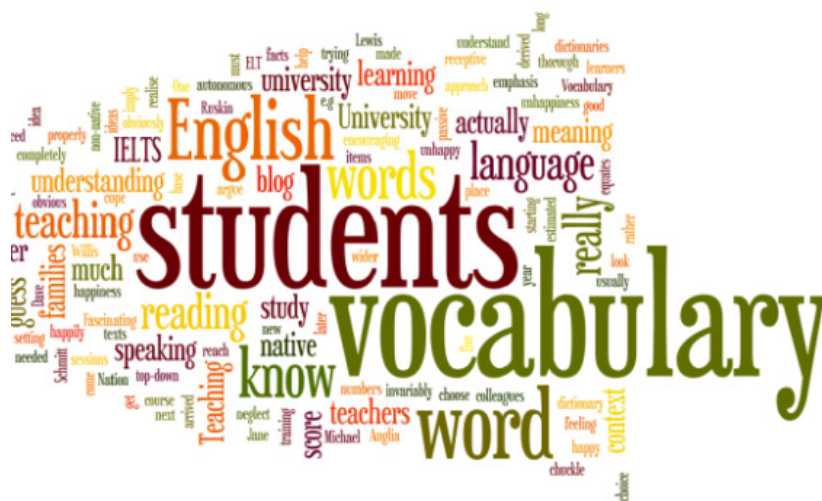


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# A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHING VOCABULARY



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## A. INFORMATION: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - THE VOCABULARY COMPONENT IN THE CURRICULUM, AND THE WAYS IT WILL AFFECT YOUR TEACHING.

### WHY IS THERE A SECTION ON VOCABULARY TEACHING IN THE CURRICULUM?

Four main reasons:

- Teachers and textbook writers have been saying for years that we need vocabulary and grammar lists to help achieve the benchmarks;
- Vocabulary is the most important component of language knowledge; it is one of the best predictors of language performance;
- Many students get to twelfth grade with a relatively small vocabulary, which prevents them from achieving their potential (based on research done in Israel and abroad, Schmitt, 2008; Laufer).
- Students don't just 'pick up' vocabulary from reading and listening. It needs to be actively taught (see practical suggestions later in this booklet).

### WHAT DOES THE VOCABULARY SECTION OF THE CURRICULUM INCLUDE?

Two main requirements:

- Core vocabulary lists of essential items for Foundation and Intermediate levels, of about 700 items each; a core vocabulary list of essential items for Proficiency level of about 1400 items<sup>1</sup>.
- The number of vocabulary items students are expected to learn at each level, (items from the Core lists, plus other items chosen by textbook writers and teachers). These numbers are: about 1200 for Foundation, an additional 2000 at Intermediate, and another 2200 at Proficiency: about 5400 in all.

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<sup>1</sup> This looks like a lot; but it includes many items which will have been taught in earlier years as part of the 'expansion' vocabulary.



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## HOW DOES THIS AFFECT MY TEACHING OF VOCABULARY?

You'll need to spend quite a lot of lesson time on teaching new vocabulary and reviewing it throughout the year. This means probably about one-third of lesson time, on average, will be devoted to vocabulary work (there are lots of practical ideas in this booklet to help you do this).

Also, you'll need to take more care in selecting which items to teach:

- select the items you feel will be most useful to your students;
- include multi-word items (lexical chunks) like *in any case*.

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## HOW MANY NEW VOCABULARY ITEMS SHOULD I TEACH IN A LESSON?

In principle, about 12 new items a week in elementary school, about 20 in junior high, about 30 in high school. This will vary of course, according to the individual class: lower *hakbatzot* will learn fewer, classes of native speakers can be expected to learn more. Remember you'll need to set aside time also for review!

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## HOW MUCH REVIEW DO I NEED TO DO?

In order to make sure that students have mastered the items, they need to review them at least ten times, probably more! Obviously, you can't review every item ten times, but you should make sure you do so several times. So this means that you'll need to review new items you've taught not only at the end of the same lesson or unit, but will need to come back to them regularly over the whole year (see Myth 5 below)



**B. IMPLEMENTING THE VOCABULARY COMPONENT IN THE CLASSROOM - (HOW CAN WE FIND THE TIME?)** GENERAL GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE VOCABULARY TEACHING AND LEARNING, WITH LOTS OF PRACTICAL IDEAS.

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REORGANIZATION

It's not a question of adding, it's a question of *reorganization*.

Two things you might cut down to make room for vocabulary work:

- **Grammar.**

There is a tendency to devote too much time to grammar teaching, much of which should be transferred to vocabulary.

- **Checking homework.**

Often half the lesson is wasted on going through exercises students have done for homework. Try ...

- ✓ just giving the answers, or writing them up on the board; students self-check and then respond only if there is a problem;
- ✓ giving them five minutes to check through the answers in pairs, asking you only if there is a problem;
- ✓ taking in their homework to check at home (obviously you can't do this every time, too time-consuming, but occasionally you can, and it saves time in class).



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## MYTHS

There are some assumptions that lead us to teach vocabulary not very efficiently, and which are not in fact true. Let's look at some of these.

### *MYTH #1: YOU SHOULDN'T TRANSLATE NEW WORDS INTO L1.*

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Not true. You may. Use other means as well - pictures, mime, explanations, examples – but don't feel guilty about clarifying by means of the L1. And of course, later review should be mainly in English: but for the first time you explain a word, L1 can be really helpful.

### *MYTH #2: IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO TEACH READING STRATEGIES THAN VOCABULARY.*

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Not true. Reading strategies are no substitute for knowing vocabulary. Learning how to skim, scan, infer from context etc., is of surprisingly limited value in reading comprehension when students don't know enough vocabulary. So it's not worth spending too much time practicing reading strategies: make students aware of them, certainly, but it'll be much more helpful to them if you spend most of your time teaching and reviewing vocabulary.

### *MYTH #3 VOCABULARY SHOULD ALWAYS BE TAUGHT AND REVIEWED IN (SENTENCE OR LONGER) CONTEXT.*

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Not always. There's a place for teaching and review of single items on their own. And often putting a new word into a brief phrase is just as helpful as putting it into a full sentence. Both these, of course, are much quicker than full-context activities. Bottom line: vocabulary should be taught both within contexts and as single, decontextualized, items.



*MYTH #4: STUDENTS CAN ALWAYS GUESS MEANINGS FROM CONTEXT.*

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Not true. They usually can't. Not just because they're untrained, and not just because the texts are too difficult, but simply because research shows that even educated native speakers often can't guess a word from context correctly: the context doesn't give enough clues to meaning. Only in the minority of cases does the surrounding context make the meaning of an unknown word clear. So don't waste time pushing students to infer words in class: just tell them what they mean. (That doesn't mean that inferring from context is useless – students will use it in their own independent reading – only that it's not a very efficient way to teach new words in class).

*MYTH #5: IT'S ENOUGH TO EXPOSE A LEARNER THREE OR FOUR TIMES TO A NEW WORD FOR THEM TO LEARN IT.*

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Not true. This isn't enough. According to research, a learner will only master a new item if he or she gets ten or more opportunities to review (some say as much as 20). So it's important to review new items you taught at the end of the same lesson, and again in the next lesson; but then remember that you'll need to come back to them after a week, and again later. Of course you won't have time to review every single item ten or more times, but remind students to refresh their memories every now and then (see Strategies below).

*MYTH #6: WHEN READING A NEW TEXT, STUDENTS CAN ALWAYS LOOK NEW WORDS UP IN A DICTIONARY, SO THEY DON'T NEED TO LEARN SO MANY IN ADVANCE.*

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Not true. Looking up in a dictionary is time-consuming and often results in mistakes. And there's research to show that students who use dictionaries for reading comprehension understand no better than those who don't! There is no substitute for knowing lots of vocabulary. (Incidentally, the more vocabulary students know, the more likely they are to use dictionaries successfully when needed.)



## STRATEGIES AND PRACTICAL IDEAS

Here are some useful strategies for teaching vocabulary without adding extra work and time, together with practical ideas that use them.

### STRATEGY 1: MAKE STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE.

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- Share with students why they need to learn a lot of vocabulary: it's probably the most important aspect of language that they need to know.
- Tell students that they'll need to work on vocabulary expansion themselves outside the lessons: there's simply no time during lessons to teach them all the vocabulary they need and review it. There are some ideas in the next section about ways students can expand their own vocabulary.
- Tell students to keep vocabulary / dictionary notebooks (could be on smartphones or tablets) to keep a record of new vocabulary learnt.
- Give students five minutes during class to check through their vocabulary lists or notebooks and remind themselves of things they've learnt.
- Make opportunities for students to share their personal strategies for learning and reviewing new vocabulary.

### STRATEGY 2: USE QUICK, FIVE-MINUTE VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES EVERY LESSON.

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- Ask students to call out all the items they've learnt in the last two weeks, write them up as fast as you can. Add any they've forgotten.
- Challenge students in groups to recall as many items as they can: who can remember most?
- Have the items on the board at the beginning of the lesson; ask students to scan them, say if there are any whose meaning they don't remember; tell them.
- Dictate the items in L1, ask students to say the English equivalents (in chorus); or vice versa.
- Ask individual students to say one word or expression they've recently learnt or come across. They/you explain meanings where necessary.
- Teach a new extra item ('word of the day') at the beginning of every lesson (could be an idiom or a proverb).
- Brainstorm all the words you know that have to do with (a topic).





### STRATEGY 3: USE HOMEWORK FOR VOCABULARY STUDY.

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- If you can, send parents the lists of items you've taught so that they - or siblings, or grandparents - can help students at home (use the school website).
- Tell students to find a word or expression (in the textbook, literature, newspaper, Internet or any other source) that they didn't know before, find out what it means, come to class and tell the others.
- Students spend 10 minutes (by the clock!) reviewing all the items they've been taught over the last two weeks.
- Students look up six words they have already learnt in the dictionary and find out either a) added meanings or b) phrases that include them that they didn't know before.
- Students do vocabulary work online. See Section D. (More resources) for some recommended websites.

### STRATEGY 4: COMBINE FLUENCY EXERCISES IN THE FOUR SKILLS WITH A FOCUS ON VOCABULARY.

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- **SPEAKING**  
Groups get a list of 20-30 items you want to review and tell (not write!) a story which brings in as many of the items as they can. Each student has to contribute at least one sentence.
- **WRITING**  
Give each student a word or expression you want to review (remind them of meanings if necessary). Ask an informative question beginning 'Can you tell me about' (e.g. 'Can you tell me about someone in your family?'). Students write a sentence or paragraph that has to bring in their word or expression. Then students share what they have written: read it aloud; or leave their own writing displayed on their tables and walk around reading other students' texts.
- **LISTENING**  
Students write down the numbers 1-20 down the left-hand side of a page (or screen). Say 20 statements (which can be true or false), each one including one word or expression that you've recently taught and want to review. Students write ✓ or x by each number, according to whether they think it is true or false. Then check answers.



- **READING**

Same as for listening, but in writing.

Simply ask them to reread a digital or photocopied text that included items you want them to learn, underlining the items they remember you taught them. They ask each other and/or you if there are any words in the text that they don't remember.

For more detailed explanations of some of these ideas, and lots more, see the next section.

## C. MORE IDEAS 1: VOCABULARY EXPANSION - PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR EXPANDING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY AT ALL LEVELS.

You'll see that ideas are coded, according to whether they are appropriate for elementary school (EL), junior high (JH), or high school (HS). Many of them are appropriate for two, or even all three, levels.

### BRAINSTORM: ASSOCIATIONS (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Give a theme word, students call out any other words or phrases that occur to them that are associated, any part of speech.
2. Add more yourself, and teach the new items.

### BRAINSTORM: WHAT GOES WITH...? (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Give a noun, students suggest all the adjectives that might describe it (e.g. *road*: a long road, a busy road, a new road...).
2. Add more yourself, and teach them.



### Variations:

- Give an adjective, students suggest all the nouns it might describe (e.g. *red*: a red shirt, a red sign, a red nose...).
- Give a verb, students suggest all the nouns that might be its object (e.g. *read*: a book, a newspaper, a sign, a t-shirt...).
- Give an adverb, students suggest all the verbs it might describe (e.g. *slowly*: write, speak, walk...).

### BUILD WORDS INTO A PICTURE (EL)

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1. Choose twelve words for the next unit you are going to teach in the course book. They should be new words.
2. Tell the class they are going to draw a picture incorporating some of the new words from the next unit.
3. Say the first word. You may explain the word by eliciting the translation from a student in class or by translating it yourself.
4. Each student then draws the word on a large sheet of paper.
5. The students then continue the picture incorporating the second word. In this way, they build each of the twelve words into one picture.
6. Say the words again slowly and ask the students to write each word over its representation.
7. Ask students to compare their pictures.

### ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT A WORD (JH, HS)

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1. Tell students they are to work in pairs researching an English word (given by you, or selected by them), using paper or online dictionaries or thesauruses.
2. Check which word each pair chooses, in order to make sure that they each choose a different one.
3. Their research may include some or all of the following:
  - a. the word's main meaning and connotations;
  - b. other meanings;
  - c. other words it goes with (collocations);
  - d. phrases or idioms in which it appears;
  - e. its synonyms and antonyms;
  - f. derivatives (other members of the same word family);
  - g. etymology.
4. They present these to the class later (perhaps using PowerPoint presentations).



## VOCABULARY-CENTERED PROJECTS OR MINI PROJECTS (EL, JH, HS)

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Aim: Vocabulary expansion

1. The teacher chooses a umbrella theme – such as Countries.
2. She elicits as much as they know, and then teaches any further general vocabulary needed (trip, accommodation, passport etc.).
3. The students work on the vocabulary together – so by the time they start looking for material for a project on the subject, they will have most of the vocabulary they need.

### Note

Often what happens in projects is that the students do not have the vocabulary they need. They go straight to the resource material and can't understand most of what is written. Therefore we suggest this activity as a prerequisite vocabulary activity to be done before beginning a project.

## GUESS THE MEANING OF A WORD (JH, HS)

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1. Prepare a short reading passage with some new vocabulary in it.
2. Tell students to read through the text and copy onto a separate piece of paper those words or expressions they don't understand.
3. Next to each item they have copied, students write more or less the 'sort of thing' they think the item means (they can do this in L1).
4. Only when students have finished writing their guesses may they go to the dictionary and check out the answers.
5. Verify the answers they have found in full class, and compare these with their guesses.
6. Show them how their guesses narrowed down the possibilities when they were looking up the word, thus speeding up the looking-up process and making it more likely that they would find the right word.

### ***See also***

Variation 3 of **Alphabet madness** below.



## D. MORE IDEAS 2: PRESENTING NEW VOCABULARY - WAYS OF PRESENTING THE FORM AND MEANING OF NEW ITEMS.

### WRITE IT AND SAY IT (EL, JH, HS)

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If the students know how to read English say the new item AND write it up on the board. If they can't yet read English, it may help to write up the word in Hebrew/Arabic letters.

### REPEAT IT (EL, JH, HS)

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Students may not catch the word first time round: you probably need to repeat it (perhaps in different contexts, but not necessarily) several times.

### GET STUDENTS TO SAY IT (EL)

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Ask student to repeat the new item after you: in chorus first, and then perhaps a few individuals.

### GET STUDENTS TO WRITE IT DOWN (EL, JH, HS)

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If students are literate in English, get them to write it down (see note on vocabulary notebooks above), with the L1 translation. (See Strategy 1 above.)

### TRANSLATE (EL, JH, HS)

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Translation is probably the quickest and most accurate way of conveying the meaning of a new word. It's useful to add it (or elicit from students) to ensure understanding to support one of the following options.



### SHOW A PICTURE (EL, JH)

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Show students a picture of the item, but make sure it's clear what it represents. It's usually a good idea to accompany the picture with a quick L1 translation, in order to make sure they interpret it correctly. Of course, a lot of items in English can't be depicted, so use translation or one of the following options instead.

### MIME (EL, JH)

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Some words (particularly action verbs, obviously) can be mimed to clarify meaning.

### DEFINE THE MEANING IN ENGLISH (HS)

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For more advanced students, it may be possible to give a (dictionary-like) definition.

### EXPLAIN THE MEANING USING OPPOSITES OR SYNONYMS (EL, JH, HS)

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If they already know the antonym of a synonym of the target word, then you can use 'It's the opposite of...' or 'It means the same as...'

### GIVE EXAMPLES / CONTEXTS (EL, JH, HS)

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Give examples of the meaning of the word in context, or a selection of words it would go with. For example, if you're teaching a category like *animal* you could say 'like: dog, cat, bird...'. If you're teaching a verb like *cook* you could give examples of things you can cook.

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## REVIEW THE NEW WORDS IN THE SAME LESSON (EL, JH, HS)

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Later in the lesson in which you taught the new words, run a quick review. For example:

- How many of the new words can you remember?
- Tell me the meaning of the words I'm writing on the board
- Who remembers how to say X in English?
- Look at the words on the board – ask me about any of them whose meaning you don't remember

## E. MORE IDEAS 3: VOCABULARY REVIEW - ACTIVITIES THAT GET STUDENTS TO REPEAT AND REVIEW VOCABULARY WITHOUT GETTING BORED.

(Easier activities first, getting more advanced as you read on)

### QUICK BINGO (EL, JH)

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1. Write all the items you want to review scattered on the board.
2. Tell each student to write down any five of them, whichever they choose.
3. Call out the items one by one (or definitions, or L1 translations, or hints), students cross their items off as they hear them.
4. The first winner(s) is/are the first to cross off all their items.
5. The second winner(s) is/are the last to cross off all their items.

### RECALL AND SHARE (EL, JH)

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1. Write all the items you want to review scattered on the board.
2. Tell students to 'photograph' them in their minds (they aren't allowed to write them down) and try to memorize them.
3. Erase or hide the items.
4. Give students time to write down as many as they can remember on their own.
5. Then tell them to share with classmates, try to list more, and check each other's spelling.
6. Finally show the items again on the board.



### MAKE A MINI-CONTEXT (EL, JH)

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1. Write up items you want to review, scattered all over the board.
2. Challenge students to do one of the following.
  - a. Invent sentences that include at least *two* of the items. Draw a line between the two items anyone manages to connect. Later, challenge students to recall what the sentences were that are represented by each line.
  - b. Invent sentences that *link an item to themselves* in some way.
  - c. Invent sentences that are *false*, using one of the items in each.
  - d. Invent *questions* to which one of the items is the answer.
3. All this can be done orally; alternatively, give students a minute or two to write down suggestions before sharing

### ODD ONE OUT (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Give students groups of five nouns (or verbs, or adjectives) that relate to the same basic theme, but without any particular obvious 'odd one out'.
2. Challenge them to justify why each in turn might be the 'odd one out'. (Elementary students might need to do some of this justifying in L1).

TIP

MAKE A ROUTINE OF FIVE MINUTES FOR VOCABULARY REVIEW EVERY LESSON: EITHER JUST 'GET OUT YOUR VOCABULARY NOTEBOOKS AND CHECK THROUGH VOCABULARY YOU'VE LEARNT RECENTLY' OR TEACHER-INITIATED, USING ONE OF THE IDEAS SUGGESTED HERE.





## DICTATIONS (EL, JH, HS)

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(Note that normally we don't remember what we don't understand, so if a student can spell a word that you say, that probably means he/she knows what it means.)

1. Simply dictate words or phrases, students write them down. OR:
2. Translation dictation: Say the word or phrase in L1, students write it in English. OR
3. Write up the target words or sentences with vowels (or random letters), or words missing. Dictate the words or sentences, and students write out the entire words or sentences.

TIP

WHEN WRITING TRANSLATIONS ON THE BOARD, KEEP SEPARATE COLORS FOR ENGLISH AND L1:  
FOR EXAMPLE, ENGLISH ALWAYS IN BLACK, HEBREW OR ARABIC ALWAYS IN GREEN.

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## CLASSROOM SPELLING BEE (EL, JH)

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1. All pupils stand up in class in order of seating arrangement.
2. Each pupil in his/her turn orally spells the word given by the teacher
3. If the pupil spells the word correctly, s/he remains standing until the next round(s).
4. If the pupil misspells the word, s/he sits down and waits out the game until all the words have been reviewed and the winners remain standing.

## PICTIONARY (EL, JH)

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1. A pupil draws a picture which represents or gives the meaning of a phrase or word.
2. The other pupils need to guess which learned word it is. The "artist" cannot use words in the picture and can only answer yes or no to questions.
3. The picture can be embellished as the guessing continues until the word/words are said.

Note

This can be played in groups or the whole class.



## SENTENCE RACE (EL, JH)

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1. Prepare a list of review vocabulary words .Write each word twice, on two separate slips of paper.
2. Organize the slips into two bundles. Each bundle includes all the words.
3. Divide the class into two teams. Get them to make creative team names .
4. Distribute a bundle of words to each team.
5. Members of the team check between themselves that everyone knows all the words.
6. Each student in the team gets one of the words.
7. When you call a word, the two students (one from each team) who have the word should run to the blackboard and race to write a sentence using their word .
8. The winner is the one with a correct and clearly written sentence.
9. Continue until you feel they have had enough (probably not all the students will be able to participate this time).
10. Take in the slips of paper that were not used and continue in another lesson.

### Note

In order to prevent disappointment, it's important to announce in advance that not all students will be able to participate this time, but that you'll carry on in another lesson.

#### TIP

KEEP A SET OF PICTURES REPRESENTING WORDS THAT YOUR CLASS HAS LEARNT. THESE CAN BE USED IN A VARIETY OF GUESSING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES: SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, CHARADES.

## CHARADES (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Divide your class into two teams.
2. One student from the first team takes a card from the pile of picture-cards representing words the class have learnt.
3. He or she acts out the meaning of the word (without speaking) to his or her team, who have to guess what the word is.
4. The rest of the team should shout out any answers that come to mind. If the team is able to guess the word, they score a point.



5. If they cannot, the other team gets one chance to guess the word. If they are correct, they score a point and then continue with their turn.
6. Continue playing until you run out of time or you run out of words. The team with the higher score at the end of the game wins.

Variation: This can be played as a full-class activity rather than a team game: the whole class guesses which word is being mimed.

TIP

USE REALIA (REAL OBJECTS OR TOY REPRESENTATIONS) INSTEAD OF PICTURES WHEN YOU CAN: THEY HAVE MUCH MORE IMPACT!

### SPELL IT TOGETHER (EL, JH)

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1. Divide the class into two (or more) teams, and have each team stand in a line at the front of the class.
2. Give one team a word, and have them spell it out by making each student say one letter, starting with the first student and first letter, second student and second letter, and so on.
3. Have the teams take turns spelling words out.

### ALPHABET MADNESS (JH)

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1. Give a letter and write it up on the board. Tell the class that they have to make sentences using words beginning with a supplied letter.
2. Give the students an example as follows. The letter M: "My mother makes my morning meal."
3. Give students a minute or two, working in pairs, to think of and write down their sentences.
4. Elicit the sentences and, optionally, write them up on the board.
5. Then do the same with another letter!

Variations

1. This can be played as a team game: the team with the best sentence wins.
2. If they find it difficult, say they may include up to two words in the sentence that begin with other letters.
3. Add a new word of your own to each sentence and explain it.



### CLASSIFYING (JH, HS)

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1. Ask students to brainstorm all the nouns they can remember that they have learnt in the last month.
2. Add others that you remember and they don't.
3. In groups, students decide how they will classify these items, e.g. human / non-human; animate / inanimate; positive / negative /neutral or whatever they decide.
4. Variation: you can do the same with verbs or adjectives (adverbs are rarer and more difficult).

### INFORMATION GAP (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Students sit in pairs.
2. Each student has a list of vocabulary words with translations.
3. One student turns his or her paper face down while the other asks him or her the words marking the correct answers.
4. Then they switch roles.

### MUSCLE MEMORY (EL, JH)

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1. Each student writes a word and its translation a minimum of 5 times each.
2. While writing the word the student says the word to themselves over and over again.
3. Students then test each other.

### COMPETITIVE DICTATION (EL, JH)

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1. Draw the outline of a car (or any other complex object) on two large sheets of paper (poster size). (If you have a large class you may want to have more than two groups working, each with their own outline)
2. Stick these to the walls at either end of the classroom.



3. Divide the class into two groups and ask them to gather around one of the outlined cars.
4. Give each group a marker.
5. Shout out the first item on your prepared list of words describing the main parts of a car.
6. Each team has to write the word on the appropriate part of the car.
7. Continue to shout out the rest of the words until you have finished all the words.
8. Review orally with both teams and check spelling and appropriate labeling.

### KNOW YOUR COUNTRY (EL, JH)

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1. Ask the students to draw a map of Israel
2. Students work together in pairs to label different parts of the country including different geographical features (mountain, lake, river, city, village etc), as well as names of places they are familiar with.
3. After each pair has completed their map, they put their maps up around the classroom and students go round looking at one another's work.

### THINK OF A WORD (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Divide the class into small teams and make sure each team has a pen and a worksheet.
2. Write any noun on the board. Example: Piano
3. Now ask the students to suggest...
4. Something bigger than a piano, e.g. bus.
  - Something smaller than a piano, e.g. pen.
  - A verb that goes with piano, e.g. play.
  - A word that comes earlier in the dictionary than piano, e.g. eat.
  - A longer word beginning with the same letter, e.g. perfection.
  - A shorter word beginning with the same letter, e.g. pig.
  - An adjective to describe a piano, e.g. black.
  - The opposite of that adjective, e.g. white.
  - Another noun that goes with the two adjectives, e.g. car.
5. Tell the students they are going to do the same thing in their teams.
6. The first team to complete all the tasks correctly wins a point.



### FREE FINISH DICTATIONS (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Dictate the beginning of a sentence including a target word.
2. Students write down what you say, and complete the sentence any way they like.

### CLOZE DICTATION (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Ask the students to fill in the gaps in a cloze text that targets words you want to review.
2. When they have filled in as much as they can, you read out the entire passage, they fill in or correct anything they need to.

#### Variation

You can do the same with single sentences.

### MEMORY CHALLENGE (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Divide the class into pairs.
2. Give them a time limit of 3 minutes
3. Ask them to write down as many words, phrases and/or expressions as they can from the last lesson on Topic X
4. The winner is the pair with the longest list who has also spelt the words correctly.

#### TIP

PROJECT WORK: PREPARE APPROPRIATE VOCABULARY BEFORE YOU START WORKING ON A PROJECT (SEE 'VOCABULARY CENTERED PROJECTS OR MINI-PROJECTS' BELOW)



### LAST ONE STANDING (EL, JH)

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1. Give the class a topic – one that you worked on recently or your current topic.
2. Ask the class to stand in a circle.
3. Clap out a beat and say one, two three, followed by a topic related word.
4. After the next three beats, the student standing next to you in the circle, (clockwise), gives a word related to the topic.
5. Anyone who cannot think of a word or repeats a word already mentioned, has to sit down, and it is the next person's turn.
6. The winner is the last one standing.

### EXCEPTIONS

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1. At the end of a unit, each student reviews the material and chooses the words he/she has learned.
2. All the students contribute their words to a class brainstorm which the teacher writes on the board.
3. Pairs then compile at least three groups of four words each with one exception in each group. For example, the exception may be a different meaning or a different part of speech.
4. Pairs then exchange their groups of words, find the exception and explain their rationale for choosing that exception.

### COLLABORATIVE PREPARATION FOR A VOCABULARY QUIZ (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Divide students into heterogeneous groups of four.
2. Give them a list of words to review for a group vocabulary quiz (the grade for which will be an average of all four individual results on the quiz).
3. Each group prepares for the quiz together, helping each other and practicing spelling etc...
4. The group takes the quiz and the grade is given based on an average of all their individual marks.



### COLLABORATIVE QUIZ COMPOSITION (EL, JH, HS)

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1. Divide students into heterogeneous groups of four.
2. Give them a list of words to review for a group vocabulary quiz
3. Each group prepares quiz items for as many of the words as they have time for.
4. Take in their items, and use a selection of them as a basis for the quiz.

### ADOPT A WORD (JH, HS)

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1. Each student adopts a word from the new word list being taught.
2. They have to write the word out clearly on a card that can be stuck up on the board.
3. They can "draw" the word
4. They must write out a number of sentences using the word
5. They must know how to pronounce the word correctly (Google translate can help them with this, although the accent is American!)
6. Then they "teach" their word to another classmate and vice versa.
7. They can come up to the front of the class and teach their word.
8. Once they have adopted a word it is theirs until the end of the year. If they find their word written in a text or in their extensive reading they should copy out the sentence

### SELF-LEARNING VOCABULARY CARDS (EL, JH, HS)

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1. For homework, each student chooses 5 words from the new word list.
2. He or she prepares a card (15cm x 20 cm), writes the word on one side and draws or pastes a picture on the other.
3. Next lesson, in pairs, A shows his picture, B says the word and vice versa.
4. Then turn to two more students creating a group of 4 and play again.





## F. MORE IDEAS 4: ADVANCED VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES

### IT DOESN'T MEAN QUITE THE SAME THING (HS)

1. Prepare pairs of (or sets of three) synonyms. Some examples are shown below. Or, preferably, make up your own: select a few words you've recently taught in class and look for rough synonyms of them.
2. Discuss the concept of synonymy with students. Tell them that there are few if any absolute synonyms within a language. Normally there are differences. There may be distinctions in terms of:
  - a. real-world meaning e.g. table / desk
  - b. intensity e.g. small / tiny
  - c. connotation or negative / positive associations e.g. damp / moist
  - d. formality e.g. guy / man
  - e. collocation e.g. tall / high
  - f. American/British e.g. candy/sweets
3. Write up on the board five words each of which has at least one obvious synonym and elicit their synonyms from students.
4. Give students five minutes to work in pairs and decide between themselves what the distinctions are between some pairs of synonyms (use the pairs created at 3. above, or select from the lists below, or create your own). They can use dictionaries if easily available. They don't need to write anything down.
5. Elicit their ideas in the full class: correct and add your own ideas if appropriate.

#### Note:

There are lots of synonym sites on the Internet (just Google the word *synonyms*), but they do not normally provide any help with identifying subtle distinctions between them; for that you need a good dictionary.

#### Synonyms: Less advanced

children / kids

lamp / light

macho / masculine

seat / chair

orchestra / band

policeman / police officer

pal / mate

apartment / flat

donate / give

educate / teach

surprised / astonished

strength / power



Synonyms: More advanced

medication / medicine

select / choose / elect

excellent / superb / outstanding

subway / underground

offspring / children / issue

disabled / crippled / physically

challenged

slip / slide / skid

forged / falsified / counterfeit

enemy / antagonist / foe

famous / notorious / well-known

slim / thin / skinny

attorney / lawyer / solicitor

toil / work / labour

TRANSLATION BLOOPERS (JH, HS)

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1. Choose a short English text at a level of difficulty appropriate for the class together with its computer translation (try using Google Translate <http://translate.google.com/#>), displayed on the board or copied for students.
2. Divide the class into pairs.
3. Distribute the two texts, and invite students to underline any translations they feel are inaccurate or inappropriate. They can use dictionaries as needed.
4. Discuss these mistranslations in full class: why did they occur?
5. Draw students' attention to the relevant aspects of meaning of the L1 or English vocabulary items that caused the computer to translate the way it did.

Variation

1. Do it the other way round: start from an L1 text and look at the English translation.
2. Tell students for homework to feed in a similar text to their computers and elicit a translation; then analyze it the same way on their own, and bring their findings to the following lesson for discussion.
3. For more advanced students, perhaps discuss: how could computer translations become more accurate? Or will computer translations never be as good as human ones?



## COMPARE COLLOCATIONS (JH, HS)

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1. Prepare a few mistakes in English that you have come across based on L1 interference within collocations or multi-word 'chunks' (e.g. *make a shower* instead of *have/take a shower*, *make one's homework* instead of *do/prepare one's homework*).
2. Show these mistakes to the class.
3. Ask them if they can add more that they have made themselves in the past or heard others say.
4. Tell them to look through their vocabulary notebooks or lists of words in their coursebook. They should look for more multi-word chunks where different component words would be used in their L1 to convey the same idea. Any they find they should underline, or highlight.
5. Students get together in small groups to make summaries (small posters) based on their findings, showing the correct English expression clearly written out, and the mistaken (L1-interference-based) expression next to it, crossed out.

### TIP

WHEN REQUIRING FORMAL PRESENTATIONS FROM STUDENTS, I HAVE FOUND IT A GOOD IDEA TO START THE BALL ROLLING WITH A SIMILAR PRESENTATION OF MY OWN. THIS ENABLES ME TO MODEL THE KIND OF INFORMATION, LENGTH OF PRESENTATION AND FORMAT THAT I AM EXPECTING. IT ALSO ACCORDS WITH THE PRINCIPLE THAT YOU DON'T ASK STUDENTS TO DO THINGS YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO DO YOURSELF!



## G. VOCABULARY ASSESSMENT - SOME USEFUL WAYS OF TESTING VOCABULARY.

### SAMPLES OF TEST ITEM FORMATS FOR ASSESSING VOCABULARY

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Most test items assess only receptive knowledge of the items (i.e. if the students can recognize them and know what they mean<sup>2</sup>). It's important also to test productive knowledge (i.e. if the students can retrieve the items from memory and say or write them in response to a question or hint<sup>3</sup>).

#### 1. MULTIPLE CHOICE

Aim: assessment of receptive knowledge

1.1 Circle the choice that best gives the meaning of the underlined word deliberately

- a. both
- b. noticeably
- c. intentionally
- d. absolutely

1.2 Circle the choice that best gives the meaning of the underlined word, given in context

He was guilty because he did those things deliberately.

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. both          | b. noticeably |
| c. intentionally | d. absolutely |

---

<sup>2</sup> Receptive or passive knowledge is commonly used in listening comprehension and reading, and involves recognition of the form–meaning relationships (Nation, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Productive or active knowledge of vocabulary is usually associated with speaking and writing and implies retrieval of the appropriate word (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004).



## 2. MATCHING

Aim: assessment of receptive vocabulary knowledge

Match words to definitions

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1. medicine | a. a person you go to see if you feel ill           |
| 2. doctor   | b. when you feel sick, you may have this            |
| 3. hospital | c. where you lie down and rest when you are ill.    |
| 4. bandage  | d. something you take to make you feel better       |
| 5. illness  | e. something you put on a cut to stop the bleeding  |
| 6. bed      | f. a place where people go to get medical treatment |

### Variations

a. Instead of words and their definitions, there are a number of other types of 'matches' you might use:

1. pairs of synonyms (e.g. *large + big*);
2. pairs of antonyms (e.g. *large + small*)
3. words that collocate with one another (e.g. *work + hard*)
4. beginnings and endings of idioms, proverbs, clichés, etc (e.g. *No news is + good news*)
5. items and their L1 translations
6. word-components (prefixes, suffixes, other morphemes (e.g. *micro + phone*))

b. In order to make the task slightly more difficult, and to lower the likelihood that students choose the right matches by chance, insert a few items in one of the columns that have no 'matches' and function as 'distractors'. For example:

- |             |                           |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1. bench    |                           |
| 2. charity  | a. _____ long seat        |
| 3. mate     | b. _____ help to the poor |
| 4. jar      | c. _____ part of a county |
| 5. mirror   |                           |
| 6. province |                           |

#### TIP

MATCHING ACTIVITIES ALLOW MORE ITEMS TO BE TESTED WITHIN THE SAME TIME. ALSO, THE MATCHING FORMAT REDUCES THE AMOUNT OF WORK INVOLVED IN PREPARING MULTIPLE CHOICE ITEMS.



### 3. SENTENCE COMPLETION

Aim: assessment of receptive knowledge

1. Write the beginnings of sentences, leaving the endings open. Each beginning should include one of the target items, underlined, but should not give substantial hints as to its meaning.

The storm was....

Variation

Use sentence endings instead of, or as well as, sentence beginnings.

..... because of the storm.

TIP

IT'S ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA TO PROVIDE AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH SECTION OF A WRITTEN TEST NOT ONLY THE INSTRUCTIONS BUT ALSO ONE ANSWER FILLED IN AS AN EXAMPLE. THIS, OF COURSE, WILL NOT COUNT TOWARDS THE TEST SCORE, BUT GIVES THE STUDENTS A CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT IS EXPECTED.

#### 4.1 FILL THE GAP (RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE)

Aim: assessment of receptive knowledge

A \_\_\_\_\_ is used to eat with.

- a. plow      b. fork      c. hammer      d. needle

Variation

Use a series of sentences with missing words, accompanied by a 'word bank'.

a picture, tea, a book, bread

1. We can drink \_\_\_\_\_.
2. We can eat \_\_\_\_\_.
3. You can read \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 You can look at \_\_\_\_\_.



## 4.2. GAPFILL (PRODUCTIVE VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE)

---

Aim: assessment of productive knowledge

As above, but without the multiple choice or word bank.

### Variation

Provide the first letter(s) of the missing word:

1. I'm glad we had this opp\_\_\_\_\_ to talk.
2. There are a doz\_\_\_\_\_ eggs in the basket.
3. Every working person must pay income t\_\_\_\_\_.
4. The pirates buried the trea\_\_\_\_\_ on a desert island.

### TIP

IF YOU ARE USING DEFINITIONS, MAKE SURE THEY ARE EXPRESSED IN VERY SIMPLE LANGUAGE (EASIER THAN THE LEVEL OF THE TARGET ITEMS!).

## 5. TRANSLATION

---

Aim: assessment of receptive or productive knowledge

Students translate target items (words or phrases) into the L1, or from L1 to the target language

Translate into Hebrew or Arabic:

1. night
2. the sky
3. a house
4. to think

Or: the same, based on Hebrew or Arabic words, the student is asked to translate into English.



Variation - Provide a context to clarify the meaning.

Translate the underlined word:

1. You can see how the town has developed. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I cannot say much about his character. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Her idea is a very good one. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I want to hear only the facts. \_\_\_\_\_

TIP  
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE A TEST EASIER, PROVIDE THE STUDENTS WITH THE FIRST LETTER OF THE ANSWER.

## 7. YES/NO CHECKLIST (SELF-ASSESSMENT)

---

Aim: assessment of receptive knowledge

Provide a list of items you want to check.

Students note by each  (I understand this item)  (I could use this item myself when speaking or writing)  I don't know this item.

TIP  
THE 'YES/NO' TEST IS AN EXCELLENT ONE FOR ONGOING SELF-ASSESSMENT – BUT DON'T USE IT FOR TESTS THAT GET A GRADE, BECAUSE IT'S TOO TEMPTING TO CHEAT AND SAY YOU KNOW SOMETHING YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW!

## 8. THE WORD ASSOCIATION TEST (FOR PROFICIENCY LEVEL)

---

Aim: assessment of receptive knowledge of the different associations of a word meaning

Choose four words whose meanings are associated with the underlined word. These could be collocations or words from the same real-world domain etc.





Choose at least one from each of the two boxes.

sudden

beautiful quick surprising thirsty	change doctor noise school
------------------------------------	----------------------------

edit

arithmetic film pole publishing	revise risk surface text
---------------------------------	--------------------------

(from Read, 1995 in Read, 2000)

9. CLOZE

---

Aim: assessment of productive knowledge

Students fill in the missing word in a gapped text.

Today, I went to the \_\_\_\_\_ and bought some milk and eggs. I knew it was going to rain, but I forgot to take my \_\_\_\_\_, and ended up getting wet on the way \_\_\_\_\_.

10. SENTENCE WRITING

---

Aim: assessment of productive knowledge

Instruct students to compose a sentence for each word, that will show they understand it.

Variation

Ask students to write an entire text, or paragraph, using at least ten of the target items.

TIP

PROVIDE AN OPTIONAL EXTRA SECTION FOR A TEST THAT CAN BE DONE BY STUDENTS WHO FINISH EARLY. GIVE THEM 'BONUS' MARKS (ABOVE THE STANDARD 100%) TO REWARD THEM FOR THE EXTRA EFFORT.



## H. USEFUL RESOURCES - RECOMMENDED INTERNET SITES THAT PROVIDE VOCABULARY WORK (WITH NOTES TELLING YOU WHAT THEY CONSIST OF), USEFUL BOOKS, AND INTERESTING RESEARCH.

### 1. BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND THINKING

Chapelle, C.A. (1998). Construct definition and validity inquiry in SLA research. In L.F. Bachman & A.D. Cohen (Eds.), *Interface between second language acquisition and language testing research* (pp.32-70). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Folse, K. (2004). Myths about teaching and learning second language vocabulary: What recent research says. *TESL Reporter*, 37(2), 1-13.

Folse, K. (2011). Applying L2 lexical research findings in ESL teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(2), 362-369.

Laufer, B., & Goldstein, Z. (2004). Testing vocabulary knowledge: Size, strength, and computer adaptiveness. *Language Learning*, 54 (30), 399-436.

Nation, P. S. I. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Read, J. (2000). *Assessing vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Read, J. (2007). Second language vocabulary assessment: Current Practices and New Directions. *International Journal of English Studies*, 7, 105-125.

Schmitt, N. (2008). Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 329-363.

Waring, R. (2002). Basic principles and practice in vocabulary instruction. *The Language Teacher*. JALT. accessible from [http://jalt-publications.org/old\\_tlt/articles/2002/07/waring](http://jalt-publications.org/old_tlt/articles/2002/07/waring)



## 2. ACTIVITIES

Morgan, J., & Rinvoluceri, M. (2004). *Vocabulary*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nation, I.S.P. (1994). *New ways in teaching vocabulary*. Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL, Inc.

Nation, I.S.P. (2008). *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and techniques*. Andover, Hants: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to teach vocabulary*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Longman.

Ur, P. (2012) *Vocabulary Activities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## 3. USEFUL WEBSITES

### **Just the word**

<http://www.just-the-word.com/>

(Gives lots of phrases and collocations based on a word you type in)

### **For better English**

<http://forbetterenglish.com/>

Provides other words that frequently collocate with a word you type in

### **Learn English feel good**

<http://www.learnenglishfeelgood.com/vocabulary/>

fill-in exercises on a variety of topics, rather adult-oriented

### **English vocabulary quizzes**

<http://a4esl.org/a/v3.html>

Vocabulary quizzes and crosswords for all levels. Different categories, teachers cannot put in their own words. Site difficult to negotiate



### **Brain pop**

<http://www.brainpopesl.com/>

Very nice site – user-friendly, colourful. Has various levels from junior to junior high school, and lots of audio work. It includes reading aloud words and sentences, games, written work and a research area for teachers to find out more about vocabulary research.

### **Quizlet**

<http://quizlet.com/>

Very nice site. Teachers can put in their own word list. Different activities for students to do at home or in computer room in class. Free sign up

### **Spelling City**

<http://www.spellingcity.com/spelling-testme.html>

Very nice site, easy to negotiate. Teachers can put in their own word list therefore suitable for all levels. Variety of games that can be played with teacher's list or with other words. Has an audio element.

### **Wordle**

<http://www.wordle.net/>

Creating word clouds, a fun way to recycle vocabulary through art. You need an updated Java on the computer to do this. Creative way to present the new words and could be used by the teacher to make a poster and put up in the class but not really useful for learning purposes

### **Learning Chocolate**

<http://www.learningchocolate.com/?page=2>

Colourful site with audio element. Teachers cannot put in their own words. Suitable for lower levels. Limited number of games but can be fun for learning.

### **ELF learning**

<http://www.elflearning.jp/>

Fun site, very colourful with links to YouTube videos with vocabulary practice for students. Ideas for teachers with YouTube links as well. Teachers cannot put in



their own words. Suitable for young children only. Lots of work pages that teachers could download to use.

### **ESL Games**

<http://www.eslgamesplus.com/pirate-games/>

This is a fun website with computer games. Suitable for younger students ( primary or maybe junior high). The vocabulary is according to topics so teacher could use it in conjunction with a topic she is teaching at the moment if it is on the site.

### **LearnEnglish.British Council**

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/vocabulary-games>

Great site. Very easy to surf. Lots of different games for vocabulary development suitable for mainly for intermediate and proficiency level

### **Merriam-Webster dictionary**

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Apart from using it as an online dictionary ( and there is also an app that can be downloaded onto a smart phone or ipad) there are high level vocabulary quizzes and also a pronunciation section. Suitable only for proficiency level

### **Wordsmith**

<http://www.wordsmith.org/awad/>

A nice site for high level students who want to enlarge their vocabulary by receiving a word a day.

### **Vocabulary**

<https://www.vocabulary.co.il/>

Lots of games that students can play at home to increase their vocabulary. Some of the games could be suitable for primary school but it may be difficult for the pupils to find their level. Good for intermediate and proficiency level.

### **Ten good games**

<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Koprowski-RecyclingVocabulary.html>

Descriptions of ten games for reviewing vocabulary.



State of Israel  
Ministry of Education  
Pedagogical Secretariat  
Language Department  
English Language Education

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHING VOCABULARY

### **Spelling bee site**

You can gain access by emailing

[teachers@galim.org.il](mailto:teachers@galim.org.il)

write on the subject line: Spelling Bee + שם בית הספר + סמל מוסד

### **Levels tests on-line**

Paul Nation and Batia Laufer

<http://www.er.ugam.ca/nobel/r21270/levels/>

### **Norbert Schmitt - Resources**

Vocabulary Tests, Useful Websites for Vocabulary, Websites of Vocabulary Specialists

<https://www.norbertschmitt.co.uk/>