

# VOCABULARY

# SKILLS

New Tutor Training






#4







## Vocabulary Skills

Vocabulary, one of the four (4) components of reading, is the best single predictor of comprehension. Makes sense, right? The more words you know, the easier it is to get meaning from what you're reading. What does it mean though to truly "know" a word? Is it enough to be able to recognize a word when you see it and quote a dictionary definition? The answer to that question is **NO!** **Recognizing a word is not the same as knowing a word.** This is an important concept to remember as you work with your adult learner.

Each time a word is introduced, one of the following will be true of your learner's knowledge:

-  Never heard the word
-  Heard the word but can't define it
-  Able to recognize the word in context and has a vague understanding of its meaning
-  Able to use the word and understand the general meaning, but can't explain it
-  Knows the meaning of the word and can use it in thinking, speaking, or writing

Recognition is only one step in the process. True knowledge is demonstrated in the learner's ability to use the word correctly in their thinking, speaking, or writing. Practically speaking, your learner will truly know a word if they can do each of the following:

-  Pronounce correctly
-  Spell correctly
-  Use meaningfully in a sentence
-  Use in conversation

## **Role of a Dictionary**

Many of us were taught to go immediately to a dictionary for the meaning of unfamiliar words. Not necessarily bad advice, but did you ever find the definition to only add to your confusion? Let's look at an example. Here's a dictionary definition of the word "machine".

“An apparatus consisting of interrelated parts with separate functions used in the performance of some kind of work.”

In order to understand this definition, you also have to know the meaning of words like “apparatus”, “interrelated”, and “functions”. Imagine now being an adult learner with a limited English vocabulary. Get the picture? Complicating things even further is the fact that the word “machine” has multiple meanings and can be used as either a noun or a verb.






This is not to say that a dictionary doesn’t have a place when working with your adult learner. Just be aware of its challenges to learners with limited English skills. Don’t use it as your primary learning tool. For best results, use a dictionary designed for ESL learners.

### **Teaching Vocabulary Skills**

Learning a word requires multiple exposures to it over a period of time. Your Site Supervisor may assign a vocabulary chapter for your learner that includes the words to teach as well as various exercises designed to practice using each word. **Each lesson will take a minimum of 3-4 classes.** Independent practice and application, where your learner demonstrates how to use each word, is critical.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Completing worksheets alone is not the indicator of learning. If a learner cannot correctly use a word in writing or in conversation, learning has NOT taken place!**

### **How to Teach**

-  Pronounce word. Ask your learner to repeat it back to you.
-  Provide the meaning to be learned. **Teach only one definition at a time.** Learners do not need to know every possible use of a word.
-  Provide three (3) examples of how the word is used in a sentence.
-  Ask your learner to write sentences using the word.
-  Provide multiple exposure to the word through various exercises.

## 🏠 Review, review, review!

- ☁ It may be helpful for your learner to keep a written list of vocabulary words and definitions in their notebook or to create flashcards. That way they have the words to study and review during the week.
- ☁ Ask your learner to explain the meaning of each word to you in their own words. If they are unable to do this, you may need to go back and re-teach the word. **Do not overlook the importance of this step.**  
It's easy to memorize a given definition, but the true test of knowledge is whether the learner can explain and use the word correctly.
- ☁ Remember to practice spelling!
- ☁ Practice using the words you have taught in conversation and/or writing with your learner. Remember, multiple exposure to a word is necessary in order to truly learn it.