

Vocabulary Power

Successful Strategies for Word Mastery

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Introduction

In any subject—from preschool to graduate school—vocabulary development is critical. Children and adults can't think about concepts or theories for which they have no words. Words are thinking, reading, and writing tools. The words we know determine our ability to think, comprehend, and communicate.

A student's vocabulary flourishes best when new words are introduced in a context that interests him or her. To understand a word, a student must have an experience, either direct or vicarious, with an idea or concept behind the word. Words are best studied not in isolation, but in the context of an assignment, an area of general interest, or something vital in the student's life.

Vocabulary in schools has generally been taught by (1) teaching words and meanings through their use in the context of other words; (2) using a process of word analysis and synthesis in which the meanings of word elements are taught; or (3) teaching word meanings directly from lists of words thought to be important. These methods can be useful ways to learn words, however learning the strategies to increase vocabulary offers an opportunity for long-term retention.

Promoting word awareness is an investment in literacy. We can help students to increase their vocabulary by (1) identifying words they need to know, and (2) giving them the skills necessary for developing their vocabulary on their own.

The effective use of a growing vocabulary is one of the best indicators of reading progress. During the middle grades, students' "reading vocabulary" usually eclipses their "speaking vocabulary" and "listening vocabulary" as they extend their word knowledge through reading and study. The purpose of teaching vocabulary is to constantly expand our students' recognition of words and their meanings. Vocabulary knowledge can influence reading comprehension. Students cannot comprehend effectively what they are reading if they do not have a good "meaning

vocabulary." Reading comprehension depends on an adequate stock of meanings. There are several types of meaning vocabularies: a "listening vocabulary"; a "speaking vocabulary"; a "reading vocabulary"; and a "writing vocabulary," which develops simultaneously with the reading vocabulary. The "potential" or "marginal" vocabulary contains unfamiliar words that a reader can comprehend by examining prefixes, suffixes, derivatives, and contextual clues.

This revised edition of *Vocabulary Power Plus* includes new and updated materials that offer students strategies for developing these vocabularies. The basic exercises for vocabulary development remain, as do the bonus activities related to the vocabulary exercises. Following these sections is a new and comprehensive section called More Bonus Activities, which includes writing-process strategies and cooperative-learning activities. This section also provides integrated vocabulary instruction in the specific context of the observation/descriptive and creative/poetry modes of writing. Vocabulary development is fostered in the context of supporting students' writing. The activities encourage students to think about their writing and to develop vocabulary for specific purposes. Students then approach the writing assignments with a command of the language they need to motivate them to write.

Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary development lends itself to a variety of teaching strategies. The suggestions that follow are designed to enhance students' vocabularies by promoting strategic thinking. The activities in the Basic Exercises, Bonus Activities, and More Bonus Activities sections may be used either as individual, whole-class, or cooperative-learning-group activities. Ideally students should have access to computers.

Word-Meaning Knowledge

To improve word-meaning knowledge, students should:

- have firsthand experiences with words;
- have secondhand experiences with words;
- read in a variety of literary genres;
- have an understanding of structural-analysis strategies (affixes, word roots, combining forms);
- use a dictionary to determine word meanings (multiple meanings, homographs, connotative and denotative meanings);
- use a thesaurus (synonyms and antonyms);
- understand strategies for determining word meanings through context.

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers can be created to help students organize a series of ideas. Graphic organizers are visual representations of knowledge. They offer a way of structuring information by arranging important aspects of a concept or a topic into a pattern using labels. A graphic organizer promotes active learning. Usually discussions accompany the use of all diagramming, mapping, and clustering activities. It exercises students' use of language as they read, talk, listen, think, and write. Students are actively

engaged in the information, discovering what they do or do not know.

The Cluster Map

Cluster maps help students structure individual or group brainstorming sessions. Students write a key word or concept in a middle circle; then they write related words or concepts in adjoining circles. Students can make "clusters" to explore the meaning of an unfamiliar or interesting word. The circles that make up the cluster may include definitions, pictures, phrases, or sentences, categories, synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, or the etymology of the word in the middle circle.

The Semantic-Feature-Analysis Strategy

This strategy helps students structure individual or group brainstorming sessions. The semantic-feature analysis has been used successfully to promote vocabulary development in a variety of classroom situations. It is an effective procedure for demonstrating relationships between concepts within a category as well as the uniqueness of each word. This procedure helps students to improve their vocabulary and categorization skills. Very often as students fill in a word grid, they learn new words within a category and become aware of semantic features they may not have considered.

Category: Animals									
	water	land	fur	feathers	fins	legs	wings	swims	flies
jackal	–	+	+	–	–	+	–	–	–
weasel	–	+	+	–	–	+	–	–	–
bustard	–	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	–
toucan	–	+	–	+	–	+	+	–	+
porpoise	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	+	–

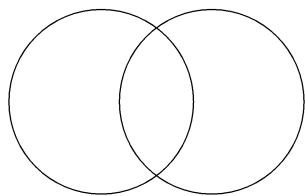
Use the following procedure to set up a semantic feature chart. First select a concrete and familiar category, such as tools, pets, or fruits. Then list words in the category down the left side of a chart. Across the top of the chart, list three or four traits, properties, or characteristics

shared by some of the words. Then guide students through the matrix, asking them to decide whether each of the words listed down the left side of the grid typically possess each of the features listed across the top. Use a plus sign to indicate that the word usually or substantially

possesses the feature, and a minus sign if it does not. Use a question mark if not sure. Students may add more words and features.

The Venn Diagram

A Venn diagram offers another way to compare the meanings of similar words. Students write the words to be compared above each circle. Then they list several properties that apply to each word inside the circle and the properties that the words share in the center.



In the Bonus Activities section, Using Analogies, exercise 2 (p. 98) and Using Prefixes, Suffixes, and Combining Forms, exercises 2–5 (p. 105) work well with Venn diagrams.

Cooperative Learning

Students can work together in a variety of modes—in partners, in small groups, or with the whole class. Cooperative learning activities allow students to engage more actively in their own learning. Group members share ideas and materials, divide task responsibilities among themselves, and work toward a common goal that depends on each person's contributions.

Technology

New technology has brought exciting changes to the curriculum. Perhaps the most visible change is the classroom computer. The computer is a convenient tool with many useful applications. However, it cannot substitute for a committed teacher presenting the reading/writing process in an ongoing curriculum.

Part of this ongoing curriculum may well include vocabulary instruction software. The most useful programs focus on three effective approaches to teaching vocabulary: words in context, word associations, and experiential opportunities. There are plenty of software programs that use games, drills, and practice

formats with preselected vocabulary words, but these may not be conducive to ongoing learning in the classroom. Teachers should screen software programs carefully to make sure they fit the ongoing curriculum and meet student needs.

The word processor is another tool that can be used creatively to promote students' interest in words and increase their vocabulary across the curriculum. Either the teacher or the students can create a variety of vocabulary exercises, develop cloze exercise passages, or devise games relevant to the curriculum. Many of the activities in this book work well with a word processor. Students should be encouraged to use word processors whenever possible. Students using word processors tend to feel comfortable with their writing. They seem not only to write more, but to be more willing to revise what they write. They are more comfortable following the writing process from beginning to end. Word processors are especially helpful with students who have low ability or those with handicaps and learning disabilities.

There are several brands of electronic dictionaries and thesauruses on the market. If you have access to one, you might bring it to class for students to experiment with as they are reading and writing. There are also many computer programs on the market now that address the various steps in the writing process.

Word Banks

Students can improve their vocabulary by establishing a word bank. A word bank is a list of words—either on a chart as a whole-group activity, or in a student's personal word book. With each addition to a word bank, students add to their knowledge and command of words. Have students establish a notebook as a personal word book that will grow as their vocabulary grows. Word banks are organized into three columns: in the first, students write the word; in the second, a definition; and in the third, a phrase or sentence that includes the word. The personal word book may be developed with sections relating to current themes being studied, specific topics or subject areas, or different word types. The final activity in More Bonus Activities includes suggestions for developing word banks.

Using Analogies—Eight

Characteristics

From the list of words below, select the word that completes each analogy. (*Characteristics* include color, size, shape, feel, taste, material, feelings, movement, temperature, weight, length, sound, and time.)

lemon	rabbit	whisper
rock	snowstorm	fender
brick	ghost	plum
brownie	hippo	ruby

1. Green is to emerald as red is to _____ .
2. Yellow is to lemon as purple is to _____ .
3. Small is to mouse as large is to _____ .
4. Round is to pancake as square is to _____ .
5. Soft is to marshmallow as hard is to _____ .
6. Sweet is to candy as sour is to _____ .
7. Funny is to clown as scary is to _____ .
8. Slow is to snail as fast is to _____ .
9. Rubber is to tire as metal is to _____ .
10. Loud is to drum as quiet is to _____ .
11. Warm is to sunshine as cold is to _____ .
12. Light is to balloon as heavy is to _____ .

Using Homographs—Two

A Different Pronunciation

The underlined word in each pair of sentences below is pronounced differently for different meanings. Use the context of each sentence and decide which meaning the underlined word in that sentence has. From the several meanings given in the box above the sentences, write the letter of the appropriate meaning on the line before each sentence.

desert	a. a very dry area with little rain
	b. to leave a person or thing uncared for
_____	1. Camels are used to traveling in the <u>desert</u> .
_____	2. Some animals <u>desert</u> their babies.

object	a. to protest
	b. a purpose
_____	1. The <u>object</u> of this lesson is to develop your vocabulary.
_____	2. Mother <u>objects</u> to my staying out late in the evening.

perfect	a. without a mistake
	b. to make exactly right
_____	1. Our class is working to <u>perfect</u> our study habits.
_____	2. Jessie’s final science report was <u>perfect</u> .

present	a. at the place
	b. to give formally
_____	1. All the students in my homeroom were <u>present</u> today.
_____	2. The student said, “I would like to <u>present</u> my teacher with this gift, for her patience with us.”

convict	a. to find a person guilty
	b. one who has been found guilty
_____	1. Some <u>convicts</u> are released on weekends to visit their families.
_____	2. Robert was <u>convicted</u> for speeding and failing to stop.

(continued)

Forming Plurals—One

*(continued)***Spelling
Plural Forms**

Write the plural form of each word.

11. Irregular forms: some words change spelling.

child	_____	mouse	_____
foot	_____	ox	_____
woman	_____	louse	_____
tooth	_____	workman	_____

12. Some nouns keep the singular form in a collective plural.

deer	_____	pheasant	_____
moose	_____	trout	_____
bison	_____	elk	_____
sheep	_____	reindeer	_____

13. Some words have two plural forms. Check your dictionary for spellings.

lynx	_____	_____
fish	_____	_____
bus	_____	_____
cactus	_____	_____
porgy	_____	_____

14. A few nouns have only a plural form.

scissors	_____	news	_____
politics	_____	trousers	_____
slacks	_____	measles	_____

15. Hyphenated-compound nouns: to form the plural make only the most important word plural.

jack-o'-lantern	_____
merry-go-round	_____
attorney-at-law	_____
father-in-law	_____
editor-in-chief	_____
court-martial	_____



Using Suffixes—Seven

Changing Nouns to Adjectives

The suffixes *-ic*, *-ical*, and *-al* mean having to do with something.
(*metallic*, *economical*, *fictional*)

Underline the word in parentheses that best completes each sentence.

1. A _____ is an invented story. (myth, mythical)
2. Gabe had difficulty putting the spelling words in _____ order. (alphabet, alphabetical)
3. Teresa gave a _____ answer to avoid hurting her friend's feelings. (diplomat, diplomatic)
4. A _____ is loyal to his country. (patriot, patriotic)
5. Thunder and lightning are _____ disturbances. (atmosphere, atmospheric)
6. Our assignment was to list the events of the story in _____ order. (chronology, chronological)
7. We are beginning a new unit on _____ in our math class. (fractions, fractional)
8. The students had to get _____ permission to go on the field trip. (parent, parental)
9. From our apartment window, we had a _____ view of the city. (panorama, panoramic)
10. The rain came down in _____ during the thunderstorm. (torrents, torrential)
11. Student attendance at after-school programs is _____. (option, optional)
12. Our school won the citywide _____ contest. (orator, oratorical)
13. Amy made a _____ rescue to save Cindy from falling off the cliff. (hero, heroic)
14. I value my grandmother's gift for _____ reasons. (sentiment, sentimental)
15. The boys were involved in an automobile _____. (accident, accidental)