

Part 1

What Is Good Vocabulary Development?

Why Vocabulary? Why Teach It?

The *Wordly Wise 3000* series focuses on improving students' vocabulary by furthering their understanding of new words and concepts. Studies have shown that reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are strongly correlated,¹ and researchers have found that word knowledge in primary school can predict how well students will be able to comprehend texts they read in high school.² Limited vocabularies prevent students from comprehending a text.

Poor readers often read less, because reading is difficult and frustrating for them. This means they don't read enough to improve their vocabularies, which could help them comprehend more. This perpetuating cycle can mean that as students continue through middle school and high school, the gap between good and poor readers grows wider.

Direct instruction in vocabulary can help arrest this cycle. 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 (and thus acquire even more words). Direct vocabulary instruction is useful for students at all ability levels, but it is particularly useful for beginning students who have a limited reading vocabulary and little exposure to incidental vocabulary learning outside of school.

The average student learns about 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.³ This leaves a large portion of words to be learned through independent reading, which is essential to acquiring word knowledge.

Although the percentage of words learned through direct instruction may seem small, it is significant. Steven A. Stahl has pointed out that for students at the lower end of the vocabulary range, who learn perhaps 1,000 words a year, a gain of 300 words equals a 30 percent increase, and that

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:

- 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.

Volumes of Volumes: Encouraging Wide Reading

Getting your students to read more may be the most valuable thing you can do to improve their vocabulary. Although direct instruction plays a crucial part in vocabulary growth, most of the words your students learn will be acquired through incidental learning, as they read on their own. The average student learns about 3,000 words a year. Although direct instruction plays a crucial part in vocabulary growth, evidence shows that wide reading is the main avenue for student word acquisition. Researchers present this scenario to demonstrate the effectiveness of wide reading:¹²

Part 3

Sample Lessons

This part of the Guide provides instruction and modeling of how to teach sample lessons in Books 1, 3, and 5. 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 three different grade levels, but the approaches presented will work no matter what level you are teaching. If you have not taught a *Wordly Wise 3000* lesson before, please read the Book 1, Lesson 1, sample lesson instructions on pages 24–29 first. The general instructions for this lesson will give you an understanding of the format and purpose of all *Wordly Wise 3000* lessons.

Book 1, Lesson 1

Word List—General Instructions

Have students look at the word list for Lesson 1. Tell them that each lesson in *Wordly Wise 3000* opens with a list of 15 words that they will discuss and learn, and that the word list 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 the word list as a class. Point out that each word's pronunciation is given beneath it and that each definition includes the word's part of speech. Tell them that often a word will take more than one form, as in the first word, *benefit*, which is defined as a verb and a noun. Also tell them that the words will often have more than one meaning.

benefit
be' nə fit

v. To help or be helpful to; to be useful to.

[That preschool program *benefits* young children.]

n. 1. Something that is useful or helpful, that does good, sometimes as part of a job contract.

[One of the *benefits* of my exercise program is that I sleep better.]

2. An event held to raise money for a cause.

[The library's *benefit* raised enough money for a new children's room.]