

Part 1

What Is Good Vocabulary Development?

Why Vocabulary? Why Teach It?

The *Wordly Wise 3000* series focuses on improving students' vocabulary by furthering the understanding of new words and concepts. Studies have shown that reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are strongly correlated.¹ Researchers have found that word knowledge in primary school can predict how well students will be able to comprehend texts when they reach high school.² Limited vocabularies prevent students from understanding a text. Students with better vocabularies have greater reading comprehension, which allows them to succeed in all areas of study that use text. On the other hand, students who are less able to understand what they read face difficulty in these same subjects.

Poor readers often read less because reading is difficult and frustrating for them. By not reading, they fail to improve their vocabularies, which could help them comprehend more. As students continue through middle school and high school, the gap between good and poor readers grows wider. Children who fall behind in the earliest grades are less likely to be able to raise their reading to grade level at a later stage. For this reason, the best chance of closing the gap between good and poor readers occurs in the early primary years.³

This is when direct instruction in vocabulary can help. Good readers often acquire much of their vocabulary through wide independent reading, also known as incidental learning. However, explicit instruction can help students learn enough words to become better readers. Direct vocabulary instruction is useful for students at all ability levels, but it is particularly helpful for those beginning students who have a limited reading vocabulary and little exposure to incidental vocabulary learning outside of school.

The average student learns almost 3,000 words a year, or six to eight words per day—a remarkable achievement! If students are taught new words at a rate of eight to ten words per week for 37 to 50 weeks, about 300 to 500 words per year can be taught through direct instruction.⁴ This leaves a large portion of words to be learned through independent reading, which is essential to acquiring word knowledge. Studies suggest that before children gain the

Part 2

General Strategies and Specific Techniques for Teaching Vocabulary

Other Aspects of Good Vocabulary Development

Effective vocabulary development is a multifaceted process requiring a combination of direct instruction, discussion, and active encouragement of independent learning strategies. On their own and in the classroom, students draw on a variety of methods to learn the thousands of words they acquire each year. This part of the Guide will discuss the following general strategies and specific techniques to keep in mind as you teach vocabulary:

- reading to preliterate children
- encouraging wide reading
- emphasizing learning from context
- using prefixes, suffixes, and roots
- using graphic organizers such as semantic maps, concept of definition maps, semantic feature analysis, and Venn diagrams
- extending instruction through reading aloud and discussion

These approaches will enhance your vocabulary curriculum and can be used to supplement the direct instruction that *Wordly Wise 3000* provides.

The Spoken Word: Reading to Preliterate Children

Despite the evidence that most vocabulary acquisition comes from independent reading, it should be obvious that children must have sufficient vocabularies to begin reading at all before that incidental learning can occur. We know that students learn new words by encountering them in text, whether they read that text or it is read to them.¹⁴ By using vocabulary instruction within the context

Part 3

Sample Lessons

This part of the Guide provides instruction and modeling of how to teach sample lessons in Books A and C. These instructions will help you introduce the basic concepts and approaches used in the lessons and will also help you extend the lessons, using the strategies and techniques discussed in Part 2. We have provided lessons from two different grade levels, but the approaches presented will work no matter what level you are teaching. If you have not yet taught your students a *Wordly Wise 3000* lesson, please read through the sample lesson instructions on pages 22–27. These will give you an understanding of the format and purpose of all *Wordly Wise 3000* lessons.

Book A, Lesson 1

Word List

Have students look at the word list for Lesson 1. Tell them that each lesson in *Wordly Wise 3000* opens with a list of ten words that they will discuss and learn and that these will be followed by several exercises.

Tell them that each word list provides definitions of the words as well as examples of how the words are used in sentences. Since this is the first lesson in the book, you may want to discuss all of the words as a class. Point out that each word is accompanied by an illustration that should help the class understand one of its meanings. Tell them that often a word will have more than one meaning and may also have more than one form. Ask them to look at the second word, *claw*, which is the name for different things (noun) as well as for an action (verb).

A **claw** is the sharp curved nail on the toe of a bird or animal. Karl held out his hand, and the parrot wrapped its claws around his finger.

A **claw** is the part of a crab or lobster used for gripping. The lobster grabbed the clam with its big claw and held it.

To **claw** something is to scratch or dig it with sharp nails. Our dog clawed at the back door so that she could come in the house.