

ETpedia™

Vocabulary

500 ideas
and activities
for teaching
vocabulary

corpus
discourse
idioms
collocation
words
lexical sets

Stacey H. Hughes, Fiona Mauchline and Julie Moore

Series editor: John Hughes

www.myetpedia.com

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ETpedia Vocabulary

500 ideas and activities for teaching vocabulary

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Introduction

10 reasons for using this resource

1. Everything in one place

ETpedia Vocabulary brings together a collection of ideas, tips and classroom activities for a one-stop, quick and easy reference. It's organised into 50 units with 10 ideas in each unit.

2. Range of contexts

This book does more than provide classroom ideas: it aims to help teachers better understand different approaches and methods of teaching vocabulary and how to adapt to any given context and the related learners' needs.

3. You're new to teaching or in need of some new ideas

If you are new to teaching, this resource will be invaluable in supporting you on your way. If you've been teaching for a while, this resource might both remind you of techniques and activities you haven't used in a while and offer you fresh new ideas to increase your repertoire.

4. Supplement your coursebook

Many teachers find that they need to offer their students more practice than is found in their coursebook. You will find plenty of ideas in this book to help you meet the needs of your students in creative ways to support their language learning, in and out of class.

5. You read on the run

Teachers who need something bite-sized that they can dip into between classes will appreciate the format of the book.

6. You want something that works

The ideas in this book are designed to be simple, effective and down-to-earth.

7. You haven't got much time to prepare lessons

Most of the practical ideas and activities in this book are straightforward and need little or no preparation.

8. Teacher's block

You might be familiar with the term 'writer's block' in relation to novelists. However, there are also times when teachers simply cannot come up with original ideas or activities for students. Keep the book in the staffroom for such moments and open the resource of any page and see if the 10 ideas on that page give you a new idea for teaching vocabulary with your students.

9. You're looking for staffroom discussion-starters

Senior teachers and heads of department can select units of the book to kick-start staffroom conversations, peer collaboration and idea-sharing among colleagues. Read a unit and then discuss it with your colleagues. Share your own ideas and techniques.

10. You enjoy teaching

This book is written for teachers who love teaching, and who want their lessons to be memorable and enjoyable – both for their students and themselves.

10 ways to use this resource

This resource has been written for English language teachers who would like to learn new ways to teach vocabulary or need to adapt to teaching vocabulary in a new or unfamiliar context. It can be read and used in different ways according to your needs, interests and level of experience.

1. Cover to cover

If you are less confident at teaching vocabulary or are adapting to a new teaching context, you might use this resource as a way to develop your teaching techniques. If so, it's worth reading the book from cover to cover in order to get a thorough overview and grounding in the different approaches and methods of teaching vocabulary.

2. Read a section

The contents page will direct you to different sections, with groups of units on a specific aspect of vocabulary teaching. Some sections may not be immediately relevant to the students you are working with, or to the resources you have available, so you can ignore them for now. Other sections will be of immediate relevance and will provide you with key information and ideas to plan effectively and teach vocabulary to your students.

3. Finding the vocabulary point you need

This book can be dipped into when planning practical activities for lessons. Within many of the units, which are listed on the Contents page (pages 3 and 4), you'll find the vocabulary point you need and related activities that are sequenced from easy to more complex, in terms of both tasks and language. The first section of the book also provides you with the background knowledge you need for understanding how vocabulary works. So you can choose to approach the units in whatever order best suits the needs of your learners.

4. Planning a lesson

Every unit provides you with 10 different ideas and activities. You might be looking for a single activity to supplement your coursebook or you may want to revise the vocabulary from the previous lesson. You may be looking for an alternative context to present a given vocabulary point. Or you may want to use the unit to build an entire lesson. You'll find a short introduction to the vocabulary with information on when it's normally taught and why it's used.

5. Photocopiable activities



Each unit contains one activity based on a photocopiable handout, which you will find in the appendix (pages 177-254).

6. Suggestions for homework and self-study



You'll find throughout the book suggested tasks for students to do after the lesson on their own. Rather than provide you with a typical homework activity, such as completing a gapfill exercise (which you can find in lots of other books), it suggests a motivating task such as noticing how vocabulary works in real-life contexts, or taking a photo related to the vocabulary point and presenting it.

7. Read it critically

No two language classes are the same, and experiences differ. Modify and adapt ideas to suit your own needs.

8. Compile a 'Top 50'

Read the book from cover to cover. At the end of each unit, circle the point that you like the most. Then add notes about how you used it in class and how students reacted.

9. Revisit ideas

Not all ideas work for every class and you don't teach the same level or type of class all of the time. Go back to ideas you've used before and weigh up if they will work with your next set of students. Use this book as a notebook to jot down ideas of what you can use with your new class and then how it impacted their learning.

10. Common difficulties

Many units give tips relating to the difficulties students can have with the vocabulary point in question. Some of the units also highlight the way a student's first language might impact on their use of the vocabulary, or the reasons why students often confuse particular words. Add your own notes to these sections of any additional difficulties you encounter with your students. You may then want to share these with other teachers in your institution to discuss the best ideas and techniques to help your students.

"ETpedia saves hours of planning time and opens opportunities for variation, adaptation and even creating my own materials inspired by the ideas it offers."

Ayat Al-Tawal, teacher, Egypt

10 facts about the authors

Between them, the three authors of this book have over 75 years' worth of experience in teaching, teacher training and materials writing.

Stacey H Hughes...


- ▶ started her career in 1992 as an EAP teacher in the US and went on to teach in Poland, Italy and the UK. Her main interest in ELT is in maximising student engagement through student-focused learning using traditional and digital tools.
- ▶ works freelance as a teacher trainer and writer/editor of educational materials, including materials for digital assessment and online training.
- ▶ has written teacher's books including several for the Macmillan *Skillful* series as well as *Headway Pre-intermediate* (Oxford University Press). She regularly writes articles and blogs, and gives talks and training sessions for teachers in many different countries.

Fiona Mauchline...

- ▶ is the author or co-author of various ELT coursebooks for teenagers including *Dive in!* (Delta Publishing) and *Motivate!* (Macmillan Education), as well as *How to Write Secondary Materials*, published by ELT Teacher2Writer. She also blogs at Macappella and Blood, Sweat and Gazpacho.
- ▶ speaks five languages (and studied two others back in the mists of time), so enjoys 'collecting' vocabulary through reading, keeping her eyes and ears open and being generally curious when travelling – particularly where menus are concerned.
- ▶ is an active member of two IATEFL special interest groups. She co-edits the e-bulletin for TDSIG (Teacher Development) and is also the Joint Events Coordinator for MaWSIG (Materials Writing).

Julie Moore...

- ▶ started her writing career as a lexicographer working on learner dictionaries for CUP, OUP, Longman, Macmillan and Collins COBUILD. She still loves the opportunity to work on dictionary projects whenever she can.
- ▶ has worked on General English and EAP coursebooks, including *Oxford EAP C1* (OUP), photocopiable resources, *Timesaver for IELTS Vocabulary* and *Timesaver for IELTS Reading (Scholastic)*, self-study materials, such as *Common Mistakes at Proficiency*, *Common Mistakes at IELTS Advanced* (CUP) and *Oxford Academic Vocabulary Practice* (OUP) and reference resources, including *Key Words for IELTS* (Collins COBUILD).
- ▶ has never been very good at spelling, but knows which words she can't spell, so looks them up.



Before you start teaching vocabulary

Most sections and units of this book contain practical activities to help you teach different aspects of vocabulary. But in order to start teaching vocabulary, a teacher must also be familiar with the key terms for talking about vocabulary. In this introductory section, Units 1, 2 and 3 will provide you with that knowledge. They contain useful summaries of the basic parts of speech, ways of referring to vocabulary, and other terms which are often used for talking about vocabulary.

If you are new to teaching, it's probably wise to start by reading these three units straight away. If you already have some experience as a teacher, you might be familiar with many of the terms; if so, just skim through and check any you haven't met before or that you've forgotten. Note that many of the words in Units 1 to 3 will be re-used and expanded upon throughout the rest of the book so it's useful to check your understanding beforehand.

Units 4 to 6 in this section move on to what we teach about vocabulary in our everyday lessons. Unit 4 looks at the importance of teaching the form, meaning and use of a word. Unit 5 outlines the reasons why a student's own first language might affect their learning of English vocabulary and how to anticipate this in your lesson planning. Finally, Unit 6 considers what should inform your choice of words to teach in a lesson. All three units will help you to plan and prepare your lessons before you walk into the classroom.

10 basic parts of speech

Before you start teaching vocabulary, it's important to become familiar with the way we classify words according to the different parts of speech. A word's part of speech can be found in a dictionary. Remember that some words can have more than one part of speech (for example, *walk* can be a verb and a noun). Once you start teaching, you will need to highlight the part of speech of any new words so students know how they're used. This unit introduces the ten most commonly taught parts of speech.

1. Noun

A noun refers to an object (*table, car, bread*), a person (*child, family, teacher*), a place (*village, museum, countryside*) or a concept (*life, organisation, management*). Nouns can be countable (*a woman, two cars*) or uncountable (*water, information*). Students commonly make errors with uncountable nouns, for example by adding an unnecessary plural -s (*informations, equipments*). This can be the result of interference from their L1 where the equivalent noun may be countable.

2. Verb

A verb refers to an action (*walk, tell, increase*). Transitive verbs are followed by a direct object (*You should tell someone, I need to eat something*) and intransitive verbs are not followed by a direct object (*She walked, He sighed*). Some verbs have both transitive and intransitive uses (e.g. *I'll drive* is intransitive, but *I'll drive your car* is transitive).

3. Adjective

An adjective is a word that describes a person, place or thing (*big, happy, awful*). Adjectives can be used before a noun (*a big mistake*), that is, they are used 'attributively'. Or they can be used after a linking verb (*That sounds awful*), that is, they are used 'predicatively'. Sometimes an adjective's meaning changes depending on whether it is used attributively or predicatively (e.g. *She's responsible for the mistake* vs *I'm looking for a responsible young person to look after my dog*). (See also 'Comparative and superlative adjectives', Tip 2.10.)

4. Adverb

An adverb gives more information about a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Many adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective (*quickly, fortunately, finally*), but there are some irregular adverbs (*well, fast, hard*). Some function words are classified as adverbs (*just, however, across*).

5. Preposition

A preposition is a short function word (*in, at, on, to, by*). It usually comes before a noun or a noun phrase. Prepositions can be used to talk about time (*at 2 o'clock, on Friday, in April*), place (*in London, at the theatre, on the table*) and movement (*go to the bank, get into the car*). They are also part of many common phrases (*on holiday, by mistake, in love*). (See also 'Dependent preposition', Tip 2.8.)

6. Conjunction

A conjunction is a word that is used to link ideas within or between sentences (*and, but, or, because, so*).

7. Pronoun

A pronoun is a word that can be used instead of a noun (*she, you, it, they*). There are subject pronouns, which come before a verb (*I, she, they*) and object pronouns, which come after a verb (*me, her, them*). There are also relative pronouns (*which, who, where*) and reflexive pronouns (*myself, herself, yourself*). (See also 'Reflexive pronoun', Tip 2.9.)

8. Determiner

A determiner comes before a noun or a noun phrase and shows which thing it refers to. Determiners include *this, that, my, the, some, all*. A determiner that refers to a quantity (*some, any, much, a lot*) can be called a 'quantifier'. *A, an* and *the* can be called 'articles'. *A* and *an* are 'indefinite articles' and *the* is the 'definite article'.

9. Modal verb

A modal verb is used with another verb to express ideas like possibility, intention and necessity. They show the speaker's attitude towards something. Compare: *I could visit my grandmother tomorrow* (= it's a possible option in my plans) and *I should visit my grandmother tomorrow* (= I feel obliged to go). Students often find the subtle differences between modal verbs quite challenging. Modal verbs include *can, could, should, might, may, must, will, would* and *ought to*.

10. Auxiliary verb

An auxiliary verb is used with another verb to form different structures. The main auxiliary verbs in English are *be, have* and *do*. They are used in the following ways:

- ▶ to form questions (**Do** you like skiing? **Did** she leave a message?)
- ▶ to form negatives (I **don't** know the answer, it **didn't** work very well)
- ▶ in continuous/progressive structures (the boys **are** leaving soon, she **was** laughing),
- ▶ in perfect structures (they **have** left, the others **had** already gone, it will **have** finished)
- ▶ in passive forms (first the boxes **are** emptied, the book **was** written in 1978)

“Using different colours for identifying parts of speech has always worked for me. We establish a colour chart with the students, and use it when presenting new language and in students' work; yellow adjective, blue noun, etc. The colour-coding can also be used in Skype lessons through screen sharing. It appeals most to visual learners and adults, and is especially useful for dyslexic learners. Colours can be used on flashcards, vocabulary lists, in gapfill exercises and so on.”

Csilla Jaray-Benn, teacher, France

10 more ways to refer to vocabulary

In Unit 1 we looked at the ten basic parts of speech. This unit looks at ten more key terms that refer to specific types of word or phrase. Note that some of these terms aren't completely fixed and may differ in usage. For example, the same sequence of words might be referred to as a phrase, an expression or an idiom by different people or in different contexts. Similarly, multi-word verbs such as *depend on* might be labelled as a phrasal verb in some dictionaries and treated as a verb plus dependent preposition in others.

1. Phrasal verb

A phrasal verb is made up of a verb (*make, take, get*) plus one or two particles, a particle being either a preposition or an adverb (*up, away, off*). Used together they have a meaning that isn't always obvious from the meaning of the two constituent words (e.g. *make sth up, get away with sth*). A phrasal verb can often have more than one meaning; for example, you can *set off* an alarm or you can *set off* on a journey. (See also Unit 24.)

2. Phrase

A phrase, sometimes called an 'expression', is a group of words that have a particular meaning when used together (*at least, in the end, by the way*). Some phrases are completely fixed and always include exactly the same words; some are variable (*to an extent, to some extent, to a large extent, etc.*).

3. Idiom

An idiom is a phrase, the meaning of which isn't obvious from the meaning of the individual words in it. Idioms can be quite mundane (*by and large, up front, to start with*) or more colourful (*once in a blue moon, put your foot in it, go out on a limb*). Phrases and idioms usually appear in a dictionary at the end of the entry for the first meaningful word. (See also Unit 23.)

4. Collocation

A collocation is a pair or group of words that are frequently used together (*make a mistake, a heavy cold, blatantly obvious*). 'Strong' collocations are pairs or groups of words that are very commonly used together (*a long time, reach a conclusion*) so that alternative choices sound strange. (See also Unit 22.)

5. Discourse marker

A discourse marker is a word or phrase that links ideas together in a text (written or spoken) and signals to the reader or listener how one idea is connected to the next (*however, similarly, for example, as I was saying*).

6. Compound noun

A compound noun is made up of two or more words (usually an adjective plus a noun or a noun plus a noun), which together refer to a single thing. They're sometimes written as one word (*bathroom, greenhouse*), they're sometimes hyphenated (*fire-fighter, brother-in-law*) and they're sometimes written as separate words (*swimming pool, car park*).

7. Noun phrase

A noun phrase is a group of words that include a 'head noun' to refer to either a person (e.g. *the acting deputy director of studies*), an object (e.g. *an advanced level coursebook for teenagers*), a place (e.g. *the big, bright room at the top of the stairs*) or a concept (e.g. *a communicative approach to language teaching*). When a noun phrase is the subject of a verb, the verb agrees with the head noun, e.g. *The big, bright room at the top of the stairs **is** the staffroom* (i.e. *room* is the head noun so a singular verb is used).

8. Dependent preposition

A dependent preposition is a preposition that typically follows a particular verb (*listen to, pay for*), noun (*the importance of, a change to*) or adjective (*capable of, compatible with*). A word together with its dependent preposition is a type of collocation. It's useful to highlight dependent prepositions along with the target word and to encourage students to note them down in this way in their vocabulary notebook.

9. Reflexive pronoun

When the subject and the object of a verb are the same person, you use a reflexive pronoun (*myself, yourself, herself, etc.*) as the object, as in the sentence: *She taught herself to play the guitar*. Reflexive pronouns are also often used to emphasise that someone did something without help (*They solved the problem themselves*). Some verbs (or uses of verbs) are typically followed by a reflexive pronoun (*introduce yourself, blame yourself, enjoy yourself*).

10. Comparative and superlative adjectives

The comparative form of an adjective is used to compare two things. It's typically formed either with the suffix *-er* (*bigger, louder*) or with *more* (*more uncomfortable, more beautiful*). The superlative form of an adjective describes the greatest degree of something and is formed either with the suffix *-est* (*biggest, loudest*) or with *most* (*most uncomfortable, most beautiful*). Some common irregular forms include *bad/worse/worst, good/better/best, little/less/least* and *far/further/furthest*.

"In China, students find using definite and indefinite articles hard because they don't exist in Mandarin. One way to deal with this is to have students fill in the missing articles in an authentic text. I also encourage students to peer edit each other's writing focusing specifically on articles."

Tim Hampson, Japan

10 useful terms for talking about vocabulary

In Units 1 and 2 we looked at key terms for describing basic parts of speech and different types of words and phrases. There's also terminology you might come across for talking about vocabulary, types of words and characteristics of words. Here are ten useful vocabulary-related terms to be familiar with when preparing to teach.

1. Synonym

A synonym is a word with a similar meaning to another word. For example, *big* and *large* are synonyms. Synonyms can often be found in a learner dictionary or a thesaurus, which gives lists of synonyms. Synonyms are useful for learners to know because they increase their range of vocabulary, give them more flexibility and help them avoid repetition. However, it's important to remember that there are very few synonyms with exactly the same meaning and range of use. Synonyms usually differ in some way and can't always just be substituted for each other. For example, we talk about a big problem (not a *large problem) and a *large amount* (not a *big amount).

2. Antonym

An antonym is a word with an opposite meaning to another word. *Dark* and *light* are antonyms. Antonyms can be helpful in explaining vocabulary and are also a simple way to help students extend their vocabulary range.

3. Homonym

A homonym is a word that looks or sounds the same as another word, often leading students to confuse them. There are two types of homonym: a homograph and a homophone.

A homograph (literally, 'same spelling') is a word that is spelt the same as another word but has a completely different meaning, e.g. *row* (= a line of sth) and *row* (= an argument).

A homophone (literally 'same sound') is a word that sounds the same as another word but which has a different spelling and a different meaning, e.g. *know* and *no*. Students from L1s that spell words as they sound, such as Spanish or Turkish, often have problems with homophones, typically opting for the most transparent spelling (*I don't no the answer*). (See also Unit 5.)

4. Sense

Many words in English have more than one sense (i.e. meaning); for example, a *table* can be a piece of furniture and it can also be a diagram with rows and columns. In a learner dictionary, the different senses of a word appear in a numbered list with the most frequent sense given first. Phrases, phrasal verbs and even some idioms can also have more than one sense, for example, *set off* can mean 'start a journey' or 'detonate a bomb or firework'.

5. Derivative

A derivative is a word that comes from the same root or the same word family as another word; for example, *patiently* is a derivative of *patient* and *development*, *developmental* and *developmentally* are all derivatives of *develop*. Learning derivatives to build up knowledge of word families is a good way for students to increase their vocabulary range and flexibility. Understanding how derivatives are formed can also help them build vocabulary independently. (See also Units 19 and 21.)

6. Variant

A variant is an alternative spelling or form of a word. *Recognise* and *recognize*, *favour* and *favor*, *judgement* and *judgment* are all examples of variant spellings. *Orient* and *orientate* are variant forms; both words have the same meaning. Variants are usually shown in the dictionary with the most common form first, for example, *orient* (also *orientate*). Both variants can be considered correct, but some variants may be used in different varieties of English, e.g. British English (*colour*) and American English (*color*). One variant may be more formal (*grandmother*) the other more informal (*grandma*). (See also Unit 33.)

7. Register

Register refers to the context in which a word is typically used and in which it is seen as appropriate. Register can refer to how formal or informal a context a word is typically used in. For example, *kid* is typically informal, *child* is neutral and *infant*, *adolescent* and *juvenile* are all more formal. A word like *progeny* could be described as very formal, or may be used humorously. *Offspring* is used in biology and *issue* (to describe a person's children) is a legal term. All of these categories of language use are referred to as registers, and words that belong to these categories are given register labels in a dictionary. (See also Unit 25.)

8. Affix

An affix is a group of letters that can be added to a word to change its meaning or part of speech. An affix might be a prefix or a suffix. A prefix is added at the start of a word and can create a negative (*unhappy*, *imperfect*, *illegal*) or add a specific meaning (*monolingual*, *eco-friendly*, *hyperactive*). A suffix is added to the end of a word and can change the form of the word (*quick* – *quickly*, *sad* – *sadness*, *translate* – *translatable*) or its meaning (*hope* – *hopeless*).

9. Metaphor

Metaphor is the use of words from one context to describe another. For example, if you talk about a *political leadership battle*, you are not using the word *battle* with its literal meaning (i.e. two armies fighting each other), you are using it as a metaphor. When teaching vocabulary in context, it's helpful to consider whether words and phrases are being used metaphorically. In some cases, the jump from the literal to the metaphorical use of a word may not be obvious to students.

10. Etymology

The etymology of a word is its origin and history. For example, the word *homogeneous* comes originally from the Greek *homos* (= same) and *genos* (= race, kind). Especially at higher levels, looking at the etymology of a word can help with understanding, particularly if the students' L1 shares some Greek or Latin origins with English. Information about etymology is not usually given in learner dictionaries, but it can be found in some dictionaries for L1 English speakers (such as *Oxford Dictionaries* or *Merriam-Webster*).

10 things we often teach about words

Units 1 to 3 provided an introduction to the key terms to know when teaching vocabulary for the first time. Note that you won't necessarily come across all of the parts of speech and terms from these previous units straight away in your daily teaching; for example, the term *derivative* (Tip 3.5) rarely appears in coursebooks, but the term *collocation* (Tip 2.4) does.

So in terms of the day-to-day, some aspects of vocabulary covered in Units 1 to 3 are covered more commonly than others, and can be broadly categorised into the three main areas of vocabulary that students need to understand: *form*, *meaning* and *use*.

In the 10 things we often teach about a new word, Tips 1 to 4 focus on teaching aspects of *form*. Tips 5 to 7 are related to *meaning*, and Tips 8 to 10 look at how to teach *use*. Later units in this book will provide further details on these aspects with ideas on how to teach each of them (see the references to specific units below).

1. Spelling

There are several issues to consider regarding spelling. Firstly, unlike languages such as Spanish or Italian, the correlation between spelling and pronunciation in English is not always clear. *Cough* and *though*, for example, share the same ending, but are pronounced differently. Similarly, words such as *meet* and *meat* or *their*, *there* and *they're* are spelt differently but sound the same. Some words that look alike (*quite/quiet*; *affect/effect*; *parity/parody*) can be confusing, especially for students whose first language does not use the Roman alphabet. For all these reasons, it's crucial to spend some time reviewing and practising spelling alongside any revision of meaning and use. (See Unit 13.)

2. Pronunciation

In order for students to understand words they hear and to be able to say them, they need to know how they are pronounced. At lower levels, students often benefit from hearing and drilling words before they see the spelling. It may also be useful to teach students the phonemic transcription of some sounds, particularly those that do not exist in their language or that are easily confused. Examples include /b/ and /p/ for Arabic speakers, /ɪ/ and /i:/ for Italian speakers, /b/ and /v/ for Spanish speakers, /r/ and /l/ for Chinese speakers and /θ/ and /ð/ for French and German speakers. By working on these minimal pairs and contrasting easily confused phonemes, we can help draw attention to and improve students' pronunciation. (See also Unit 11.)

3. Stress patterns

Following on from 2, knowing which syllable is stressed in a word is important because stressing the wrong syllable can lead to misunderstanding. In fact, mis-stressed words are often harder to understand than words which are mispronounced due to a phoneme confusion. Demonstrate to students how vowels in unstressed syllables tend to sound like /ə/ or /ɪ/, while the stressed syllable retains the full vowel sound. Similarly, knowing the number of syllables in a word is important. You can ask students to compare a word like *visit* (two syllables) with *visited* (three syllables) or clap out the rhythm and underline the stressed syllable like this: visit.

4. Word forms

Students need to know the form of a word; for example, is it a verb, an adjective or a noun? This allows them to choose the right form of a word (e.g. *produce*, *productive* or *production*) and construct a sentence (e.g. *We had a very productive meeting*). Word-form mistakes are common and lead to sentences such as **It is a beautifully city*, or **I am boring by this lesson**. (See also Unit 19.)

5. Meaning

Some words represent concrete things that you can see, feel, hear, touch, taste or do. These are easy to illustrate using pictures, actions or realia; for example, *table*, *book*, *run*, *walk*, *blue*, *happily*, *laughter*. Other words like *love*, *benefit* or *absolutely* are more abstract. Most words have more than one meaning depending on the context: compare *She wore a blue dress* and *He was feeling a bit blue*. For this reason, it's important to introduce or learn the word in the context of a sentence or paragraph.

6. Denotation and connotation

All words have a literal, dictionary meaning, or 'denotation', but they can also have a positive, negative or neutral 'connotation'. For example, most people would consider *healthy* to be positive, *damage* to be negative and *cup* to be neutral. Sometimes, however, connotation is subjective. *Old-fashioned* may be a positive idea for some, but a negative idea for others. Students could get into trouble if they use a word with a similar denotation to another word, but a different connotation; for example, they might say *She looks so juvenile!* (instead of using the more positive adjective *youthful*).

7. Synonyms and antonyms

Synonyms and antonyms give variety to written and spoken texts. Although it isn't always helpful to introduce new synonyms together (see Unit 3), the contrasts offered by antonyms (e.g. *good/bad*; *hot/cold*) mean that they are often more usefully presented in pairs. A thesaurus is a good source of synonyms, but students need to be careful to choose ones that have a similar meaning within the context. One useful activity is to notice how words are used in specific contexts, and whether or not another word can be substituted to make writing more varied. A good example is *study* and *research*, which are similar in some contexts: *Studies show that ... / Research shows that ...*

8. Grammar of words

The grammar of words includes such questions as whether a noun is countable or uncountable, how to form the plural of a noun (*book* → *books*; *child* → *children*), whether a verb is regular (*look* → *looked*) or irregular (*go* → *went* → *gone*), or whether it's transitive (*bring*, *love*, *admire*) or intransitive (*come*, *arrive*). For adjectives (*cold*, *quick*) and adverbs (*coldly*, *quickly*), grammar might include such questions as whether or not the adverb is irregular (as in the case of *fast*, which is both an adjective and adverb) or knowing that the adverb form of *late* is not *lately*. Similarly, students need to learn the comparative and superlative forms of regular and irregular adjectives to avoid mistakes such as *good*, *gooder*, *goodest*, and which prefixes and suffixes to use (*unimportant*, not *inimportant*; *capable*, not *capible*).

9. Collocation

It's important to know which words go together. For example, we can use the verb *take* with many different nouns, as in *take a shower, take time, take action, take a message, take a taxi*, etc. In many cases, it will be unclear to students why certain words go together; for example, when working with the verbs *make* and *do*, students need to learn that we *do homework* but we don't ~~make homework~~. In such cases, students need to focus on how we use words in collocations rather than the literal meaning. (See also Unit 22.)

10. Register

Some words are used in more formal situations and others in less formal situations. Confusing these could make a learner sound rude or inappropriate. Context is key here. Sometimes, students choose a more formal word where a less formal one is more appropriate for the context. For example, a student might say, *I need to **obtain** a new school bag* where it would sound more natural in this context to say, *I need to **get** a new school bag*. Similarly, students who use texting language in a formal essay would benefit from learning the more formal language appropriate to the situation. (See also Unit 25.)

“Don't be a walking dictionary. Resist the temptation to supply students with every word they need. That is not the teacher's job. Provide words occasionally and selectively, depending on how important they are for context.”

Edmund Dudley, author of *ETpedia Teenagers*

10 ways learners' first language affects vocabulary learning

As well as understanding what we need to teach about a word when planning a lesson (see Unit 4), it's also important to note that a student's first language (their 'L1') can have a huge influence on how they learn English, especially in the area of vocabulary. This influence can be helpful when they can find similarities between L1 words and English words that help them to remember their meaning. It can also cause problems if differences lead to confusion (or 'interference').

Having some understanding of these interactions can help you make use of the positives and try to pre-empt problems or tackle them head-on. If you are teaching a monolingual class (i.e. a class where every student shares the same L1), you can prepare your lessons accordingly. And even if your class has a number of students with different first languages, a basic understanding of how this will affect their learning of English is useful.

1. Helpful cognates

Cognates are words that are very similar in two different languages (e.g. English: *guitar*, Spanish: *guitarra*, French: *guitare*, German: *Gitarre*, Russian: гитара, Japanese: ギタ pronounced *gita*). Because of its history, English shares a lot of words with other European languages. Even students with L1s that are unrelated to English are likely to be familiar with some English words that have become ubiquitous in advertising and other global media. Highlighting and discussing these similarities in class can help students engage more deeply with vocabulary.

2. Similar but different

Close cognates can, however, differ in a number of ways, and this can lead to incorrect usage. A word may be different in terms of spelling or pronunciation. For example, the French verb *developper* is a cognate of the English word *develop*. As a result, French students tend to transfer the double *p* in the spelling (i.e. they might write **developped*). Similarly, close cognates might behave in different ways grammatically. For example, the word *information* has close cognates in several European languages, where the word can be used as a countable noun (e.g. French: *informations*, Italian: *informazioni*), leading students to use the plural form (incorrectly) in English. Cognates may also differ in terms of their range of usage. For example, for students from Romance language backgrounds, Latinate verbs (*conclude*, *terminate*, *maintain*, etc.) may seem an easy, familiar choice. However, in English, while they often have a similar meaning, they are generally more appropriate in formal, written or academic contexts rather than in everyday conversation.

3. False friends

False friends are words shared by languages that appear to be similar but which, in fact, have quite different meanings. For example, the word *actual* is often used incorrectly by speakers of several European languages because in these languages, a similar word means 'current' or 'happening now' (French: *actuel*, Spanish: *actual*, Italian: *attuale*, Polish: *aktualny*). In English, however, it means 'real' or 'existing in fact'. This can lead to confusion and sometimes even embarrassment when words are substituted unwittingly by a learner. For example, a Spanish student who says they are 'constipated', may just have a cold (*constipado* = congested / having a cold)! Recognising false friends and highlighting them in class can lead to fun discussions, which may help students avoid similar mistakes in the future.

4. One-to-one equivalence

There isn't always a direct one-to-one relationship between words in languages. For example, some languages have only a single verb to replace the two English verbs *make* and *do* (French: *faire*, Spanish: *hacer*). This can make it difficult for students to conceptualise the two subtly different meanings in English. Similarly, Chinese speakers are used to having a single pronoun for 'he' and 'she', so they often seem to be mixing up genders in English.

Conversely, other languages may have words which don't readily translate into English, at least not as a single word. One example of this that often confuses students is the fact that there isn't a standard single-word polite response to *thank you* in English as there is in other languages – German: *bitte*, Italian: *prego*, Greek: παρακαλώ (transliterated as *parakalo*). Instead, we use a range of expressions depending on context (*you're welcome*, *no problem*, *that's all right*, etc.) or sometimes English speakers just smile and say nothing at all. Bilingual dictionaries can be somewhat misleading here, as they may give one or more possible translations without always explaining the subtleties of usage.

5. Different alphabets

Students whose L1 does not use the Roman alphabet (also called the Latin alphabet) may take time to get to grips with English spelling. When working with these students, it's important to dedicate time to working on the alphabet and spelling at early levels. Remember that students will need to get to grips with both printed and handwritten scripts. This means you need to pay attention to using standard and consistent forms in your own handwriting on the board or in written feedback. These students may also need extra emphasis on spelling, even at higher levels. And remember, even students whose L1 does use the Roman alphabet may not be familiar with exactly the same set of letters, and so may struggle with particular words and sound–spelling relations.

6. Different spelling systems

The spelling system of a learner's L1 can influence the way they read language and think about spelling. Students whose L1 has a *transparent* spelling system, that is, words are pronounced exactly the way they're spelt (such as Spanish, Italian, Finnish or Turkish), tend to read words letter by letter. Speakers of languages with an *opaque* spelling system (such as English, French and Arabic), on the other hand, process whole words, recognising the 'shape' of the word rather than spelling it out letter by letter. This might mean you need to spend more time explicitly highlighting less predictable spelling patterns in English with learners who are used to a transparent spelling system. (See also Unit 13.)

7. Collocations and phrasing

The influence of a learner's L1 can go beyond the level of the individual word. When learners try to translate word for word from their L1, they often transfer L1 collocations and phrases that don't work in English. For example, it's common for Spanish speakers to say *I have 16 years old* instead of *I am 16 years old*. Understanding and discussing the root of these transfer errors can help students avoid them.

8. Translation

Using translation can be a useful tool in the classroom, especially as a means of helping students to learn and record new vocabulary. However, it's vital that students understand the pitfalls of assuming that words always have directly translatable equivalents. As we've seen above, there are often important differences between an English word and its nearest equivalent in an other language that need to be noticed and noted down. Encourage students to use both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and advise them to include extra notes and examples in addition to simple translations in their notebooks. All this is an important part of learner training.

9. Monolingual and multilingual groups

Monolingual groups (where students share the same L1) make it easier to use translation in class (especially if the teacher shares the students' L1). They also allow for discussion of similarities and differences between the L1 and English in which students share specific issues and fixes or ways of remembering vocabulary. In multilingual groups (with students from different L1 backgrounds), it can still be interesting to encourage such discussions. Just articulating the issues they've come up against can help students process language; they may find overlapping issues with other L1s or strategies they can share.

10. Multilingualism

In an increasingly globalised and multicultural world, it's important to remember that students may speak a number of languages (to different degrees of fluency). So, as well as making connections between their L1 and English, students may be able to draw on knowledge of other languages to help in learning vocabulary. For example, an L1 English speaker who has French as their L2 may use this to help them understand words in Italian and Spanish.

"If you speak the students' language, you can make the vocabulary more personalised. Translating specific words students want into English is generally very effective. Students are less likely to forget these words because they tend to remember things that derive from their own needs."

Isida, teacher, Albania

10 things to consider when creating a lexical set

Before you start teaching vocabulary, you need to choose a set of items (words and phrases) to focus on, often known as a *lexical set*. Picking a random set of words without any clear aim can result in confused and confusing activities, so getting the set right up-front is key. Here are some factors to bear in mind when putting together a lexical set.

1. Size

If you try to teach students a long list of new words in one go, the chances are they won't remember them all; they may just get confused and feel overloaded. The number of items you choose will depend on the level of the students, the type of activity and whether the words are completely new or for revision. For new vocabulary, around eight to 10 words or phrases is probably enough. For revision, students can manage a longer list, but 12 to 15 items is a sensible maximum.

2. Receptive or productive

When you're planning a vocabulary activity, you should consider whether the vocabulary is for *receptive* use (i.e. you mainly want students to understand the word when they read or hear it) or *productive* use (i.e. you want them to use the word themselves). For example, you may want students to focus on understanding vocabulary to decode a reading text (receptive use) or you may want them to focus on extending the range of vocabulary they use in their own writing (productive use). This decision will influence the set of words you choose and the activities that follow.

3. Frequency

One way of deciding which words will be most useful for students at each level is to focus on the most frequently used words in the language first. High-frequency words are likely to be more useful than rare, low-frequency words, especially at lower levels. In addition to using your own intuition, there are several ways you can check the frequency of a word. Some learner dictionaries label the most frequent words using symbols. There are a number of published wordlists that are based primarily on word frequency, such as the New General Service List and the Oxford 3000™. You can also use online tools to check whether words are in the top 1,000 or 2,000 most frequent words (see Unit 45). Remember, though, that dictionary frequency measures and wordlists are usually referring to the most common sense of the word, so *address* (noun, meaning 'where you live') is a very frequent word, but *address* (verb, meaning 'deal with an issue') is much less frequent.

4. Relevance

Choose vocabulary items that will be interesting and relevant to your learners. If you're teaching business English, then work-related vocabulary will be key; on the other hand, teenagers are likely to be more interested in words to talk about their own interests. Some learners, for example those planning to live or study in an English-speaking country, will want to know words to do with the UK or the US. Other learners will find words for describing the realities in their own country and context more relevant.

5. Bias and inclusion

Be careful to avoid bias and stereotypes when selecting vocabulary to teach. Learners can feel excluded if the language you teach doesn't apply to them or to their lives. For example, when teaching family vocabulary think about non-traditional families too: *step-mother/father*, *partner* (for non-married or same-sex couples), etc. Teach gender-neutral terms like *police officer* instead of *policeman* or *flight attendant* instead of *air hostess*. Don't assume learners all know people who are *doctors*, *lawyers* or *teachers*: include a variety of different job types that students in the class can use to talk about the people they know.

6. Avoid similar words

Introducing new words together that are similar in meaning (synonyms), such as *scared* and *frightened*, or form (synforms), like *contain* and *maintain*, can be confusing, and students are less likely to remember them. This problem is known as 'interference'. One way to avoid this is to choose words that are around the same theme, but which include a mix of different parts of speech. For example, if you want to focus on vocabulary to talk about feelings, instead of picking lots of adjectives (*happy*, *sad*, *angry*, *scared*, *frightened*, *nervous*, etc.) include some verbs (*feel*, *enjoy*, *complain*) and some nouns (*fun*, *feelings*, *nerve*). This also encourages students to use a variety of structures with the vocabulary.

7. Focus on one use

Many words in English have more than one sense, that is, they are 'polysemous'. For example, *free* can mean 'costing no money' or 'not restricted or controlled'. Don't try to introduce several senses of a new word at the same time, as this can lead to confusion. Pick one sense of the word and only present and practise that sense in your activities. Similarly, if a word has more than one part of speech (e.g. *note* as a noun and a verb) don't introduce them both as new vocabulary in the same lesson. Making connections between different senses and different parts of speech can be useful later, though. For example, if students know *note* as a noun, drawing their attention to the verb form used in a text and making the link to their existing knowledge will be helpful. This way they will build up layers of information gradually.

8. Beyond the word

Vocabulary isn't just about lists of individual words. Remember to include phrases (*at least*, *more or less*, *get lost*), phrasal verbs (*turn up*, *get on with*) and idioms (*the chances are*, *once in a blue moon*) in your lexical sets. The best way to teach these multi-word items is as part of a mixed set with other words around a topic. A set of similar-looking phrasal verbs or idioms that all include colours, for example, may just cause confusion and lead to interference. Instead, you could include phrasal verbs and idioms along with other vocabulary on a topic, e.g. *make friends*, *get on with*, *relationship*, etc. or *occasionally*, *all the time*, *once in a blue moon*.

9. Words you don't want to teach


Just because you think your learners won't know a word or phrase in a reading or listening text doesn't mean you have to include it in your vocabulary set for the lesson. Ask yourself whether it's a useful item to learn. Is it a word students might need to use? Are they likely to come across it again? If not, then find another way to help them through the text without treating the item as target vocabulary. You could add a glossary next to the text giving the definition of the word (or a translation) or include a picture to illustrate it.

10. Keeping track

Students don't fully learn a new word the first time they meet it. It takes time to learn about a word and how it's used before it becomes part of their own vocabulary (see Unit 4). That means revisiting and recycling vocabulary is vital (see Unit 10). In order to help students to do this, keep a track of the lexical sets you've worked on so you can recycle previous target words in later lessons. And vocabulary isn't just about the words you have planned to teach. Note down any incidental vocabulary that crops up for discussion during class and add it to your class list so you can include it for recycling.

“When selecting a topic-based lexical set for a unit in a coursebook, I try to imagine a real life discussion about the topic or script the output stage of the lesson and see what words naturally come up.”

Paul Dummett, ELT coursebook author



Section 2

In the classroom

This section starts out by providing you with some of the basic principles behind presenting and practising new vocabulary. Units 7 and 8 suggest a range of ways and activities to teach form, meaning and use, as well as ideas for controlled practice activities. Having introduced new words, we all know from experience that students won't necessarily remember the new vocabulary from a single lesson. So Units 9 and 10 suggest ways to help students memorise, revise and recycle vocabulary in the lessons that follow.

From Units 11 to 15 you'll find ideas for going more deeply into vocabulary. Units 11 and 12 look at the key issues behind teaching the pronunciation and grammar of a word, and then offer a variety of activities to help students. Unit 13, on spelling, provides a list of quick ideas for activities that students can do in or out of the classroom. Unit 14 is one of two units in the book that consider how teachers can make use of a student's first language by comparing it to English. Then, having worked on the different aspects of learning new words, Unit 15 brings all this together by encouraging students to use different strategies for recording words.

When you want to start or end a lesson, it's always helpful to have a few quick activities that require very little preparation and that will change the pace of your class. The activities in Units 16 to 17 are useful to have up your sleeve, and they will also be of use when you are preparing students to revise for vocabulary tests, the topic of the final unit (Unit 18) in this section.


10 ways to present a new word

When you are planning to present new vocabulary items to your students, decide on the target items you wish to present and how to convey the elements of form, meaning and use (see Unit 4). Most learners will manage to learn seven or eight new items per lesson, but remember that different students will find that different words stick more easily, certain cognates are easier to remember and, at higher levels, you may be building on words they already know. You will need to develop a presentation technique to make the presentations memorable and engaging. Here are a few ways to get you started.

1. Show a picture

Especially at lower levels, pictures are one of the best ways to present vocabulary. They are useful for nouns (e.g. *table, bush, belt*), action verbs (e.g. *run, cook, fly*) and many adjectives (e.g. *excited, dirty, crowded*). You can show pictures alongside words written on the board or you can show the picture as you say the word. One way to help students memorise the new words is to write the new set of words randomly around the board. Point quickly at each word for students to repeat them. Gradually rub out words and replace each word with a picture of it. Continue to point while students repeat. When they've said each word many times, remove the pictures one by one, continuing to point to the empty space where the word and picture were for students to repeat. Seeing the written word and the concept while saying and hearing the word over and over is a successful way to introduce new vocabulary.

2. Show an object

 Using real objects (also called *realia*, see Unit 48) is the obvious choice for presenting lexical sets such as clothes, stationery and classroom objects. As with the pictures in Tip 1, you can say and write the word, but this time show the object as well. To present vocabulary for containers (e.g. *bottle, packet, bag, jar, can, box, tube, sachet, tub, carton*), bring a selection of these items to class. Put them on a table in the classroom where students can access them. Give each pair of students a word card (provided on page 178 of the Appendix) with a phrase like *a jar of honey, a carton of juice* or *a bag of peanuts*. Ask each pair to come to the table and work out which item goes with their card. The students then present it to the class; for example: *This is a jar*. When all the word cards have been matched with items, put the items in a bin bag and ask students to write down the list of containers from memory.

3. Mime or act

Sometimes you can mime or act a movement to teach some vocabulary, especially verbs. For example, if you are presenting verbs used in a cooking process (e.g. *crack, put, beat, pour, cook*), students could watch as you give the instructions and mime. Then you repeat the demonstration while students mime silently with you. Next, they mime and speak with you; then *they* mime and speak while you are silent. After that, they dictate the process to you and you write the vocabulary on the board as they say it. Finally, they note down the spelling.

4. Present the sound

As well as seeing the written word, students need to hear a word and try to say it. With low levels (A1/A2), whenever you introduce a new word, say it more than once and ask students to repeat it. To build confidence, have the whole class say it together as a chorus. Then individuals can say it to check they know how to pronounce it. Even with higher-level students, quickly drilling any new word that comes up in a lesson is an effective way to practise it, and students at any level will appreciate the opportunity to check they know what it sounds like. (See also Unit 11 on pronunciation.)

5. Synonyms and antonyms



When a word you have already taught has a synonym (a word with a similar meaning) or antonym (a word with an opposite meaning), make use of it to teach new words. One way to present synonyms and antonyms is to have pairs of words on cards. The ones on page 179 of the appendix have been designed for an elementary level (A1/A2) class. Cut up the words and stick them around the board. Move them around to match the antonyms. Then mix them up again and ask volunteers to come forward to put them into pairs. The physical and visual aspect of this will aid learning. Next, give pairs of students their own set of the cut-up cards to match up the pairs of words. One variation is to use them for playing pelmanism (see Tip 17.3).

6. Translation

Translation, as a way to present vocabulary, is fraught with difficulty because so few words translate exactly to words in other languages. You need to clarify meaning. One way to do this, particularly with intermediate levels and up is with a 'beep dictation'. Create or find a short text with your target vocabulary. Dictate the text, saying 'beep' or whistling instead of saying the target words. For example, *The grass was very long, so he decided to borrow a [beep] and cut it. He picked a rose and scratched his finger on a [beep].* When you have finished dictating, pairs work together to decide what the missing words mean (rather than what the words actually are). They then find the actual words in a bilingual dictionary or you write them on the board, and they match them to the gaps. Learning the meaning before the word(s) will reinforce memorisation.

7. Words on a scale

Some sets of new words lend themselves to being presented on a scale such as *boiling, hot, warm, cold, freezing* or *always, often, sometimes, occasionally, rarely, never*. Here's an example of a scale from a lesson about likes and dislikes:

love really like like don't like hate
 ←-----→
 +++++ +++ ++ -- ----

Alternatively, you can provide students with the scale and they label it themselves with a set of words.

8. In context

You can present words in sentences or texts to show students how they work in context. This is probably the most frequent way of presenting vocabulary at higher levels (e.g. B1 and above). To draw attention to a word, ask students to cover it with their finger and to work out the meaning from what's around it. Students can compare their understanding in pairs. A good source of texts for general English courses, apart from coursebooks, is graded readers. You'll find that the target vocabulary in graded readers is not only listed in a glossary or wordlist, but is also used repeatedly throughout the text. This helps students learn vocabulary in a way that mimics the way in which adults learn words in their own language.

9. Definition

Following on from Tip 8, another way to teach vocabulary in context is to take certain words out of a reading text and provide the dictionary definitions on a worksheet. Students match the words with their definitions; they can refer back to the words in the context of the reading text to help them decide. Another way of presenting vocabulary using definitions is to say them like this: *I'm very very tired. I'm **exhausted*** (to present the word *exhausted*). This gives a more complete meaning than a translation would, but it also helps form associations in students' minds and allows them to hear the pronunciation and word stress.

10. Poster presentations



Asking a student to teach a word to other students is often the best way to learn it, so give responsibility for some vocabulary presentations to your learners. Ask students to research one or two words for homework. They must find the meaning, prepare example sentences and research the pronunciation. They then create a small (A4-sized) poster about the word and bring it to class. In class, students work in pairs or small groups, presenting their word to each other using the poster. Alternatively, the whole class can stand up and walk around, teaching their word to their classmates as they meet each other.

"You might notice that some of the students are having problems with the pronunciation of certain words. Write out the words you need to focus on, mark the stress on them and then create a mini video where you go through the words. You can then share the video with the students."

Russell Stannard on using screen capture technology, www.teachertrainingvideos.com

10 activities for practising new vocabulary

When new vocabulary is introduced, students need to engage with the words or phrases in meaningful ways. The more times students encounter new words and the more exposure they get from working with their form and meaning, the more likely they are to remember them. These activities provide students with practice both in and out of class to maximise learning.

1. Notice the words in context

Noticing involves students paying attention to aspects of language such as form or meaning. Context plays an important role here. In a reading or listening lesson, ask students to highlight or underline the vocabulary items in a reading text or audioscript that you want them to learn. Ask them to notice which words come before and after the target words. For example, in the sentence *We stayed at a modern hotel in central Berlin*, students might notice *stayed at a modern hotel*. As a follow-up, ask them to use the words in a new sentence context: *I have never stayed at a modern hotel*.

2. Use action and movement

Using action and movement is another way to aid memorisation. Students can practise action verbs by miming the action for others to guess. They could create short videos of actions to illustrate new action verbs on an online bulletin board. Actions are good for practising adverbs of manner, too. Give a student a verb (e.g. *run*) and an adverb (e.g. *happily*). The student mimes 'running happily' for the others to guess. Display words (or pictures representing the words) around the room. Give a definition and ask students to point to the word you have just defined.

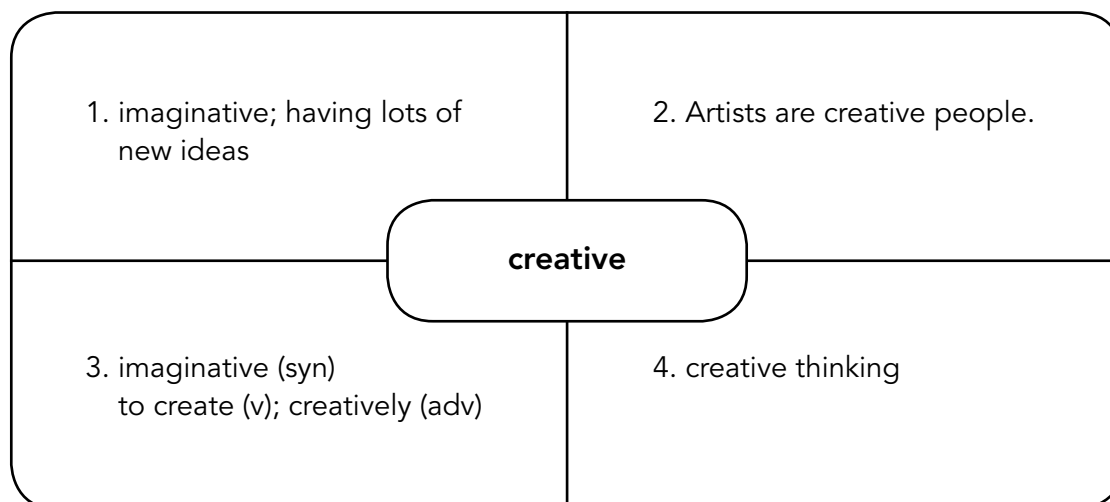
3. Categorise

As humans, we instinctively categorise things (*good/bad; safe/dangerous; living/non-living*); categorising new words is another way to increase exposure and aid memory. There are numerous ways to categorise new vocabulary: by topic or theme, by word form, by connotation, whether the word is more or less formal (e.g. *leave out* vs *omit*), etc. When practising new vocabulary, ask students questions that lead to different categorisations: *Which of these words are adjectives? Which words have a positive connotation? Which can be both a noun and a verb? Which have three syllables? Which ones are better in spoken English? Which would you associate with money or banking?*, etc. Alternatively, ask students to come up with a way to categorise the words themselves.

4. Use study cards

It's useful for students to keep a set of blank cards (or slips of paper) that they can write new words on. As they collect a set of cards, they can carry them around and test themselves when they have a spare moment. One way to organise the information about a word on a card is shown overleaf. The student writes the new word (e.g. 'creative') in the middle of the card. Then, in the first square, in the top left corner, they write a definition of the word (either a definition from a dictionary or their own). In the second square, they write a sentence using the word. In square 3 they list any synonyms, antonyms, a translation, or other word forms. And finally in square 4, in the bottom right-hand corner,

they can write a collocation or perhaps draw a picture to help them remember the word. The process of having students create their own study cards means that students not only increase their exposure to new words, but also engage their brains in the process of creation.



5. Social learning in pairs

Most teachers are familiar with asking students to work in pairs and this kind of social interaction makes learning more memorable. One idea for practising vocabulary is to put students into pairs to test each other on the meaning of new words: Student A says the definition and Student B says the word. Another activity which encourages students to play with the language is this: Student A says two words; Student B then has to find a way to connect them. For example: Student A: *advantage ... information*. Student B: *It's an advantage to have lots of information before making a decision*. A variation of this is to say what the two words have in common: Student A: *pineapple ... bee*. Student B: *Both have yellow parts*.

6. Make use of technology

Most students have mobile phones. Ask pairs to choose a word or assign a word to each pair. They must come up with a way to teach the word to another pair using their phone. Don't give them any more instruction, but let them come up with their own idea. For example, they might take a photo representing a word, then write a caption and send it to another student. Alternatively, they might create or share a gif to show an action, or send a link to a dictionary definition. After a few minutes, put the pairs into groups of four to share their ideas.

7. Grow a sentence

Write a simple sentence on the board with one of the vocabulary words you want to practise, e.g. *The waiter recommended the pizza*. Working together as a class, invite students to suggest ONE word to add to the sentence to make it longer, for example, *The waiter recommended the vegetarian pizza*. Then elicit a few more words until students

feel the sentence has reached its limit. Alternatively, you could ask students to add whole phrases, for example, *The friendly waiter strongly recommended the fresh vegetarian pizza to the hungry customer.*

Having demonstrated how 'growing a sentence' works, give students another simple sentence and put them in pairs to create a longer one. This could be a competition: the team with the longest grammatically correct sentence would be the winner. Allow for silly (but still grammatically correct) sentences, too, as these are often more memorable.

8. Play a card game

Prepare a set of cards for each vocabulary word and a set of corresponding definition cards. Ideally, there should be one of each card for each person in the class. In a large class, create subgroups. Choose a student to start. The student uses the definition card to ask a question: e.g. *Who has a word that means to communicate with someone?* The student with the right vocabulary word (in this case, *interact*) answers: *I have: interact.* That student then continues the game by using their definition card to ask the next question. This encourages students to listen carefully to each other and is a non-threatening and engaging way to learn the new words.

9. Create a game board



Give each student a blank game board such as one of the two provided on pages 180 and 181 of the Appendix. Ask them to write one word in each square. They should use any new vocabulary that has recently been taught in their lessons. When all the squares on their board game have a word, put students in pairs or groups of three and they take turns to play each other's board game (or play each game over two or three separate lessons). Give each student a counter. (Alternatively, they can use a small object from their bag.) They place the counters on 'Start'. Student A flips a coin: if it's heads, Student A moves one space; tails, Student A moves two spaces. The object is to use the word you land on in a sentence correctly. The other player(s) decide if it is correct. You can make the game more challenging with the rule that an incorrect sentence (or incorrect pronunciation of the word) means missing a turn.

10. Teach learning strategies



For homework, ask students to make a list of all the ways they use to learn new words. Give them a few ideas to get started, such as writing it down, drawing a picture of it, repeating it in a sentence, etc. The students bring their ideas back to the next lesson and, either working as a whole class or in smaller groups, they share their ideas. During the discussion, write all the ideas on the board. Share them online if you are able to. It's a useful way of having students develop new strategies for learning vocabulary.

10 tips for memorising vocabulary

Memorising vocabulary is the first stage in learning it. Students will probably manage to keep words in their short-term memory for the duration of the lesson, but they need to be able to transfer them to their long-term memory. Forming associations is key, and providing an emotional context for vocabulary, as well as a semantic one, helps form whole memories. This unit will help you do that.

1. Peer-teaching

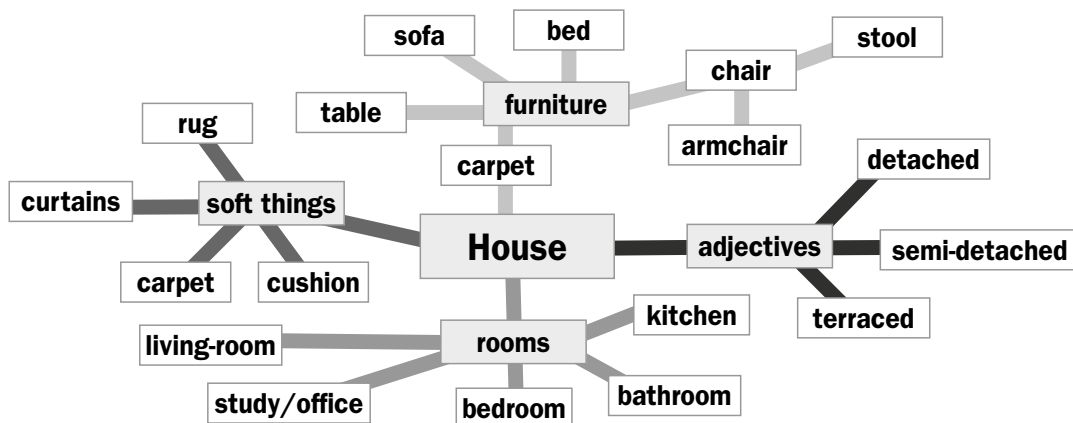
One of the best ways for students to memorise something is to teach it themselves. Put students into pairs. They take turns teaching each other a set of new words. Give each student a list of three different items; for example, Student A receives *mug*, *rug* and *blinds*, and Student B receives *cupboard*, *fork* and *armchair*. The students look up their words and decide how they will present them. Encourage them to use drawings, actions or definitions in their presentations of the words.

2. Use colour

The vast majority of visual attention is drawn by colour, so activities exploiting colour help memory. For example, when students record words in their vocabulary books, suggest that they use different colours for verbs, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, etc. Alternatively, you can ask students to organise a mixed or random set of vocabulary into categories of their choice; for example, 'things that fit in my bag', 'things I'll never buy', 'places', 'objects', 'people' and 'feelings'. They write the words in each category in a different colour. They can then use the different colours when making word cards to use for self-study. The thinking processes that go into this kind of task help memorisation.

3. Use spidergrams

We generally find it quite easy to walk around a familiar room in the dark because our brains create maps in our memories to help us remember. In the same way, creating maps and spidergrams is a good way to memorise vocabulary. Give students a list of items relating to a topic such as 'house', 'freedom' or 'animals', or ask them to review their notes and find the vocabulary. They'll need a clean page or sheet of paper. Ask them to write the topic word in the middle of the page and to organise the vocabulary into a spidergram by grouping the items as they wish. When they have finished, they can stick them in their notebooks for reference or use them as classroom posters.



4. Mnemonics

Mnemonics are techniques for memorising long lists of items. For example, when you first meet someone, you might think of something their name reminds you of so as not to forget it. For example, you might imagine a girl called Rosa holding a rose, or a boy called Axel cleaning an axle. Mnemonics are particularly good for learning items like phrasal verbs, which students find particularly tricky. If you imagine standing looking upwards at, for example, your grandmother, it will help you memorise *look up to*. Similarly, imagining someone climbing over a broken heart emoji will help with *get over something*. When you teach new items, ask students to think of a mnemonic and to explain it to a partner.

5. Start with a memory test for awareness

At the start of the course, slowly read out a list of 15 random items, e.g. *nostalgic, house, rainy, chocolate, pudding, hen*, etc. Tell students that they mustn't write them down, but that they must remember them until the end of the lesson. Read the list a second time, then carry on with the lesson. Ten minutes from the end, ask students to write down the words they remember. Discuss how many words they managed; seven or eight is the normal number of items a brain will store, though an overt memory test like this might give higher scores. Next, form groups, mixing those who remembered a greater number with those who remembered fewer. They tell each other how they memorised them. This will not only raise awareness but will also allow them to share successful techniques.

6. Personalisation

Forming opinions of words helps students to memorise them. For example, students look at a list of words and choose the five they think will be most useful to them, or the five they like best. They then write a sentence using each one. You can also ask students to decide which is the *least* likely to be memorable. They compare and discuss the words they have chosen and explain why. They are likely to memorise the words chosen, having made a personal association with it. You can also ask students which words they like the sound of, which ones sound funny to them, or which ones their parents might find useful.

7. Repeat, repeat, repeat

Researchers say we need to encounter a lexical item at least 15 times to memorise it. We would be unlikely to present an item 15 times, but we can achieve this level of repetition by getting students to read a word, then say, hear and write it. A type of dictation called a 'dictogloss' is good for this. Read out a text containing target vocabulary. Students write down what they heard. They then work in pairs to try to reconstruct the text. You should always speak at natural speed (slightly slower for lower levels) and, if students ask to hear it again, never read out the text more than three times. The effort of trying to catch words, transcribe sounds, comprehend meaning and work out the context and grammar surrounding it really helps memory. Short pieces of students' homework or a section of a text they read in the previous lesson work well for this.

8. Think beautiful

One thing that triggers the formation of memories is beauty. Try using postcards of artworks for students to label with nouns, verbs and adjectives related to what they see. They can also add adjectives of emotion or mood for their personal response to the image. Another way for students to improve memorisation is to create their own vocabulary pages by writing the words in the form of eye-catching graffiti. This strategy is particularly effective with teenagers, as it helps develop their creativity – and creativity in turn aids memorisation.

9. Use wordclouds

Wordclouds (also called text clouds or tag clouds) can be created using sites such as Wordle, Tagxedo and WordItOut. They allow you present groups of words in interesting formats and in different colours, making them useful for aiding memorisation. After presenting a set of new vocabulary, show a brightly coloured wordcloud of the target words to your class. Let them see it for 30 seconds (a minute for lower levels) and tell them to memorise as many of the words as possible. Take the wordcloud away and put students into groups of three or four. One person in each group acts as scribe, writing down all the words the group can remember.

10. Focus on positive emotions and the senses

Memory works best when we feel positive about something (the lesson, the teacher or the vocabulary, for example) and when our senses are activated. If you bring sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and feel into your vocabulary lessons, you help memorisation. For example, when you teach holiday vocabulary, such as *beach*, *hotel*, *bikini* and *sightseeing*, add in words with a sensory connection, such as *hot*, *sandy*, *fish* and *chips*. Ask students to decide if those are the words they associate with holidays, too. Then give them a table to complete with two or three words in each column. You could end the lesson by asking students to mime holiday words for classmates to guess.

sight	smell	hearing	touch	taste

“I like my students to deduce and discover meaning of a word themselves using authentic resources. In taking a more active role, new vocabulary is more likely to stick.”

Jennie Wright, teacher, Germany

10 ways to revise and recycle vocabulary

We all know from experience that if you see or hear a new word once, you will probably have forgotten it the next day unless it is seen or heard again. So revising and recycling is a crucial part of vocabulary teaching and students who revise new vocabulary a little and often will remember better than those who never review, or those who try to revise everything the night before a test.

1. Study skills


Ensure students understand the importance of frequent revision. Ask them to devise a self-study schedule (five to ten minutes a day is enough) in which they plan to use their flash cards, Quizlet cards or vocabulary notebooks. They should choose tasks that are easy to do while commuting, or that can be done as a quick review just before bed. Note that students might start the term adhering to the schedule, but lose momentum as the weeks pass. Keeping track of their study sessions with a chart or log could encourage them to stay the course. At the end of term, add up the time spent so that students can congratulate themselves.

2. Use a three-tick system

The three-tick system allows students to self-assess which words they most need to revise. Ask students to look at the list of vocabulary words and award ticks to each word like this:

- ☐ I don't remember what this word means.
- ✓ I recognise the word and know what it means.
- ✓✓ I recognise it and can explain what it means.
- ✓✓✓ I am confident about this word. I know it and can use it confidently in sentences.

3. Peripheral learning

 Beginner students can create a 3D 'dictionary' at home with sticky notes. Ask them to label things around the house – bed, door, cupboard, wall, etc. as a constant reminder of the names for these items.

4. Test each other

Students form a group chat of four to six people using a messaging app such as WhatsApp or Snapchat. Each person in the group posts a definition in the form of a question to the group, (e.g. *What's a word that means connected with technology?*). The others respond with answers.

5. Listen for the words

At the beginning of the lesson, tell the class you are going to use three vocabulary words in sentences at some point during the lesson. Write these on the board. Students must listen carefully to everything you say. When they hear the word, they raise their hands or stand up. If appropriate, treat this as a competition with points awarded to the first student (or students) to respond. Try to integrate the words naturally into the lesson. You can make this a regular part of every lesson.







6. Discussion slips

Give each student five to ten slips of paper. Ask them to go through their coursebook or vocabulary notebook and write down one noun, verb, adjective or adverb per slip. Put students into groups of three or four. The students hold their slips so that they can see the words but the others cannot. The aim of the activity is to hold a discussion and keep it going until all the words have been used. Student A starts the discussion using one of the words from his or her collection of slips and then discards it. Another student continues the discussion using and discarding words in the same way. This activity is good for mixed levels in a group: higher-level students can have more words to use. Ensure students understand that they are not competing to use all their words up as quickly as possible, but that it is instead a collaborative effort to hold a conversation.

7. Roll a word

To revise vocabulary before a test, choose 36 words you would like your students to review. On the board, write six sets of six words each. Label the sets A–F. Number the words in each set 1–6. Put students into groups of three or four and give each a six-sided dice. Student A rolls the dice. The number rolled corresponds to a word in set A which the students then write down on a sheet of paper. For instance, if Student A rolls a 6, he or she writes down the word that is numbered '6' in Column A. Students take turns to roll the dice again to collect the next five words. Groups now have a list of six words that they must use to write a story or paragraph. When they have finished, they can either read their story to another group or post it on a class forum or blog.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	teach	description	tourist	growth	effective	sun
2	study	additional	hotel	enjoyable	danger	sea
3	plan	quickly	active	creative	expensive	heat
4	lecture	desk	holiday	critique	useful	nuclear
5	presentation	unfortunately	fun	local	wind	waste
6	subject	notes	leisurely	economics	power	agree

A		study
B		unfortunately
C		fun
D		economics
E		danger
F		sun

8. Nonsense words

Instead of writing a story with specific words included, ask students to write a story or paragraph that includes nonsense words such as buzz instead of the vocabulary word. (e.g. *Every restaurant must have a buzz to cook the buzz.*) They then pass their story to another group, who must replace the nonsense word with the correct vocabulary word. To make the activity easier, ask students to include a list of vocabulary words for the others to choose from. Alternatively, allow them to add words that make the story or paragraph silly, as long as the word form is correct (e.g. *Every restaurant must have a police officer to cook the flowers.*)

9. Guess the word

Prepare sets of cards with vocabulary words you want your students to revise – one word per card. Put students into pairs and give them each a set, which they place face down between them. The aim of the activity is to see how many words a student can guess in one minute. Students can time themselves, or you can set a class timer. To start, Student A takes a card and tries to define, explain or give an example of the word on it so that Student B can guess the word. This continues until the minute is up. Students then swap roles so that Student A has a chance to do the guessing. You may wish to pre-teach useful phrases for this activity, for example: *It's something that you use to ...*, *It's what you do when you ...*, *It's a way to ...*, *It means the same as ...*, *It's the opposite of ...*, *It's a kind of ...*, etc.

10. Find real-life examples



Ask students to choose three to five vocabulary words. Task them with finding an example of at least one of them in use. The examples can be from written or spoken sources. They can search around town (if in an English-speaking country), look on product labels, listen to songs or podcasts, read news stories, books or graded readers, or watch YouTube videos or films. They bring in their examples to share with the rest of the class.

"I get students to make short video clips on their phones in small groups. Each group chooses a verb or verb phrase we've been working with recently, and decides on how to represent it in a 10-second video. They share the clips with other groups and guess which verb or verb phrase is being represented."

Ceri Jones, co-author of ETpedia Grammar

10 tips for teaching the pronunciation of vocabulary

Research has found that 67.5% of communication breakdowns between second-language speakers of English are caused by pronunciation issues. While any given vocabulary item will still be 'correct' despite changing pronunciation slightly between, for example, the Irish, New Zealander, Indian and North-West English accents, there are some sounds that need to be clear for the word or phrase to be understood. This means, generally speaking, that teaching the sound of a word or expression is as important as its spelling – often more so. That, in turn, means looking at sounds within words, how words and phrases sound as units, and how they sound in a sentence. The sounds in English that cause most communication problems are the long/short vowel distinctions (e.g. /ɪ/ and /i:/), the slight aspiration before p, k and t, consonantal clusters (e.g. /tʃt/in *watched*), and word stress. Locally, individual consonants can also be problematic. A good starting point is to point out that the major online learners dictionaries (and often Wikipedia) have clickable soundbites (see Unit 41), but there are many things you can do in class, too.

1. Listen and repeat

This is a good starting point for learning to produce the spoken form of a lexical item. Ideally, the items should be in context, rather than in isolation, and recording using a phone is a useful way to self-evaluate. Most students can recognise when something sounds like English, even if they struggle to produce the sound. For one-to-one classes, take turns with your student to record sentences containing the target items. They can then play the recording back to hear how you say it and compare it with how they say it. For bigger groups, give students example sentences and ask them to anticipate how they think the target items will sound. Then read out the sentences or play a recording and ask students to listen and repeat. To add some cognitive processing to the activity, say sentences which are incorrect or possibly not true for your student(s) and ask them to say the sentences back to you but with any necessary corrections; for example, for parts of the body: *I have very big feet.* > *I don't have very big feet.* *Spiders have six legs.* > *Spiders have eight legs.* *My hair is blonde.* > *My hair isn't blonde.*

2. Word stress



Generally speaking, if a word is stressed on the incorrect syllable, it is either difficult to understand or can sound like a completely different word. Take *important*, for example: pronounced as *IMportant*, it sounds very much like *impotent*. When you teach vocabulary, make sure students know where the stress goes on the item, and that they are familiar with the phonemic convention used in transcripts in dictionaries (there is usually a stress mark immediately before the stressed syllable, as in /'wɜ:ɪ'dstres/). As well as encouraging students to become more independent in their vocabulary learning, doing this will help them see over time how, for example, affixes or particles in phrasal verbs are rarely stressed.

Give students a copy of the word stress table on page 182 of the Appendix. Whenever they learn a new word, they can add the words to the table according to the word stress pattern.