

Short guide 3: Supporting your learners to understand key words

What are you doing already?

Every time you explain the meaning of a word, draw a diagram with labels or replace a word with a simpler word, you are helping your learners to understand the words of your trade. Below are some ideas that can help you support your learners:

What does your learner need to know?

Do your learners need to:

Understand the word (reading and listening):

Meaning of words in different situations and/or

... **Use** the word (writing and speaking):

Spelling, place in a sentence, how to say it clearly, using it in the right situations, using it with the right word.

How useful are glossaries?

Glossaries are really useful if they are set up properly. Some things to think about:

- Pick words that occur many times.
- Keep your definitions short.
- Check the words in the definition are easy to understand.
- Divide glossaries into topics.
- Use them in a written text, e.g., in the margins.
- For online texts, use links that connect directly to information about the word.
- Learners can write their own glossaries.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is this an important word for my learners?
- How frequently does this word occur?
- What do your learners need to know about the word?
- What can I do to help them?
- How can learners guess the word?
- How can word parts help my learners?
- What words usually go together?
- How do I know learners understand the word?

More info: emma.mclaughlin@twoa.ac.nz

Below are some ideas you can use:

- Before your learners come across new words,
- While they are studying and meeting new words *and*
- After they have been working with the words in class:

Before:

What do learners already know?

- Brainstorms
- Labelling diagrams
- Matching words and pictures
- Pre-teach meanings
- Matching words and meanings

During:

What are you doing during the session to build words skills?

- Elicit information about a word: *What do you call this? What does this mean?*
- Learners guess in context
- In text glossaries
- Learners develop glossaries
- Word lists on the board

After:

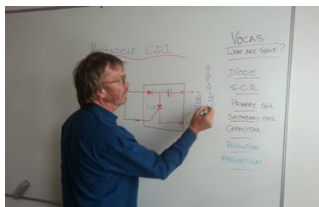
What are you doing at the end of the class?

- Recall brainstorm
- Use the words in reading or writing
- Explain the words to each other
- Self-directed tasks
- Online programmes e.g. *quizlet*

Activities – learning key words

Vocabulary list on board

As new words come up, write them on one side of the board - learners can see them and spell them; add what words they normally go with:



Vocabulary Brainstorm

Brainstorm a topic and write as many of the trade words learners need to know and use for that topic:



Traffic light

Give your learners 10 new words. Ask them to colour the words...

... they know in green

... they are not sure about, orange

... they don't in red

Learners find a learner who has their red word coloured in green and asks them to explain it. For the orange words, they can all get together and share what they know. (You can use ✓ ? or x)

Matching Activities

Learners match words that go together (on cards or online programmes like *quizlet*)

- adjustable spanner
- buff chisel
- coping saw

- plumb bob
- claw hammer
- torque wrench

Labels in the workshop

Number the equipment and learners write down the names of each one and what it is used for or ask learners to label equipment:



Guessing meaning in context

Help your learners guess the meanings of words in context and save time for them looking up words:

1. Does the word look like one they know?
2. What words are next to it?
3. Where is it in the sentence?
4. What is the topic of the sentence?
5. What is the topic of that section?
6. What is the topic of the text overall?
7. Replace this word with one they already know to see if their guess is correct.

Word parts

These can be helpful as when they are added to a word, they change its meaning:

- Un / mis (not)
- Re (again)
- Pre (before)
- Inter (between)

If your learners already know words, like stress and mix, learning **pre** helps them understand and use **pre**stressed and **pre**mixed. They can break words down to understand them. Google *most commonly used prefixes* to help you find useful ones.