



# Content Vocabulary Instruction, Distilled\*

\*Distilled (di-stild') adj. 4. Separated or extracted essence

Why we need to explicitly teach vocabulary ...	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of content vocabulary helps build background knowledge.</li> <li>• Pre-teaching key vocabulary provides scaffolding for struggling learners.</li> <li>• Words at the heart of the discipline are critical for content understanding.</li> <li>• Explicit vocabulary instruction has been proven to increase student achievement and close the achievement gap.</li> <li>• Language is both the foundation of and the vehicle for learning.</li> <li>• The language a person uses indicates his/her understandings and insights about the world and his/her place in it.</li> </ul>	
What explicit vocabulary instruction is...	What it is NOT ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking students to provide explanations, descriptions and examples of the word rather than a definition.</li> <li>• Giving students multiple and varied exposures to the words.</li> <li>• Requiring students to use their own words and non-linguistic representations of the words.</li> <li>• Teaching word parts (root words, prefixes, suffixes) as a way to unlock new vocabulary.</li> <li>• Giving students multiple opportunities to “play” and interact with the words.</li> <li>• Including key academic vocabulary in the planning of any instruction.</li> <li>• Making connections between new vocabulary and students’ background knowledge.</li> <li>• Implementing a systematic plan for building the content vocabulary of your students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving randomly chosen word lists not connected to the content and context of the learning.</li> <li>• Having students memorize words in isolation.</li> <li>• Asking students to look up the definitions in the dictionary and write sentences for each word.</li> <li>• Giving students 10, 20, or some other number of words to look up each week, quizzing students on Friday, and then beginning the process again the next week.</li> </ul>

Strategies for selecting content vocabulary		
Select . . .		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. words that students will encounter frequently in the discipline/subject area</li> <li>2. words which students will encounter in their reading or need to use in their work.</li> <li>3. words that are critical for the understanding of key concepts.</li> <li>4. content words that might be frequently misunderstood.</li> <li>5. words that increase a student’s knowledge of terminology important to the content of the discipline.</li> </ol>		
Steps for planning vocabulary instruction		
<p>Make a systematic plan for the implementation of your vocabulary instruction, employing research-based best practices. For example, you might use the six-step process suggested by Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering (2005):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term.</li> <li>2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation or example in their own words.</li> <li>3. Ask student to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representing the term.</li> <li>4. Engage students periodically in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in their notebooks.</li> <li>5. Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another.</li> <li>6. Involve students periodically in games that allow them to play with terms.</li> </ol> <p>(Quoted from <i>Building Academic Vocabulary</i>, Alexandria, VA: ASCD)</p>		
Strategies for reinforcing content vocabulary		
3-2-1 \$2 summaries Headline summaries Vanity Tags Key Points Summary Word Walls Acrostics	Written conversations Think-Write-Share Word Splash One-Sentence Summary Word Sorts Frequent use of words by both teacher and student	Framed Paragraph Sentence Starters Give One-Get One Frayer Model Alphabet Game Concept/Word Map Sticky Notes