

Vocabulary Activities for Extended Student Practice

Have students pay attention and note examples of a word being used in their daily lives. Give students a word journal to keep notes or draw pictures that show words being used.

Incorporate taught words in your casual discussions with students and “teacher talk” throughout the day. See the following examples:

- “I went to bed too late last night. I feel **exhausted** today.”
- “We have an **abundance** of crayons that you can use to write words in different colors.”
- “Please come straight back from the office. Do not **roam** the hallways.”
- “El patio se ve **desolado** cuando los niños y niñas no están jugando afuera.”
- “Tenemos una **escasez** de colores rojos. ¿Dónde están todas los crayones rojos de este salon?”

Develop a vocabulary word wall for discussing meanings, matching synonyms and antonyms, and categorizing words according to meaning. Create activities to connect these vocabulary words to words on other word or sound walls. See the following examples:

- Find and read words on the word wall that are vehicles. (*Vehicle* is on the vocabulary word wall.)
- Possible words from a sound wall: *airplane, train, boat, car*

Discuss previously learned vocabulary words. See the following example:

- When was a time you were **overjoyed**?
- How did you feel when you were **overjoyed**?
- What made you feel **overjoyed**?
- ¿Cuándo fue la última vez que ustedes se sintieron **orgullosos** de algo? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué se puede hacer para ayudar a las personas durante una **sequía**? ¿Podemos prevenir una **sequía**? ¿Qué cosas debemos hacer durante una **sequía**?

Provide examples and nonexamples of word meanings and ask students to identify which examples are correct. This activity could be done across various instructional contexts, including counseling, P.E., or music. See the following examples.

“I will say some actions. Say, ‘That is considerate,’ if it is a considerate thing to do. Say, ‘That is inconsiderate,’ if it is not a considerate thing to do.

- You help a friend who fell down.
- You let a friend play with your toys.
- You take a toy away from someone.
- You laugh at someone who makes a mistake.
- You tell someone what you like about him or her.”

“I will say an activity. If it requires stamina, say, ‘That takes stamina.’ If it does not require stamina, say, ‘That does not take stamina.’

- Running two miles
- Lying on the couch
- Playing soccer
- Eating French fries
- Playing video games”

“Voy a decir unos ejemplos. Digan, ‘Habitado,’ si lo que digo está habitado. Digan, ‘Deshabitado,’ si lo que digo está deshabitado.

- El planeta Marte
- La cumbre del Monte Everest
- La ciudad de México
- El fondo del mar
- El estado de Texas”

“Voy a decir una acción. Si esa acción demuestra que soy generosa, digan, ‘Eres generosa.’ Si esa acción demuestra que no soy generosa, digan, ‘No fuiste generosa.’

- En la mañana, compartí mi desayuno con mi hermano chiquito.
- Guardé todos mis juguetes para que nadie más jugara con ellos.
- Dejé que mis compañeros utilizaran mis lápices de colores.
- Hice galletas para mis nuevos vecinos.”

Create various activities and games for students to interact with and use previously learned vocabulary words. See the following example activities and games.

Memory

Students make flashcards of the vocabulary words, writing the words and their definitions on separate cards. Students place all of the cards facedown and turn cards over one at a time to try to match the word with its meaning. Students can also do this activity for homework and bring in the matched pairs the next day.

20 Questions

Tell students that you are thinking about one of their vocabulary words. (This game works well if you have a vocabulary word wall.) Students must ask questions requiring “yes” or “no” answers to help them determine the vocabulary word you have chosen. Students must ask specific questions to determine the answer in fewer than 20 questions. For example, students could ask questions such as the following (the vocabulary word is *horrible*):

- “Is it a noun?” (“No.”)
- “Is it an adjective?” (“Yes.”)
- “Is it a word you could use to describe something as fast?” (“No.”)
- “Could it describe something that’s really bad?” (“Yes.”)
- “Is it *atrocious*?” (“No.”)
- “Is it *horrible*?” (“Yes.”)

Once students understand how to play, they can play the game in partners or at a workstation.

Swat Cards

Create the following three sets of cards for one set of words:

- One with pictures of the words only
- One with the words only
- One with definitions of the words only

Place the cards in front of two students. Use the card set that is most appropriate for the students' level. For example, the teacher might start by putting out picture cards and giving students the words or by putting out word cards and giving students the definitions. To make it more difficult, the teacher can put out definition cards and give students the words instead.

The student who swats the correct picture, word, or definition keeps the card. Scaffold by placing only two choices for students who may be overwhelmed with all of the available cards. This game can be played in a vocabulary workstation or in partners using words from previous weeks or as a review later in the week.

Mother, May I?

Put students in a horizontal line facing you. Give students a word. Students raise their hand, and you pick one student to ask, "Mother, may I?" The student must correctly define the word before taking a step. This game can also be reversed, in which you give students the definition, and they must answer with the correct vocabulary word to take a step.

I Have, Who Has?

Create a set of cards with "I have [vocabulary word]" written on the top of each card and "Who has [definition of another vocabulary word]?" written on the bottom. Pass out all the cards. The leader begins the game by reading, "I have [vocabulary word]" and then asking, "Who has [definition of another vocabulary word]?" The person with the correct word reads, "I have [correct vocabulary word]" and then reads, "Who has [definition of another vocabulary word]?" Players continue answering and asking questions until it comes back to the leader, which ends the game. This review can be used with the whole class, in small groups, or at a workstation. See the following examples:

- I have *swiftly*. Who has "answer"?
- I have *reply*. Who has "a natural ability or skill"?
- I have *talent*. Who has "how heavy something is"?
- I have *weight*. Who has "people—men, women, and children"?
- I have *humans*. Who has "to cry loudly for a long time"?
- I have *wail*. Who has "quickly"?
- I have *emit*. Who has a word that means "made of two or more parts, elements, or ingredients"?
- I have *compound*. Who has a word that means "a cord or rope that is lit to start an explosive"?
- I have *fuse*. Who has a word that means "to set a fire or to start"?
- I have *ignite*. Who has a word that means "to make an exact or specific measurement"?
- I have *calibrate*. Who has a word that means "to give off or let out"?

(BACK TO BEGINNING)

(BACK TO BEGINNING)

Go Fish!

This game is played just like the card game. It can be played with any kind of vocabulary pairs, including the following:

- Homophones
- Synonyms
- Antonyms
- A word with an example
- A word with a definition

Students play the game by choosing one of their cards and asking a fellow player a question like, “Do you have a homophone for *here*?” or “Do you have a word that means ‘the distance around a polygon?’” If the student who is asked does not have a match, he or she says, “Go fish.”

Jeopardy

Divide words that have been learned throughout the year into categories, such as adjectives, action words, prefixed words, synonyms, antonyms, who or what, rhyme time, etc. Write the categories across the top of the board. On flashcards, write the meanings of specific words to go under each category and tape the cards to the board. Students take turns picking a card under a category. When a student has selected a card, you read the clue for the word (or have a designated student reader). The student must answer with the correct word to keep the card. If the student answers incorrectly, the card goes back on the board for another student to pick.

Vocabulary Calendar

A vocabulary calendar has a word of the day for every day. Each day, read the word of the day and discuss its meaning with students. Brainstorm together different ways the word can be used in sentences. Give students a mission to use the word appropriately later in the day or to find the word in text. Students can also use the word in a sentence for bonus points.

Word Tags or Bracelets

Students wear the words of the week. Adults in the building are aware of the game and the words. Adults can ask students to say the word and a sentence or definition, or adults can say the word and use it in a sentence—as appropriate for the student’s grade level or time of year. Students share their favorite or best example at the end of the day (or review words). The objective is to provide multiple opportunities for practice and to develop oral language and social skills.

Sort Examples and Nonexamples of Words

Give students pictures of items that could be used as examples or nonexamples of a vocabulary word. For example, for *cheerful*, you could give students pictures of a happy child or a cheerleader and pictures that are clearly not cheerful, such as an angry person or a crying baby. Students sort the cards based on whether they are examples or nonexamples of *cheerful*.

Venn Diagram

Select two related words and write one in each circle of a Venn diagram. Write similarities of the words in the overlapping portion of the circles and differences in the nonoverlapping portions. For example, the words *city* and *town* have many similarities and differences that could be compared and contrasted using a Venn diagram. Students can do this activity with the whole class, in mixed-ability groups, with partners, or individually. If not done with the whole class, bring students together as a whole group to share their responses at the end.

Other Graphic Organizers

Other kinds of graphic organizers can be used as students learn more vocabulary words to help them make connections among word meanings. Graphic organizers to build deeper vocabulary knowledge and visualize word relationships include the following:

- Word web
- Semantic or concept map
- Circle map
- Bubble or double-bubble map
- Antonym continuum
- Four-square map (also called the Frayer model)

Examples of these graphic organizers are in Handout 7. These graphic organizers should initially be used with the whole class, but once students understand how to fill out the graphic organizers, students can do so in partners, at a vocabulary workstation, or on their own as an informal assessment.

Make Stories or Books With Vocabulary Words

Students create a story or other text incorporating all of their vocabulary words. Each sentence must build on the previous sentence and make sense. Students can generate the story as a whole group, small group, or individually. Students can challenge themselves to use more than one vocabulary word in a sentence.

Using Vocabulary to Improve Word Choice in Writing

Teach and model for students how to use previously learned vocabulary to revise drafts within the writing process. For example, show students how to change a phrase like *very good* into *fabulous* or *amazing* or a less precise word like *said* into *mumbled* or *hollered*. You can also use new vocabulary words to help students add details to their writing, like changing *the cat* to *the timid, scruffy cat*. Have students practice these revision techniques with their own writing during independent writing time or at a writing workstation.

Vocabulary Word Wall Activities

These activities can be done with the whole class, in small groups, at a workstation, or in partners.

Synonyms

Students find synonyms on the word wall for a word provided. Example: “The first word starts with an s and is a synonym for *alike*.” Students find *similar*.

Antonyms

Follow the above directions but use antonyms.

Examples and Nonexamples

Students find examples and nonexamples of words or pictures provided.

- Example: “The word starts with a g. Here is your example sentence: An elephant is one of the biggest animals at the zoo.” Students find *gigantic* on the vocabulary word wall.
- Nonexample: “The word starts with a g. Here is your sentence: Yesterday, I saw a tiny red ant.” You may also draw a picture of an ant or show a photograph to demonstrate the nonexample. Students find *gigantic*.

Context Clues

Choose a word from the wall. Tell students the first letter or sound. Then, say a sentence, leaving out the word that begins with that letter or sound. Students choose a word that makes sense in the sentence and write it. See the following examples:

- “The first word begins with /d/ and fits in this sentence: Some kids ____ going to the dentist.” (*dread*)
- “This word begins with /t/ and fits in this sentence: Snakes ____ Ms. Jones.” (*terrify*)
- “This word begins with /g/ and fits in this sentence: The ballerina was very ____.” (*graceful*)

To check the answers, read the sentences again and have the students tell you the word they wrote. Say the sentence again with the word inserted and ask students whether the sentence makes sense. You can also ask the students to provide each word’s definition.

Vocabulary Table

Place the following table at a silent or independent reading workstation or have copies at students’ desks. As students read, they write words or phrases that fit in the appropriate column. Students can share their words or phrases in small groups or in a debriefing session.

I know this word or phrase well.	I have heard of this word or phrase.	I know nothing about this word or phrase.

Conozco esta palabra o frase bien.	He oído esta palabra o frase antes.	No sé nada sobre esta palabra o frase.

Quick Activities

- Say a vocabulary word and have students write as much as they can about the word's meaning in 1 minute.
- Hold dictionary races to see who can find a word the fastest. Play a scavenger hunt with the dictionary entry, looking for the part of speech, etymological information, number of meanings, etc.
- Using a pinch card with several vocabulary words on it, give definitions, examples, nonexamples, synonyms, antonyms, etc., and have students pinch the correct words.
- Introduce a vocabulary word in a sentence with clues to the meaning of the word. Read the sentence and ask students to discuss possible meanings of the word and the clues they used to figure out its meaning.
- Name two words. Ask students to tell how the words are similar in meaning and how they are different.
- Write 10 to 12 words on index cards. Discuss with students how the words can be sorted into categories according to their meanings.
- Give points to students who incorporate weekly vocabulary words into their writing or speaking.

Adapted from Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004; Stahl, 2005; Stahl, & Nagy, 2006.

