

Simple Ways to Help Students with Vocabulary Acquisition

“Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.”

(Wilkins, 1972, p. 111)

New terminology can be overwhelming for students who are exposed to a new field of study. It can also be difficult to understand the course readings with a large amount of new vocabulary, especially for students with weaker reading skills. Here are some ideas to help students with vocabulary acquisition:

- Help students learn the subject-specific terms by covering key vocabulary words in the class session before students go home and read the chapter.
- Create a Google Doc or discussion board where students can put words and/or concepts they find difficult. Allow other students to define the word or explain the concept. Offer extra credit for correct responses.
- Teach students simple methods to learn new vocabulary like using context clues, understanding key roots and affixes, and encouraging students to find a way to remember new words like using mnemonic devices. Ask students to come to class with a tip or method they use to learn new vocabulary and have them share it in groups.
- Require students to come to class with one new vocabulary term. Have them share the term, definition, and example in a small group. In addition, have them share that information in a group document the whole class maintains on new vocabulary terms.
- Have students discuss concepts in pairs or small groups to help them better understand the material and areas of confusion.

Resources:

Gifford, A. P. (2000). Broadening concepts through vocabulary development. *Reading Improvement, 37*(1), 2.

McCarville, K. B. (1993). Keyword mnemonic and vocabulary acquisition for developmental college students. *Journal of Developmental Education, 16*(3), 2.

Nation, P. (2008). *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and techniques*. Boston, Heinle.

Wilkins, D. (1972). *Linguistics in language teaching*. London, UK: Arnold.

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