

# Strategies for Learning Vocabulary: Notes

Chris Spackman

Language Institute, Columbus State Community College

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# How Big Is Your Vocabulary?

You checked your vocabulary.

Maybe it is big, maybe small.

It doesn't matter.

We are here to learn how to make it **bigger**.

# Learning Vocabulary

Please answer these questions, briefly. We will all answer. I will call on students.

We will think for a minute before starting to answer. Please make notes, if you want to.

- 1 Where do you find new vocabulary words?
- 2 How often do you use vocabulary cards? Everyday? Once a week? Never?
- 3 What software do you use to learn vocabulary?
- 4 Do you know and use “prefixes” and “suffixes”?

# Types of “Remembering”

We will talk about two types of “remembering”: “recognition” and “recall”.

**Recognition** You understand a word when you hear it or see it. This is your “passive vocabulary”.

**Recall** You can think of a word that you need without hearing it or seeing it. This is not as easy as recognition. This is your “active vocabulary” — the words you know **and** can use.

When learning new vocabulary, you want to move words:  
*unknown* → *can recognize* → *can use (recall)*.

# Strategy 0: Vocabulary Cards

“Strategy zero” because it is very important. You should be using vocabulary cards ***even if you don't use any of the other strategies we talk about today.***

But, please also use the other strategies!

- new vocabulary word on one side
- meaning, in native language (L1) or English on the other side
  - you can also have examples on the other side

# Strategy 1: Start with the definition

If you use L1 words

- **step 1:** look at the English word and trying to recall L1 word after you can do that, then switch to ...
- **step 2:** look at the L1 word and try to recall the English word

If you use English definitions

- **step 1:** look at the definitions and try to recall the word after you can do that, then switch to ...
- **step 2:** look at the word and trying to recall the definition

# Strategy 1: Start with the definition (continued)

## Basic vocabulary word routine:

- study about 15 words (your “deck”)
- for each **step 2** word: easy, medium, or difficult?
  - **easy** set aside (your “done pile”); add new word card to your deck
  - **medium** keep in the deck
  - **hard** keep in the deck

## Strategy 2: “Spaced Repetition”

“Spaced repetition” is **the best** way to learn new words

*(Below is a very simple example of spaced repetition)*

- study the words in your deck as usual
- review the words in your “done pile” using spaced repetition:
  - one day later: know it? Leave in done pile. Don’t know it? Put in deck.
  - one week later: know it? Leave in done pile. Don’t know it? Put in deck.
  - two weeks later: know it? Leave in done pile. Don’t know it? Put in deck.
  - one month later: know it? Leave in done pile. Don’t know it? Put in deck.

Computer software (“apps”) make it much easier to do spaced repetition.



## Strategy 3: Use the words in sentences

### See the word in use:

- usage examples in dictionaries and at dictionary web sites

→ Learner's Dictionary <https://www.learnersdictionary.com>

→ Longman Dictionary of American English <https://www.ldoceonline.com>

- search for the word on news websites

→ Breaking News English <https://breakingnewsenglish.com>

→ CNN <https://www.cnn.com>

→ Voice of America <https://www.voanews.com>

## Strategy 4: Learn prefixes and suffixes

If you know the word “do”, you can easily learn several new words by using prefixes and suffixes. For example:

- **redo** — to do again
- **undo** — to change back to how it was before
- **doable** — it can be done
- **undoable** — it cannot be done

# Practice

Next, we will do some practice with Quizlet.

Please go to: [https://quizlet.com/515385261/  
csc-cc-strategies-for-learning-vocabulary-flash-cards/](https://quizlet.com/515385261/csc-cc-strategies-for-learning-vocabulary-flash-cards/)

# Apps and Software

For most people, Quizlet is good enough. If you want more, start with **Anki**.

- Anki (for MS Windows, Mac OSX, & Linux)      <https://apps.ankiweb.net/>
- Anki Droid (for Android phones & tablets)  
    <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ichi2.anki&hl=en>
- Anki Web (web — can link to your Anki app)      <https://ankiweb.net/about>