

10 Principles for Effective Vocabulary Instruction (and 10 Things to Avoid!)

✓ DO THIS

1. Select words to teach.



2. Use strategies to engage students in word study.



3. Help students to come up with their own definitions.

4. Assess student use of words in authentic writing and speaking.

5. Teach students morphological strategies to figure out words they do not know, in addition to context-clue strategies.



6. Use symbols and pictures to help bring vocabulary to life.



7. Highlight and use a word wall in classroom instruction.

8. Use and apply vocabulary words regularly (versus isolated practice).



9. Allow opportunities for wide reading so students are exposed to words all the time in a variety of books.

10. Model the use of academic language at all times, setting high expectations for language use.

NOT THAT ✗

1. Assign long lists of words (six to eight a week is recommended) but never teach about the words selected.



2. Have students look up lists of words in a dictionary, write arbitrary sentences, or copy words multiple times.

3. Have students simply copy definitions.

4. Give students matching tests that show only memorization of definitions.



5. Tell students to use only context clues to figure out unknown words.



6. Lack the use of visual cues in the classroom to assist with vocabulary instruction.

7. Lack or misuse a word wall in the classroom.

8. Spend a large chunk of language arts time working on vocabulary in isolation.



9. Teach only whole-class books/texts with controlled vocabulary study.

10. Use "kid" language around students and allow students to speak "kid" back.

Adapted from
Vocabulary Strategies That Work: Do This—Not That
by Lori G. Wilfong

