

Embedding and Vocabulary: a resource for ACE tutors



Embedding and Vocabulary introduces strategies that will help ACE tutors to teach new vocabulary to learners — including specialist or technical terms. It gives tutors ideas for **embedding** vocabulary learning into ACE courses. Learners need to learn and use new vocabulary as part of becoming proficient in a new subject area.

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What do learners need to be able to do to learn new words?

All subjects have their own technical vocabulary, specialist words, language and jargon. Think about first aid terms — such as temperature, injury, consciousness, treatment, medical, respiration, emergency, oral, intravenous, hydration. Learners need to hear and understand a new word, read the word, write the word, say the word and use it in conversation with others as part of learning about the subject.

How can tutors help learners to understand and use new vocabulary?

If a person has never heard a word, they won't be able to use it, read it, or write it; therefore, tutors need to teach vocabulary deliberately. They need to show learners effective ways of learning and using new words.

This resource has four areas of focus that are important for tutors: pre-teaching vocabulary; building learners' abilities to use and recognise a word in speech; helping learners recognise important root words related to their particular subject; and creating word maps to make connections between new and known words and concepts.

Strategy 1: Pre-teaching new vocabulary

Tutors can pre-teach vocabulary — making sure learners become familiar with the words of the subject **before** they start learning the subject. In this way the learner can focus on the words and meanings first and then experience them within their subject. Teaching new terms first helps learners understand the new subject more quickly. If a subject is completely new it is important to pre-teach some vocabulary.

Pre-teaching vocabulary is particularly useful for:

- high frequency specialist words
- technical words that learners already know but that have a specific meaning within the subject matter
- new or unfamiliar words that are central to the topic; for example, photosynthesis in horticulture.



Here are some suggestions for pre-teaching vocabulary:

1. Brainstorm likely vocabulary in groups or pairs:

Organise learners into two groups and give each group a large piece of paper and a felt tip pen. Give each group a different brainstorming task; for example, words related to accidents around the house and home treatments for common accidents. Put up the charts on the wall. Have a group discussion about the terms used.

2. Match words and definitions:

Write key vocabulary (including abbreviations) on to cards, one card for each new word. Put the definition of each word on a second set of cards. Get learners to work in pairs. Give each pair 5–10 word cards and their meanings. Shuffle the cards and ask the learners to match the new word with its definition.

3. Prepare a cloze exercise:

Chose a text learners will have to read. Delete some of the new vocabulary, leaving a line or space for the learner to fill in. Provide the learners with a list of the terms that have been deleted. Ask them to read the text and find appropriate words from the list to fill each of the gaps. When they have finished get them to work in pairs to review their answers.

Pre-teaching vocabulary in a first aid class

Jo is teaching CPR to a group of eight learners. On a large piece of paper she writes eight key words and abbreviations that she knows are difficult. This will go on the wall of her classroom so she can refer to it during the session.

Jo also writes each of the eight words onto cards — old business cards are good for this. On another set of cards she writes short definitions of these words.

At the start of the session Jo gives each learner one word card and a different definition card. Each learner has to give away their word card and get a word card from another learner that matches the definition on their card. When all the learners have matching words and definitions Jo goes around the group and discusses each word and its meaning. Jo finds out which learners already know some of these words and which do not. She makes a mental note to give extra support and teaching to those learners who know few, if any, of the words on the list.

When the group is settled, Jo writes 'Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation' and 'CPR' on the white board. She leads a discussion about the meanings of the terms: cardio – the heart; pulmonary – relating to the lungs; resuscitation – returning to consciousness. She also talks about the abbreviation 'CPR' and says that this is the term she will be using in her teaching.

Strategy 2: Building oral vocabulary

Learners need the opportunity to use new or unfamiliar words. This helps to cement the meaning of the word and helps the learner feel more confident about using the word in future conversations.



Here are some suggestions for building oral vocabulary:

1. Give each learner a list of ten new terms. Have them work in pairs using the new terms in conversation.
2. In a group learners construct an oral script incorporating a given list of words ; for example, imagine someone is describing an accident to a 111 operator. The accident has meant someone has been giving the patient CPR on the scene.
3. Ask and answer questions about the meaning of words using subject matter knowledge, for example, 'What is happening when someone has a cardiac arrest?'
4. Tutors may need to model the correct pronunciation of new words by saying them aloud and encouraging learners to repeat the word. The tutor clarifies and gives feedback on correct pronunciation. This includes emphasis or stress on beginning, middle or end syllables.

Building oral vocabulary in a first aid class

Jo is teaching CPR and wants her learners to practice using the technical terms related to it. She has a set of photographs showing the different stages of CPR. She asks the learners to select one to discuss in depth and to generate a scenario describing what might be happening before, during and after the event in the photograph. Each group presents their scenario 'story' to the group.

Jo can make this activity more challenging by requiring the group to use the eight vocabulary words introduced in the pre-teaching exercise.

Strategy 3: Creating word families to help build vocabulary and spelling

Many words can be made from a single root word, that is, a word from which others are formed. Think about the word 'help'. These words come from it:

Help: helps, helped, helping, helper, helpful and unhelpful, helpless, helplessly, helplessness. Also home-help, helpline, helpmate, helpdesk and help-out.

Once a learner can read a word, and understand that changes can be made at the beginning or end of that word to change its meaning, they can read and write many words from that word family. Understanding word families and recognising patterns within words is an important way of increasing a learner's reading and written vocabulary.



Here are some suggestions for creating word families:

1. On a whiteboard or chart write a word that appears in a text that learners have to read, for example, 'treat'.
2. Ask the learners about the word; does it have any special characteristics or shape; are there parts that are difficult to spell (with letters that cannot be heard when spoken or sounded out, or with the same letter at the start and end, for example, the 'ea' letter combination).
3. Ask the learners to create a word family from the root word by adding beginnings (prefixes) or endings (suffixes). Look up some of the words in the text so you are fully prepared for this; for example, 'Treat, treated, treatment, treatable, untreated'.
4. Ask learners to give examples of sentences (either orally or in writing) that contain each of the words you have added; for example, she was **treated** for cuts and bruises; the **treatment** rooms are on the left.
5. Discuss how adding to words changes their meaning. Brainstorm other words in the text, for example, treats, treaty; works, working, worker; hopeful, hopeless, hopelessly, hopelessness.

Creating word families in a first aid class

Jo hands out her standard text for wound care. She gives each learner a highlighter pen and tells them to find related words and to highlight them. Different word families can be identified by either underlining or circling. Then she has the learners work in pairs to create other sentences using each of the root words. The pair who finish first get to have first pick of the biscuits at tea break.

Here is an example of a wound care text that could be used in this exercise:

Items needed for wound cleaning:

Clean water and disposable drying material should be provided to clean wounds. If clean water is not available, consider providing alternatives like individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes or sterile saline solution.

Strategy 4: Word maps

Learning vocabulary means both recognising and understanding the meanings of new words. Word maps are a simple way of making connections between the new word and known words. It also helps learners remember words and their meanings.

By working together on word maps group members can draw on one another's experience and vocabulary and help make further connections that the tutor alone may not make. Word maps can include a focus on word families (as in Strategy 3).



Here are some suggestions for using word maps:

1. Select a key word that is important to your subject matter and write it in centre of the whiteboard.
2. Select four categories to put onto the word map, for example, associations, opposites, similar meanings, word families. You may select other categories suitable for your context.
3. Have learners brainstorm words that relate to the key word and fit within each category heading and write the words on the board. Get the learners to create sentences as they go to demonstrate use of the word.

Creating word maps in a first aid class

Jo has used a few word maps during her course and thinks that her learners have got the hang of what to do. She also wants to use the word map to review some of the course content. She gives them a map with category headings and asks the group to work in pairs to complete it. She provides an overview of each of the categories:

- **Associations:** what do you think of when you hear the word 'heart'?
- **Body parts:** what other body parts and organs have we learned about during the CPR course? (This is useful for course revision.)
- **Word families:** What other words include the root word 'heart'?
- **Heart facts:** what facts do you know about the heart? (also useful for revision)

Jo writes the categories on a large chart. When the learners have finished, each pair has a turn writing up three of their ideas onto the chart. When it is finished, the word map contains all the ideas from the group.

