

the ARTICLE (for instructors)

Vocabulary: Is it Important?

A beginning student of English says, "Go Canada. Homestay. Next month." Although there is no grammar structure whatsoever, he will still be understood. Similarly, a foreign tourist lost in New York who says, "Where. Subway. Close?" should get directed to the nearest subway station. Such is the power of vocabulary.

For students just beginning to study English, most new words have an immediate and obvious practical use. Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are high frequency words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, many students find that new words are used less frequently. They encounter the words, in reading or listening, only occasionally. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition seems less pertinent, at least immediately. New words are also more difficult to remember.

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But it places greater importance on the techniques and strategies students use to retain new words.

First, and perhaps most important, a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals. How many words will he learn within a month? How many words will he learn within six months? Without goals, a student often lacks motivation. But keep the goals reasonable!

Second, when a student encounters a new word, it's always best to guess the meaning from the context of the sentence. After guessing the meaning, then he can check an English-English dictionary. This technique makes his deduction abilities stronger. And yet, if wrong, the student will want to know *why*.

Lastly, it just comes down to hard work. A student should practice writing his own definitions, synonyms, and sentences at home. He should also read or listen to English as much as possible. As a final word of advice: relating new words to personal experience helps.

Teacher's Notes:

* Underlined words in red typeface are the answers.

the ARTICLE (for students)

deduction	technique	immediately	obvious	pertinent
practical	experience	encounter	reasonable	context
directed	retain	whatsoever	beginning	synonyms

Vocabulary: Is it Important?

A beginning student of English says, "Go Canada. Homestay. Next month." Although there is no grammar structure (a. _____), he/she will still be understood. Similarly, a foreign tourist lost in New York who says, "Where. Subway. Close?" should get (b. _____) to the nearest subway station. Such is the power of vocabulary.

For students just (c. _____) to study English, most new words have an immediate and (d. _____) (e. _____) use. Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are high frequency words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, many students find that new words are used less frequently. They (f. _____) the words, in reading or listening, only occasionally. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition seems less (g. _____), at least (h. _____). New words are also more difficult to remember.

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But it places greater importance on the techniques and strategies students use to (i. _____) new words.

First, and perhaps most important, a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals. How many words will he/she learn within a month? How many words will he/she learn within six months? Without goals, a student often lacks motivation. But keep the goals (j. _____)!

Second, when a student encounters a new word, it's always best to guess the meaning from the (k. _____) of the sentence. After guessing the meaning, then he/she can check an English-English dictionary. This (l. _____) makes one's (m. _____) abilities stronger. And yet, if wrong, the student will want to know *why*.

Lastly, it just comes down to hard work. A student should practice writing his/her own definitions, (n. _____), and sentences at home. He/She should also read or listen to English as much as possible. As a final word of advice: relating new words to personal (o. _____) helps.

STEP ONE

Brainstorm: Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "vocabulary acquisition" for 2 minutes.

Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.

STEP TWO

Vocabulary match: Individually or in pairs/groups, match the words in column A (from the article) with the best choice in column B. Use a dictionary for any words you don't know, but be sure to check your English-English dictionary, too.

a.	whatsoever	q.	relevant
b.	obvious	r.	clear
c.	practical	s.	remember
d.	encounter	t.	framework
e.	pertinent	u.	realistic
f.	retain	v.	reasoning
g.	context	w.	not at all
h.	technique	x.	similar word
i.	deduction	y.	method
j.	synonym	z.	run into

STEP THREE

Fill in the Blanks: Fill in the blank with the correct word.

	deduction	context	synonyms	retain	pertinent
	encounter	obvious	whatsoever	technique	practical
a.	There is no grammar structure ().				
b.	The need to study advanced vocabulary is less ().				
c.	Many words for beginning students have a (), everyday use.				
d.	Difficult words are () less often in everyday English.				
e.	Words used less often seem less ().				
f.	Strategies and techniques become more important to () new words for higher level students.				
g.	It's best to guess the meaning of a word from the () of the sentence, then check a dictionary.				
h.	There are many () to learn vocabulary.				
i.	It's important to make your () abilities stronger.				
j.	() are useful because they help you remember new vocabulary.				

STEP FOUR

The Article: 1) Read the article, but don't worry about the missing words. 2) Fill in the blanks with today's vocabulary, followed by all the other words. 3) Read the article again, and circle any unknown words/phrases. In pairs/groups, use your dictionaries to understand the words or phrases your circled. 4) Answer the questions to check your comprehension.

a.	Why is vocabulary such a powerful tool for communication?
b.	What problems do higher level students have with vocabulary?
c.	Why is it important to have goals?
d.	What techniques are suggested in the article?
e.	From the information in the article, what does "if you don't use it, you lose it" mean?

STEP FIVE

Discuss: Write down five vocabulary words from today's article that you want to use.

a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	

Now talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Every time you use a vocabulary word, place a check next to it.

a.	What strategies would you like to try to study vocabulary?
b.	Do you agree with the article's suggestions to retain vocabulary?
c.	Which English skill do you think is the most important?
d.	Which English skill would you like to improve?

Score yourself:

10 or more times: Fantastic! Be sure to review the words at home.

6-9 times: Pretty good! You're on your way to acquiring today's vocabulary. Try writing your own sentences at home.

5 or less times: Try harder next time! To acquire new vocabulary, you need to use the new words as much as possible.