

Whole-school vocabulary planning pack

Choose, teach and revisit the words learners need in your curriculum. Use this pack with a phase, subject team or small group of colleagues.

Start with one forthcoming unit and up to five words. Include essential subject terms and words whose meaning changes between subjects.

Team or phase

Forthcoming unit

A 15-minute staff meeting

2 min

Choose the words

Name the unit. Select up to five words needed for the next lessons.

4 min

Compare meanings

Check the meaning in each subject. Note familiar words used in a new way.

6 min

Plan the teaching

Complete one example together. Choose a definition, examples and a meaningful use.

3 min

Agree the review

Set a review date in two weeks. Decide which anonymised learner work to bring.

Leave with a clear next step

A short word list, a teaching plan and a review date. Use page 2 to compare meanings, page 3 to select words, page 4 to clarify a concept and page 5 to plan use over time.

Who will coordinate the review?

Review date, two weeks from now

Evidence and practical choices

EEF guidance informs curriculum word selection, subject meanings, explicit teaching and repeated use [1, 2]. The 15-minute meeting, five-word starting list and two-week review are our flexible planning choices, not EEF requirements. Adjust them to your curriculum and learners.

The EEF report is secondary guidance. The primary blog illustrates a primary application. Choose age-appropriate words, examples and tasks. See page 6 for linked sources and origins.

02 / 06 COMPLETED WORD MAP

Map the meaning in each subject

The same word can carry different meanings. Teach the meaning required by the subject and the sentence.

power

Science: physics

Energy transferred per second.

In a sentence

A 60 W lamp transfers 60 joules of energy each second.

Here, power is a rate of energy transfer.

power

History

The ability to influence decisions or actions.

In a sentence

The monarch's power was limited by Parliament.

Here, power concerns authority and influence.

volume

Mathematics

The space occupied by a three-dimensional shape.

In a sentence

The cuboid has a volume of 24 cubic centimetres.

Here, volume measures three-dimensional space.

volume

Music

How loud or quiet a sound is.

In a sentence

Play the phrase at a lower volume.

Here, volume concerns the loudness of a sound.

Try the comparison with learners

Show two sentences containing the same word. Ask which meaning applies in each sentence. Learners can point to a definition, draw the meaning or explain it.

Which word will your team compare?

These are original illustrative planning examples. Select examples that fit the age, curriculum and subject knowledge of your learners.

03 / 06 BLANK CURRICULUM WORD MAP

Choose up to five curriculum words

Select words learners need to understand a forthcoming lesson or unit. Record the meaning in context before deciding how to teach it.

Tier 2 words are useful across several contexts, such as compare. Tier 3 words name specialist concepts, such as photosynthesis. These are planning guides, not fixed labels. Choose words for this unit and these learners. Essential subject terms may need teaching first.

1	Word	Subject or unit
	Meaning in this context	
	Example sentence	
	First teaching: _____	Review: _____
2	Word	Subject or unit
	Meaning in this context	
	Example sentence	
	First teaching: _____	Review: _____
3	Word	Subject or unit
	Meaning in this context	
	Example sentence	
	First teaching: _____	Review: _____
4	Word	Subject or unit
	Meaning in this context	
	Example sentence	
	First teaching: _____	Review: _____
5	Word	Subject or unit
	Meaning in this context	
	Example sentence	
	First teaching: _____	Review: _____

Use the Frayer Model to clarify a word

Place the word and subject context at the centre. Add a definition, essential characteristics, examples and non-examples. Choose a concept whose boundaries are useful to discuss.

Worked example: solid in science

Definition

A state of matter with a fixed shape and volume under the stated conditions.

Essential characteristics

Keeps its own shape and occupies a fixed volume under the stated conditions.

Examples

An ice cube below its melting point; a rock at room temperature.

Non-examples

Liquid water at room temperature; air. Neither has its own fixed shape.

Complete your model

Definition	Essential characteristics	
Your word and subject context		
Examples		

Transfer task: give a new case. Ask learners whether it is an example and which characteristic supports their decision.

05 / 06 VOCABULARY TEACHING AND REVISIT PLANNER

Plan teaching, use and review

This original Structural Learning planner uses the Select, Teach, Activate, Review sequence described by Word Aware authors Stephen Parsons and Anna Branagan. It is not an official Word Aware worksheet.

Select

Which word is needed for the unit? What must learners understand about it?

Word and subject context

Teach

Give a clear meaning. Model it in a sentence. Use examples and non-examples where they clarify the concept.

Meaning, example and non-example

Activate

Plan a task that uses the word in context. Let learners point, draw, write or explain when that fits the learning aim.

Task and response route

Review

Return to the word in a later lesson. Use a new example or context to check the meaning.

Review date and check

Keep the task tied to the meaning

Copying a definition is a starting point. Ask learners to use the meaning to sort, compare, choose, draw or explain something in the current lesson.

Source: Parsons and Branagan, Teaching Vocabulary - getting started (2017)

Review the learning and plan the next step

Bring anonymised learner work or brief teaching notes from the planned lessons. Use it to decide which meanings need another example or explanation.

Team or phase

Review date

Record what the work shows

Describe the response in this task. A copied definition or confident answer alone does not show whether a learner can apply the meaning in a new context.

Word and context	Meaning shown or still incomplete	Next teaching action

Next review date and coordinator

Sources, origins and scope

Based upon the evidence from the EEF. These are original Structural Learning templates and illustrative examples. The sources below explain the teaching principles and framework origins.

- [1] EEF / Butlin (2024): Sowing the seeds of disciplinary literacy. Primary example.
- [2] EEF: Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools, recommendations 1-2, pp. 8-13.
- [3] STAR: Parsons and Branagan (2017), adapted from Blachowicz and Fisher (2010).
- [4] Tiers: Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2013), Bringing Words to Life, chapter 2.
- [5] Frayer: IRIS (2012), modern adaptation of Frayer, Fredrick and Klausmeier (1969).

Read the four supporting Structural Learning guides

- Vocabulary across subjects
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary
- The Frayer Model
- Word Aware and the STAR approach