

# Using Internet Resources to Improve Vocabulary Knowledge

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## Abstract

In recent years, the importance of English language students developing their vocabulary knowledge has come to be recognized. The Internet has a great many resources for the development of vocabulary knowledge. In this paper, I identify types of resources, categorize them, and explain how they can be used. These resources have been divided into two broad categories, resources for teachers and resources for students, and then further divided into subcategories. The subcategories of resources for teachers include general resources; worksheets, lesson plans, and teaching ideas; games and puzzles; vocabulary learning strategies; vocabulary notebooks; and vocabulary frequency resources. The subcategories of resources for students include interactive activities and online dictionaries.

## Introduction

Learning vocabulary is an important aspect of language learning which in the past has been neglected. In recent years, there has been a greater understanding of the importance of vocabulary learning to the process of language learning (Lightbown 2010).

Nation (1994) identified five components of vocabulary learning:

1. Meeting new vocabulary for the first time
2. Establishing previously met vocabulary

3. Enriching previously met vocabulary
4. Developing vocabulary strategies
5. Developing fluency with known vocabulary

The Internet has resources for each of these elements of vocabulary teaching and learning, both for students and teachers. Most of these resources are free. They can be used by teachers to develop lessons or by students to study independently, or sometimes by both.

In this paper, I will give examples of the types of resources that are available in two categories: classroom resources for teachers and resources for students, along with suggestions for how they can be used. These categories are further subdivided, although some of the websites include a variety of resources and do not fit neatly into one category. In such cases, I have tried to explain what is included on the webpage.

## Resources

### **Classroom Resources for Teachers**

Teachers can find resources on the Internet that they can either use directly in the classroom or that they can adapt to their particular classes.

*General resources.* These webpages have a variety of resources that might be useful either for the teacher in the classroom or for students who are working independently.

Compleat Lexical Tutor (<http://www.lextutor.ca/>). This site has tests for students' level of vocabulary which can either be printed out or used interactively online. It also has lists of words at various levels (including the Academic Word List and the University Word List) which students can click on to hear pronounced or to find a list of examples of the usage of the word from a corpus. There is a feature called a hypertext builder which allows a text be entered and linked to a concordancer and a text-to-speech program. (There is also a link to a paper with a study of the use of such "resource-assisted readings.") "Grouplex" is a community-developed list of useful words with sample sentences and definitions which can be used as the basis for a quizzes. In addition to the features of the Tutorial section, there are various features that can be used for research.

Vocabulary.com (<http://www.vocabulary.com/>). This site has links to a great many useful vocabulary websites.

Vocabulary Teaching Ideas for ESL Teachers (<http://www.eslflow.com/vocabularylessonplans.html>). This site has links to a large number of ideas for teaching vocabulary, plus exercises to help students with confusing words, topical vocabulary lists, suggestions for vocabulary word "maps" and vocabulary notebooks, and vocabulary games.

*Lesson Plans, Worksheets, and Teaching Ideas.* Some websites provide lesson plans, worksheets, or teaching ideas which teachers

can use directly or adapt to their particular situations. Worksheets can be used in class or as homework assignments. These are generally organized by content area or part of speech, so teachers can find worksheets with vocabulary words that are appropriate to supplement their lessons. Interactive exercises can be used in the classroom if the class is held in a computer lab or can be assigned as homework if it is not.

ESL Tower (<http://www.esltower.com/vocabularyteachers.html>). There are great many vocabulary worksheets on this website for teachers to print out; organized by part of speech, content area, affix, etc.

Idioms (<http://www.rong-chang.com/idioms.htm>). This site contains a list of links to resources related to idioms and teaching idioms. The list includes dictionaries of idioms and slang, exercises, and topical lists of idioms.

ESL Teacher Lesson Plans & Worksheets (<http://www.usingenglish.com/teachers/lesson-plans/>). This site includes more than 150 worksheets in the pdf format in three levels of difficulty, some with answers and teachers' notes.

Language Arts: Vocabulary (<http://www.instructorweb.com/resources/vocabulary.asp>). Teachers can use these ideas for games and other vocabulary activities.

Vocabulary lesson plans: American English (<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=59778>). This site has theme-based vocabulary lessons, with notes for teachers.

Free Printables for Teachers-Worksheets (<http://www.mes-english.com/worksheets/flashcards/>). Teachers can use this online software to make vocabulary worksheets in a variety of formats and on a variety of subjects. The formats include matching a picture with the corresponding vocabulary word, writing the word that corresponds with the picture, various games, and writing something describing the picture. There are also suggestions for using the worksheets.

Printable and Interactive ESL Vocabulary Exercises (<http://www.esl-galaxy.com/vocabularysheets.html>). The printable sections include an extensive collection of vocabulary development activities and exercises arranged in categories (holidays, food, festivals, jobs and occupations, sickness, etc.). The interactive section, which can be given to students as homework if you are not teaching in a computer lab, includes games and other activities for self-study.

Printable English Vocabulary Worksheets (<http://www.esltower.com/vocabularyteachers.html>). This is collection of worksheets for vocabulary lessons related to a wide variety of topics, as well as some related to phrasal verbs and affixes.

Vocabulary Games (Interactive) (<http://www.englishcorner.vacau>

com/vocabulary/vocabulary.html#games) and Vocabulary Games (Paper) (<http://www.englishcorner.vacau.com/vocabulary/vocabulary.html#paper>). These are vocabulary games that can be played online or offline. The paper games use academic vocabulary.

Vocabulary Lesson Ideas ([http://www.proteacher.org/c/694\\_Vocabulary\\_Lesson\\_Ideas.html](http://www.proteacher.org/c/694_Vocabulary_Lesson_Ideas.html)). This site has long list of vocabulary activities, mainly game-type activities, contributed by teachers.

Spelling Dictionaries and Word Study Notebook ([http://www.proteacher.org/a/40068\\_Word\\_Study\\_Notebooks.html](http://www.proteacher.org/a/40068_Word_Study_Notebooks.html)). This site includes teacher's ideas for using vocabulary notebooks.

Idioms (<http://www.englishcorner.vacau.com/idioms/idioms.html>). Teachers can use these exercises and games for teaching idioms, phrasal verbs, slang, similes, etc.

Vocabulary Size Test (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/staff/Publications/paul-nation/vocabulary-size-test.pdf>). This is a 14-level test of vocabulary size. Each level includes 1000 words, from which 10 test questions are drawn.

*Vocabulary Games and Puzzles.* Games and puzzles can be useful in introducing or reinforcing vocabulary. They can be used, for example, as a warm-up activity, as a pre-reading or pre-listening activity to introduce the vocabulary in a passage, or as a review

of vocabulary already covered. A great many websites have games and puzzles for language teaching. Some are pre-made and can be used as they are; others can be used to make puzzles or games customized for a particular class. For example, a teacher can use the vocabulary that students have learned in a particular lesson to make a crossword puzzle, either with written clues or pictures, to review the vocabulary after the lesson. Students particularly seem to enjoy doing games competitively — for example, teams of students trying to finish the crossword puzzle fastest.

Learning Vocabulary Fun (<http://www.vocabulary.co.il/>). This website has wide variety of vocabulary related games, including word search, crossword puzzles, word matching games, and unscrambling words.

Crossword Puzzle Games-Create a Crossword Puzzle (<http://www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com/create.html>). Teachers can enter up to 20 words and hints, and the program makes a crossword puzzle.

Free Online Puzzle Maker (<http://www.puzzle-maker.com/>). Teachers can make crossword puzzles or word search puzzles.

Create a Crossword Puzzle (<http://www.crosswordpuzzlegames.com/create.html>). Users can enter words and hints and get a printable crossword puzzle.

ESL Galaxy (<http://www.esl-galaxy.com/vocabularysheets.html>).

These are puzzles and exercises that teachers can print out, organized by level.

Discovery Education (<http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>). This is a site where users can make a variety of types of puzzles.

Word Search (<http://www.armoredpenguin.com/wordsearch/>). Users can create word search puzzles or choose puzzles from an archive.

Tools for Educators: Custom Worksheets, Games, and Other Resources (<http://www.toolsforeducators.com/>). While this page is not primarily for vocabulary learning, many of the resources available here can be used to develop vocabulary-related activities for classes. They include a word search maker, a crossword puzzle maker, a dice maker (images and/or text can be printed on the six-sided dice and used for games), a board game maker with images and/or text, a bingo card maker with images and/or texts, and a handout maker for different subject areas on which the teacher can customize with images and text.

*Vocabulary Learning Strategies.* It is important not just to teach students vocabulary but to help them learn how to learn vocabulary. Papers and articles online provide information and advice about vocabulary learning strategies. These can suggest strategies that teacher may use as a basis for in-class activities or homework assignments. In addition, teachers can present a variety of strategies to students and have students choose the strategies



that seem appropriate for them.

How to Increase Specific Vocabulary (<http://esl.about.com/library/howto/htvocab.htm>). This website suggests a procedure to improve vocabulary in a specific area.

Vocabulary charts (<http://esl.about.com/library/lessons/blvocabtrees.htm>). This is a lesson plan for teaching students to use vocabulary charts/trees as a strategy. (A similar lesson plan with a different type of example can be found at [http://esl.about.com/cs/teachingtechnique/a/l\\_wordpart.htm](http://esl.about.com/cs/teachingtechnique/a/l_wordpart.htm).)

English Vocabulary Learning Advice Sheets from the Language Center at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. These online leaflets address strategies for learning and remembering vocabulary in a variety of situations. The introductory leaflet can be found at <http://lc.ust.hk/~sac/advice/english/vocabulary/V1.htm>, and in addition, the following are useful leaflets.

Learning Vocabulary from Lists/Textbooks (<http://lc.ust.hk/~sac/advice/english/vocabulary/V6.htm>). This website had advice for using lists or textbooks to learn vocabulary, including how to find lists and how to learn the vocabulary from them.

Learning Vocabulary by Reading or Listening (<http://lc.ust.hk/~sac/advice/english/vocabulary/V7.htm>). This website has suggestions

for learning vocabulary through normal reading and listening.

Organizing Your Vocabulary Learning (<http://lc.ust.hk/~sac/advice/english/vocabulary/V3.htm>). Here are suggestions for organizing vocabulary words effectively so they can be learned more efficiently.

Evaluating Your Vocabulary Learning (<http://lc.ust.hk/~sac/advice/english/vocabulary/V5.htm>). This site includes suggestions that students can use to evaluate the progress they are making in learning vocabulary.

Remembering Vocabulary (<http://lc.ust.hk/~sac/advice/english/vocabulary/V4.htm>). This website gives concrete advice about strategies for learning vocabulary. It would be suitable to adapt as a handout for students to introduce them to a wide variety of vocabulary learning strategies.

*Vocabulary Notebooks.* Students often have vocabulary learning notebooks that are merely random lists of words with their translations. However, vocabulary learning notebooks can be used in more effective ways. Various webpages have suggestions for how to do this.

A template for a vocabulary notebook page (<http://www.eslflow.com/Notebook.pdf>). This template can be printed out and used as pages for a vocabulary notebook.

Vocabulary Notebooks (<https://www.msu.edu/user/weltigma/094vocabnotebook.html>). Teachers can give students these suggestions for what to include in a vocabulary learning notebook.

Creating Vocabulary Notebooks (<http://heartofwisdom.com/Guide/Vocabulary.pdf>). This site has suggestions for making a vocabulary learning notebook.

Word Surfing Notebook (<http://wordsurfing.co.uk/resources/WORDSURFING-VOCABULARY-NOTEBOOK.pdf>). This is a “notebook” that can be printed out and bound together with a explanation of how to do “word surfing” (a strategy using a notebook to learn vocabulary by recycling it, using it in context etc.) and pages for the student to record words to learn.

*Word Lists and Word Frequency Resources.* When making or using materials, it is useful for teachers to have guidelines as to what works are likely to be difficult for students and therefore what words students may have to be taught. Word lists of various types are useful for this purpose. It is also useful for teachers to have lists of words that are useful in academia in general and in various fields, lists of irregular verbs, etc. Such lists are available online.

Common Irregular Verbs (<http://www.rong-chang.com/irregularverbs.htm>). This is a list of common irregular verbs in alphabetical order with their simple past and participle forms and

links to their dictionary definitions.

Countable Nouns-Irregular Plurals ([http://www.rong-chang.com/irregular\\_plurals.htm](http://www.rong-chang.com/irregular_plurals.htm)). This is a list of irregular plurals.

English Vocabulary Word Lists (<http://www.manythings.org/vocabulary/lists/b/>). This site provides sets of word lists, including beginning word lists (colors, days of the week, months, etc.), basic vocabulary (adjectives for people, cooking, family members, geography, transportation), business vocabulary, and large or comprehensive vocabulary lists (3000 most frequent words in American English, a core vocabulary of more than 20,000 words, etc.). In some cases, there are choices of “Things you can do with these words,” which includes Hangman, Guess the word, and Concentration that make use of the words on the list. Some of these can be played competitively with other students. The games themselves can be found at <http://www.manythings.org/vocabulary/>.

JACET 8000 Word List. The JACET 8000 word list is a very important and useful tool for English language teachers. It was developed based on the British National Corpus (a 100 million-word corpus that includes different type of spoken and written language) and adjusted to reflect Japanese students’ English vocabulary. It is divided into eight levels of 1000 words each. Depending on the level of vocabulary of your students, you can find out what words in a particular text might give students

problems. There are two websites where teachers can use the JACET 8000-word list.

JACET 8000 Level Marker (<http://www.tcp-ip.or.jp/~shim/J8LevelMarker/j8lm.cgi>). On this website, you can enter a passage and get a result showing the passage with the levels of the words in a text color-coded and with their level identified with a number. This result can be used as a guideline as to which words in a text students may need to be taught.

V8an-Revised web edition (<http://www.tcp-ip.or.jp/~shim/j8web/j8web.cgi>). On this website, you enter a text and submit it for analysis. The results include a chart of types and tokens at each of the levels, plus words not on the list, contractions, non-words, and proper nouns, along with the type/token ratio. This can be used to give you an idea of whether a text may have too many unknown words for your students. It also has a list of words and their frequency at each of the eight levels, plus the other words, which will help you interpret the chart and which can be used to decide which words might need to be taught.

Academic Vocabulary (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/>). The Academic Word List is a list developed to help students of English learn useful academic words. It is divided into ten sublists based on frequency. The word list is based on a corpus of 3.5 million words made up of academic texts from arts, commerce, law, and science. (Detailed information about the list

and how it was developed can be found at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/information.aspx>) The Academic Vocabulary website has the ten sublists, a highlighter and gapmaker, and exercises based on the word list. Using the highlighter, teachers can enter a text and the words on the Academic Word List will be highlighted. The gapmaker can be used to turn a text into a cloze exercise with gaps for words from the list.

*Flashcards.* There are also websites with printable flashcards, with pictures, which students can use in class as part of their classroom activities or on their own to learn words and test themselves on what they have learned. Some of these are arranged by some principle such as subject, and others help with a particular type of word, such as irregular verbs.

Free ESL Flashcards (<http://www.eslflashcards.com/>). This site has printable flashcards on a variety of subjects.

Irregular Verbs Flashcards ([http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregular\\_verb\\_flashcards.html](http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregular_verb_flashcards.html)). This site has online flash cards for 100 irregular verbs.

Free Printables for Teachers Flashcards (<http://www.mes-english.com/flashcards.php>). This website provides a huge collection of printable flashcards, categorized by topic (chores, body parts, daily routines/activities, rooms in the house, etc.) and parts of speech

(adjectives, plural nouns, passive verbs, prepositions, questions words, etc.). The page also has suggestions for how the teacher can use the flash cards to teach different grammar points along with vocabulary and other suggestions for how to use flashcards.

*Teaching Collocations.* Collocations are words that tend to occur together. For example, the word *strong* is often used to modify the word *coffee*, but the word *heavy* is not, and you would say, “I did my homework,” but not “I made my homework.” In order to be able to use words that they have learned, students need to know the collocations in which they commonly occur. There are webpages which help teachers introduce collocations and help students learn to be aware of them.

“Helping ESL Learners to Minimize Collocational Errors” (<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Taiwo-Collocation.html>). This paper explains what collocations are, why they are important, and gives suggestions for making students more aware of collocations and how to use them.

Collocations Used with Miss, Get, Do, and Make ([http://esl.about.com/library/vocabulary/blcollocation\\_5.htm](http://esl.about.com/library/vocabulary/blcollocation_5.htm)). This is a quiz for collocations with *miss*, *get*, *do*, and *make*, with a link to quizzes for collocations for other very common words.

“Teaching ESL Vocabulary” ([www.uniroma2.it/didattica/englishSSIS/deposito/Lesson\\_2.ppt](http://www.uniroma2.it/didattica/englishSSIS/deposito/Lesson_2.ppt)). This site has the PowerPoint

slides for a presentation on collocations, including what collocations are, what types there are, and how to teach them.

Matching and Collocation Worksheets (<http://www.esl-galaxy.com/collocation.html>). This site has beginning and intermediate worksheets on collocations.

Collocations (<http://www.englishcorner.vacau.com/vocabulary/vocabulary.html#colls>). This site includes exercises related to adjective-noun collocations, academic collocations, and common collocations.

### **Resources for Students**

In addition to the sites listed above, there are sites that students can use independently.

*Interactive Activities.* Many sites have interactive activities for students, such as quizzes and puzzles, which they can do online.

LanguageGuide.org English (<http://www.languageguide.org/english/>). This is a webpage with pictures in a variety of categories (for example, the body, family, clothing, food, animals, art). Learners can move the mouse over pictures, hear the English word spoken, and see it displayed on the screen.

Irregular verbs ([http://www.rong-chang.com/irregular\\_verbs\\_ex.htm](http://www.rong-chang.com/irregular_verbs_ex.htm)). These are interactive practice exercises for irregular verbs, presenting sentences with blanks and hints if requested.



Paint by Idioms (<http://www.funbrain.com/idioms/>). This is a game for learning idioms.

Eye on Idioms (<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/idioms/>). These exercises are sentences which students complete from a list of idioms.

Vocabulary is Fun (<http://www.vocabulary.co.il/>). This is a large and useful site with crossword and word search puzzles, vocabulary quizzes on 16 topics (business and money, movies, opposites and synonyms, etc.), a matching game, and so on.

Vocabulary Games ([http://eslbears.homestead.com/Contact\\_Info.html](http://eslbears.homestead.com/Contact_Info.html)). This website contains large collection of games and links to games related to vocabulary. The games include Hangman, crosswords, and geography games.

Vocabulary Practice with Pictures (<http://eslbears.homestead.com/Card.html>). This site provides links to vocabulary practice exercises and activities, some of which make use of pictures, on various topics including colors, opposites, and numbers.

English Vocabulary Games with Pictures (<http://www.manythings.org/lulu/>). This is a collection of games on various topics, including animals, sports, and houses and parts of speech.

Academic Vocabulary Quizzes (<http://www.eslgold.com/vocabulary/>

academic\_quiz.html). This site has vocabulary quizzes — matching and odd one out.

Vocabulary Quizzes (<http://www.eslgold.com/vocabulary/quizzes.html>). This is a very large collection of vocabulary quizzes arranged by level of difficulty, including low beginning (family, group nouns, colors, adverbs that are often confused, and so on), high beginning (jobs, nationalities, opposites, school subjects, and so on), low intermediate (food, transportation, opposites, problem words, and so on), high intermediate (opposites, plants and animals, baby animals, What is it used for?, and so on), and advanced (basic 2000 words and similar or opposite words).

*Online dictionaries.* The following are dictionaries that students can consult online. There are a wide variety of dictionary sites online, and I am including only a few that I have found useful.

Dictionary.com (<http://www.dictionary.com>). This site combines a variety of dictionaries with a thesaurus, an encyclopedia, and a translator.

Cambridge Dictionaries Online (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>). On this site, students can search the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, as well as dictionaries of phrasal verbs, idioms, and American English.

Online Etymological Dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com/>). This

searchable or browsable dictionary lists words with an explanation of where they came from and when they were first used.

### Conclusion

With a nearly unlimited number of websites dealing with different aspects vocabulary language learning, an exhaustive list of sites is impossible. However, the sites listed in this paper should give readers an idea of what types of sites are available and where to find some of the resources of each type.

### References

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