

How to empower vocabulary

Why is vocabulary important?

Good reading comprehension depends on understanding the words you are reading. **The more words you recognize and understand in a text, the better your comprehension will be.**

What do you do when you encounter (meet) a new word in your reading?

- Ask another student about the meaning.
- Try to guess the meaning of the word from the context.
- Look up the definition in a dictionary.
- Skip over the word and continue reading.
- Analyze the word for clues to its meaning.

In fact, a good reader does all of the above at different times, depending on the word, the text, and the reason for reading it.

Strategy No. 1: Check your knowledge of the words used most frequently in English

Advances in computer technology have made it possible for researchers to analyze thousands of English-language texts containing millions of words. From this research they have learned that a small percentage of words – about 2,000 – are used much more frequently than all the other words. In fact, these 2,000 most frequent words account for almost 80 per cent of most texts. If you know these words, you have a much better chance of understanding what you read: <https://www.talkenglish.com/vocabulary/top-2000-vocabulary.aspx>

Strategy No. 2: Focus on the words used in academic texts

Research on academic texts (textbooks and academic journals) has shown that certain words are used very frequently in these texts, regardless of the subject matter. These words allow academic writers to explain or generalize their ideas or research, and to compare them with the work of others. Learning **these 570 academic words can improve your comprehension of academic materials:** http://simple.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Academic_word_list

Strategy No. 3: Use the dictionary effectively

Along with the definition, a dictionary provides a great deal of other information about a word. It tells you the part of speech of the word (noun, verb, adjective, etc.), how to pronounce it, and how to divide it into syllables. An example sentence is often included too.

Check how the word "**buzz**" has been defined in the online dictionary: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/buzz>

Buzz [buhz]

noun

1. a low, vibrating, humming sound, as of bees, machinery, or people talking.
2. *Informal.* a rumor or report: *There's a buzz going around that he'll soon be fired.*
3. *Informal.* a phone call: *When I find out, I'll give you a buzz.*

Slang.

4. a feeling of intense enthusiasm, interest, excitement, or exhilaration: *I get a terrific buzz from those Pacific sunsets. Their ads are generating plenty of buzz.*
5. a feeling of slight intoxication or overstimulation from liquor or drugs: *Too much caffeine gives me a buzz.*

verb (used without object)

6. to make a low, vibrating, humming sound.
7. to speak or murmur with such a sound.
8. to be filled with the sound of buzzing or whispering: *The room buzzed.*
9. to whisper; gossip: *Everyone is buzzing about the scandal.*
10. to move busily from place to place.

Slang. 11. to go; leave (usually followed by *off* or *along*): *I'll buzz along now. Tell him to buzz off and leave me alone.*

verb (used with object)

12. to make a buzzing sound with: *The fly buzzed its wings.*
13. to tell or spread (a rumor, gossip, etc.) secretly.
14. to signal or summon with a buzzer: *He buzzed his assistant.*
15. *Informal.* to make a phone call to.

IDIOMS FOR BUZZ

have / get a buzz on, *Slang.* to be slightly intoxicated: *After a few beers they all had a buzz on.*

ORIGIN OF BUZZ

First recorded in 1350–1400; Middle English *busse*; imitative

OTHER WORDS FROM BUZZ

buzz·ing·ly, **adverb**

Strategy No. 4: Keep a vocabulary notebook

Write any new word you encounter in a text in a notebook that you use only for vocabulary and not for other course work. (A small notebook is preferable so you can carry it around with you.) This notebook will help you study vocabulary more effectively. With all your words in one place in the notebook, you can easily check your knowledge of words you have studied before. The way how to organize it is quite personal: some prefer to note down the words in alphabetical order, while other do it randomly as they evolve while reading a text.

Strategy No. 5: Use study cards

To make study cards, you will need small, blank cards (3x5 inches or about 7x12 cm).

On one side of the card, write a word, the part of speech, the word in syllables, and the phrase or sentence in which you found the word.

Encounter (verb)

[en-koun-ter]

We were angry when we encountered,
but we parted with smiles.

On the other side of the card, write the dictionary definition of the word as it was used in the passage.

To meet, especially unexpectedly or in
conflict