



Keys to Evidence-Based Vocabulary Instruction



Teach vocabulary words with a combination of definitions and a variety of authentic, high-quality contexts.

Use instructional activities that engage students in active processing of target word meanings.

Schedule review activities over time, including both study and testing of target words to facilitate long-term retention.

Individualize target words and review schedules for each student.

Structure activities to encourage intrinsic motivation among students.

Note. The instructional components described in this guide are featured in the DictionarySquared vocabulary program (<https://dictionaryquaredresearch.sc.edu>). This guide is presented as a supplement to a research manuscript reporting the initial development and testing of the research platform. More information, including the evidence base to support these components, can be found in the manuscript cited below.

Adlof, S.M., Baron, L.S., Scoggins, J., Kapelner, A., McKeown, M.G., Perfetti, C.A., Miller, E., Soterwood, J., & Petscher, Y. (in review). Accelerating adolescent vocabulary growth: Development of an individualized, web-based vocabulary instruction program.

Handout design by Allison Blakeley, MS CCC-SLP

Key Ideas for Implementation

Teach vocabulary words with a combination of definitions and a variety of authentic, high-quality contexts.

Ideas for implementation

Gather examples of target words from real-world contexts, including news articles, classroom activities, popular books, video clips, song lyrics, and social media posts.

Encourage students to gather and share examples of vocabulary words encountered outside the classroom.

Provide direct instruction of target words using definitions from a learner's dictionary, which uses high-frequency words within the definitions to make them easier to understand.

Use instructional activities that engage students in active processing of target word meanings.

Ideas for implementation

Encourage students to generate their own definitions and example sentences for target words.

Ask students questions that require them to reflect on word meanings, "How is an *advocate* like a *defender*? How are they different?" "Which sport is more *hazardous*, football or golf?"

Ask students to evaluate self- and peer-generated contexts for appropriateness of vocabulary word usage.

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More Key Ideas for Implementation

Schedule review activities over time, including both study and testing of target words to facilitate long-term retention of vocabulary words.

Ideas for implementation

Test students' recall and understanding of target word meanings on a regular basis.

Collect target words in index card sets, a binder, or a shared slide deck and check periodically for recall. This can be a great session warm-up or wrap-up activity.

Individualize target words and review schedules for each student.

Ideas for implementation

Pretest word knowledge before assigning words for instruction. From a larger list of possible words, select a subset for each student to learn based on their current level of knowledge.

Invite students to evaluate their own word knowledge prior to and during instruction.

Schedule reviews based on students' memory for word meanings. For example, if a student accurately recalls the definition of a word, it is moved to a list to practice in two weeks. If a student cannot remember the definition, the word is reviewed the next day.

Structure activities to encourage intrinsic motivation among students.

Ideas for implementation

Promote the study of different target words and review schedules as a positive learning experience.

Involve students in target word selection to promote autonomy.

Provide words that are challenging yet attainable to support feelings of competence and positive academic self-concept.

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