

Word Power Activities

Learning new vocabulary should, and can, be fun! Below are some practical activities to introduce, review and deepen student's understanding of vocabulary.



Running dictation: This activity requires teamwork and gets students up and moving. Hang up a list of key words outside the classroom. Students work in pairs. One student goes outside and read the words, trying to remember as many as possible. Back in classroom, they quietly share the words they remember with their partner, who writes them down. Then they switch roles. This activity can easily be turned into a friendly competition. The first team to write down all the words correctly wins. The teacher's role is to check words. If there are mistakes, the team must keep walking to check their work.

Word Bingo: Students draw a grid and write vocabulary words in the boxes. The teacher reads the word definitions out loud. Students cross out the word that matches the definition. When students have four across vertically, diagonally or horizontally they yell "BINGO."

Word sorts: This is a way to help students process words at a deeper level. Which words are similar or belong to the same category? Which words have opposite meanings?

- **Odd one out:** create lists of 4-5 words. Students must determine (and explain) which word doesn't "fit in."
- **A Venn-Diagram:** sort words into categories such as positively loaded, neutral and negatively loaded.
- **Two columns:** create one column for synonyms and another for antonyms.

Story in a bag: We can help our students to understand more challenging texts by "frontloading," or "pre-teaching" key words. Choose 10 key words from a short story.

Divide the class into groups of 3-4. Give each group an envelope with the key words written on slips of paper. Using the key words and a dictionary, the teams will work together to write their own story. Afterwards the class will read the original story and discuss whether their own story was similar.

Online tools:

<http://www.wordle.net/> create word clouds to help students visualize high-frequency words.

<https://quizlet.com> a website that allows students to practice sets of vocabulary through flashcards, tests, matching games etc. It's easy to search for pre-made quizlets or create your own.

<https://www.powerthesaurus.org/good/synonyms> When writing, students should practice using a Thesaurus to find synonyms and antonyms. Model critical use of a thesaurus by rewriting a "simple" text together.

Online dictionaries are an excellent way to check pronunciation of new words. Students can click on the speaker icon next to the word and listen to how speakers of different English variants would pronounce the word.

Reflect together: Try out and discuss different word-learning strategies as a class. Which strategy should be used when? Which methods are effective and why? In this way, we help students take more responsibility for their language learning.