



Forum: Common English Questions

Topic:

Subject: Re:

Posted by: buddy

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Improving Active Vocabulary

Active vocabulary is used to express our thoughts and ideas whereas passive vocabulary is used to understand and comprehend what we read from context clues and inferences.

You can develop a personalized list of words you want to learn to use, perhaps add just one or two each day. Here are seven steps for improving your active vocabulary.

1. Find new words in context

Be alert for "good" words, they can be found everywhere: television, newspapers, magazines, textbooks, lectures, conversations, etc. Get out of your rut and deliberately expose yourself to new environments, new experiences or new books. Read parts of magazines and newspapers you normally skip. Try joining in on classmates' discussions.

2. Carry a pen and a notebook

Keep a small notebook or note cards handy at all times and jot down new words with their contexts as you find them. You can look them up and learn all about them later.

3. Personalize your dictionary

Every time you have to look up a word in your dictionary, mark a small dot or date in the margin beside the word. If you do this regularly, it will become a record of words you have needed. When you have looked up a word three times, it's time for that word to become a part of your active vocabulary. Give it special attentions until you are comfortable using it.

4. Personalize your published word list

This only applies if you decide to use a published word list. First, mark out all the words that you have never seen before and all the words you already use. Those left will be the vaguely familiar words you have seen before and may need to see again at some time in the future.

5. Use and reinforce a few new words every day

It has been estimated that you must use a new word ten times before it becomes "yours" and you feel comfortable using it.

6. Make flash cards

Write the word and sentence (context) in which you found it on the front of the card; write the definitions and another sentence which is meaningful to you on the back. Look through the cards (both back and front) and test yourself at odd moments during the day (while standing in the grocery store line, doing mindless chores or waiting between classes)

7. Read often and regularly

The best way to experience new words and become comfortable with them is to see how other

skilled writers use them. Read from a variety of subjects, authors, and publications.

Improving Passive Vocabulary

Passive vocabulary is used to understand and comprehend what we read from context clues and inferences, whereas Active vocabulary is used to express our thoughts and ideas.

You can easily develop a personalized list of words you want to learn to use, maybe Just one or two each day.

Here are four steps for improving your passive vocabulary:

1. Become familiar with common word parts

Common word parts include prefixes, roots/stems, and suffixes. Becoming familiar with these parts will enhance your chances of making better educated guesses about the meanings of unknown words you hear and read. A bound word part is one that is not an independent word.

This part can not stand alone in a sentence. An unbound word part is one that is an independent word. This word part can stand alone in a sentence.

Prefix - A bound form, one that is not an independent word, placed before another word or bound form to change its meaning. Prefixes include be, counter, dis, hyper, ad, sub, anti, pre, pro, etc.

Roots/Stem - The part of the word around the prefix and suffix. It can be bound and unbound.

Suffix - A bound form added to the end of a word or another bound form. Inflectional suffixes indicate such meanings as "plural" or "past tense". Derivational suffixes usually change the part-of-speech category of the words to which they are attached. Suffixes include ly, ble, ize, ise, yse, yze, our, ic, ac, etc.

2. Use clues in the context

Use clues in the context to help you guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. In other words, use what you already know. Is the word similar to one you already know? There are fewer than 100 major prefixes, which, alone with the context clues, help you to infer meaning from unfamiliar words.

3. Look for examples to illustrate an unfamiliar word

Are there details later in the paragraph, which reflect the meaning of the unknown word?

4. Try

You should perform all of the above steps before interrupting your concentration for a trip to the dictionary. When you do use a dictionary, take particular care to locate a definition appropriate to the context in which you found the word.

source: Sorry, it completely slipped my mind.