



## English Vocabulary

You will need to develop your vocabulary throughout your studies. Some of this development may happen naturally the more you read.

However, there are some strategies you can put in place to ensure that you learn new words and phrases most effectively. Below are 5 strategies.

### 1. Use context cues

First, try to work out the meaning of an unfamiliar word or phrase from its context. Translation apps and dictionaries can be very useful, but be careful: they can't understand the context of the words you're looking for and can give you incorrect or misleading results.

If you become reliant on translation apps you may start to look up words you already understand, 'just in case'. You'll waste time and lose confidence.

If you do want to use a dictionary, make sure you have an English-English dictionary (also called a thesaurus), which will give you definitions, and often also synonyms for the word you are looking for. Using a thesaurus will help you learn to think in English.

## 2. Keep a learning journal

Collect new words and expressions in a notebook, and try using them when you speak and write.

Pay attention to context and formality. Some words and phrases will only come up in very specific situations and can feel out of place elsewhere.

## 3. Review often

When you learn new words and expressions try to use them regularly.

Write them out in sentences, say them out loud to practice pronunciation, and imagine scenarios where you could use them.

## 4. Find connections

Visualise your vocabulary and find connections between words and phrases.

Create mind maps and charts of new words and phrases, and connect and compare them to other words with similar sounds, meanings and spellings.

Pay attention to related words, word variants and collocations, or words that often appear together.

## 5. Study glossaries

Glossaries are lists of subject-specific words with their definitions. Professional associations, government agencies and journals often have lists of specialist terms you can study proactively. Some examples are linked below.

- Statistical concepts by [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).
- Printmaking terms by [National Gallery of Australia](#).
- Governance terms by [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency](#).

You can find glossaries via other online sources as well, such as Wikipedia. Make sure you verify the information: Wikipedia should never be the last place you look, but it can be a good place to start.

Being systematic and applying practical strategies to build your vocabulary will help you develop skills and confidence across all language areas: reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking.