also help students develop reading strategies that will allow them to read more challenging texts with lower levels of frustration. When students have been taught comprehension strategies, they tend to do more reading.

Increasing their motivation to read is another critical factor in helping students make the most of wide reading. One powerful motivating factor associated with more reading is a classroom environment that encourages and promotes social interactions related to reading. Making available a variety of books and setting aside ample time for reading also motivate increased reading.

As is true for any method of promoting vocabulary growth, wide reading has some limitations. One is that it obviously cannot be effective with very young students who are not yet able to read very much on their own. Another limitation is that, although wide reading may be effective in producing general vocabulary growth, it is not an effective method for teaching the words that students need to master a particular selection or a concept related to a specific content area. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that, as important as it is, wide reading does not produce immediate, magic results; its effects are cumulative, and emerge over time.

You can encourage wide reading in a number of ways. You might, for example, recommend or provide lists of books for students to read outside of class, and make time in class for students to discuss what they have read. You can set aside a time each day for independent reading. And, of course, you can model the value you place on reading as they read, by telling students about the books you are reading.


What To Do About the Differences Between Spoken and Written English: High Quality Oral Language and Word Consciousness

High-quality oral language. As we discussed earlier, both English language learners and English-speaking students may achieve fluency in the language of face-to-face conversation and still have little exposure to or knowledge of the kind of language they encounter in school textbooks. Clearly these students need more exposure to written English, and wide reading is the most effective way of increasing exposure to this kind of language. But what can be done with students who are in the process of learning to read, and who cannot do a great deal of reading on their own? Here is one solution: Increase the quality of the oral language to which students are exposed—let them hear spoken English that incorporates more of the vocabulary and syntax typical of written, and particularly literate English.

A very effective way to expose children to literate vocabulary is to read to them from storybooks, especially when the reading is accompanied with discussion. Authors of good children's literature have always found ways to talk “over children’s heads”—using big words and other aspects of literate language—without decreasing children's interest or enjoyment. Both younger and older students appear to benefit from read-aloud activities, and older students can learn the meanings of new words as efficiently from hearing stories read to them as they can from reading the stories themselves. Making available (either in the classroom or school library) a selection of quality audio books and players that students can use on their own can also be a good way to expose them to a variety of good books and broad language experiences.

Storytelling is yet another way to increase the quality of students’ oral language experiences. Even when no text is involved, storytelling still exposes students to richer language than does normal conversation. Pretend play likewise involves rich language use. The quality of preschool children’s conversations and teachers’ use of a more sophisticated vocabulary also have been found to affect students’ language and literacy development.

Word consciousness. Asked what they could do to use more sophisticated vocabulary without intimidating or confusing their students, a group of teachers responded enthusiastically, “Make it fun!” We definitely agree. Playing with language is an essential component of language development. Word consciousness is the knowledge of and interest in words. Word-conscious students enjoy learning new words and engaging in word play. They know and use many words, and are aware of the subtleties of word meaning and of the power words can have.

To become word conscious, students first need to develop a feel for how written language is different from everyday conversation. To this end, it is valuable to draw their attention to the distinctive characteristics of written language, even when reading aloud, and to help them learn to read like a writer, and to write with an audience in mind.

Having students copy in their journals phrases or sentences from their reading that are examples of especially effective language use—vivid descriptions, striking metaphors, interesting similes, plays on words—can help make language more alive for them. Students can share their examples with the class, or they can post them in the classroom to serve as inspiration or models for others.

Reading and discussing two versions of the same story—ideally, one with rich language and one with language that is less interesting—can promote word consciousness in younger students.

Word consciousness can be promoted in a way that helps students become aware of differences between Standard English and non-standard varieties, without stigmatizing the latter. Shirley Brice Heath describes classrooms in which students learned to be “language detectives,” studying how people speak differently in different groups and in different situations. She believes that this awareness made an important contribution to the students’ academic success.\(^{33}\) It may be especially important to make such differences explicit for students less familiar with standard English.

A number of oral and written word games can serve to promote word consciousness, including puns, limericks, Hink-Pinks, crossword puzzles, jokes, riddles, and anagrams.\(^{34}\) Encouraging students to play with words can create an interest in knowing more about them, and thus, can become a strategy for independent word learning.

What To Do About the Limitations of Sources of Information About Words: - Independent Word-Learning Strategies -

Independent word-learning strategies are techniques that teachers can model and teach to students so as to help them figure out the meanings of unknown words on their own. Because students learn most new words incidentally, through wide reading, helping students to acquire a set of word-learning strategies is important to their vocabulary development. Key word-learning strategies include (1) the efficient use of the dictionary; (2) the use of word parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots, compounds) to unlock a word's meaning; and (3) the use of context clues.

**Dictionary use.** Instruction in dictionary use that focuses on having students look up words and use information from their definitions to write sentences does not provide students with the guidance they need to make dictionary use an efficient independent word-learning strategy.

This is not to say, however, that dictionaries are not important aids to word learning. In fact, the more students are exposed to dictionary definitions, the better their word learning.\(^{35}\) The crucial point here is that students receive instruction in how to use what they find in a dictionary entry so that they are able to translate the cryptic and conventionalized content of definitions into usable word knowledge.\(^{36}\) This instruction includes modeling how to look up the meaning of an unknown word, thinking-aloud

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about the various definitions in an entry, and deciding which is the most appropriate definition for a particular context.\textsuperscript{37}

**Word parts.** Teaching students how to use information about word parts can be very valuable in promoting vocabulary growth. Many students, however, are not aware of this strategy. Even students who have learned to break words into parts in their decoding instruction may not understand that they can use this knowledge to figure out word meanings. Teacher modeling helps to make the strategy’s value clear to students.\textsuperscript{38}

Using word-part information can be especially helpful in learning certain content-area concepts, as we will discuss in part three of this booklet.

**Context clues.** Context clues are clues to the meaning of a word contained in the text that surrounds it. These clues include definitions, examples, and restatements. Teaching students strategies for identifying and using context clues has been suggested as a major instructional technique for vocabulary development.\textsuperscript{39}

A student learns a new word from context by making connections between the word and the text in which it appears. When a new word is first encountered, the student stores in memory some information about how it fits into what is being read. In subsequent encounters with the word, this information is reinforced, and more information about the word’s role in particular contexts is added until the word is understood and used appropriately. As in teaching other kinds of strategies, teaching students to use context clues to develop vocabulary is an extended process that involves: modeling the strategy; providing explicit explanations of how, why, and when to use it; providing guided practice; gradually holding students accountable for independently using the strategy; and then providing intermittent reminders to apply it to reading across content areas.

As we noted earlier, learning words from context is a long-term process, one that involves multiple encounters with words. The challenge is to create vocabulary instruction that compresses this process to enable students to learn more words in a shorter period of time.\textsuperscript{40}

### What To Do About the Complexity of Word Knowledge: Explicit Instruction of Specific Words

Although students gain most of their word knowledge through wide reading, explicit instruction of specific words and their meanings also can contribute greatly to their vocabulary development. Explicit instruction is especially important for students whose exposure to the vocabulary of literate English is limited. To be most effective, explicit vocabulary instruction should be dynamic and involve a variety of techniques. Specifically, instruction should:

\textsuperscript{37} Graves et al., 1997.


\textsuperscript{40} Stahl, 1999.
1. use both definitional and contextual information about word meanings,
2. involve students actively in word learning, and
3. use discussion to teach the meanings of new words and to provide meaningful information about the words.

1. **Use definitional and contextual information.** In the past, vocabulary instruction most often consisted of learning lists of words and definitions (with a test on Friday). We now know that such instruction is of limited value, particularly in improving students’ reading comprehension. Students need to know how a word functions in various contexts. Therefore, instructional methods that provide students with both definitional and contextual information do improve comprehension, and do so significantly.

Some instructional activities that provide students with definitional information include:

- **Teach synonyms.** Often a synonym is all students need to understand a new word in context.

- **Teach antonyms.** Not all words have antonyms, but thinking about antonyms requires students to identify the crucial aspects of a word. For example, the word *chaos* implies an abyss, a void, or clutter, but its antonym, narrows the focus to the “clutter” part of the word’s meaning.

- **Rewrite definitions.** As we noted earlier, dictionary definitions can often confuse or mislead students. Asking students to restate a dictionary definition in their own words can be more effective than requiring them to remember the exact wording of the definition.

- **Provide example sentences.** A good way to ascertain whether students understand a word’s definition is to have them provide example sentences in which they use the word. They may draw these examples from personal experiences (“Mom’s kitchen is chaos”) or from textbooks (“After the great flood of 1937, there was chaos all over the Tennessee Valley”).

- **Provide non-examples.** Another way to find out if students truly understand the meaning of a new word is to have them supply words that are not examples of the word’s meaning. For example, point out to them that cry is not an example of the word *guffaw*, then ask them to think of other non-examples of the word (*bawl, sniffle, whine, whimper*). Coming up with non-examples requires students to think about the critical attributes of a word, much like providing antonyms.

- **Discuss the difference between the new word and related words.** A discussion of the word *debris*, defined as “trash,” “garbage,” or “waste,” might include a discussion of the differences between *debris* and *trash, garbage, and waste*. For example, *debris* might be the result of some sort of accident or disaster, whereas *trash* might include anything. *Garbage* generally refers to organic material, such as food leftovers, and *waste* implies something left over, rather than something resulting from a disaster. Such a thorough discussion encourages students to focus on the meanings of words.

Some activities that provide students with contextual information include:

- **Have students create sentences that contain the new word.** Encourage students to create sentences that show a clear understanding of the meaning of the word—not just “I like chaos.” More acceptable sentences are those that include the definition, such as, “Chaos is when everything is in disorder.” Even more acceptable are sentences that extend the definition, such as, “The scene was complete chaos—desks were turned over, paint was splashed on the floor, and the trashcan was upside down.” Of course, to write sentences containing a new word, students need examples of how it is used correctly. Definitions, even those that give brief examples, rarely provide enough information to guarantee that students have a real sense of how words are used. One way to scaffold students’ use of new words is to have them complete sentence stems containing the word, e.g., “John thought it would pacify the teacher if…”

- **Use more than one new word in a sentence.** Asking students to use more than one new word in each sentence they create can force them to look for relations among words.

- **Discuss the meaning of the same word in different sentences.** Many words have multiple meanings, which depend on the context in which the words appear. To prevent students from limiting word meanings to one particular context, have them use a new word in several different and varied sentences. For the word *chaos*, their sentences might include topics such as chaos in classroom behavior, chaos as clutter and mess, chaos in personal relations, and so forth.

- **Create a scenario.** Invite students to make up a story in which a new word features prominently. If students are too young for this activity, have them draw a picture story for a new word.

- **Create silly questions.** You might have students pair new words and use each pair to make a silly question. For the words *actuary, hermit, philanthropist,* and *villain,* their questions might include, “Can an actuary be a hermit?” “Can an actuary be a philanthropist?” “Can a philanthropist be a hermit?” “Can a philanthropist be a villain?”

2. **Involve students actively in word learning.** Students remember more when they relate new information to known information, transforming it in their own words, generating examples and non-examples, producing antonyms and synonyms, and so forth.

### Instruction That Works

In one study of exemplary vocabulary instruction, activities were conducted in a five-day cycle. On the first day, the new words were defined, and students discussed the use of each word in context. This discussion took different forms, including discussion of examples and non-examples, pantomimes, and having students say “Yay” if the word was used correctly in a sentence and “Boo” if it was not. On the second day, after a review of the definitions, students might work on log sheets, completing sentences for each word. On the third day, they completed another log sheet, then worked on a timed activity in

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which pairs of students attempted in the shortest amount of time to match words with their definitions. This activity was repeated on the fourth day. After completion of the second timed activity, students were asked silly questions. On the fifth day, they took a post-test.

These activities varied somewhat with different units. For example, students also completed a “Word Wizard” chart activity each day. A Word Wizard chart is a chart that contains new vocabulary words. These words can be taken from a storybook, or a text, or can just be words that are encountered in some way. Every time a child in the class found one of these words in context, the teacher attached an adhesive note with the child’s name and the context next to the word. The first child who received 5, 10, or some other number of notes became the Word Wizard. Students were given credit toward becoming a “Word Wizard” by finding examples of each word used outside of class.

This program, or variations of it, significantly improved students’ comprehension of texts containing words that were taught. As part of the program, it was revealed that twelve encounters with a word reliably improved comprehension, but four encounters did not. The instructional approach, which involved active processing of each word’s meaning, had significantly greater effects than did a definition-only approach on measures of comprehension, but not on measures involving the recall of definitions. These findings suggest that vocabulary instruction can improve comprehension, but only if the instruction is rich and extensive, and includes a great many encounters with to-be-learned words.

3 Use discussion to teach word meanings. Discussion adds an important dimension to vocabulary instruction. Students with little or no knowledge of some new words they encounter in a vocabulary lesson are often able to construct a good idea of a word’s meaning from the bits of partial knowledge contributed by their classmates. (When the class as a whole does not know much about a particular word, however, you may have to help. Perhaps you could supply some information about the word, such as a quick definition.)

Discussion can clarify misunderstandings of words by making the misunderstandings public. For words that a student knows partially, or knows in one particular context, the give-and-take of discussion can clarify meanings. When misunderstandings are public, the teacher can shape them into the correct meaning.

Discussion involves students in other ways. As they wait to be called on, students practice covertly, or silently prepare a response. Therefore, even though you call on only one student, many other students anticipate that they will have to come up with an answer. As a result, discussion leads to increased vocabulary learning. Without the practiced response, discussion is not likely to be valuable as a learning experience.

Bringing Instruction Together: A Sample Lesson

This sample lesson illustrates how a teacher can bring together the three components of explicit vocabulary instruction to teach words that are key to understanding the story *The Talking Eggs* by Robert San Soucil. The words chosen for instruction are *backwoods, contrary, dawdled, groping, rubies, and silver.*


45 This sample lesson is adapted from Stahl, 1999.
For the key word backwoods, read the following sentence from the story: “Then the old woman took her by the hand and led her deep into the backwoods.” Ask students to predict what backwoods means. Backwoods is a compound, and, when the information from the word parts is combined with some information from the context, its meaning should be fairly clear. Next, ask students to describe the backwoods briefly.

The key word contrary can be taught the same way, beginning with reading this sentence from the book: “You do as I say and don’t be so contrary,” and asking students to predict the meaning of the word from context. For this word, have students discuss a definition for the word, such as “disagreeable, raising objections,” and encourage them to explain how the definition fits in the context of the sentence. As a follow up, you have them create some sentences that contain contrary. This can lead to a discussion of another, related meaning for contrary, that of “from another point of view,” as in the expression “to the contrary.”

For dawdled and groping, begin once again by reading sentences in the story that contain the words. Because these words are verbs, however, you might want to pantomime the meaning of each, rather than supply a conventional definition. Then ask students to create sentences that use the words. You might define dawdled with some non-examples, because it is a word that has some clear antonyms, such as hustled, ran, went quickly, and so on.

For rubies and silver, begin by having the class discuss what precious things are. You might illustrate the words by providing pictures that show rubies and things made of silver. Next, work with the class to make a list of precious things, including rubies and silver, as well as gold, diamonds, and so forth.

The words used in the sample lesson are highly dissimilar. They were selected for instruction only because they happen to come from the story the students were reading. The techniques used to teach the words, however, are somewhat similar. For four of the six words, the teacher starts with sentences from the text, then asks students to create additional sentences to extend the meaning of the word beyond the text. Finally, the teacher also includes a definition, either a conventional verbal one or a gestural one, for each of the words.

The instruction this lesson illustrates is relatively minimal, designed to support the reading of the text. More elaborate instruction would shift the focus from the story to the vocabulary words, and might be useful in a classroom with many English language learners, or in any classroom when a greater emphasis on vocabulary is appropriate. More elaborate instruction also might include using additional sentence contexts for each word, a “yea or nay” activity (“Would you dawdle in the backwoods?”), or having students write a scenario, or story that contains these words.
Some Cautions -

Explicit vocabulary instruction does seem to improve comprehension significantly, at least when the words taught come from the text students are reading. Nevertheless, some cautions are in order. First, teaching vocabulary as students read can, under certain circumstances, distract them from the main ideas of the text. Second, teaching words that are not important to understanding the text leads students to focus on individual word meanings rather than on the overall meaning of what they read. The more effort students expend focusing on word meanings, the less effort they will have available to recall information that is important to comprehension.46 Thus, to be effective, pre-reading vocabulary instruction should focus on words that relate to the major ideas in a text, rather than on words that are interesting or unusual.

Teaching Word Meanings as Concepts

Although there is general agreement that effective vocabulary instruction should include the components we have just discussed, there is no such agreement as to the most effective techniques for increasing students' knowledge of specific words. We do know, however, that the most effective instruction teaches word meanings as concepts, using a variety of techniques to help students establish connections among context, their prior knowledge, and the concepts or words being taught.47

In this part of the booklet, we discuss specific techniques that have proven successful in teaching word meanings as concepts. These include Concept of Definition Maps, Semantic Mapping, Semantic Feature Mapping, Possible Sentences, Comparing and Contrasting, and Teaching Word Parts.

Concept of Definition Maps

Concept of Definition Maps (or Word Maps) reflect the idea that students need to have some understanding of what a definition is and how it works before they can give the meaning of a word on their own. Concept of Definition Maps are graphic displays that show common elements of a dictionary definition. These elements include (1) the category to which the word being defined belongs (What is this?), (2) some characteristics of the word (What is it like?), and (3) some specific examples and some non-examples of the word. Students refer to context, their prior knowledge, and dictionaries to find the elements needed to complete the map.

The following filled-in map for potentate was prepared to clarify the meaning of the word potentate, which appeared in a story in a fourth-grade reading textbook.

Concept of Definition Map -

Once the map is complete, the teacher models how to write a definition using the information on the word map. For example, “A potentate is a ruler who has a lot of power. The people do not elect potentates, and some stay in office for life. Some types of potentates are sovereigns, kings, and emperors.” After writing their own definitions, students can confirm them by using dictionaries to look up potentate, then revise or add to their definitions, if necessary.

A simpler variation of the Concept of Definition Map is called the Four Square activity. In this activity, each student takes a sheet of paper and folds it so there are four sections. The students write the target concept word (such as soothing) in the upper left section of the paper, then write some examples of the concept in the upper right section (baths, soft music, chocolate), some non-examples of the concept in the lower right section (loud music, traffic, crying babies), and a definition in the lower left section (having a calming effect).

Semantic Mapping

Semantic Mapping involves a web-like graphic display. To begin instruction, students are presented with a concept that is central to understanding a selection or subject. They then brainstorm or freely associate words that are related to that concept. As students brainstorm, the teacher writes their suggestions on the board, adding words they need to learn.

For example, for a unit on weather, the teacher targeted the words meteorology, global, precipitation, barometer, and hurricane in the text students were about to read. These words were defined and discussed during the brainstorming session. When the students finished brainstorming, the teacher and

the class together developed the following map to show the relationships among the words. The target words were highlighted, and one section of the map was left blank so that the class could fill in another category after reading the selection.

Semantic Mapping is helpful for developing students’ understanding of almost any concept. It has been used to develop concepts as diverse as polygons and the Dewey decimal system.\(^{49}\)

### Semantic Map

![Semantic Map Diagram]

Semantic Feature Analysis

Semantic Feature Analysis also draws on students’ prior knowledge and uses discussion to elicit information about word meanings. Semantic Feature Analysis is similar to Semantic Mapping, with the exception that it uses a grid such as the one below rather than a map as a graphic display.

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\(^{50}\) Stahl & Clark, 1987; Stahl & Vancil, 1986.

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The left-side column of the Semantic Feature Analysis grid contains the names of members of the category to which the target concept belongs. The top row of the grid contains names of features of members of the category. Students should be encouraged to add terms either across the top or down the side during discussion. Groups of students or the whole class should discuss whether each item is an example of each concept, marking + for positive examples, − for negative examples, and ? for items which might be examples under certain circumstances.

The following grid was prepared for a unit on transportation.  

### Semantic Feature Analysis

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>two wheeled</th>
<th>four wheeled</th>
<th>one wheeled</th>
<th>foot powered</th>
<th>motor powered</th>
<th>on land</th>
<th>in the water</th>
<th>in the air</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As with Semantic Mapping, discussion is the key in this activity, because there are many ambiguities in determining the feature of a concept, and discussion of these ambiguities can help students clarify the concept they are learning.

### Possible Sentences

The Possible Sentences technique uses both known words and new words that are related to key concepts in a reading selection. The teacher begins by choosing some six to eight words from the text that might cause difficulty for the students. (In a content area text, these words are usually key concepts in the text, but they also may be more general words that relate to those key concepts.) Then, the teacher chooses an additional four to six words that are more likely to be known by the students. These familiar words are used to help generate sentences.

The teacher writes all of these words on the board, providing a short definition of each word if desired or if necessary. Most of the time at least one student in the class has knowledge of the word that can be...
shared. Students are directed to make up sentences that contain at least two of these words, and that might be in the selection they are about to read. The teacher writes these sentences on the board. Both accurate and inaccurate guesses are accepted, but are not discussed at this time. When the students are finished contributing sentences (and all words are included in at least one sentence), the teacher has them read the selection.

After reading, the class then returns to the sentences on the board, and discusses whether each sentence could or could not be true based on their reading. If a sentence could be true, it is left alone. If a sentence could not be true, then the class discusses how it could be modified to make it true.

For a unit on weather, front, barometer, humidity, air mass, air pressure, and meteorology were chosen as the target words, with high, rain, clouds, and predict as the familiar words. The criteria for choosing the target words included a consideration of which words might be difficult for fifth graders and which words were central to the concepts taught in a specific selection. The familiar words were words that students were likely to know, and that lent themselves to logical sentences that would relate to the major concepts in the selection.

Comparing and Contrasting

Comparing and contrasting can help students extend their vocabularies by establishing relationships among concepts. A simple Venn diagram can be a good tool for comparing and contrasting such content-area concepts as republic and democracy, organic and inorganic, symphony and concerto, and so forth.

The following diagram was prepared as part of a unit on the American Revolution to compare and contrast the important concepts of protest and rebellion. The teacher first explained that whereas the American colonists thought that acts such as the Boston Tea Party were legitimate protests against British taxation, the British thought that the colonists were engaged in rebellion against their sovereign government. The difference in perceptions led to increasing tensions and eventually, revolution.

Teaching Word Parts

Teaching students to recognize and use information from word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots can be an especially effective word-learning strategy for use with content area texts. These texts can contain many words that are derived from the same word parts. Although words such as misread, interdependent, and substandard can often be figured out from context, decomposing such words into known parts like mis-, read, inter-, depend, and so forth, not only makes the words themselves more memorable, but, in combination with sentence context, may be a useful strategy in determining the meaning of unknown words.

Students can acquire the meaning of word parts by inference as they read. However, although such a strategy may be part and parcel of normal reading, many students—even high school students—are unaware that breaking words into their parts can be a way to determine their meanings. In addition, students often do not know the meanings of common word parts.\(^{53}\)

**What parts to teach?** A number of lists are available that contain hundreds of prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin roots.\(^ {54}\) Although such lists may be useful, it is not possible or even fruitful to teach each element on each list. It seems more reasonable to teach students the most commonly used or important elements, and accompany this instruction with the teaching and modeling of a general strategy for breaking words into parts. One such strategy is to teach students to combine word-part information with information from the sentence context.

**Prefixes.** Only twenty prefixes account for 97 percent of prefixed words that appear in printed school English.\(^ {55}\) Teaching at least the most frequently occurring nine—if not all twenty—of these prefixes to middle school students can pay dividends in increased vocabulary learning.

**Suffixes.** The most frequently occurring suffixes in printed school English are inflectional endings such as noun endings (-s, -es), verb endings (-ed, -ing, -en), and adjective endings (-er, -est).\(^ {56}\) In general, even young students use these endings in their oral language. Therefore, middle school and older students should have few problems learning and using them.

Derivational suffixes (such as -y, -ly, -ial, and -ic) appear in fewer than a quarter of all the words that contain suffixes, but they can also be useful to teach. Comprehension of relatively infrequent words such as exponential and unwieldy can be aided by knowledge of the meaning of the -ial and -y suffixes.

The length of some suffixed words can occasionally overwhelm students who are less able readers. Learning to recognize the letter patterns that make common suffixes can help these students to distinguish root from suffix, thus reducing the size of the word and allowing them to focus on relevant information within the word.\(^ {57}\) Activities such as these are a natural extension to decoding instruction that teaches students to look at chunks of words.

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56 White et al., 1989.

57 Adams, 1990.
Other suffixes, such as -ful, and -less, are meaningful components of words, contributing to words’ meanings in much the same way as prefixes. Even suffixes without such stable meanings, such as -tion or -ly, might also help students identify words, if only to alert them to the grammatical function of words in sentences. For example, -tion indicates that a word is a noun; -ly at the end of a word indicates that it is an adverb.

The following list shows the most common prefixes and suffixes in printed school English.

### The Most Frequent Affixes in Printed School English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Percent of All Prefixed Words</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Percent of All Sufixed Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>un-</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>-s, -es</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>re-</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>-ed</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>in-, im-, il-, ir- (not)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>-ing</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>dis-</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>-ly</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>en-, em-</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-er, -or (agent)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>non-</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-ion, -tion, -ation, -ition</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>in-, im- (in)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-able, -ible</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>over-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-al, -ial</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>mis-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-y</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>sub-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-ness</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>pre-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-ity, -ty</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>inter-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-ment</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>fore-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-ic</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>de-</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-ous, -eous, -ious</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>trans-</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>super-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-er (comparative)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>semi-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-ive, -ative, -tive</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>anti-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-ful</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>mid-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-less</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>under- (too little)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-est</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All others</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Roots

When students encounter unknown words such as interdependent, readable, and substandard, they can break them into prefixes, suffixes, and familiar English roots, and combine the information this analysis reveals with conceptual information they find in the context. But what can students do with content-area words such as biosphere, astronomy, superstructure, or deconstruct? In addition to their prefixes or suffixes, these words contain Greek or Latin roots. Researchers and educators are divided as to whether it is profitable to teach these roots. Some argue that the modern meanings of words (especially the most common derived words) often do not reflect the meanings of their historical roots, and that readers—particularly young students—might be misled by a literal translation of root to mean-
ing. For example, knowing that mort refers to “death” may help students to figure out the meaning of mortal or immortal, but it probably does not help them to determine the meaning of mortgage or mortify. Likewise, knowing that saline means “salty” will probably not help students get the meaning of salary, even though the words are both derived from the same root, sal. (Salt was once so valuable that it was used to pay workers.)

On the other hand, having students elaborate basic information makes it more memorable. Therefore, teaching roots may make new words more memorable by adding a story to their definition.

The solution may be to make a distinction between using word parts as an independent reading strategy and using word parts as a word-study tool. When students encounter new affixed words during independent reading, they will find it useful to be able to take off prefixes or suffixes and identify the word that remains. But because poor readers tend to be overwhelmed by long words, you may need to teach them how to use this strategy. For example, you might help students to figure out the meaning of the word interdependent by teaching them to cover the prefix inter-, then see if they recognize the rest of the word. If they do not recognize dependent, you can have them cover the suffix -ent, leaving depend. Providing students with practice in adding and removing prefixes and suffixes might also be useful. For example, you might take the root word dependent and add prefixes such as in- or non- to make new words.

Teaching students to further break down words into Latin or Greek roots is not likely to be a helpful independent reading strategy. We doubt, for example, that a struggling reader will be helped by breaking depend down further into de- and pend, even if he or she could assign meaning to these word parts, such as down and hang.

For the purposes of word study, however, when students have already been provided the meaning of the word, knowing the story or the history of the word may well make it more memorable.

A distinction also should be made between time spent studying those roots, especially Greek roots used in scientific terminology, that have relatively specific meanings (bio, hemo, meter), and time spent studying those roots, more often from Latin, whose meanings are not so specific (for example, ceive, as in conceive, deceive, receive).

The following list contains commonly occurring Greek and Latin roots.
Common Greek and Latin Roots -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aud</td>
<td>hear</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>audiophile, auditorium, audition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>astro</td>
<td>star</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>astrology, astronaut, asteroid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bio</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>biography, biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dict</td>
<td>speak, tell</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>dictate, predict, dictator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geo</td>
<td>earth</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>geology, geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meter</td>
<td>measure</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>thermometer, barometer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>min</td>
<td>little, small</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>minimum, minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mit, mis</td>
<td>send</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>mission, transmit, remit, missile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ped</td>
<td>foot</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>pedestrian, pedal, pedestal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phon</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>phonograph, microphone, phoneme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>port</td>
<td>carry</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>transport, portable, import</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scrib, script</td>
<td>write</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>scribble, manuscript, inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spect</td>
<td>see</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>inspect, spectator, respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>struct</td>
<td>build, form</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>construction, destruction, instruct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For content-area reading, you might find it worthwhile to make up lists specific to each area. Thus, for biology, such a list might include bio-, chromo-, eco-, soma-, and so forth.

**How to teach word parts.** Introductory word-part lessons should stress the idea that words can be composed of elements, such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots. These elements should be defined for students, but the emphasis should not be on learning the specific terms so much as on learning about how the parts function together to affect word meaning. For example, a lesson on *un-* might provide both examples of words beginning with *un-*, and also ask students to generate *un-* words of their own, including silly words. The use of imaginative extensions may not only solidify for students the meaning of *un-*, but also may solidify the concept of *prefix* in general. Providing students with some non-examples of prefixes, such as *under* and *uncle*, also helps reinforce what prefixes are and how they work.

After students understand the basic concepts of prefix, suffix, and root, teaching them specific word parts should be easier for you. You can teach specific word parts within the context of other vocabulary instruction, as part of the discussion of a particular word’s meaning, or by using explicit instruction. Such instruction should include providing a definition for the target word part, pointing out models of words using that word part, and having students read sentences containing the target parts. For prefixes, you should attempt to extend the instruction to include as many real and silly words as possible. For *un-*, you might use both real words such as undone, unknown, unimaginable, or unbelievable, and silly, or made-up words, such as unbig, unhamburger, unsleep, and so on.

This procedure can be used with suffixes as well as prefixes. Note, however, that although prefixes should be defined, because their definitions tend to be consistent over a variety of words, providing definitions of suffixes may serve only to confuse students. For example, defining the suffixes -ance/-ence and -ment as “condition of, quality of, or state of” does little to help students understand the mean-
Adding this information to the definition of a root such as amend or precede will do little to help students understand the meaning of amendment or precedence. A more productive procedure is to give students many examples of words containing suffixes, along with the words from which they were derived.

To teach roots, you might employ a similar teaching procedure. You might also find it useful to use a word-part web, such as the following one for the Greek root photo. Such webs introduce students to many new words as well as teach a few key words. Discussing derivatives as part of the introduction of a new word, with or without a web, is useful and motivational. Including words in the discussion and web that are relatively infrequent (such as geocentric or geode) can make target words (such as geology) more memorable for students.

Clearly there are benefits to be gained from teaching students to break words into their parts as a strategy for determining the meanings of new words. Combined with the use of context clues, this strategy seems to be especially fruitful, particularly in the content areas, where so many of the words students encounter in textbooks contain recognizable parts.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this booklet, we stressed the difficulties associated with trying to promote vocabulary development. In closing, we reiterate that helping students to develop large and powerful vocabularies is anything but an easy task. The number of words students need to learn is astronomical; their exposure to the vocabulary of literate English outside of school may be minimal; effective use of dictionary definitions, word parts, and context to determine word meanings requires students to be flexible and strategic learners; and traditional methods of teaching vocabulary are often ineffective in helping students deal with the complexity of word knowledge.

However, helping students develop strong vocabularies is essential to their success, both in school and beyond. Students may forget many of the specific facts they learn in school, but the words they learn will serve them as useful tools for a lifetime. Effective vocabulary instruction is an attainable goal. We hope that the information we have provided in this booklet will help you attain this goal for your students.
References


O’Rourke, J. (1979). *Prefixes, roots, and suffixes: Their testing and usage*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Reading Association, Atlanta, GA.


COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

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(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a nonsegregated basis;
(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;
(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;
(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
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In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by citizen or citizens residing in a school district where alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

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If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.


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References


