

Teaching Vocabulary for Intermediate Level Adult Students

North Carolina ABE instructors wrote the vocabulary lessons presented using Tier 2 words for their intermediate level adult students. These lessons are provided to help you in planning efficient and effective vocabulary instruction.

Instructors should make changes to the information provided in the lessons to make them a better fit for their individual adult learners. For example, each lesson contains an example *Read and Respond* activity; however, you may want to use a different reading passage and develop your own questions.

If you have developed vocabulary lessons as outlined in the research for evidence-based reading instruction, please send them to us for inclusion in this vocabulary bank.

Selecting Words for Vocabulary Instruction

Gaps in intermediate readers' knowledge about word meanings can make acquiring vocabulary from reading inefficient and ineffective. To develop vocabulary knowledge at this level, direct and explicit instruction will usually be the best route. Teacher can begin by choosing academic (Tier 2) words that their students will encounter frequently across a variety of content areas. The words should also be ones that the students can connect to other words, meanings, and concepts as well as their experiences.

Vocabulary Instruction at the Intermediate ABE Level

Two aspects of knowledge of word meanings are related to vocabulary at the intermediate level: breadth of vocabulary and depth of vocabulary.

Breadth of vocabulary refers to the number and kinds of word meanings known.

Among typically developing readers, vocabulary size more than doubles between the 6th and 12th grade levels. Consequently, if reading development has been delayed, it is likely that growth in vocabulary has also. A useful framework for thinking about the breadth of a learner's vocabulary is the notion of word tiers.

Most intermediate level readers have a good grasp of the meanings of Tier 1 words — concrete words like house that make up reading materials at beginning reading levels. Tier 2 words begin to appear in reading materials at the intermediate level. They continue to serve an important function at more advanced levels where they connect the concepts represented by Tier 3 words (e.g., carbohydrates are a consequence of photosynthesis).

Depth of vocabulary refers to the flexibility and precision of a learner's knowledge about the meaning of words. Because of their role in comprehension at the intermediate and advanced levels, Tier 2 word meanings are the most important ones to teach to intermediate level readers.

For many intermediate level learners definitions are tied to particular contexts in which words have been experienced (e.g., “decline is when your credit card is turned down”). When those words are encountered in new contexts (e.g., the decline of the Roman Empire), confusion and misunderstanding can result.

Planning for Instruction: Instruction begins with assessment

For a true measure of vocabulary, teachers should use an assessment that requires no reading. If students are required to read vocabulary items, any weaknesses they have in alphabets will affect the results. A commonly used method of vocabulary testing is to ask students to give the meanings for words that a teacher presents to them aurally. The Word Meaning Test is a free and easy to use vocabulary assessment. It is available in the assessment kit on the ABSPD website under teaching resources – ABE reading.

Planning for Instruction: Teach using explicit Instruction

Preparation:

- Teacher prepares notes for explanation and modeling.
- Teacher selects a list of words for vocabulary instruction.

Explanation:

- Teacher tells the students the purpose of the instruction.
- Teacher pronounces the target word and leads a discussion with the students for each word by providing the definition of each word. The teacher gives just the meaning that is to be learned at this time.

Modeling through Direct Instruction:

- Teacher gives examples of the word used in contexts that will illustrate the target meaning.
- Teacher leads students in a discussion to elicit personal associations and additional contexts that illustrate the target meaning of the words.

Scaffolded Practice with Feedback:

- Teacher provides multiple (ten or more) encounters with the word and the concept being taught.
- Extensive practice is both oral and in writing.
- Practice focuses on helping students come up with contexts in which the word meaning can be applied.
- Practice helps students explore similarities and differences in word meanings in order to develop depth of vocabulary knowledge.
- Initially, tasks are highly structured and closely supported by the teacher.
- As students get more familiar with the target word, the tasks become less structured with reduced scaffolding.
- Tasks should range from simple to complex.
- Previously studied words should be integrated with new words.

Application:

- Students apply word meanings independently in a multitude of contexts.
- Teacher encourages word use through ongoing practice activities and discussions.
- Teacher continually has students apply words used in previous lessons as well as new words.

Monitoring Progress:

- Teacher formally or informally gauges students' understanding and application of target words during oral and written activities.
- Teacher can tell if additional modeling or practice is needed.

Vocabulary Lessons: What is included

Each lesson includes the following to aid in preparation, explanation and modeling:

- Word, part of speech and meaning
- Synonyms (if any)
- Antonyms (if any)
- 2-4 sentences using the word in a personal context, possibly using another word form (if meaning is not changed)
- Personal association
- Knowledge rating scale

Each lesson includes the following to aid guided practice, application, monitoring and feedback:

- Fill In The Blank
- Sentence Completion
- Yes/No/Why?
- Read and Respond