Make Words Your Own

Decades of research have confirmed the important role that vocabulary plays in reading comprehension and in students' overall academic success (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). Immersing students in rich and varied language experiences permits them to learn words through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this new view of robust, explicit instruction, vocabulary is introduced using a consistent, predictable routine (Beck et al., 2002). Follow these steps to help students make words fully their own, so that vocabulary can be accessed at will in a variety of situations.
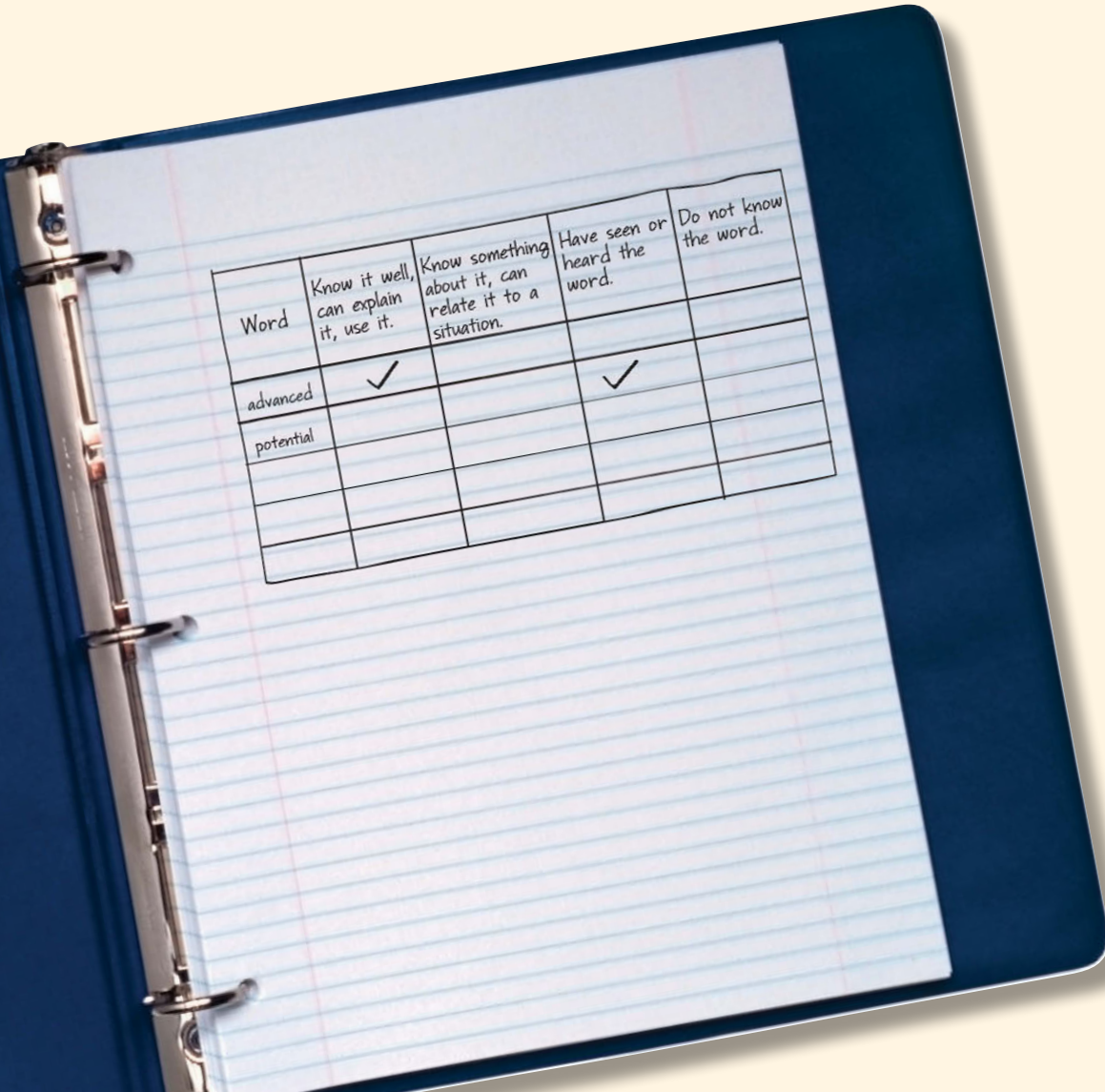
1. **Pronounce**   Guide students in correctly pronouncing the word (by syllables and as a whole). Have students repeat the word after you multiple times; you may want to have ELLs repeat syllable-by-syllable before building up to the whole word. Point out spelling patterns. For higher-level students, point out if the word is a compound word, includes prefixes or suffixes, or has Latin or Greek roots. For example: *The word* **structure** *includes the Latin root* -struct*, which means "to build." Knowing that, what do you think the word* destruction *means?*

2. **Explain**   Refer to the examples in **Prepare to Read** to provide a clear, student-friendly explanation of the word's meaning. Provide any synonyms and/or antonyms that students may be familiar with. For example: *The word* **opponent** *means the person or team who is against you. A synonym is* rival*, and an antonym is* teammate. *Our opponents in next week's basketball game are the varsity team from Middletown High.*

3. **Study Examples**   Encourage students to think about how and why words are being used in example sentences. Systematic use of tools such as word squares, definition maps, and vocabulary study cards provides students with the opportunity to study words in various contexts.

4. **Encourage Elaboration**   Students elaborate word meanings by generating their own examples and through practice. Choose from these techniques:

   - Role-play, drama, or pantomime

   - Create a drawing or visual representation

   - Generate more examples. Build schema by creating a list of examples within a specific category. For example: *A* **mammal** *is a warm-blooded animal that feeds its young with milk. Human beings are mammals. What other animals are mammals?* (cat, dog, whale, elephant, cow, etc.)

   - Prompt a discussion by asking open-ended questions. For example: *Talk about* **standards** *that you have chosen for yourself and your own life.*

5. **Assess**   Check student understanding through both informal, ongoing assessment and summative evaluations. In all cases, assessments should go beyond simple memorization or matching, requiring students to demonstrate a deeper level of thinking and understanding. The following are examples of assessment types that require deep thinking:

   - Students complete a sentence that requires giving an example or explaining the word. For example: *The workers* **struggled** *to _____.* (lift the heavy boxes, move the large sofa, etc.)

   - Students complete a sentence with the target word. For example: *Because I didn't want to be late to class, I took the _____ of setting my clock ten minutes ahead.* (precaution)

   - Ask students to identify appropriate use in a sentence. For example: *Which sentence makes sense? It is an American tradition to celebrate July 4th with fireworks. OR It is an American tradition to play soccer on Labor Day.*

Vocabulary Notebook

Materials: dedicated section of three-ring binder or spiral-bound notebook; print or online student dictionary

1. Before explicitly teaching key words, have students conduct a self-assessment by completing a **knowledge-rating scale** for each word. (After students work with the word in multiple vocabulary routines, ask them to re-rate their word knowledge.)

2. Model how to trap information for each key word, including **a student-generated example and a definition**. Students can develop the information individually or with a partner. Although students can consult a dictionary for help, discourage them from directly copying definitions as this requires little thought or understanding.

3. In addition to the example and definition, encourage students to include other helpful information. For example, a **phonetic respelling** may help them remember how to pronounce the word. Sometimes, a **common opposite** or **a common prefix, root, or suffix** will help jog the students' memory of the word's meaning. For some words, students may draw a picture, diagram, or cartoon.

4. As extra support for English language learners, suggest they include **a translation of each key word** and examples in English of multiple meanings for the word.

5. To foster word consciousness, encourage students to **add to the notebook** interesting words that they come across in other sources: outside reading, conversations, the Internet, music, etc.

Word	Know it well, can explain it, use it.	Know something about it, can relate it to a situation.	Have seen or heard the word.	Do not know the word.
advanced	✓		✓	
potential				

Source: Beck, McKeown, Kucan, 2002
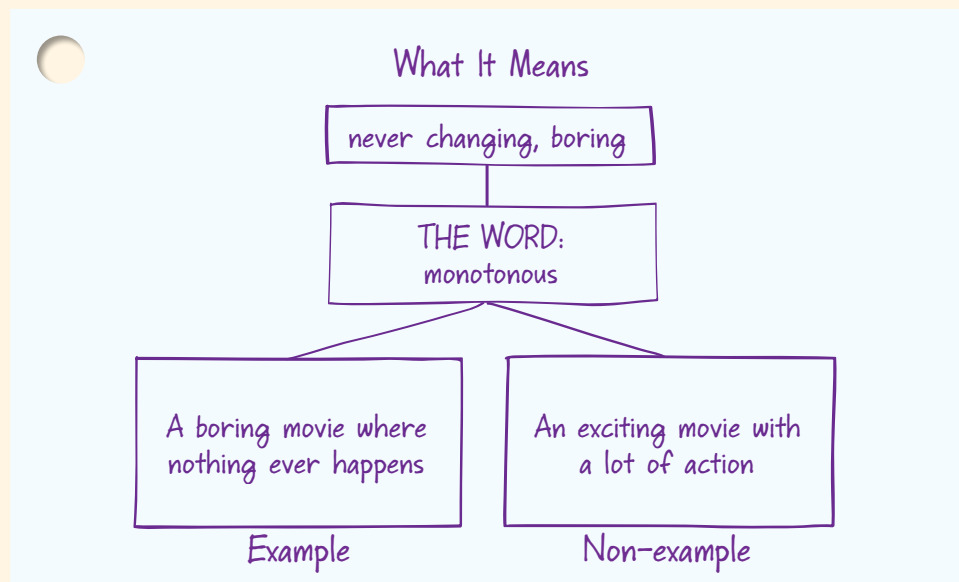
Vocabulary Study Cards

Materials: 3" x 5" index cards; thesaurus and pronunciation guide (optional)

Have students create a **study card** for each key word they wish to learn. They may want to keep the cards in their vocabulary notebooks for quick reference.

1. Demonstrate how to draw the **word map** with the labels and four cells. Then model adding the information to the map by writing the word in the center, a student-generated definition at the top, and an example and non-example in the two bottom cells. Encourage the student to draw on prior knowledge to come up with examples and non-examples from his or her own life.

2. Turn the card over and model how to note additional information about the word's pronunciation, synonyms and antonyms, connotation, word family, and a sample sentence.

3. Suggest that students use these study cards for periodic cumulative review and to prepare for vocabulary tests.

What It Means

never changing, boring

THE WORD: monotonous

A boring movie where nothing ever happens

An exciting movie with a lot of action

Example   Non-example

Pronunciation	mu•not•u•nus
Synonyms	unchanging, boring
Antonyms	changing, exciting
Connotation	negative
Word Family	monotony, monotone
Sentence	The movie was so monotonous, I almost fell asleep.

Materials: overhead projector or board

Use a Wordbench to provide explicit instruction in spelling, morphemic analysis, word families, and cognates. Wordbench helps connect basic and advanced phonics knowledge with more complex vocabulary learning.

1. Display these two questions in a prominent place in the classroom:
   Do I know any other words that look like this word?
   Are the meanings of the look-alike words related?

2. Use these questions to examine new vocabulary with students. **Display a word** and explain that this is like a carpenter's workbench, where you can take a word apart and put it back together.

3. Have students **pronounce the word** and **divide it into syllables**. Then ask them to name other words that look like it. List the words and invite students to underline and "spell out" the letters that make up the common parts.

4. Next, **focus on meaning** by asking students what each familiar word means. Refer students back to the passage where the new word appears. The more examples of its use that you can provide, the better. Then ask: *Does the meaning of the word you know relate in some way to this new word? If so, how?*

5. If the two words are related in meaning, lead students in exploring why the words are in the **same word family** or are **cognates**. Discuss their common roots, affixes, and word origins. Then point out the differences between the words—spelling, pronunciation, affixes, etc.

6. Encourage students to add insights from the Wordbench to their **Vocabulary Notebooks** and **Vocabulary Study Cards**. Remind them that they can draw on their knowledge of word families and cognates to figure out the meanings of new words during reading.

Wordbench

judicial
ju–di–cial
judge   judgment
justice   justify
jud=law
–ial=relating to
Meaning: having to do with laws and courts

Text Talk Read-Aloud Method

The Text Talk method (Beck, et al., 2002) teaches text-specific vocabulary after a story or passage has been read aloud to students.

1. **Read Aloud** Read aloud the text or excerpt; as you are reading, pause to provide a short explanation of each target word as you reach it in the text, as well as any other words that may affect comprehension. Don't let your explanations break the flow of your reading; you will be explaining the target words more fully after reading the story or passage. If your target words were *tradition*, *celebrate*, *purpose*, and *freedom*, you would do the following:

   - For the target word *tradition*, pause and say: *A tradition is a belief or way of doing things.*

   - For the target word *celebrate*, pause and say: *To celebrate is to have a party or other special activities to show that an event is important.*

   - For the target word *purpose*, pause and say: *A purpose is a reason for something.*

   - For the target word *freedom*, pause and say: *Freedom is the power to do, say, or be whatever you want.*

2. **After Reading** After reading the story or passage, explain the meanings of the target words more fully. Use the **Make Words Your Own** routine (p. PD27), which includes these steps: Pronounce, Explain, Study Examples, Encourage Elaboration, and Assess.

3. **Bring the Target Words Together** After you introduce the target words one at a time, give students opportunities to use the words together.

   - **One Question** Using all the target words, create one thoughtful question and ask students to answer it. For example if your target words were *tradition*, *celebrate*, *purpose*, and *freedom*, you could ask: *Which U.S. tradition has the purpose of celebrating people's freedom?*

   - **Questions: Two Choices** Form a question that requires that students choose the best target word between two options. For example, ask: *If a group of people always wears the color red to celebrate a holiday, is it a tradition or a purpose?* (tradition)

   - **Questions: One Context** Form a question for each of the target words, keeping all questions within a single context. Ask students to answer the question set. For example, if the single context is learning about Thai culture, you could ask: *What tradition do Thai farmers have after the January rice harvest? How do Thai families celebrate the New Year? What is the purpose of the* wai *gesture? Why is freedom important to Thai people?*

   - **Questions: Same Format** Use a consistent format to form a question for each target word. Encourage students to explain their answers. For example, ask: *When you follow a tradition, are you doing something original or something many people do? When you have a celebration, are you excited or bored?*

   - **Prompts** Create a discussion prompt for each of the words. Be sure your prompts are open-ended, and encourage students to answer creatively. For example, ask: *How could you and your classmates create new traditions? If you wanted to celebrate your friend's birthday, what would you do?*

4. **Extend Word Use Beyond the Classroom** In order to develop a rich, deep, and lasting understanding of new vocabulary, students require multiple exposures to target words, in more than one context. Encourage students to think about and use target words beyond the classroom as often as they can.

Word Sorts

Materials: 3" x 5" index cards or narrow paper strips

Students explore word relationships by sorting, or categorizing, words into groups.

1. Have students **write a word on each card or paper strip**. You can have students do a **closed sort** by providing the categories of how the cards should be sorted. Choose closed sorts when progress monitoring indicates that students need additional review, reinforcement, or practice with particular skills.

When students need to apply spelling and structural analysis for more advanced vocabulary development, use the following sorts for **spelling patterns:**

- **number of syllables**
- **common affixes**
- **derived vs. non-derived forms**

When students struggle with grammar and syntax, use the following sorts:

- **Part of speech**
- **Formal and informal language**
- **Words with cognates (for English learners)**

When students are learning to synthesize ideas or analyze word choice, use the following sorts:

- **Related meanings or concepts**
- **Multiple meanings**
- **Positive or negative connotations**

Another option is an **open sort** where you provide students with a list of words only. Then students work together to identify the common patterns and attributes of the words on their own. Open word sorts foster creativity, support student independence, motivate students, and foster word consciousness.

2. When students have sorted the cards, ask students to **explain their sorts**. Then have them create a chart or web to record the word relationships.

3. Finally, encourage students to **sort the words again using different categories** and to once again record the information in a graphic organizer.

4. **List-Group-Label** is a more sophisticated version of a word sort.

- Students brainstorm words associated with a topic.
- Students look at the word list and group words into different categories.
- Then students label the categories.

When students are sorting words, supply a "parking lot" category for words that might not fit existing groups. Additionally, allow students to assign one word to more than one category when appropriate.

Parts of Speech Sort

Nouns	Verbs	Adverbs
abstract (n.)	adhere (v.)	ethically (adv.)
dilemma (n.)	advocate (v.)	desolately (adv.)
	reinforce (v.)	deliberately (adv.)

Number of Syllables Sort

2	3	4	5
ab-stract	ad-vo-cate	des-o-late-ly	de-lib-er-ate-ly
ad-here	di-lem-ma		
	e-thi-cal		
	re-in-force		

List-Group-Label Sort

Topic: War

general	planes	courage
soldier	weapons	uniform
plan	fear	spy

People	Tools	Feelings	Actions
general	planes	fear	plan
soldier	weapons	courage	spy
	uniforms		

Graphic Organizers

Materials: overhead projector; models of completed graphic organizers (optional)

Students can use graphic organizers to visually represent dimensions of word meanings and build connections between groups of semantically connected words. There are many different types of graphic organizers that you can choose from:

Word Web

1. **Word Web**   A **word web** shows the meaning(s) and examples of a key word. The key word is written in a central oval, with spokes connecting it to its various meanings and examples. The web can be further extended by adding other words that are related to each of the meanings. A word web is ideal for the study of polysemous (multiple-meaning) words and their synonyms.

2. **Semantic Map**   In a **semantic map**, students group words related to a predetermined concept. For example, in a unit on extreme sports, they might group together the following terms under the topic of Cave Exploration: spelunking, stalactite, crevasse, mineral. Semantic maps are adaptable to a number of different topics and contexts. You may want to develop an initial semantic map based on a preview of a reading selection, and then revise and expand it after students have finished reading the text.

   To gain the most out of semantic mapping, actively engage students in a discussion using **questions that contain the target words**. For example, *What is the difference between* a cave *and* a cavern? *Would you like to go* spelunking? *Why, or why not?* Use yes/no questions for students with limited oral English.

Semantic Map

3. **Matrix Grid**   A **matrix grid** is a good way to quickly compare things in a category. Students write the category at the top of the first column. Below it, they list examples of items in the category. Across the top they list the attributes or key features of things in the category. Then they go through each example, deciding whether or not it has each feature they listed. A plus sign (+) indicates that it does; a minus sign (-) means that it does not. When the grid is complete, students can see at a glance how the items are similar and what makes each one unique.

5. **Denotation and Connotation Chart** In a **Denotation and Connotation Chart**, students determine the feeling that the word suggests. This can help students choose the best word when they are trying to describe something.
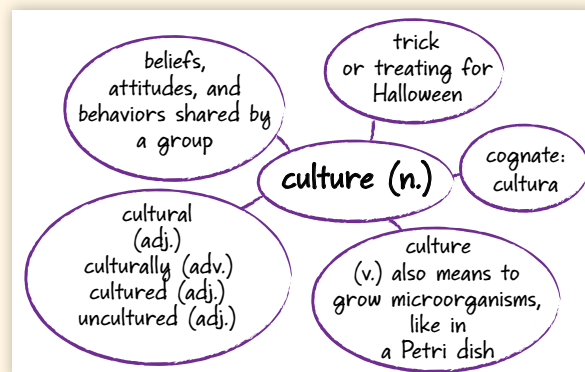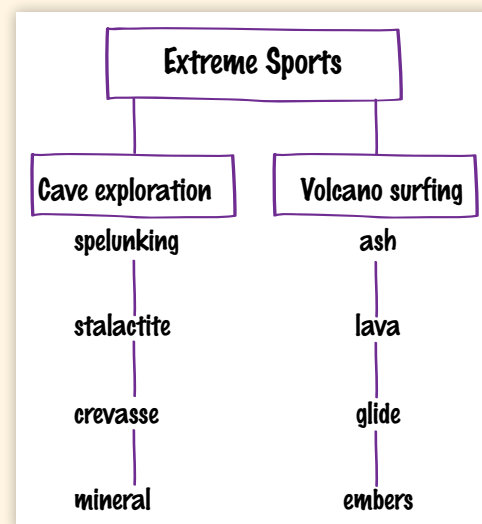
Matrix Grid

Instruments	wood body	metal body	strings	pedals
piano	+	−	+	+
guitar	+	−	+	−
vibraphone	−	+	−	+
marimba	+	−	−	−
saxophone	−	+	−	−

Denotation and Connotation Chart

Word	Denotation	Example from My Life	Connotation
steady	"not changing, constant"	when the beat in a song stays the same	◇ positive ✔ neutral ◇ negative
monotonous	"not changing; repetitious and dull"	when the beat in a song is boring	◇ positive ◇ neutral ✔ negative

Discuss Author's Word Choice

Structured discussions about an author's word choices provide students opportunities to extend their knowledge of known words, learn new words, and realize how specific words shape the meanings of texts.

1. To introduce word choice discussions to your students, first select 2 or 3 words or phrases from a passage that are especially effective in shaping meaning and tone, engaging feelings, or triggering sensory images. These terms often have strong connotative or figurative meanings.

2. After students read the passage, use the **eEdition** to display a page containing the words or phrases that you selected. Briefly describe word choice by explaining: Authors choose words to grab your attention and influence your thinking. These words suggest important ideas, positive or negative feelings, and sensory images. Identifying these words and talking about them adds to your understanding of the word and of the text that you're reading.

3. Then model how to analyze an author's choice of words. For instance, for "The Grapes of Wrath," say:

> John Steinbeck writes "A 1926 Nash sedan pulled wearily off the highway." The phrase *pulled wearily* grabbed my attention. This phrase means the car was tired. The car doesn't have feelings, of course. But the phrase makes me think the car and passengers have come a long way and they're very tired. I imagine an old, creaky car rolling slowly to the side of the road. If Steinbeck had used the words *zipped quickly* then I would expect the car and the car's passengers to be in a hurry and full of energy.

4. Display the page containing other words you identified, and have students chorally read the sentences in which they appear. Then collaboratively discuss with your students the author's choices of the particular words or phrases. Use the following questions to generate discussions about word choice:

- Why do you think the word(s) _____ is/are important?
- How does/do the word(s) _____ make you feel?
- What images does/do the word(s) _____ create for you as a reader?

5. Have pairs or small groups of students identify 2 or 3 additional noteworthy words or phrases. Then invite the pairs or groups to compare the words they identified. Display language frames to support English language learners.

6. Have students add the new words to their Vocabulary Notebooks using to Step 5 in **Vocabulary Routine 2** (PD 32). Encourage students to record the following details in their notebook entries:

- The context for the word and citation of the passage
- Why the word is important
- The feeling or image the word creates

7. Gradually release responsibility for discussing word choices. Before reading a new passage, remind students to be prepared to talk about noteworthy words. After reading, have students discuss the author's use of noteworthy terms and encourage students to add them to their Vocabulary Notebooks. Use additional language frames to promote academic discussions. Fade out the use of prompts and language frames gradually so your students independently discuss the words that authors choose.

Language Frames

Identify Words or Phrases

- I think the word(s) _____ is/are important because _____ .
- The word(s) _____ makes/make me feel _____ .
- The words _____ create images of _____ .

Language Frames

Discuss Word Choice

- The author probably chose the words _____ to make me think _____ .
- The words _____ tell me that _____ .
- The author used the words _____ because _____ .
- The words _____ made me feel positive/negative about _____ because _____ .
- The words _____ made me use my senses to _____ .
- If the author had used the word _____ instead of _____ , I would think _____ .
- The word _____ seemed like it didn't belong in the text, but it does belong because _____ .

Games and Drama

Games motivate students to be word conscious while actively manipulating and using language. Drama activities allow students to explore word meanings through a total physical response. Games are especially beneficial for English language learners since they create an authentic context for social interaction and build listening and speaking skills; pantomime and charades are ideal for students who have limited oral vocabularies. In addition to the time-honored **20 questions**, **classroom baseball**, **concentration**, and **Pictionary®**, make the following games and drama activities part of your daily vocabulary routines:

1. **Stump the Expert**   Designate an expert. A stumper presents a definition and the expert has 10 seconds to produce the term. If the expert responds accurately, the next stumper offers a challenge. This continues until the expert is stumped, or until the expert answers a set number of challenges and earns applause or a prize. The person who stumps the expert becomes the next expert.

2. **Around the World**   A student designated as the traveler moves from his or her seat and stands by a student in the next seat. Give the traveler and the challenger a definition; whoever correctly identifies the word first is the traveler and stands by the student in the next seat. A traveler who continues responding first and returns to his or her seat has successfully gone "Around the World."

3. **Whatta' Ya' Know**   Pose *yes/no* questions using two key vocabulary words. You or your students can make up the questions. The responses can be written or stated orally, and hands can be raised for *yes* and then for *no*. For instance, the following questions might be asked about words associated with volcanoes: Are **volcanoes** made of **lava**? Do **igneous** rocks come from **magma**?

4. **Multiple Key Word Skit**   Groups can work together to create and act out a skit with dialogue that includes at least five of the key words. Allow groups a few minutes of preparation time to brainstorm ways that the words relate to each other. You may wish to award points for the most original skit, the most humorous, or the most accurate use of the words' meanings.

5. **Charades**   Students can play Charades to pantomime an action or emotion associated with a key word or phrase.

   - Write out words or phrases on index cards and place them in a stack.

   - Divide students into teams; one member of a team takes a card and acts out each word or syllable of a word using only physical signals. His or her teammates must guess the word or phrase being acted out.

   - A time-keeper from the other team monitors the time, and the team with the lowest time score after a full round wins.

6. **Synonym Strings**   Have teams compete to form synonym strings. Divide the class into two teams, and assign a starter word, such as *talk*, to each team. Teams then work to come up with as many synonyms as they can, and act out the meaning of each one. For example, for the starter word *talk*, students might come up with *babble*, *blab*, *chat*, *drawl*, *intone*, *squeal*, *yell*, etc. Synonyms can be checked in a thesaurus, or against a teacher-generated list. Building synonym strings leads to distinguishing denotations / connotations and shades of meaning.

Word Wall

Materials: bulletin board; word cards or butcher paper; photographs and diagrams

Word walls present a **visual reminder** of key vocabulary throughout a unit of study. Reserve a bulletin board to display important words. The words can be shown in graphic organizers, by themselves, or with photos or diagrams that help clarify their meanings.

- Some teachers create a complete display of all the key vocabulary and refer to it throughout the unit. Other teachers prefer to add words gradually, as they come up in reading or class discussion. In either case, do some culminating activities asking students what they learned about each word.

- Many new meanings that students must learn are words that represent concrete, real things. You can create word/picture boards around certain themes and areas of study. For example, a music board might display the symbols for *sharp*, *flat*, *note*, *repeat*, and so forth, along with the words for which they stand.

- Cover a bulletin board or display a banner with acronyms that occur in your study. List the acronym and the words for which it stands. Invite volunteers to draw something that symbolizes each one. Examples of common acronyms include:

ASAP	As soon as possible	MLB	Major League Baseball
ATM	Automatic teller machine	NASCAR	National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing
BTW	By the way	NFL	National Football League
DVD	Digital Video Disk	PS	Postscript
FYI	For your information	Q&A	Question and Answer
GPA	Grade Point Average	SCUBA	Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus
ID	Identification		
LASER	Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation	VIP	Very Important Person
		WWW	World Wide Web
MC	Master of Ceremonies		

Synonym Word Wall