

## Vocabulary Building Activities for Intermediate Level ESL learners

- Always begin orally. Give the learners opportunities to hear words and connect them to contexts and observe how they are used before asking them to use them in speech. Make sure learners can recognize written forms of the words before asking them to use them in written texts.
- Have learners create learner dictionaries with sample sentences for each word they include so they can see them in context. Let the learners write the words in their own language here if it makes them feel more confident using them. Have the learners organize the words in their dictionary alphabetically, by theme, or by parts of speech, or by some other way that makes sense to them.
- Have learners categorize words to help them reinforce meaning. Find words in a text that fit into certain categories, for example, find all the “time” words in the text. Or find all the words that describe the main character.
- Teach your learners to use context clues to learn new vocabulary in texts. Context clues are hints about the meaning of new word that are provided in the text around the new word. Context clues can include visuals, definitions, restatements, examples, or descriptions. Using context clues will help learners figure out the meanings of many new words in texts when they do not have teacher support.
- Play games:
  - The Category Game. All class members except one are given a card with a category on it. They take turns giving the “guesser” (the learner who did not get a card) clues by saying words that would fit into that category until the “guesser” guesses the category. For example, if the category is elections, learners might give the guesser clues like: vote, register, government, mayor, representative, ballot, etc.
  - Guessing games: I’m thinking of... (one learner describes something and the others guess the word).

- Use pair dictations with your learners. Take a short text that includes the new vocabulary words in context. Make two separate versions of the text, alternating blanks and text. Learners work in pairs, taking turns reading the text to their partner or writing what their partner says to them to complete the text. When they have completed it, they can compare their opposite copies of the text to check for accuracy.
- Try running dictations with your learners using vocabulary words that the learners have been introduced to previously and are familiar with. Post a short text that includes the new vocabulary words in context at the front of the room. Each line of the text should be numbered and written on a separate line for ease of reference. Divide the class up into teams. One person on each team should be the scribe and sit at a desk at the back of the room. The rest of the team takes turns running to the front of the room, reading a line and then running back to the scribe to dictate the line to the scribe. When all teams are finished, have them compare their text to the original text and correct the errors. Go over the vocabulary words in the text with the learners. Did they use them correctly?
- Help learners make connections among words:
  - Work with learners to determine synonyms and antonyms for vocabulary words.
  - Have learners arrange the words on some kind of a scale, for example: adjectives with negative connotation to positive connotation.
  - Help learners create word maps, connecting new vocabulary to different contexts when they would use the words or connecting new vocabulary to words they already know.
  - Compare slang to regular words so that they can use the correct words depending on the situation.
  - Create charts for learners to keep track of vocabulary, slang and words that are similar.
- Take some time in each class to recycle vocabulary: call out definitions and have learners guess the words; give an opposite; give a rhyming word, etc. Whenever possible, use vocabulary taught in previous lessons again in texts or exercises.

- Encourage learners to use words outside of class. Assign certain vocabulary words to be used each week.
- Use worksheets. Have learners complete fill in the blanks exercises. Create matching exercises for your learners matching words to simple definitions. Create crosswords with words and simple definitions.
- Encourage learners to do journal writing on a regular basis. Give them a number of vocabulary words to incorporate into related theme writing in their journals each week.