

**ACADEMIC STUDIES**

**ENGLISH**

**Support Materials and Exercises  
for**

**VOCABULARY**



**SPRING 1999**

**VOCABULARY**  
**ACADEMIC ENGLISH**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Spring 1999

This support module may be used with IAU-ENG 3.1, Building Vocabulary.

<b>IAU-ENG 3.1</b>	<b>BUILDING VOCABULARY</b>
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<b>OBJECTIVE</b>			
Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to			
1. implement a variety of strategies to improve his/her vocabulary.			
<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Structural Analysis</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Using roots</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>prefixes (e.g. pre, post, ex, il, circum, uni, etc.)</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>3</b>	<b>suffixes (e.g. ment, ly, able, ed, ing, ious, etc.)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Context Clues</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Location: found in appositives</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>5</b>	<b>clausal, phrasal explanations</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>6</b>	<b>definitions</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>7</b>	<b>meaning from complete sentence</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Sight words</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>9</b>	<b>Words with multiple meanings</b>	<b>7/8</b>
	<b>10</b>	<b>Figurative language</b>	<b>7/8</b>
	<b>11</b>	<b>Phonetic Skills</b>	<b>7/7</b>
	<b>12</b>	<b>Personal vocabulary list</b>	<b>8/9</b>
<p><b>Learners should work on vocabulary in one form or another from their first first day in class. The words they choose to learn should suit their immediate needs, and emphasis on memory work should be kept to a minimum. The habit of reading widely and investigating words as they occur makes building vocabulary effective and efficient at any level.</b></p>			

## **NOTE TO FACILITATORS AND LEARNERS:**

1. This module presents information and exercises on vocabulary skills to accompany the objectives of IAU-ENG 3.1, Building Vocabulary.
2. Facilitators are free to use any support materials appropriate to their learners' needs.
3. Additional resource materials will probably be required for those wanting more information on this topic or for those needing more practice mastering certain areas. Any text on writing can provide additional useful material.
4. Alternate support materials may be appropriate.
5. The words in this module are not presented as a definitive list. Learners, with the help of their facilitators, should develop their personal vocabulary lists.
6. Every learner should have a personal vocabulary list at all times.
7. Learners who wish to work on the GED or other standardized tests should have experience answering multiple choice vocabulary questions.
8. It is the learner's responsibility to search out additional exercises to supplement the practice work included in this module by consulting with his/her facilitator.
9. Do NOT write in this module. Please make your notes and complete the exercises in your own notebooks so that other learners may also use these booklets.

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# BUILDING VOCABULARY

*Good words are worth much, and cost little.*

*George Herbert, Jacula Prudentum (1651)*

## I. INTRODUCTION

No English program is complete without a section on building vocabulary. Words are the building blocks of written and spoken communications. The more words you know, the easier it is to understand the messages you *receive* from others. A good vocabulary also means that you can say exactly what you mean when you *send* a message. This module presents strategies that will help you learn new words easily. Like any kind of learning, however, you will need to experiment with a variety of study techniques until you find the ones that work best for you and suit your learning style.

## II. WHAT IS VOCABULARY?

The word *vocabulary* simply means a list of words. The vocabulary of the English language contains more than a million words, many of them scientific. About 200,000 of these are in common use. Stuart Berg Flexner, an American lexicographer<sup>1</sup>, says that the average well-read person probably knows roughly 20,000 words, but uses only about 1,500 to 2,000 in a conversation.

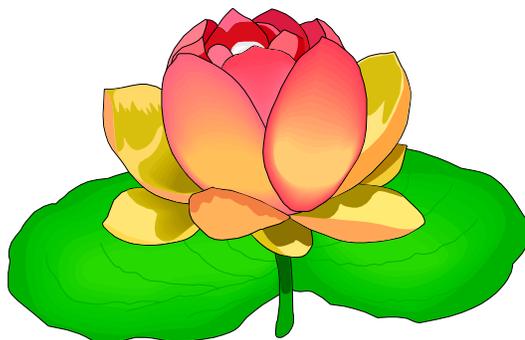
Words are being added to and dropped from the language all the time, so everyone needs to work to keep his/her vocabulary up-to-date.. For example, the word *blizzard* was unknown before the 1800s and its earliest use is sometimes credited to the American frontiersman, Davy Crockett. The invention of the computer has added many new words like *byte*, *download*, *cursor*, and *internet*. On the other hand, you never hear the word *ugsome* (meaning *disgusting*) although it was around for 500 years and can still be found in some unabridged dictionaries.



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<sup>1</sup> Dictionary maker

Every subject, or area of interest, has its own vocabulary. The first section of most courses is usually vocabulary study, learning the new terms used in that field. Once these are understood, the learner can begin to read and learn about the subject itself. For instance, most of the grammar modules in this program start with explanations of vocabulary (e.g. *noun, verb, subject, case, complement, complex sentence*) before moving on to how to use grammar rules. When you start to learn about the weather, you learn words like *precipitation, cyclone, low pressure, isobar*. Knowledge of the plant world requires special terms (*sepal, pollen, calix, rhizome, rootlet*). Even following a recipe means acquiring a special vocabulary (e.g. *saute, sear, blanch, simmer, fold*). No matter who you are, how old you are, or how many years you've gone to school, you will always need to work on new vocabulary. New words are the keys to new knowledge and even new ways of looking at things you already know well.



Many people think that a *good vocabulary* means knowing lots of big, important-sounding words. Long, complicated words do have very important uses, but improving your vocabulary is much more than being able to scatter big words throughout your writing or speaking. The goal of any communication is to be understood. A good vocabulary makes it easy to write (or say) exactly what you mean and to understand what you read (or hear). A good writer or speaker communicates ideas, even complicated ones, in words that his/her particular audience will understand clearly.

### III. WHAT WORDS DO I NEED TO LEARN?

**Learn words that you need to know and that you are likely to use.** These words depend on who you are, what your needs are, and what you want to do with them. For example, if you are getting ready to write a standardized exam that contains a vocabulary test, there are many books available to help you identify the

words you will need to know to pass. On the other hand, if you are starting a new course, your instructor or the textbook will provide you with a list of new terms to add to your vocabulary study. Most often, however, the words you choose to learn should come from things you read and hear everyday.

Many vocabulary building programs and books present long lists of words that the writers think students need to know. Some eager students even try to build their vocabulary by sitting down in front of a dictionary and starting to memorize definitions at page one. Learning new words just because they are on a list is more difficult than it has to be. Experts agree that people learn best when they have a need for the information *right now*; learn new words as you need them or as you meet them

In general, the best way to start building a better vocabulary is to focus on words that match your own special circumstances. For example, an adult learner made a list of all the words he wasn't sure of from the front page of his local newspaper and learned them quite quickly. Later, he gave this list to another student.

stake	discrepancy	analyst	concessions
extent	monitoring	primary	consolidation
negotiations	seminar	significant	status quo
reconvene	per capita	viable	overwhelming
amendment	appendices	municipal	decline
compensation	merger	reserve the right	capacity
agenda	advocate	textiles	former
cease and desist	monopoly	avert	latter
eliminate	alliance	tacit	breach

These are all good words, but the second student had more trouble learning than the one who made the list. Why? How many of these words do you recognize? How many can you use correctly in a sentence? How many would you use in speaking? Which ones would you like to learn? You would probably benefit from becoming more familiar with all of them, but how likely are you to remember words from a list?

Even when you make your own list of words, simply memorizing definitions isn't always the best way to add them to your vocabulary. Read on to find out how to learn new words effectively.

Learning new words can be easy if you go about it the right way. Think about how young children do it. They imitate the words they hear around them. When your three-year-old hears a new word, he/she will probably use it (and overuse it) for several days until it has become part of his/her world. Children often make mistakes when they first hear a word, but they rely on the people around them to correct them until they get it just right. For example, a youngster went around telling everyone in her family that she was going to give them an *old tomato* for their birthdays. It turned out she had overheard her older brother talking about a teacher giving his students an *ultimatum* about the number of detentions an unfinished homework assignment would bring. Once she was corrected about the word and its meaning, she added it to her vocabulary and used it regularly even though she was only four.

#### IV GETTING STARTED

Learning new vocabulary is like any other kind of learning; it is a process which includes four stages:

9. Making a commitment to learn
10. Identifying what needs to be learned
11. Understanding the new material
12. Internalizing<sup>2</sup> what you have discovered

Begin by *making a commitment* to increase your vocabulary. If possible, say it out loud; tell your classmates or instructor; put it in writing some place where you will see it regularly. Remind yourself regularly of your decision.

*Set some goals.* How many new words would like to you learn in this course? In a week? In a day? For instance, you could decide that two words a day is within your ability. That's ten words a week and three hundred words in one year of upgrading ( a 20% improvement in your basic speaking vocabulary). Learning this many new words will mean that you will be able to read better, understand more of what you hear, and write more effective messages.

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<sup>2</sup> Remember that learning is more than memorizing because memorized material only stays with you as long as you use it regularly. If you want something to be part of your long term memory, you have to learn it in such a way that it becomes automatic (becomes part of "you"), just like riding a bicycle or driving a stick shift.

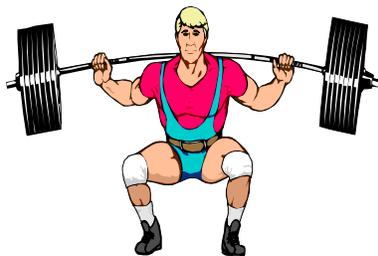
Next, ***organize yourself*** to learn. Make vocabulary study a part of your daily routine. Identify a time during each day that you will use to work on learning new words. For example, if you read the newspaper each day, you could do your “words” then. On the other hand, you may find that many of your spelling words are unfamiliar to you, so your vocabulary work might fit into your spelling time. That way, you could use your time efficiently by “killing two birds with one stone”.

Another part of getting organized means creating a place to ***keep all your vocabulary work***. Many people enter their vocabulary words in a separate section of their notebooks. The words they are learning are all in one place, and it is easy to review them regularly. A vocabulary notebook is most effective when it is easy to use, so use loose leaf paper and place each new word at the top of a separate page. This makes it easy to arrange and re-arrange the words for studying. Entries in a vocabulary notebook can be arranged in any order

- alphabetical
- by meaning
- by subject
- by prefix
- by root word
- by similar spelling
- your learning style

As part of your study plan, create a method for ***using what you have just studied***. If you want to make sure that your time is well spent, you need to internalize what you have learned. That means using the new words regularly until you feel comfortable with them and use them without thinking. Then you need to continue to use them, just as would work a group of muscles in a physical exercise program. At the end of this module, you will find a sample vocabulary sheet.

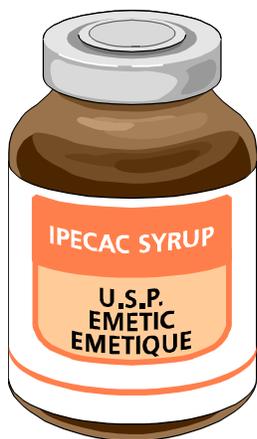
Your personal vocabulary relates directly to your success in life, at home, and at work because it helps you communicate (send and receive messages) accurately.



## V. FINDING WORDS TO LEARN

**Read! Read! Read!** Reading brings lots of new words (and writing styles) to you, so you don't have to go looking for them. It also forces you to use your head to figure out what they mean. As a result, when you read widely, you will find that your vocabulary will build itself. Make it a habit to read a local newspaper. Many magazines are well-written and have the benefit of a variety of articles, so you can always find something that interests you. Make a trip to your local library to find out what magazines they subscribe to, and then make it part of your weekly routine to spend time reading them. If you don't subscribe to magazines yourself, find friends who do and who are willing to share with you. Many people in the community simply throw magazines away after a week or two. Perhaps you could arrange to pick these up and place them in your classroom before they get outdated. Magazines like *People*, *Time*, *Maclean's*, *Newsweek* are published weekly so they are usually timely and interesting. Depending on your interests, you might like *Discover*, *Equinox*, *National Geographic*, *Canadian Geographic* (science magazines with lots of pictures and short articles). No matter what your interests (snowmobiles, fishing, carpentry, crafts, decorating), there are magazines on the subject.

Words are all around you, all day long. You will find them on medicine bottles, on packages at the grocery store, in advertising flyers, or on billboards as you drive around. New words turn up on radio or TV, at the doctor's office, on buses or even at parties. Be aware of them wherever you are, and be curious about them. Curiosity is a good quality for anyone focused on increasing his/her vocabulary.



Some people are uncomfortable with things they don't understand, and as a result, they don't even really hear them. They block out new words. New words are not dangerous; in fact, the more of them you learn, the faster you will move through your upgrading. At first, you may just want to count of how many new words you hear in a day. Then, you can start recording them and choosing the ones you want to learn.

## VI. UNDERSTANDING NEW WORDS

### 1. Ask Someone You Trust

The first and easiest way to get information about new words, particularly if you hear them in conversation is to ask about the meaning. Usually, you will get a general definition or a synonym. This may be enough for you to understand the general idea, but you should probably make a point of checking it out for yourself before you add it to your list of words to learn.

### 2. Use Context Clues

When you are reading, looking up every unfamiliar word may make the task so difficult and boring that you lose interest in what you are doing. Sometimes, you can skip over a word you don't know because something else in the sentence (*context*) will give you a **general idea** of what it means.

*After he broke his **ulna**, he had to wear a sling to support his injured arm.*

*Al's lawyer checked the court **docket** to find the date of his client's next appearance before the judge.*

***Paraffin**, the British name for kerosene, can be extremely dangerous.*

*At the hospital, she asked the **radiologist** to explain what her x-rays showed.*

What do the words in bold type in the sentences above mean<sup>3</sup>? What clues did you use to make your guess? Are these words you need to add to your everyday vocabulary?

## EXERCISE 1

Use context clues to guess the meaning of the words in bold type below. Write your guesses in your notebook and then check your answers at the bottom of the next page. If the words are new to you and you would like to learn them, add them to your vocabulary list.

1. Stan was an **ardent** stamp collector who spent all his time focused on anything to do with postage.

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<sup>3</sup> ulna = one of the bones in your forearm; docket = a list of legal cases to be tried in court; paraffin = kerosene; radiologist = a doctor who specializes in x-rays for diagnosis and treatment

2. Brass is an *alloy* of two metals: copper and zinc.
3. Sue made a profit of \$40,000 when she sold her property. Who would believe a piece of rocky pasture could *appreciate* so much in value.
4. Even though he was losing money, Mr. Fenton could never fire anyone. He just waited for people to retire or move away, letting *attrition* reduce the size of his staff.
5. We worked hard on the project, but the boss *belittled* our efforts by saying he wished he'd hired a crew of chimpanzees.
6. Maude Tilbury's diary written in 1867 is a *chronicle* of the tragic events surrounding the county's worst mining disaster.
7. Marshanski's scientific articles were always *concise*, brief and to the point.
8. He was so *indifferent* about the money he had won that he didn't bother to pick it up for three months.
9. It is *prudent* to slow down and steer carefully on icy roads.
10. Failing to make child support payments is *reprehensible*<sup>4</sup>, particularly if the children are cold and hungry most of the time.

Readers who regularly use context clues are able to understand some words without having to break their concentration to look up unfamiliar words. Often, this is enough to meet their needs.

**A word of warning:** Although you can often get a good idea of the meaning of a new word from the context, it can sometimes be misleading, so you need to be careful. For example, in an article about a short story you read

*The protagonist was full of pain and longing after the brief meeting.*

. You might think that the word *protagonist* had something to do with *agony* or *pain* when, in fact, it simply means the central character in the story. It is important to check your “guesses” about meaning in the dictionary.

### 3. Use a Good Dictionary

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<sup>4</sup> Ardent = passionate, enthusiastic; alloy = combination of two things, usually metals; appreciate = increase in value; attrition = gradual wearing away or loss; belittle = to make to seem little, to put someone or something down; chronicle = a record of events, history; concise = brief and to the point; indifferent = apathetic, not caring one way or the other; prudent = careful, cautious; reprehensible = worthy of blame.

Sometimes, you will find words that are so essential to understanding the writer's message that you can't continue reading. Then, it's time to use the dictionary. Stop and find out what the word means, enter it in your vocabulary notebook right away. Spend time thinking about what it means and how it is used. Then go back to the **beginning** of the sentence (paragraph or the page) and start reading again. This time the meaning should be much clearer.

Dictionaries, as you know, come in a variety of sizes and types, so not all of them contain the same kinds of information. Although you should have access to a large, quality dictionary at home or in the classroom, it isn't very practical to carry one around with you. Instead buy yourself a small paperback dictionary so you can take it with you. It will get you started on a new word as soon as you see it. Later, you can check it out in a bigger dictionary that will give you more information.

A dictionary can really help you zero in on the exact meaning(s) of new words and how to use them correctly.<sup>5</sup>

1. If you have only read the word, you may need to find out how to pronounce it. Use the phonetic symbols and accent marks.
2. Some words have multiple meanings. Each separate meaning is usually preceded by a number in bold type. Make sure you find the meaning that matches what you are reading. Be careful. Some words even have opposite meanings like *bolt* which can mean *to fasten securely* as in "*He bolted the door.*" or can mean *to run away* as in "*The horse bolted from the barn when it smelled smoke.*"
3. Some dictionary entries offer a list of *synonyms* (words with similar meanings). Use these to help you create clearer idea about the word's meaning.
4. Many dictionaries include phrases (or idioms) that show unusual uses of the word or suggest prepositions that follow it. For example, the first meaning of the verb *dabble* describes the action of a duck turning itself upside down in a pond to find food on the bottom. *The ducks dabbled in the pond.* Later, another entry shows (*~ in the stock market*) which means that people *dabble in* something if they do it irregularly or as a secondary<sup>6</sup> interest.

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<sup>5</sup> Be sure to review the module on DICTIONARY SKILLS so that you can read and understand all the information presented with an entry word.

<sup>6</sup> Less important

5. Good dictionaries also include brief explanations of “often confused” words.

*PRINCIPLE and PRINCIPAL*

*Usage: Principle is only a noun; principal is both adjective and noun. If you are unsure which noun you want, read the definitions in this dictionary.*

Even if you have used context clues to read an article, it is often useful to reread material that is of special interest and find the **exact meaning** of words you are unsure of or are likely to want to use. Look them up and add them to your vocabulary list. It's usually a good idea to copy the writer's whole sentence into your notebook so you have an example of how to use it. By doing this, you take a giant step toward learning new words that will be useful to them everyday.

## EXERCISE 2

Find the exact meaning of the words in bold face in the sentences below.

1. Sylvia's personality is too **cloying**.
2. Mark's anger **dissipated** slowly.
3. Would you recommend **clemency** in a case like this.
4. **Sloth** is one of the seven deadly sins.
5. She had kept her **sobriety** for forty-two days.
6. The Burwells have bought a **rustic** cottage near the Bay of Fundy.
7. The lawyer said, “**Peruse** this document and then sign it”.
8. Who is your **beneficiary**?
9. Do you know the **criteria** for this job?
10. Use the **zest** of a lemon when you make this cake.

### 4. Use a Thesaurus

A thesaurus can often help you understand the meaning of a new word. Use the list of synonyms provided with each entry word to get a better idea of how and when to use the word. Thesauruses are also useful when you are need to find the “right” word when you are writing. Never use a word found in a thesaurus without checking its meaning in a dictionary first. If you make a mistake and use it incorrectly, you will look very foolish.

Some students abuse thesauruses by writing their own sentence and then replacing their own words with big words from the thesaurus.

*Homo sapiens who are domiciled in abodes of a vitreous nature should not launch dense igneous spheroids.*

This simply means, “People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones. If your writing looks like this, your readers will certainly be confused.

### EXERCISE 3

Use a thesaurus to find synonyms for each of the words you looked up in Exercise 2

#### 5. Ask Someone

Everyone meets new words every day. There is nothing wrong with asking what a strange word means. This is an important strategy if you don’t have a dictionary with you.. It’s better to get an answer right away than risk a misunderstanding. As well, if you wait until you get home, you will probably have forgotten the word or else decided that it really wasn’t that important anyway.



Asking questions is how children learn so effectively. If they don’t understand the first explanation, they just keep on asking until they are satisfied. You can do this too! It’s a good technique that works well in vocabulary building. Be careful though; some of the definitions you get this way may be incorrect or vague. Always check them later in a dictionary.

The best and most accurate information about words comes from the dictionary.

## VII. ADDING WORDS TO YOUR VOCABULARY

There are as many ways to learn vocabulary as there are people who want to learn. Although you want to remember what a new word means, memorizing the dictionary definition may not be the best or easiest way to do it. This section of the module presents a variety of learning strategies that you should try. Give each one a good try and then choose the one(s) that work best for you. Don't be afraid to create your own techniques. Remember you are the only true expert on how you learn.

**1. Repeat what you hear.** For instance, a friend tells you that he saw hundreds of *smolts* in the river last week. *Smolts* is a new word for you so you need to ask what it means. Your friend, an experienced<sup>7</sup> salmon fisherman, tells you that they are two-year-old salmon that have turned silvery in colour and are ready to move out of the rivers and into the sea. Now that you know what the word means, use it by repeating your friend's story to everyone you meet. One of the easiest ways to learn new words is to use them as soon as you hear them. This method works so well that often you won't even need to put the new word on your vocabulary list.

### **2. Use Tricks and Mnemonics**

By now, you know about mnemonics and have used them in other parts of this course. They work equally well for learning vocabulary. A mnemonic is any memory device that helps remember something specific. For example, you can remember the difference between *principle* and *principal* with the sentence,

*The school principal is my pal.*

Mnemonics work by associating something you are trying to learn with something you already know. The crazier the mnemonics, the better they seem to work. Mnemonics can include the use of colour, diagrams, cartoons, anything that will make the things you are trying to learn stick in your mind.

Little rhyming verses can also make learning easier because they contain rhyme patterns and rhymes.

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<sup>7</sup> To use this method, you need to be sure that the person giving the explanation knows what he/she is talking about.

*Cats are feline; dogs are canine  
And cattle are called bovine,  
So in this crazy world of mine  
How would you define  
Words like equine and asinine?*

#### **EXERCISE 4**

Create mnemonics for these words.

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. prism         | 2. troll (noun) |
| 3. lurk          | 4. strait       |
| 5. simmer (verb) | 6. weird        |
| 7. tact          | 8. dire         |
| 9. quarantine    | 10. hoax        |

#### **3. Write It Out**

The physical act of writing a new word makes you slow down and look at it carefully and the motion of your hand seems to implant it more firmly in your brain. Write the new word several different ways at the top of your vocabulary sheet: printed, cursive, capitals, small letters. Use different colours, vary the height of the letters, write it backwards if you think it will help. The word itself, however, is little good if you can't remember what it means so you must also work to learn that too. Write the definition, use it in several practice sentences, and insert it in your own written and spoken communications as often as you can.

#### **EXERCISE 5**

Use the ten words in Exercise 4 in sentences. Write several practice sentences for each one. Then write a paragraph using as many as you can.

#### **4. See It**

A new word may suggest a vivid mental picture. These mental pictures are also a form of mnemonic. If you need to remember the meaning of *abridge* (which means to shorten something from its original length), you might draw a picture of a

bridge and a silly little pink and purple snake with legs, trudging the long way around. To that you could add a caption, *Take a bridge, it's shorter*. If you are working on the word *protract* (lengthen), you could picture your favourite wrestler (a *pro*) sitting on a *tractor* which is pulling the ropes on the wrestling ring, making them longer. Here's another one for the word *aloof* which means uninvolved or keeping one's distance as in *He was always aloof when his relatives came to visit*. Be creative. Invent a character named Al Oof. Give him a silly hat and a huge tie with yellow rabbits on it. Then imagine him sitting on top of the china cabinet in the dining room while the rest of the family eats its Thanksgiving dinner. The more real you make Al Oof look, the less trouble you'll have remembering the meaning of *aloof*.

Make sure your mental picture is related to the meaning of the word and that it is funny or silly. Studies show that the more ridiculous the picture, the better this kind of mnemonic works. These examples will work but it is always better to make them personal. When you invent your own mnemonic, it really means something to you and is likely to stick with more than one you have copied from someone else.

## EXERCISE 6

Create a visual mnemonic for each of the following words.

- |                |                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. paramount   | 2. subjugate          |
| 3. bigamy      | 4. inquest            |
| 5. circumvent  | 6. delta (of a river) |
| 7., horizontal | 8. meander            |
| 9. topiary     | 10. congregate        |

### 5. Use the Word's Etymology

For some people finding out about the history of word often sets up an association that helps them put it firmly in their memory. The etymology, or history of the word, is usually found right after the phonetic symbols in a dictionary entry. Here's a true example of how etymology worked for one learner who read this sentence in the newspaper.

*The police officer was charged with **misprision** in that case.*

At first, she thought it was a spelling or typographical error and the word should have been *misprison* so she guessed it had something to do with jail. When she eventually found *misprision* in the dictionary, she discovered that it meant *neglect or wrong performance of an official duty*, but it was the word history that helped add the word to her vocabulary. It came from Middle French *mesprison* meaning error or wrongdoing. This made her feel a little better about her original wrong guess at the spelling. She was also interested to see that *mesprison* came from the Old French *mesprendre* which meant to make a mistake. Suddenly she realized that this was related to a modern French word, *la méprise* (mistake), she already knew because she lives in a bilingual community. After making all these connections, she didn't need a mnemonic for the new word because she had already made a firm association with something she knew.

Another connection happened when she read that the French word came from the Latin *prehendere* meaning to seize. The “h” made her think of another word with the same letter pattern *comprehend*, so she realize that *comprehend* had a stronger meaning than just *to understand*; it, in fact, carried the idea of *seizing* something or *capturing* it. A little later, when she read the word *apprehend*, she was able to guess its meaning accurately.

Sometimes the etymology is just an interesting story. The word *butcher* is probably Celtic and is related to “he-goats” while the word *carpenter* related to “carriages” and “chariots”.

## **EXERCISE 7**

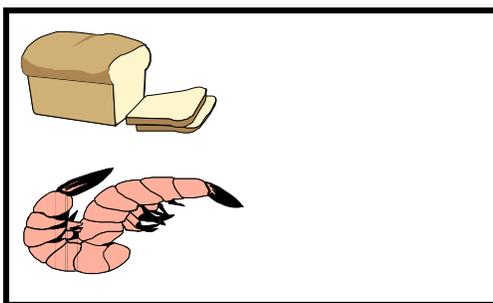
The words in this exercise have interesting origins. Use this information to make the words meaningful to you.

- |                  |                               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. bedlam        | 2. boycott                    |
| 3. beefalo       | 4. bloomers (an undergarment) |
| 5. berserk       | 6. saxophone                  |
| 7. yuppie        | 8. bodacious                  |
| 9. serendipitous | 10. Hobson's choice           |

## 6. Use Flash Cards

Flash cards are easy to make. You can use 3" x 5" cards or just cut paper into an appropriate size to fit in your purse or pocket. If you carry your flash cards with you all the time, you can use the minutes normally lost standing in line to review the words you are trying to learn. Print the word in large dark letters on one side of the card, and then record a mnemonic of some sort on the other. Students working in pairs can test each other regularly, so each will be exposed to double the number of words.

**crustacean**



Use colour and “silly” pictures if it helps you remember.

## 7. Use Word Clusters

The English language is made up of thousands of words, but you will discover that many of them are related because they come from the same root word. Some people find it helps to group these words together. Take the word *chronological* for example. It's root is *chron* which means time. Here are some other words from this cluster:

<i>chronometer</i>	a device for measuring time, a clock
<i>chronicle</i>	record of events, a story
<i>chronic</i>	lasting a long time, a chronic heart condition
<i>anachronism</i>	something out of time or place in history
<i>synchronize</i>	things happening at the same time, synchronized swimming

## EXERCISE 8

Think of as many words as you can that contain these letter combinations. Then look them up in the dictionary. Add the ones you think you might use to your list.

- |                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| A) ject: project | C) port: export       |
| B) tend: intend  | D) scrib(p): describe |

### 8. Divide and Conquer

Splitting words into sections or syllables is considered by many to be the best way to learn new vocabulary. After all, words usually don't just happen; they grow and change over centuries. They start with a simple root, often from Greek or Latin, and add prefixes (beginning syllables) or suffixes (ending syllables) as needed to cover a wide range of meanings. Learning to recognize these roots, prefixes and suffixes helps the learner understand an unfamiliar word (often without having to look it up) as well as remember it. For example, if you know that *phil* means *to love*, *anthrop* means human, and *ist* means *someone who*, you can probably make an accurate guess at the meaning of the word *philanthropist*<sup>8</sup>. Not only that but you may be able to guess the meaning of more than 70 other words that begin with *phil* and 60 more that begin with *anthrop*, and that does not include those that have *phil* or *anthrop* in the middle. Think about this. The word *Bible* comes from the root *bibl* meaning book. What is a *bibliophile*<sup>9</sup>?

Learning roots is a quick way to increase your vocabulary and it can be entertaining. Here are the origins of some common English words.

alphabet	[alpha, beta] the first two letters of the Greek alphabet
malaria	[mal - bad; aer - air] a disease that got its name because people thought it was caused by "bad air"
companion	[com - with; pan - bread] originally meant someone you shared your bread with
salary	[sal - salt] the money paid to Roman soldiers to buy salt

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<sup>8</sup> Someone who loves people. A philanthropist is someone who gives money or time to help support a worthwhile community activity. *The philanthropist left \$7 million to the Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund.*

<sup>9</sup> Book lover

bonfire	originally a “bone fire”; used during the Middle Ages to dispose of corpses that had died of the plague.
curfew	originally “couvre-feu; in France in the Middle Ages a bell was rung to tell peasants that it was time to put out their fires for the night
trivia	[tri - three; via - way] originally meant a crossroads where three roads met and where people talked about unimportant things on their way to market.

The dictionary is full of interesting stories that you will uncover as you search for word meanings.

Sometimes roots, prefixes and suffixes change their spelling depending on the word it is attached to, so don't be surprised to find that the prefix *ex* as in *extend* becomes *es* as in *escape*.

On the next page, you will find a list of some important roots <sup>10</sup> and their meanings. There are far too many words in English to provide a complete list, but you might create an appendix to your vocabulary notebook in which you could keep track of roots, prefixes and suffixes as you find them.

The last syllable of a word, *the suffix* can also be used to help you determine how to use the word in a sentence. Here are some common suffixes and the part of speech they are usually associated with.

**er:** noun suffix: (worker, driver) a person whose occupation is associated with

**itis:** noun suffix: (appendicitis) inflammation of

**or:** noun suffix: (actor) a person whose occupation is associated with

**ory:** noun suffix: (observatory) something that serves the purpose of

**ary:** adjective suffix: (revolutionary) belonging to, connected with

**ian:** adjective suffix: (Torontonian) belonging to, characteristic of

**iatic:** adjective suffix: (paediatric) medical treatment

**al:** adjective suffix: (national)

**ic:** adjective suffix: (allergic) consisting of, containing

**ive:** adjective suffix: (objective) performing, or tending toward

**ism:** noun suffix: (criticism) act or practice of

**ize:** verb suffix: (crystallize)

**lyze:** verb suffix: (analyze) act or practice of

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<sup>10</sup> The term *root* is used here to also mean prefixes and suffixes.

**EXERCISE 9**

Suffixes are listed alphabetically in the dictionary with a dash (-) in front of them. Find the part of speech and meaning of the following suffixes and add them to your list. Find at least one complete word as an example for each suffix.

- |          |         |
|----------|---------|
| 1. ate   | 2. ous  |
| 3. ine   | 4. ity  |
| 5. istic | 6. ette |
| 7. ite   |         |



## SOME USEFUL ROOTS

a, an	not, without
ante	before
anti	against, not
aud	hearing
auto	self
anti	against
bi	two
bio	life
bell	war
bene	well, good
bio	life
cede, ceed	to go
cent	one hundred
chron	time
circum	around
com, con, col, cor	together, with
crac, crat	government
cred	to believe
cur	to run
de	do the opposite
dem	people
dict	to speak, say
dis, di, dif	not, away from
equ	equal, the same
eu	good, well
ex, es, e	out,
fac, fic	to do
fid	faith
gen	birth, race
graph, gram	to write
ir, il, in, im	not
ject	to throw
log	word
-logy	the study of
mal	bad
meter	measure

mit, mis, miss	send
pan	all
micro	very tiny
mono	one
multi	many
path	feeling, suffering
ped <sup>11</sup>	foot
ped (paed)	child
phil	love
phob	fear
phon	sound
poly	many
post	after
pre	before
pro	for, before, forward
re	again
scrib <sup>12</sup>	to write
spec, spic, spect	to look
sub	under
super	over, above
syn, syl, sym	together, with
tele	far
tri	three
uni	one
ver	truth
vert, vers	turn
via	way
voc, voke	to call, voice

---

<sup>11</sup> Ped is sometimes confusing. Ped is the root meaning *foot*. Paed is the root meaning *child*, but in North American it has recently been shortened to ped. A *pedestrian* is someone on foot, but a *pediatrician* is a doctor specializing in children. In many places, it is still spelled *paediatrician*.

<sup>12</sup> The root *scrib* is usually found in verbs. When used in a noun or adjective, it often changes its spelling to *script*.

For example, in the grocery store you see a new kind of hand soap with the label, ***New Antimicrobial Action***. Once you are familiar with the roots above, this big word should be easy to figure out. First split it into parts: *anti*, *micro*, *bi*, *al*.

*anti* - against      *micro* - very tiny      *bi* (from *bio*) - life      *al* - an adjective

Now it is clear that this soap is designed to kill very tiny life forms, or germs. Further, the *-al* at the end of the word tells you to use it as an adjective, so it must come before a noun. Here's another example: *antidemocratic*.

*anti* - againsts      *dem* - people      *crat* - government      *ic* - an adjective

The word is an adjective meaning *against government by the people*.

## EXERCISE 10

Use your knowledge of roots from the list above to guess the meaning of the following words. Begin by dividing them into parts.

Choose those you think will be most useful to you and add them to your vocabulary list.

eulogy

eugenics

tricentennial

benefactor

beneficiary

atypical

immoral

amoral

apathy

antecedent

spectator

audience

provoke

eject

antebellum

bureaucracy

democracy

autocracy

## INCREASING YOUR VOCABULARY

Here is a step-by-step strategy to use whenever you find a new word and decide you want to add it to your vocabulary.

1. Guess at the meaning based on the word's context.
2. Look it up in the dictionary.
3. Pay attention to the spelling. It may give you clues to the meaning.
4. Say it aloud, using the phonetic symbols. This will help you remember it.
5. Pay attention to **all** definitions but focus on the meaning you need now.
6. Read the list of synonyms and examples of how the word is used.
7. Define the word in your own everyday words.
8. Write it out and then use it in a sentence of your own.
9. Make a mnemonic or create a flashcard.
10. Fill in a vocabulary sheet with as much information as you can gather.
11. Use the new word every chance you get.

### EXERCISE 11

Before you continue with this module, make several copies of the Vocabulary Worksheet at the end of this module. If the sample worksheet does not meet your individual learning needs, create one of your own. As you work through the following practice exercises, decide which words you would like to add to your vocabulary and fill in a sheet for each one.

The last part of this module is made up of exercises to help you get comfortable with some learning strategies you can use to increase your vocabulary. The words you will be working with are quite common, but they aren't necessarily the ones you will need in your everyday work. While you may want to add some of these words to your own vocabulary sheets, remember the best way to increase your vocabulary to learn words as you meet them in reading and speaking, or as you need them.

### EXERCISE 12

- A. Read the following passage from start to finish. Do not stop to look up words the first time through. Can you understand the writer's main idea?
- B. Read it through again and list all the words you aren't sure of.

- C. Find out what each one means.
- D. Decide which ones you would like to add to your vocabulary list.

*It was a frigid November evening, complete with intermittent icy rain, and I was crouched behind some overgrown junipers that largely concealed my position from the notice of any late night pedestrians. My feet were numb and my nose had developed an irritating drip because I had been stationary for so long, but I had long ago forgotten about the discomfort. It's amazing how indifferent you can become to inclement weather, especially when you know that the police are less than indulgent with people found skulking in the environs of the country's biggest arms manufacturer. This was going to be the biggest break of my career.*

*My boss, Miller Hunt, had summoned me to his dingy little office, cunningly hidden in a decaying strip mall in a section of Lewiston soon to be completely appropriated by gangs, drug dealers, and prostitutes. It was still a good location, however, because most of the people who came to see him here blended in pretty well with the seedy characters who lounged against light poles or slouched behind dumpsters. Hunt, of course, had another office downtown where he enticed prospective clients to sign big contracts for full security protection and extolled the virtues of his highly trained staff. Being part of the staff, I never got to see the inside of that office, but I was definitely moving up in the world. I was, as of 2 p.m. yesterday, in charge of my very own case. I was investigating for MTI, a big client and manufacturer of components for the space shuttle program.*

*All this sounds very sinister, I'm sure, but for me, it was my first opportunity to prove to the boss that I was an extraordinary investigator who could produce exceptional results with a minimum of supervision, despite my limited exposure to the world of industrial espionage.*

*My name is Jake Delaney, and I was about to be ambushed, but I didn't know that then.*

### **EXERCISE 13**

Here are some sentences that use some words you may not be familiar with. Write the meaning in your own words.

1. *Martha knew her idea for a small craft store was viable, but she was overwhelmed by the municipal rules and regulations she would have to follow if she wanted to start her own business.*

2. *Michael successfully negotiated a settlement with his creditors by agreeing to consolidate his debts and eliminate his impulsive spending habits.*
3. *His negative attitude may jeopardize his ultimate success.*
4. *They asked for compensation for their lost wages and an amendment to the current legislation governing legal strikes.*
5. *The municipal council's agenda included items on the per capita cost for new sidewalks and the capacity of the new land fill.*

## EXERCISE 14

Guess at the meaning of the words written in bold type. Use context and roots if necessary. Then check them out in a dictionary.

1. Many of Shakespeare's plays begin with a **prologue**.
2. The students planned a visit to a **zoological** park to see the lions and tigers..
3. The whales **submerged** slowly and we didn't see them again.
4. The heart surgeon discovered two blocked **coronary** blood vessels.
5. The air was **redolent** with the smell of burning leaves.
6. **Uniformity** is important in the military so everyone wears similar clothing.
7. He gathered all his bills and **calculated** the total amount he owed.
8. Fred, a registered **mortician**, opened his own funeral home last year.
9. Jack **circumnavigated** the globe in his tiny sailboat in just six months.
10. *The National Enquirer* is being sued for **libel** because Samantha can prove that the story about her is untrue.

## EXERCISE 15

Read a magazine article, a page in the newspaper, or a short story. Make a list of all the unfamiliar words. How many of the words do you need to look up to get a basic understanding of the material. How many can you guess at? Find the meaning of each word and use each one in a sentence of your own. Choose several to add to your personal vocabulary list.

**EXERCISE 16**

Set up your own vocabulary building program. Make sure you have at least 20 words on your list at all times. Decide the number of words you can learn in one week and then stick to it. Review your words regularly, even those you have mastered.

**EXERCISE 17**

Review this module and choose at least twenty words you would like to learn.

**EXERCISE 18**

Choose a topic you are interested in and create vocabulary list of at least 20 words that go with it. Share your list with a friend.



<b>VOCABULARY WORK SHEET</b>	
<b>WORD:</b>	<b>Date Entered:</b>
<b>SOURCE:</b>	
<b>SAMPLE USE:</b>	
<b>DICTIONARY DEFINITION:</b>	<b>Synonyms:</b>
<b>ETYMOLOGY:</b>	<b>Root Word:</b>
	<b>Prefix:</b>
	<b>Suffix:</b>
<b>RELATED WORDS (and definitions):</b>	
<b>MNEMONIC</b>	
<b>PRACTICE SENTENCES:</b>	
<b>DATE MASTERED:</b>	

## VOCABULARY WORK SHEET

**WORD:**IMPECCABLE, impeccable

**Date Entered:** Nov 27, 2000

**SOURCE:** People Magazine, Sept 2000.....page 47

**SAMPLE USE:**.Liza was always know for her impeccable manners.

**DICTIONARY DEFINITION:**  
not capable of sinning or liable to sin  
free from fault or blame  
flawless

Synonyms:innocence,  
flawless, correct, guiltless,  
faultless, blameless, above  
suspicion

**ETYMOLOGY:**1531 from Latin *impeccabilis*  
in + peccare - to sin

Root Word: pecc - sin

Prefix: im - not

Suffix: able - adjective

**RELATED WORDS** (and definitions):

None found

**MNEMONIC**

Bluejays have manners at table  
Do **not pecc** at their neighbours  
Even if they are **able**



**PRACTICE SENTENCES:**

His suit was impeccably pressed before he went to the job interview.

His impeccable arguments were very believable.

Their yard was impeccable because they spent every weekend working at it.

**DATE MASTERED:** Dec 17, 2000

**SAMPLE VOCABULARY LIST (BAU)**

acknowledge	ethics	notorious	severe
acquire	external	novel (new)	society
anonymous	famine	opera	solar
artery	feeble	partial	stable
ballot	fondle	penalty	stoic
blend	frugal	polar	supple
breach	gyrate	portal	supplement
cataract	hazy	precise	tempt
cease	immigrant	prejudice	trudge
concise	journalist	preserve	typical
consequence	luminous	prior	vague
consist	lunar	quotation	wager
demote	Marshal	roam	wanton
deprive	maximum	ruthless	wharf
devoid	minimum	sacred	wholesale
dilemma	miser	savour	wrath
drastic	mortal	scarce	zeal
elegant	naughty	senator	

## SAMPLE VOCABULARY LIST (IAU)

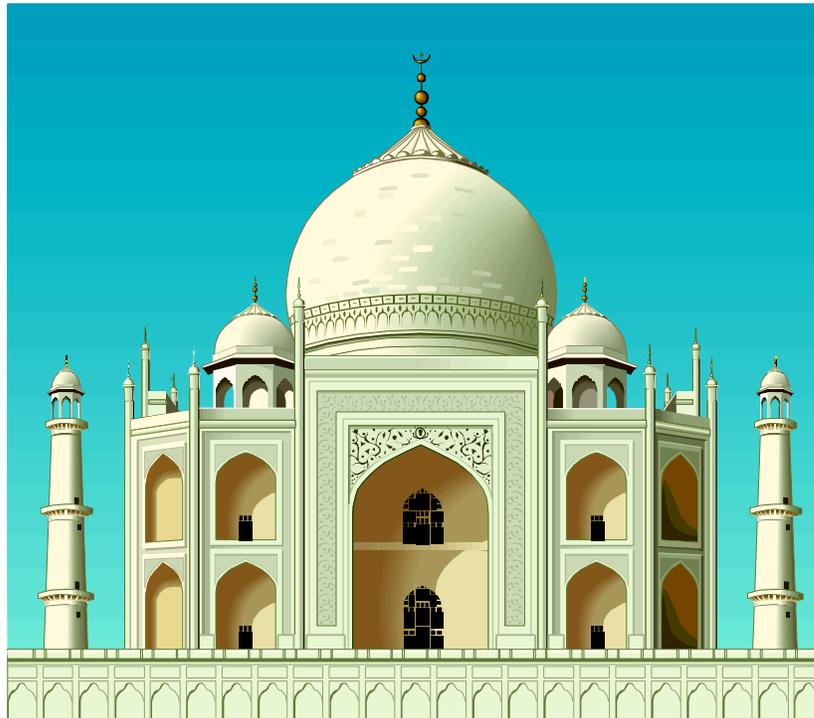
abdicate	belligerent	dictatorship	infamous
abort	benign	digress	infer
absolute	blatant	discreet	inherent
absolve	blight	discriminate	insolent
abstract	botany	docile	integer
abyss	breach	dormant	ironic
accost	cajole	dubious	isthmus
acid	candid	eccentric	jettison
acute	capitalism	emigrate	kindle
adverse	caricature	empathy	kinetic
affluent	catalyst	enigma	kinship
agenda	category	exasperate	knave
align	charisma	expedient	leer
allegation	coerce	explicit	legacy
allusion	coherent	extend	libel
ambiguous	compel	faction	literal
amenity	complacent	ferocious	litigate
amiable	complement	figurative	martial
amnesty	comprehension	flotsam	matriarch
anachronism	concise	fluent	maudlin
analogy	condescend	fraternal	mediator
analysis	condone	frugal	mentor
anarchy	copious	futile	muster
anecdote	coup	genre	myriad
antecedent	credible	ghastly	nausea
apathy	criterion	hiatus	nepotism
apprehensive	culinary	hierarchy	notorious
aptitude	cosmopolitan	hyperbole	nuptial
arbitrary	cynic	hypothetical	oblique
arbitrator	deceitful	icon	omnibus
archaic	deduce	impeccable	opaque
arduous	delude	imperial	pacify
aristocrat	deluge	implement	paradox
assimilate	despot	imply	pathology
austere	destitute	incisive	patriarch
axiom	diagnosis	inept	pauper

periphery  
 pertinent  
 pious  
 poignant  
 precedent  
 preclude  
 predecessor  
 premise  
 profuse  
 promontory  
 proponent  
 protagonist  
 purported  
 quiver (noun)

rash  
 reciprocal  
 recluse  
 recursive  
 redundant  
 refute  
 reproach  
 resolute  
 rustic  
 secular  
 slander  
 sordid  
 squalor  
 squander

static  
 stigma  
 strife  
 subtle  
 succinct  
 synthesis  
 tangible  
 tantalize  
 tantamount  
 temperate  
 tentative  
 tirade  
 translucent

ubiquitous  
 unscrupulous  
 utilitarian  
 utopia  
 vacillate  
 vandalism  
 vex  
 vicarious  
 vindictive  
 wistful  
 woof  
 yen



## **FEEDBACK PROCESS**

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For feedback, please forward your comments to:

New Brunswick Community College - Woodstock  
100 Broadway Street  
Woodstock, NB  
E7M 5C5  
Attention: Kay Curtis  
Tel.: 506-325-4866 Fax.: 506-328-8426

- \* In case of errors due to typing, spelling, punctuation or any proofreading errors, please use the enclosed page to make the proposed correction using red ink and send it to us.
  
- \* For feedback regarding the following items, please use the form below:
  - insufficient explanations;
  - insufficient examples;
  - ambiguity or wordiness of text;
  - relevancy of the provided examples;
  - others...

<b>Page number</b>	<b>Nature of the problem</b>	<b>Proposed solution (include your text if possible)</b>

