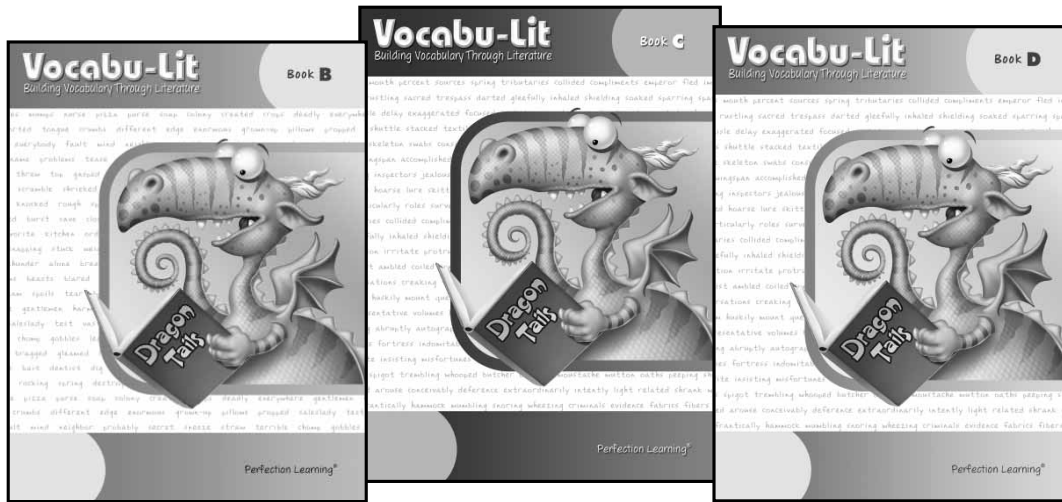


# Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction

## Vocabu-Lit Grades 2-4



In January 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 went into effect with sweeping changes to education in the United States, including an emphasis on research-based teaching practices. In accordance with the NCLB Act, the United States government will provide funding for educational programs that use scientifically proven ways to teach reading comprehension.

Vocabulary development is highly correlated to successful reading comprehension (Pressley, 2000; Stanovich, 1986). The National Reading Panel reports that the “importance of vocabulary in

reading achievement has been recognized for more than half a century.” (National Reading Panel, 2001).

Elementary teachers have long known the importance of a rich vocabulary to a learner. But recognizing what a student needs and knowing how to teach it are two different things. This report will provide substantial research findings that demonstrate how Perfection Learning’s *Vocabu-Lit* program for grades 2-4 can be used as a successful teaching and learning tool for vocabulary development.

## Goals

**“The goal for vocabulary development is to insure that students are able to apply their knowledge of words to appropriate situations and are able to increase and enrich their knowledge through independent encounters with words.”**

—*Beck and McKeown, 1996*

Scientific studies of how to best teach vocabulary have been conducted since the 1920s. The results of these studies have provided educators with a clear picture of teaching practices that have proven results.

## Research-Based Teaching Practices

- Relating new words to prior knowledge
- Multiple exposures to new words are provided
- A contextual and definitional meaning for each word is established
- Students are engaged in active learning

Each of these practices is an integral part of the *Vocabu-Lit* program.

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# Relating New Words to Prior Knowledge

**“Ownership of vocabulary occurs when students can relate the word to an appropriate schema.”**

—Beck, 1984

**Exercise 4 Use Synonyms**  
Synonyms are words with the same or nearly the same meanings. Circle the synonyms for each Master Word. Some will have more than one answer.

- determined**    decided    hopeful    unsure
- dilemma**    difficultly    problem    event
- fashion**    way of doing things    manner    way
- fluttering**    waving    tearing    flapping
- forfeit**    give up    sell    small

**Word Attack/ Analogies**  
An analogy shows how things are alike or related. For example, a goldfish and a bowl are related in the same way that a cow and a barn are related. A goldfish lives in a bowl. A cow lives in a barn. The analogy would be written this way: Goldfish is to bowl as cow is to barn.  
Analogies are fun—and they help you learn new words. They also help you learn new ways to use words you already know. Practice using analogies in the exercise below.

**Exercise 5 Create Analogies**  
Complete the following analogies with Master Words from the box.

- Paw is to claw as feather is to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Cold is to frozen as fire is to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Sad is to crying as happy is to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Horse is to galloped as duck is to \_\_\_\_\_.

Now write an analogy for the Master Word **clumsily**. Fill in the blanks.  
\_\_\_\_\_ is to \_\_\_\_\_  
as \_\_\_\_\_ is to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Master Words**  
clumsily  
determined  
dilemma  
fashion  
fluttering  
forfeit  
quill  
rejoicing  
singed  
waddled

LESSON 9 • *Vocabu-Lit* Grade 3 © *Perfecten Learning* No reproduction permitted. 49

From Book C, grade 3

Vocabulary learning must be meaningful to students. This occurs when a learner is able to relate new words to his or her prior knowledge or schema. (Thelen, 1986). Schema is defined by Pearson and Spiro, 1982, as “little pictures or associations you conjure up in your head when you read a word or sentence.” Schema has also been likened to mental “slots” or “files” of existing information that can be filled with new information (Lange, 1981).

The *Vocabu-Lit* program for grades 2–4 begins each lesson by reading a grade level passage from classic or contemporary grade-level literature with 8 to 10 bold-faced targeted vocabulary words. The rich literary context for each word not only provides a literary context, but also exposes students to fiction and nonfiction by diverse authors. And the engaging passages may encourage wider reading in the students.

After reading the passage, either aloud with the teacher or independently, students discuss what they think the targeted words mean. They can refer to the contextual usage in the passage or their prior knowledge. This is the first step in helping learners relate the words to their own schema.


# Contextual and Definitional Meaning

**“In order to ‘know’ a word, one must not only know its definitional relations with other words, but also be able to interpret its meaning in a particular context.**

—Stahl, 1996

**Exercise 2 Define** Read the two meanings given for each Master Word below. Make an X in the box in front of the meaning used in *Toy Fads*.

- balance**  
**balance** (BAL<sup>ə</sup>uhns)  
 an amount of money: *I have a balance of \$22.50 in the bank. noun.*  
 to keep even; keep from tipping: *The clown can balance a plate on the end of a stick. verb.*
- business**  
**business** (BIZ<sup>ə</sup>ness)  
 the kind of work someone does: *Mr. Kruger is in the toy business. noun.*  
 a company that makes or sells things: *That business sells cars. noun.*
- decide**  
**decide** (di<sup>ə</sup>SYDE)  
 to make up your mind: *I decided to rest. verb.*  
 to bring to an end: *The home run decided the game. verb.*
- engineer**  
**engineer** (en<sup>ə</sup>juhn<sup>ə</sup>NEER)  
 a person who drives a train: *The engineer blew the train whistle. noun.*  
 a person who makes machines and other helpful things: *The engineer began to plan a new kind of car. noun.*




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From Book B, grade 2

Words presented with only a definition or words presented in context with no definition will have little effect on comprehension. To teach words well, instruction includes definitional and contextual information—a mixed approach (Stahl, 1985).

- knocked**  
**knock** (nok)  
 a tapping noise: *We heard a knock at the door. noun.*  
 to hit and make fall: *The dog knocked over the vase with its tail. verb.*
- rough**  
**rough** (ruf)  
 choppy, wavy, or stormy: *The ocean was too rough to swim in. adjective.*  
 not finished; sketchy: *She made a rough drawing of her room. adjective.*
- spring**  
**spring** (spring)  
 a piece of metal that is tightly twisted: *Today a spring in our old chair broke. noun.*  
 to jump or leap: *We saw a rabbit spring out of the bushes. verb.*
- tools**  
**tool** (tool)  
 a thing used for doing a job: *Mary used her new tools to fix the door. noun.*  
 to draw letters or shapes on something: *The man tools flowers on leather. verb.*



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In the *Vocabu-Lit* program, students first read the passage and compare the targeted words to their prior knowledge, thereby establishing a contextual meaning. Next, they use the dictionary provided at the end of the book to find the correct definitional meaning of each targeted word. Then students write the correct meaning in the workbook.

By combining both contextual and definitional meanings, learners begin to form a strong association with the new words. These meanings are further developed in the ensuing activities in each lesson.

# Multiple Exposures to New Words

“Reviews of the literature indicated that the most effective vocabulary instruction includes multiple exposures to words in a variety of oral and written contexts.”

—Dixon-Krauss, Dec. 2001/Jan. 2002

**Word Attack/ Context Clues**  
When you see a word you don't know, look at the words around it. They can give you context clues that help you decide what the new word means. For example, in the passage from *We Are the Many*, the word *lawyer* and the phrase case before the U.S. Supreme Court help you understand that *plead* probably has something to do with presenting a case in a court of law. Practice using context clues in the exercise below.

**Exercise 3 Use Context Clues**  
Draw connecting lines from the Master Words on the left to the sentences where they fit best on the right. Then circle the words in the sentences that give you context clues. The first one has been done for you.

ancestors \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It was interesting to see how the lives and personalities of our \_\_\_\_\_ affected the lives of our family members today.

caretaker \_\_\_\_\_ 2. They found the grave of their dead uncle in the local \_\_\_\_\_.

cemetery \_\_\_\_\_ 3. She knew it was wrong and dangerous to \_\_\_\_\_ on a military testing base, but it was a shortcut and she was late.

declared \_\_\_\_\_ 4. He had always been a person who liked to look after things, so the award for \_\_\_\_\_ of the year pleased him very much.

intruders \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Everyone knew that the Lakota Sioux people respected the earth, considering it to be \_\_\_\_\_.

plead \_\_\_\_\_ 6. She was embarrassed when he \_\_\_\_\_ his love for her in public.

proof \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A \_\_\_\_\_ noise in the leaves reminded them that they were not the only living things in the woods.

rusting \_\_\_\_\_ 8. They used to be such good friends! It was sad to know they were now thought of as \_\_\_\_\_ in their neighbor's yard.

sacred \_\_\_\_\_ 9. She had shown them the things she bought and the sales slip. What more \_\_\_\_\_ should they need that she had spent the money well?

trespass \_\_\_\_\_ 10. If they had only been willing to listen to each other earlier, they would never have had to \_\_\_\_\_ their cases in court.

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From Book D, grade 4

**Word Attack/ Base Words**  
A base word is a word with no endings or beginnings added to it. For example, *slow* is the base word of *slowly*, meaning "in a slow way." Necessary is the base word of *unnecessary*. Sometimes a letter is dropped or doubled when an ending is added: *smile* becomes *smiling* and *tap* becomes *tapped*. Added endings or beginnings often change the meaning of a word. Finding the base word can help you understand a new word's meaning.

**Exercise 4 Find Base Words**  
For each Master Word below, identify the base word and write it and its part of speech in the second column. Then fill in the rest of the columns to describe how the added endings and beginnings change the word. The first one is done for you.

| Master Word     | Base Word and Part of Speech | Added Ending/Beginning | Resulting Part of Speech |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| conceivably     | conceive, verb               | drop e, add -ably      | adverb                   |
| agitated        | _____                        | _____                  | _____                    |
| extraordinarily | _____                        | _____                  | _____                    |
| intently        | _____                        | _____                  | _____                    |

**Exercise 5 Find Word Relationships**  
Below are groups of words. Think about what the words in each group have in common. Then choose a Master Word that best fits in each group. Write the word on the line.

- wake up, stir up, bring up \_\_\_\_\_
- point of view, appearance, way of looking at something \_\_\_\_\_
- feet, trembling, shied \_\_\_\_\_
- single woman, divorced woman, married woman \_\_\_\_\_
- slaters, brothers, parents \_\_\_\_\_
- respect, courtesy, kind attention \_\_\_\_\_

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**Exercise 6 Word Graphics: Topic Circles**  
Some words fit together to suggest a topic or idea. For example, if you were talking about a picnic, you might use words like *blanket*, *sandwich*, *ants*, and *grill*. The topic circles below are labeled "Sweet Dreams" and "Nightmares." List the Master Words that you might use in describing each. Then list the Master Words that might relate to both topics.

**Master Words**  
ambled complicated drowsily hammock snoring  
coiled crouching frantically mumbling wheezing

**Write Now!** Help! Your father has too much pressure at work and is very nervous. On another sheet of paper, write your plan to help him have a relaxing Saturday afternoon. Use as many Master Words as you can.

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“One trend that was strongly reflected in the database (research) was that high frequency and multiple, repeated exposures to vocabulary material are important for learning gains” (National Reading Panel, 2001). The outcome of multiple exposures to a word is “deep” processing.

In each *Vocabu-Lit* lesson, there are seven activities for each of the 10 vocabulary words. The first two activities always involve students in reading the words in context and finding the contextual meanings.

There are four varying activities that follow providing opportunities for students to process the words and learn strategies for identifying the meanings of new words. These include

- recognizing synonyms and antonyms
- identifying context clues for word meanings
- writing sentences using the targeted words
- using words as different parts of speech
- using the words in different contexts
- using root words, base words, prefixes, and suffixes to determine word meanings
- finding word relationships

In addition, *Vocabu-Lit* books for grades three and four contain a graphic activity in each lesson to help students visually see word relationships and explore word possibilities. And, in all three books, grades 2, 3, and 4, the last activity in every lesson is a game, riddle, or puzzle so students can play with words.

# Active Learning

When students were engaged in the tasks in which they were learning vocabulary, they had larger gains.

—National Reading Panel, 2001

**Exercise 5 Understand** Circle the Master Word that means the same as the bold words in each sentence below.

**Master Words**  
balance decided knocked spring  
business engineer rough tools

1. Richard James, the **person who made helpful things**, invented the Slinky.  
business engineer teacher tools

2. Mr. James was working on an invention to help **keep boats from tipping**.  
balance business fair spring

3. Boats would sometimes have trouble in **stormy** weather.  
balance fair knocked rough

4. Mr. James and his wife **made up their minds** to sell the spring as a toy for children.  
decided forgot knocked balance

5. Their new **company** sold 400 Slinkys in one day.  
business engineer friends tools

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**Exercise 6 Find Words That Go Together**  
Each of the groups of words below contain a Master Word. Read all the words in the group. Three of the words go together. Circle the word that does NOT belong in the group.

1. **decided**, chose, forgot, picked  
2. park, grocery store, **business**, sandwich shop  
3. hammers, **tools**, saws, bicycles  
4. jumped, hopped, bounced, **spring**  
5. **rough**, choppy, quiet, stormy

**Exercise 7 Word Play** How much do you know about yourself? Finish the sentences below.

1. I wish an **engineer** would make me a new \_\_\_\_\_  
2. Not long ago I **decided** to \_\_\_\_\_  
3. I have used **tools** to \_\_\_\_\_  
4. One time I **knocked** over a \_\_\_\_\_

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From Book B, grade 2

An important goal of a vocabulary program for students on any level is “to get students interested in new words so that they will notice new words, use strategies to identify their meanings, and take pride in remembering and using them” (Spiegel, 1991). For students to develop this attitude, they must be actively involved in their own learning.

“Students should be active in creating semantic connections between what is already known and new vocabulary and also in using new words in contextual situations” (Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown, 1982; Nagy and Anderson, 1984).

Students are actively engaged in deep learning of new words and applying vocabulary strategies throughout the *Vocabu-Lit* program. Students interact with each vocabulary word in seven different activities. They have been immersed in the targeted words and practiced important vocabulary development strategies.

In addition, students become independent learners as they work through the *Vocabu-Lit* books. In these student-considerate texts, each lesson is structured identically so students can work through them with ease. Since they learn and practice applying vocabulary strategies, they can monitor and adjust their own learning.

An average child enters school knowing approximately 5,000 to 6,000 words. Over 12 years of school, children learn another 36,000 words. Since the English language has approximately 5 million words, a person’s vocabulary will grow throughout a lifetime. Research-based teaching and learning strategies, such as those in the *Vocabu-Lit* program, will help students to be avid vocabulary learners in their adult lives.

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