

Vocabulary Teaching Essentials

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1 Active and Passive Vocabulary

Help students to learn words in context first, then to use them immediately and in different contexts.

(Students may know a word but not use it, but they cannot use a word without knowing it.)



2 Vocabulary Journal

Students must keep a “Real English” Vocabulary Learning Record. This is a “personalized mastery” approach, where each student can increase their own active vocabulary continuously.

Vocabulary journal (sample format)

Appendix 4. Vocabulary Learning Record

| Word | Pronunciation | Word Class (N., V., Adj., etc.) | Meaning (in English) | Example Of Use | Words Of The Same Family | Translation (in Chinese) |
|---------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| accommodation | ac/com/mo/da/tion | Noun | a place to live, work or stay in | Hotel accommodation is included in the price of your holiday. | accommodate (v) | 住處 |
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3 Recycling

Students must revisit and reuse learned vocabulary in order to learn it well. This is among the most challenging aspects of teaching vocabulary, but research shows convincing evidence that it helps deepen learning and retention.



4 Comprehensibility and Moderation

Students differ greatly in verbal ability and interest levels, but all students learn better when the context of words is clear and meaningful. **Adopt and adapt** materials to make this possible! Aim for moderation in vocabulary acquisition. It is much better to learn and use fewer target words well than more words poorly or incorrectly.



5 Encourage incidental learning

Most vocabulary is learned in context, out of necessity and familiarity, not from a systematic “list” or “topic” approach (however necessary that is in earlier stages of learning). Encourage students to think actively about word meaning in context - and with different kinds of support when necessary.



6 Target “high frequency” words

Do your research about “high frequency words”. Know which words in textbook lists, selected texts and other academic target texts are actually ‘high frequency’ words in English. These are words that will serve students for the rest of their lives if they learn them well.



7 Increase students' motivation to learn intentionally

Encourage and reward active, intentional vocabulary learning strategies. Games and contests may have a role if the learning can then be reinforced for retention and active use. Vocabulary lessons can be based on the principles of developing independent learning skills.



8 Create connections

Create opportunities for students to focus on words that are both high frequency and useful to teach the principles of multiple meanings, word forms, prefixes and suffixes and other forms of **morphology**.



9 Promote fluency

Developing fluency takes time... and it depends on students learning strategies, thinking about meaning and practicing using the vocabulary.



10 What do you suggest?