



PYE BANK CE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Robust Vocabulary Instruction

Based on *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*

by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan

Key Concepts

***'A robust approach to vocabulary involves directly explaining the meanings of words along with thought provoking, playful and interactive follow up.'* (Beck , McKeown and Kucan)**

There are 3 tiers of words:

Tier 1 : Words typically found in oral language

Tier 2: Words which are more common in written language than spoken, and used in texts to clarify meaning and further engage the reader.

Tier 3: Words which tend to be limited to specific themes e.g. enzyme, insulator, or those that are rarely encountered by even the more avid reader

For vocabulary instruction, choose Tier 2 words.

When choosing words to teach, consider:

- a. Would students be able to explain these words using words that are already well known to them? (New words offer students more precise or mature ways of referring to ideas they already know about.)
- b. Are the words more precise or more complex forms of familiar words—*not just synonyms*?
- c. How generally useful is the word? Is it a word that students are likely to meet often in other texts? Will it be of use to students in describing their own experiences?
- d. How does the word relate to other words, to ideas that students know or have been learning? Does it directly relate to some topic of study in the classroom? Or might it add a dimension to ideas that have been developed?
- e. What does the word contribute to a text or situation? What role does the word play in communicating the meaning of the context in which it is use?

Choosing Words and Introducing Word Meanings:

When reading aloud, if the purpose is **comprehension** of the text being read, talk about the word **as you come to it**.

If the purpose is **vocabulary development**, introduce the word **after the reading**.

Avoid asking: Who can tell me what _____ means?

Steps:

1. Introduce the word by giving a student-friendly explanation. (**utilise the cobuild English dictionary**)
 - a. Try to capture what is particular about a word and how it is typically used.
 - b. Explain the meaning in everyday language.
 - c. Anchor your explanation by including words such as **something, someone, or describes**.

2. Regarding multiple meanings:


do choose words with multiple meanings if students already know one of the meanings:
e.g fast—moving quickly; fast—not eating for a period of time

don't choose words whose meanings are not at all related:
e.g. sound—what you hear; sound—the body of water; sound—sturdy

What Robust Vocabulary Instruction Looks Like

Introducing the Words

1. Introduce the words with student friendly explanations, making the wording meanings explicit and clear. Use the Cobuild dictionary (<http://dictionary.reverso.net/english-cobuild/>) and have them prepared and ready for display/to distribute to pupils.

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- ✓ *First the story context for the word was reviewed.*
 - ✓ *Next the meaning of the word was explained in a child friendly way.*
 - ✓ *The children were asked to repeat the word. (Pronouncing a word helps build a memory for the sound and meaning.)*
 - ✓ *Examples of the word used in contexts different from the original were given.*
 - ✓ *Children came up with their own examples.*
 - ✓ *Finally the children said the word again to reinforce phonological representation and meaning.*

2. Do short, lively activities that require students to process the meanings right away.

Questions/Reasons/Examples

- If you are walking around a dark room, you need to do it cautiously? Why? What are some other things that need to be done cautiously?
- What is something you could do to impress your teacher? Why?
- Which of these things might be extraordinary? Why or why not?
A shirt that was comfortable, or a shirt that washed itself?
A flower that kept blooming all year, or a flower that bloomed for 3 days?
A person who has a library card, or a person who has read all the books in the library.
- Does morsel mean a big meal or a small piece of food?
- Which would be a good time to eat just a morsel? When you are tasting something for the first time or when you are starving?
- Does delicate mean something small and easily broken, or something big and heavy?

Word Associations

Ask students to associate one of their new words with a presented word or phrase.

- e.g. Which word goes with *crook*? (*accomplice*)
Which word goes with “gift to build a new hospital”? (*philanthropist*)
Which word goes with *piano*? (*virtuoso*)
Which word goes with *kindergartner*? (*novice*)
Which word does breakable make you think of? (*delicate*)

Have You Ever...?

Help students associate newly learned words with contexts and activities from their own experience.

e.g. “Describe a time when you might *urge* someone, *commend* someone, *banter* with someone.”

Applause, Applause! (shades of meaning, connotations)

Students clap in order to indicate how much they would like (not at all, a little bit, a lot) to be described by the target words: *frank, impish, vain, stern*. And, as always, **why they would feel that way**.

Clap to show how much you would like:

- To have your house described as eerie
- To have your work described as preposterous

Which Would...?

Form questions around target words by asking students which they would prefer between alternatives:

e.g. Which would you rather *anticipate*—your birthday or a dentist appointment? Why?

Which would you rather *interact* with—sharks or polar bears? Why?

Which would be easier to *confine*—butterflies or cats? Why?

Making choices? Examples/Non-Examples

If any of the things I say might be examples of people clutching something say 'clutching' (Make the gesture).

If not, don't say anything:

- Holding on tightly to a purse
- Holding a fistful of money
- Softly stroking a cat's fur.
- Holding onto branches when climbing a tree
- Blowing bubbles and trying to catch them

I'll say some things; if they sound leisurely, say 'leisurely' (Draw out the word). If you'd need to be in a hurry, say 'hurry'.

- Taking a walk in the park
- Firefighters getting to a fire
- Runners in a race
- Sitting and talking to friends
- A dog lying in the sun

(Variations include the following: children responding with the word itself; respond in a creative way (gesture or sound); using choice within the example, 'Which would be easier to notice?' or choosing between two target words.)

Word Relationships

Encouraging children to think about how words might be related to each other. Working with two words and how their meanings might link can be done in many ways.

1. How are the words conscientious and random linked? - someone conscientious would not do things in a random way.
2. Could someone who is curious be a nuisance? Why?
3. Complete the sentence: You could describe someone as being miserable if they are always sad. On the other hand, you could describe someone as jovial if.....
4. Word sorts: Words that describe people/words that describe places
5. Word line! How surprised would you be if...? *An extremely fragile plant survived in the North Pole? A determined student gets an excellent grade?*

Least surprised-----most surprised
Pleasing -----disgusting
Calm -----scary
Lame-----cool
I can handle it -----I can't handle it

Writing

Respond to word meanings using writing:

1. Sentence stems to complete: The king was miserable because...
2. More extended writing: Think of when you might need to investigate, cooperate, or be impressive. Write a paragraph about it.
3. Use several words within a longer piece: Write about a time when you arrive in a new city and people think you are a celebrity. Use these five words in your writing...

Puzzles

Provide a series of clues for a vocabulary word. Each clue should begin to narrow the possible responses.

1. A lot of people would not actually see this person
2. It is someone who just watches
3. The word has nine letters and starts with an s.

The word is spectator.

1. Babysitters need to be.....
2. You can count on people who are
3. The word has 8 letters and starts with an r.....

The word is reliable.

Simply Engage in the Word Meanings

e.g When might you...?

How might you...?

Why might you...?

What might a clever dog learn to do when its owner comes home?

Why is eating leftovers a frugal thing to do?

What might an audience say about a splendid musician?

Give three things that would be catastrophic?

What would make a teacher say these things about a class?

- *What an industrious class you are!*
- *What a clever class you are!*
- *What a splendid class you are!*

How we will work at Pye Bank?

An Instructional Sequence for Teaching the Words: KS1/2

Key Features of strong vocabulary instruction:

1. Frequent and varied encounters with target words
2. Robust instructional activities that engage students in deep processing
3. Assessment and quizzing to ensure learning is embedded.

Words will be generated from three sources:

1. Reading Zone Texts/Cracking Comprehension texts (5-7 words)
2. Year group spelling lists (3-5 words)

Each Fortnight there will be 10 Tier 2 words chosen in total.

- ✓ *They are taught to the children through a range of strategies. They are taught during the allocated slots for vocabulary/spelling, during Reading Zone lessons and checked/drilled at other transition points.*
- ✓ *At the end of the two weeks, the children are given a vocabulary quiz and the scores are recorded.*
- ✓ *Words are sent home at the beginning of the unit for self drill and quizzing. They are stuck into homework books.*

Assessment

The type of assessment depends on the learning goal. Remember what it means to “know” a word?

- a. Different measures lead to different conclusions about whether a student knows a word.
- b. If fairly straightforward knowledge is the goal, then multiple-choice items can be appropriate.**
- c. If deeper knowledge is the goal, then more complex formats will provide the kind of information that will allow teachers to determine whether students have gained complete, precise, or deep understanding.

Sequences for teaching:

Each fortnight there are 5 sessions dedicated to RWI spelling and 5 taught sessions linked to vocabulary instruction which includes one assessment session.

Sequence 1: Key Stage 1

Days 1-3

Introduce the words by providing student-friendly explanations and describing how the words are used in the story. Do some of the Introductory Activities listed on the previous page. The vocabulary sheet is stuck into their homework book- older children can write some of the meanings etc together. The homework book goes home every day in Reading bags.

New Vocabulary	Meaning in context	Example sentence Student friendly explanation

- Display the words on a word wall or poster so children can refer to them throughout the week.

Days 4 and 5 Choose from the activities below to practice the words

- Questions, Reasons and Examples -Making choices
- Using all the words: *Relating words: gestures, sentences and choices; One context for all words; Same format; Children create examples*
- Example /non example - Find the missing word - graphic organizer
- Word associations - Finish the sentence - Four Square Vocab
- Writing - Puzzles - sort cards
- Yes/no - Ready Set Go - Beat the Clock
- **Drill Practice**- quick fire questions- read out a meaning and children write the word/shout out the word; read out a word and children write the meaning.

Sequence 2: Key Stage 2

Sessions 1-2

Introduce the words by providing student-friendly explanations and describing how the words are used in the story. Do some of the Introductory Activities listed on the previous page.

New Vocabulary	Meaning in context	Example sentence Student friendly explanation

- Display the words on a word wall or poster so children can refer to them throughout the week.

Sessions 3 to 4 Choose from the activities below to practice the words

- Questions, Reasons and Examples -Making choices
- Using all the words: *Relating words: gestures, sentences and choices; One context for all words; Same format; Children create examples*
- Example /non example - Find the missing word - graphic organizer
- Word associations - Finish the sentence - Four Square Vocab
- Writing - Puzzles - sort cards
- Yes/no - Ready Set Go - Beat the Clock
- **Drill Practice**- quick fire questions- read out a meaning and children write the word/shout out the word; read out a word and children write the meaning.

Sessions 5: Assessment and quizzing

- **Boxing Up** or **Match up** - Multiple Choice
- Example/Non-Example - Which one is correct
- True or False - Cloze Procedure
- Children create examples

Final Quiz (See Templates): Scores recorded on class list given.

Example of an instructional sequence for teaching:

Sessions 1-2

Introduce the words on the first day by providing student-friendly explanations and describing how the words are used in the story. Do some of the Introductory Activities listed on the previous page.

Target Words	Context: (This may be from the story or a relevant context created by the teacher)	Example sentence Student-Friendly Explanation
<i>Admiration admire</i>	Jack's mother spoke of Miss Volker with admiration because Miss Volker was wise. Throughout the book, Miss Volker expressed her admiration for the women of Norvelt.	If you have admiration for people, you respect them and think about them with approval and sometimes wonder or surprise.
<i>exasperation exasperated</i>	Miss Volker was exasperated when she found out that Jack didn't know how to type.	When you're exasperated, you are annoyed and irritated by something.
<i>abscond</i>	When Miss Volker wrote an obituary for Emma Slater, she told how Emma absconded with her life after being captured by Indians.	When you abscond, you leave suddenly and secretly, usually to avoid being seen.
<i>implored</i>	When Jack visited Mrs. Dubicki, she implored him to stay longer.	To implore is to ask for something with great urgency or need.
<i>conceded</i>	Mom wanted Dad to get help in fixing the airplane runway in their yard, but conceded when Dad said that he wanted to keep the project in the family.	To concede is to give in or agree that someone is right or has a good reason for doing something.
<i>forlornly</i>	When Jack's dad told him that he still had to finish digging the bomb shelter, Jack shrugged his shoulders forlornly because he had to help Miss Volker.	Forlorn means miserable or unhappy.
<i>incredulously incredulous</i>	When Miss Volker told Jack that she wanted to bury the mice that she had poisoned, he was incredulous.	Incredulous means not willing to believe that something is true or real.

- Display the words on a word wall or poster so children can refer to them throughout the week.
- Children keep their own records of the words and their meanings in their homework book.

Sessions 3-4

Choose follow-up activities in such a way that students interact with the words in scaffolded ways.

Example/Non-example

e.g. If I say something that might make you feel forlorn, say "Oh no" in a forlorn voice. If not, don't say anything.

- Finding out that your best friend is moving to another state.
- Reading that your favourite pop star has a new record.
- Discovering that you left your backpack out in the rain.

If I say something that might exasperate you, say "No way" in an exasperated voice. If not, don't say anything.

- Learning that the latest computer game will not be delivered on the day of release
- Finding out that your little sister has been using your closet for a playhouse.
- Discovering that your dog has hidden one of your shoes again.

If I say something that would evoke your admiration, say "That's admirable." If not, don't say anything.

- A high school student walks his young neighbour to the bus stop each school day.
- A nurse volunteers with the Red Cross on weekends to help in areas struck by disaster.
- A young man sits in the handicapped section of the bus because he wants a seat but he has no disability.

(Alternate activity: Students differentiate between two descriptions by labelling them as an example or a non-example of the target word. Make the descriptions quite similar, differing only in features that are critical to the word's meaning.) (In this example, the words are from a different text.)

banter

- A husband and wife argue about what to have for dinner.
- A husband and wife kid each other about who ate more at dinner.

impatient

- A boy tells his friends about his birthday party and hope they can come.
- A boy counts the days until his birthday and wishes the time would go faster.

retort

- The player comes back with a quick answer after the referee calls a foul on him.
- The player complains to the coach after the referee calls a foul on him.

Word Associations

Which comment goes with a target word? (*concede, implore, incredulous, abscond*)

- I told my mom how much I really wanted to go to the concert even though it was on a school night.
- We knew the game was over when the other team scored a touchdown with 10 seconds left.
- The news story told how the thief ha concealed the shoes he had stolen.
- No one could believe what the mayor said because it was so unlike her.

Generating Situations, Contexts, and Examples

The following questions hold the situation constant and challenge students to find ways to apply different words to it:

- What would make someone say:
"I am totally exasperated!"
"I am filled with admiration!"
"I am incredulous!"
"I am ready to concede."
"I am really forlorn today."

Word Relationships

Ask students to describe how two vocabulary words might be connected or related.

- *incredulous/admire* (A person might do something so heroic and admirable that people would be incredulous when they read about it.)
- *implore/concede* (After much imploring, a person might concede or give in.)
- *exasperated/forlorn* (A person might be exasperated and then become forlorn because a situation is not improving.)

Alternate activity: Ask students about the relationships between words.

- *Could a virtuoso be a rival?* Explain.

Writing

Provide students with sentence stems such as the following. The value of this format is that it prevents students from producing minimally informative sentences ("I felt admiration.").

- The neighbours were incredulous when...

- The dog absconded with...
- The candidate refused to concede that she had lost the election because...
- You could see how forlorn people were when they found out that...
- The chef was exasperated with the waiter because...
- The principal spoke of the retiring teacher with admiration, explaining that...
- The little girl implored her friend to...

More extended writing can be generated by formats such as:

- Think of a time when someone might need to concede. Write a little bit about that.
- Think of someone you admire. Write about why you admire the person.
- Think of a situation that involves someone absconding. Write a headline about the situation using the word *abscond*.

Returning to the Story Context (going beyond the original context)

Having students return to the context in which they met the words is a powerful way to reinforce the connection between understanding vocabulary and understanding story ideas.

- Find three examples of times when characters in the story were exasperated.
- Select two situations in the story when you were incredulous.
- After reading the obituaries in the story, which of the women did you most admire? Why?

Ready, Set Go

This works well as the last instructional activity—the one before the next day’s assessment.

- It consists of four activity sheets, which students complete as a partner times them.
- Each sheet lists the words on one side and the definitions on the other, and the students have to match them by drawing lines to connect each word and definition.
- The order of the words for each lap should be changed, and the wording of the definitions altered a little to ensure that students are not just associating specific words with a target word.
- The goal is to see if one could get faster from the 1st to the last sheet.

Beat the Clock (alternate speed activity)

Students are given 1 ½ minutes to complete 14 True/False items.

- *Shrill* sounds can hurt your ears.
- *Gregarious* people would rather be alone.
- It might be hard to have a conversation where there’s a *commotion*.
- *Frank* people keep their thoughts to themselves.

Note

During the week, at times present **alternative definitions** for the target word. This is done so students are not simply memorizing the definition but have to process the description of the word in a meaningful way. This helps ensure students are learning the concepts represented by the words rather than the mere wording of a definition.

Example:

- ambitious
 - Really wanting to succeed in becoming rich or important.
 - Wanting to get ahead by becoming powerful.
 - Wants great success in life.

- stern
 - Being very strict about how you look and what you do.
 - Very demanding about how you and others behave.
 - Acts hard and serious

Session 5 Assessment and quizzing

Boxing Up

Children are given the vocabulary grid given on Day 1 with a box on each line missing. The children mark the quiz at the end in pairs and purple pen additions or corrections.

Multiple Choice

The results are greatly influenced by the choices on offer

They can introduce ideas that may confuse a learner by interfering with what they know.

If the choices on offer are very different from the meaning of the word, the student can get the item correct with very limited knowledge of the word.

Multiple Choice tests can be manipulated to be easier or more difficult.

Shades of meaning among the choices

Diligent means:

1. Fast
2. Hardworking
3. Lost
4. Punished

Shades of meaning among the choices

Diligent means:

1. Making a lot of money
2. Working at an interesting job
3. Always trying one's best
4. Remembering everything

True/False

- True/False items can be made relatively easy or harder, just like multiple choice tests
- True or false: If you abscond you tell people that you are leaving.
- True or false: If you abscond you leave when you are not meant to and you do it without telling anyone

Example/Non-example (essentially a True/False exercise) Present items that ask students to distinguish between an example or a word and a non-example of a word. Both the example and the non-example should be designed to present situations that have similar features and thus require student thinking that zeros in on the meaning of the target word.

Which one is correct?

proclaim

A woman refused to talk to reporters about the election.

A woman tells reporters which candidate won the election.

commend

Your teacher tells you to have your parents come in for a conference.

Your teacher tells your parents how well you are doing in school.

mention

Our neighbours once told us that they had lived in Florida.

Our neighbours are always talking about when they lived in Florida.

Cloze procedure:

- Children choose the appropriate word for the blank in the sentence given

Have students create examples:

- Describe how someone acts that shows them being *diligent*.
- Tell about a time that you were *perplexed*.
- Describe some things that could make a person feel *miserable*.

When children are ready add in additional challenge for deeper meaning: Context interpretation

- Students respond to questions about sentences containing target words.
- This task requires students to apply the word's meaning to understand the context of its use.
- Students use knowledge of the words to draw an inference in order to make sense of the context. (comprehension)

When Father heard that Lisa had ripped up the letter from Steve, Father *commended* her for it. What do you think Father thought of Steve? (not so typical use)

When Sam and I arrived at Alvin's front door, I had to *urge* Sam to knock on the door. How do you think Sam felt about going to Alvin's house? (typical use)

Rhonda sent out wedding invitations to all the family, including Uncle Charles, who was a *hermit*. What do you think Uncle Charles's answer was to the invitation?

Mr. Robinson, the high school principal, was in a very good mood after his meeting with the *philanthropist*. Why do you think Mr. Robinson was happy?

Mary thought that Jim was *ridiculing* her when he said that the cake she made looked beautiful. How do you think Mary thought her cake looked?

Maintaining Attention to New Words

Key Ideas

- Vocabulary research strongly points to the need for frequent encounters with new words if they are to become a permanent part of an individual's vocabulary repertoire.
- Those encounters should not be limited to the week in which words are the focus on instruction; rather the students should have opportunities to maintain their vocabulary learning and elaborate their understanding of words by meeting them in contexts beyond the instructional ones.

1. Creating Classroom Reference Resources for Words

- a. Create a record of the words learned: classroom dictionary, word wall, set of index cards.

2. Incorporating Words into New Situations

- a. Notice when a target word appears in a subsequent text being read in class.
- b. Notice when a target word doesn't necessarily appear in a text, but could be applied to the text situation. (Bring the word into a different text's discussion.)

3. Extension Beyond the Classroom

Word Wizard

Students gain points by bringing in evidence of hearing, seeing, or using target words outside the classroom. Word Wizard chart consists of a list of students' names with a space to add tally marks as they brought in sightings or uses of words that had been introduced to their class. Students could earn extra-credit points for reporting sightings of target words or for using them. Students earn one point for telling their teacher where they heard or saw the word and how it was used.

Variation: Ask student to identify or create a situation that could be described by a target word. For example, ask students to find something in the news that could be described as *whimsical*. Or, challenge them to find as many possible applications of a short list of target words (*ultimate, diverse, unique*) as they can in one evening—using sources such as the newspaper, books they read, TV programs, or their family's conversation.

Instructional Contexts

Key Points:

- Remember, instructional contexts are contrived to make word meanings transparent for students—but that is not enough.
- A definition or explanation needs to be developed.
- The reasoning behind deriving the meaning for the word needs to be made public for students.
- **At first**, the teacher needs to provide some models for deriving meaning from instructional contexts—when the students are **being introduced to the idea of deriving meaning from context** and when a complicated and subtle context is being explored.
- Teacher modelling is passive for students, so later it should be replaced by students attempting to derive word meanings from instructional texts with supporting questions that are carefully scaffolded by the teacher.

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