

Short guide 7: Developing glossaries

Making glossaries work

What are you doing already?

Every time you or your learners write down words and their meanings, you are building glossaries. Glossaries are a place we can go to check the meaning of a word. However, there is a range of ways to develop them and different information you can include, depending on your learners and what they need to do with the word.

Why are they important?

Do your learners need to:

understand the word (reading and listening)?
AND / OR

use the word (writing and speaking)?

If they need to understand or use certain words, especially if they are used a lot in your area, a good starting point is to develop glossaries.

What do you need to think about?

Glossaries are really useful if they are set up well:

- Pick words that occur many times
- Think about which words learners find challenging
- Keep your lists short
- Keep the definitions simple
- Ask your learners what they need to know

What do your learners need to know?

Meaning

Whether your learners have to use a word or just understand it when they see it or hear it, they will need to know the meaning:

building envelope - outside walls of a building

Using it in a sentence

Your learners may need to know where it goes in a sentence, what goes before it, what goes after it
'engage a clutch'

engage is what you do

clutch is the thing

How to spell it

Glossaries can be useful for learners to use to check the spelling. They will need to know this if they want to use it in their writing or recognise it when they see it written down.

Words it usually goes with

It can really help learners to use words if they know what words usually go together:

cross section / spark plug / down pipe

Other words with a similar meaning

Knowing other words that have similar meanings can help learners understand and use a greater range of words:

cut / chop / slice

Other family words

Once learners know one word, it is helpful if they also can understand and use related words:

stress / prestressed / stressful

What could you put in your glossary? Have a look at some examples below for what you could include:

Word	Meaning	Sentence	Words it goes with	Synonyms	Family words
adjust	Change something	We need to adjust the wheels.	<u>adjust</u> a clutch <u>adjust</u> settings	alter change	adjustment readjust
coolant	Something that makes things colder - reduces heat	Lower the temperature with coolant.	engine coolant use coolant check coolant level of coolant	-	cool cooling

How you can use and develop glossaries with your learners:

Learners can build their own glossaries

Some tutors help their learners to build their own glossaries. Give them templates such as blank tables or partly filled out glossaries to complete.

Benefits: Cuts down on prep time.

Build a central online dictionary

In plumbing, one of the tutors has developed an online dictionary. This is a 'go to' for any plumbing words that focuses on the meanings.

Benefits: learners only have one place to go.

Organise words into topics

One of the automotive tutors has made topic based lists. He gives these to the learners each week and they add sentences, pictures or meanings.

Benefits: breaks the words down into useable topics.

Use pictures

Sometimes, the easiest way to explain something is with pictures. Glossaries can include pictures or if it is an electronic glossary, a link to a range of pictures or diagrams.

Benefits: a quick way to understanding.

Put words next to the text they are reading

Using glossaries in the text the learners are actually reading can be really helpful. You can put meanings at the bottom of a page or in the margin by the line where the word appears.

Benefits: learners have the meaning as they read.

On the board as you teach

A really good habit to get into is to develop glossaries as you teach. Writing a list down the side of the board of words that come up in a lesson, along with the meanings can help your learners.

Benefits: supports learners understanding as you teach and cuts down on prep time.

Bite size chunks

Some tutors give their learners 5 new words for that topic for that week. Learners then research that word and each week share different information with their class: meaning, picture, sentence etc

Benefits: builds learners knowledge in manageable chunks and no prep.

Links to words in texts

Some tutors add links to any texts learners are reading on line. The links take the learners to an online glossary where they can find information about the word as they meet it in the text.

Benefits: learners have the meanings as they meet the words.