

the ARTICLE (for instructors)

Vocabulary: Is it Important?

A beginning English student says, "Go Canada. Homestay. Next month." There isn't any grammar structure, but he will be understood. Likewise, a foreign tourist who is lost in New York says, "Where. Subway. Close?" He should be directed to the nearest subway station. This is the power of vocabulary.

For students who are just beginning to study English, most new words can be used immediately. The words have an obvious use. Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are often used words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, many new words are used less frequently. Students encounter the words only sometimes while reading or listening. And so, vocabulary acquisition seems less important. New words are also more difficult to remember.

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But the techniques and strategies used to remember new words becomes more important.

First, and perhaps most important, a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals. How many words will he learn in a month? How many words will he learn in six months? A student often lacks motivation without goals. 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 helps to improve a student's reasoning ability. And yet, if he is 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)

encounter	synonyms	motivation	advice	context
meaning	likewise	experience	directed	reasonable
techniques	remember	strategies	goals	obvious

Vocabulary: Is it Important?

A beginning English student says, "Go Canada. Homestay. Next month." There isn't any grammar structure, but he will be understood. (a. _____), a foreign tourist who is lost in New York says, "Where. Subway. Close?" He should be (b. _____) to the nearest subway station. This is the power of vocabulary.

For students who are just beginning to study English, most new words can be used immediately. The words have an (c. _____) use. Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are often used words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, many new words are used less frequently. Students (d. _____) the words only sometimes while reading or listening. And so, vocabulary acquisition seems less important. New words are also more difficult to (e. _____).

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But the (f. _____) and (g. _____) used to remember new words becomes more important.

First, and perhaps most important, a student needs clear short-term and long-term (h. _____). How many words will he learn in a month? How many words will he learn in six months? A student often lacks (i. _____) without goals. 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 (l. _____), then he can check an English-English dictionary. This technique helps to improve a student's reasoning ability. And yet, if he is wrong, the student will want to know *why*.

Lastly, it just comes down to hard work. A student should practice writing his own definitions, (m. _____), and sentences at home. He should also read or listen to English as much as possible. As a final word of (n. _____): 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.	likewise	q.	method
b.	direct	r.	run into
c.	obvious	s.	ambition
d.	encounter	t.	framework
e.	technique	u.	guide
f.	strategy	v.	similar words
g.	motivation	w.	plan
h.	context	x.	furthermore
i.	synonym	y.	recommendation
j.	advice	z.	clear

STEP THREE

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

	techniques	motivation	likewise	obvious	advice
	directed	strategies	synonyms	context	encounter
a.	(), a foreign tourist who is lost in New York says, "Where. Subway. Close?"				
b.	He/She will be () to the nearest subway station.				
c.	Beginning English words have an () use.				
d.	High-level students () difficult words only sometimes while reading or listening.				
e.	The () used to remember new, difficult words is different.				
f.	The () used to remember new words becomes more important.				
g.	A student often lacks () without goals.				
h.	It's always best to guess the meaning from the () of the sentence.				
i.	A student should practice writing his/her own definitions, (), and sentences at home.				
j.	As a final word of (): relating new words to personal experience helps.				

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.