

Tools and Apps for Vocabulary Building

Traditionally, learners acquire vocabulary through rote learning of glossaries and dictionaries. Unfortunately, this method does not promote retention in long term memory. Researchers, therefore, are interested in investigating whether a particular strategy can foster vocabulary retention more than the others. Successful learners outperform the others because they know well their strengths and are able to use strategies flexibly in various learning situations (Cohen, 1998). All learners can benefit from strategy training. According to Hansen (2009), “a rich, well-developed vocabulary will make you a better contributor to class discussions, a better reader, and a learner who can make connections among various disciplines.” Here are five suggestions for you:

1. Learn word parts

An English word normally consists of three parts: a prefix, a root word and a suffix. It would be helpful to decode a word by its structure, e.g. re-new-able. The root word (new) gives us the basic meaning. The prefix (re) suggests part of its meaning (“again”). The suffix (able) tells us it is an adjective. You may guess the word meaning, “make something new again” instantly, without consulting the dictionary. Let’s discover a root chart and challenging games here:

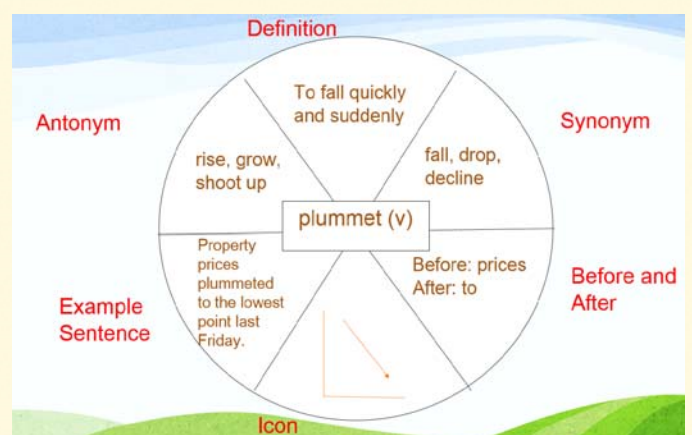


English Language Roots Reference

<http://www.prefixsuffix.com>

2. Memorise the vocabulary with a word wheel

The word wheel is a graphic organiser which arranges key information into a pattern using labels. Teachers may look up the definition, synonyms, antonyms and example sentence from dictionaries and fill in the wedges accordingly. A word wheel caters for one definition only. Then, with reference to the example sentence, teachers may put down which word(s) come before and after the vocabulary in the “Before and After” wedge before drawing the icon. Having demonstrated these steps, teachers may encourage learners to complete the other vocabulary items. Finally, give the suggested answers to learners for checking and revision. Teachers may include or exclude certain aspects of vocabulary according to the learning styles and motivation of learners as well as their teaching needs.



Example of Word Wheel
(Image courtesy of CLT, 2016)

3. Establish memory clues with keyword method

According to Atkinson (1975), the keyword method is a two-staged approach for vocabulary acquisition. First, form a sound link. The learner thinks of a keyword which is similar to the sound system of the vocabulary. Second, form an imagery link. Create a mental image and/or construct a linking sentence to combine the keyword with the meaning of the vocabulary. Here is an example:

Vocabulary	Meaning of the vocabulary	Keyword	Linking sentence
helmet (noun)	a strong hat	help	This strong hat helps to protect the worker's head.

4. Organise your thoughts with a mind map

Mind map helps learners to brainstorm ideas, organise thinking and prepare writing. It can also enhance memory and facilitate recall. Learners may create a mind map of their own style by downloading an effective tool, SimpleMind from:



SimpleMind Desktop

<http://www.simpleapps.eu/simplemind/desktop/>

or



You may hide or show topics and branches, add topic with embedded image and record your voice to explain a particular idea with voice memo. Free tutorial lessons are available at:



SimpleMind

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=simplemind

5. Grouping the words with a collocation grid

Learning vocabulary as chunks is more efficient and accurate than learning individual words only. Since collocational relationships provide powerful and long-lasting links in the vocabulary, it may be helpful to learn word groupings with a collocation grid. Here is an example below:

	public image	acceptance	profit	service	performance	facilities
enhance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
increase	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
boost	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
raise	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

Note: ✓ Good collocation ✗ Bad collocation

It is suggested that teachers should spend time on teaching strategies rather than vocabulary only to learners. As every class varies with learning styles, motivation and learning and teaching needs, it will be fruitful if we adopt an eclectic approach in building learners' vocabulary with enlightening vocabulary learning strategies.

References:

- Atkinson, R. C. (1975). Mnemotechnics in second-language learning. *American Psychologist*, 30(8), 821-828.
- Cohen, A.D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London, UK: Longman.
- Hansen, K. (2009). *10 Ways to Build and Use Your Vocabulary*. Retrieved April 11, 2016, from <http://www.mycollegesuccessstory.com/academic-success-tools/build-vocabulary.html>



學習詞彙的工具與應用程式

傳統學習中，學生一向以背誦詞彙表及字典來學習詞彙，只是這方法對長遠記憶並沒有太大幫助。研究人員於是探討較能有效促進詞彙記憶的學習策略。學生表現較好，往往因為清楚自己的優點，且靈活運用學習策略，應付不同的學習情況(Cohen, 1998)。所有學生都能受惠於策略的訓練。正如 Hansen (2009)所言：「豐富的詞彙量，有助課堂討論，閱讀時更易掌握，甚至能融會貫通各學科的學習。」以下給你五個建議：

1. 學習詞彙的結構

英語詞彙一般由詞首、詞根及詞尾組成。若把詞彙按結構拆成三部分來認識，學生將獲裨益。例如：re-new-able 一詞，詞根(new)表示「全新」的基本意義；詞首(re)包含「再次」的意思；詞尾(able)表示這是個形容詞。不用翻查字典，你可猜到這詞意思是「使某些事物再變新」的意思。你可到以下網址找尋詞彙結構表及有趣的遊戲：

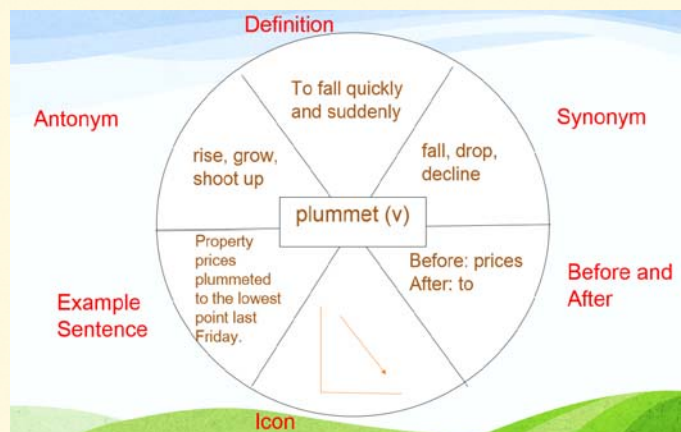


English Language Roots Reference

<http://www.prefixsuffix.com>

2. 利用文字輪記憶詞彙

文字輪這個圖像組織工具，把重要資料分類放在圖像工具中，並標明各部分的用處。老師先從字典找尋詞彙的意義(Definition)、同義詞(Synonym)、反義詞(Antonym)及例句(Example Sentence)，填在文字輪的相應位置內。一個文字輪只可包括詞彙的一個定義。然後，老師把例句中出現在詞彙前後的詞語填在「之前之後」的位置內，最後畫圖(Icon)。老師示範上述步驟後，可鼓勵學生完成其他詞彙。最後，老師派發參考答案給學生核對和溫習。老師可根據學生的學習型態、學習動機和教學需要，增加或減少學習詞彙的層面。



文字輪可協助記憶詞彙
(圖像由教學中心提供，2016)

3. 用關鍵詞方法建立記憶的線索

根據 Atkinson (1975)所述，關鍵詞方法可分兩個階段。首先，建立聲音的聯繫。學生先構想一個關鍵詞，讀音跟詞彙相近。接着，建立圖像的聯繫。學生可在腦海中利用詞彙的意思構成圖畫或一句句子，把關鍵詞和詞彙意思聯繫起來。請看看以下的例子：

詞彙	詞彙的意思	關鍵詞	聯繫句
helmet (noun)	a strong hat	help	This strong hat helps to protect the worker's head.

4. 用心智圖組織思考

心智圖有助學生集思廣益，組織思考，準備寫作。心智圖更可增進記憶，方便日後記起內容。學生可從以下網址或流動應用程式下載 SimpleMind，設計具個人風格的心智圖：



SimpleMind Desktop

<http://www.simpleapps.eu/simplemind/desktop/>

or



你可隱藏或顯示話題和分支，加插影像作話題，以及利用「voice memo」功能親自錄音解釋某個重點。請到以下網址觀看示範片段：



SimpleMind

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=simplemind

5. 用詞語搭配表分組學習詞彙

分組學習詞彙比學習單字更準確有效。因為詞語搭配關係更持久地促進各詞彙的聯繫記憶，用詞語搭配表分組學習詞彙將見效用。請參考以下例子：

	public image	acceptance	profit	service	performance	facilities
enhance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
increase	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
boost	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
raise	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

註： ✓詞語搭配得當 ✗詞語搭配不當

我們建議老師不單教授學生詞彙，更要多花時間應用不同的教學策略。由於每班學生的學習型態、學習動機及教學需要不同，只要我們採用不同層面而又啟發思維的詞彙學習策略，學生的學習成果將有目共睹。

參考文獻:

Atkinson, R. C. (1975). Mnemotechnics in second-language learning. *American Psychologist*, 30(8), 821-828.

Cohen, A.D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London, UK: Longman.

Hansen, K. (2009). *10 Ways to Build and Use Your Vocabulary*. Retrieved April 11, 2016, from <http://www.mycollegesuccessstory.com/academic-success-tools/build-vocabulary.html>