

A What do you need to learn?

- How many words are there in English?
a) 10,000 b) 100,000 c) 250,000 d) 500,000
- How many words does the average English speaker use in everyday speech?
a) 2,500 b) 5,000 c) 7,500 d) 10,000
- How many words make up 45% of everything written in English?
a) 50 b) 250 c) 1,000 d) 2,500
- What do you think are the twenty most common words in English?

Answers are on page 236. They show the following basic facts about English vocabulary.

- There are many words in English that you don't need at all.
- There are words that you need to be able to use yourself.
- There are other words you need simply to understand when you read or hear them.
- The most common words in English are the grammar words, which you already know.

Clearly you need to spend the most time learning words that you need to be able to use yourself. In the text below, underline the words you want to understand. Then, circle the words you want to understand *and* be able to use.

English vocabulary has a remarkable range, flexibility, and adaptability. Thanks to the periods of contact with foreign languages and its readiness to coin new words out of old elements, English seems to have far more words in its core vocabulary than other languages. For example, alongside *kingly* (from Anglo-Saxon), we find *royal* (from French) and *regal* (from Latin). There are many such sets of words, which add greatly to our opportunities to express subtle shades of meaning at various levels of style.

B What does knowing a new word mean?

It is not enough just to know the meaning of a word. You also need to know the following:

- Which words it is usually associated with, such as
adjectives and nouns (e.g., *classical music*, *common sense*)
verbs and nouns (e.g., *to express an opinion*, *to take sides*)
nouns in phrases (e.g., *in touch with*, *a sense of humor*)
words with prepositions (e.g., *at a loss for words*, *thanks to you*)
- Its grammatical characteristics, for example,
irregular verbs (e.g., *take*, *took*, *taken*)
uncountable nouns (e.g., *luggage*)
nouns that are only used in the plural (e.g., *clothes*)
- How it is pronounced (see Units 4 and 18)
- Its register – whether it is formal, informal, or neutral (see Units 95 and 96)

1. What phrases could you write to help you remember the following words?
a) chilly b) dissuade c) up to my neck d) independent e) get married
2. What grammatical notes could you write next to the following words?
a) scissors b) weather c) teach d) advice e) lose f) pants
3. What pronunciation notes could you write next to the following words?
a) subtle b) catastrophe c) photograph/photography d) answer
4. What notes could you write about the register of the following words?
a) guys b) persons c) people

C Can you learn just by reading or listening to English?

You can help yourself learn English vocabulary by reading and listening to English as much as possible. Rank each item below from 0 to 4 to describe how important the way of learning vocabulary is for you personally (with 4 being the most important). You can add more items to the list if you like.

reading newspapers or magazines	watching TV, movies, or DVDs
listening to podcasts or the radio	listening to CDs or MP3 files
reading books, comics, or blog sites	surfing the Internet
talking to English speakers	attending lectures

D What should you do when you come across new words?

- When you are reading something in English, don't stop to look up every new word or expression in a dictionary – this slows down your reading and your comprehension. Look up only those words that are really important for understanding the text. When you have finished reading, look back at what you have read and then perhaps look up some extra words and write down new expressions that interest you.
- When you listen in English, don't panic when you hear words or expressions that you don't know. Keep listening for the overall meaning.
- When you read or listen to English, it is sometimes possible to guess the meaning of a word you don't know before you look it up. Decide first which part of speech the word is, and then look for clues in its context or form.

Look at the following text. Before you read it, see if you know what the underlined words mean. After you read the text, try to guess the meaning of the underlined words from the context or from the way the word is formed. Then, if necessary, check a dictionary.

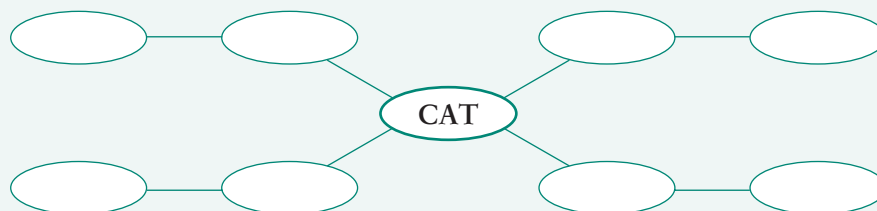
A tortoise is a shelled reptile famed for its slowness and longevity. The giant tortoise of the Galapagos may attain over 1.5 meters in length and have a life span of more than 150 years. Smaller tortoises from southern Europe and North Africa make popular pets. They need to be tended carefully in cool climates and must have a warm place in which they can hibernate.



A Learning associated words together

- Learn words with associated meanings together.

Complete this bubble network for the word *cat*. Add as many other bubbles as you like. Then, if possible, compare networks with your classmates. If you like, add any of their ideas to your own network.



- Learn words that form collocations together. Sometimes similar words do not make equally strong collocations (such as *a big day* or *a big race*, but not *a large day* or *a large race*). The best way to build your collocation knowledge is to notice what other words usually appear with the words you want to learn. This takes a long time, so you should also use a good learner's dictionary to find common collocations.

For these groups of words, decide which words might make the strongest collocations.

draw make write ... <i>a line</i>	<i>point</i> ... a gun a finger a book	utter horrible extreme ... <i>nonsense</i>	<i>highly</i> ... complex enjoyable successful
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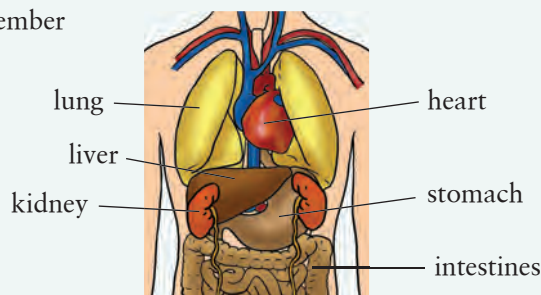
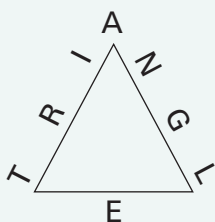
- Learn words based on the same root together.

Can you add any other words or expressions to these two groups?

- | | | |
|----------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. price | priceless | overpriced |
| 2. handy | single-handed | give me a hand |

B Using pictures

- Pictures might help you remember vocabulary visually.



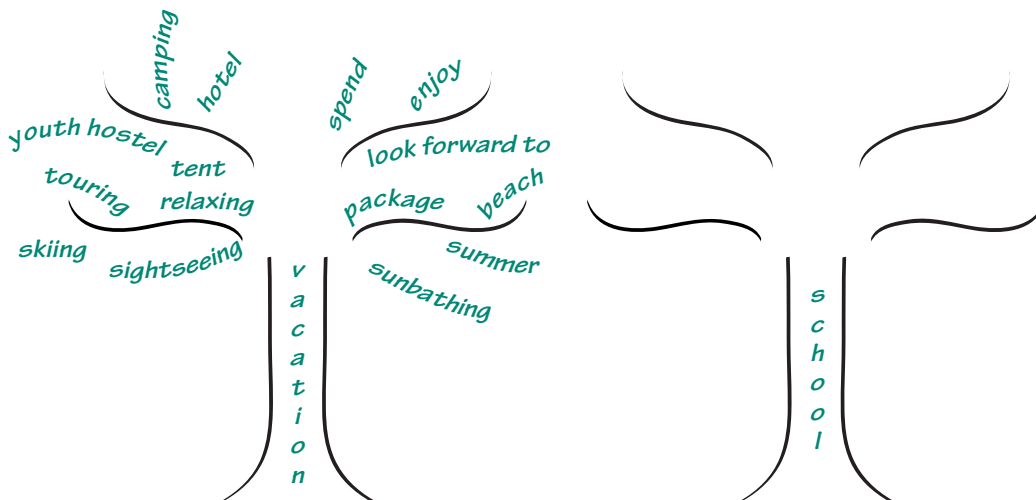
Can you draw any pictures that would help you remember the following vocabulary?

skeleton skinny receipt

C Using diagrams

- Word trees can help you make connections between related words.

Look at the word tree for *vacation*. Now complete a tree for *school*.



- Word forks are a good way of learning adjectives and verbs.

Look at the complete word forks for adjectives that go with *idea* and verbs that go with *a movie*. What words can you use to complete the word forks for *view* and *a ball*?

original		shoot		magnificent		kick	
brilliant		edit		breathhtaking		hit	
unusual	idea	direct	a movie	superb	view	bounce	a ball
great		star in					
excellent		review					

- Tables can also help clarify collocations.

Look at this example of a table. Then complete the sentences below by using the correct form of the verbs *fly*, *drive*, or *ride*.

	<i>a car</i>	<i>a motorcycle</i>	<i>a truck</i>	<i>a horse</i>	<i>a plane</i>
to fly					✓
to drive	✓		✓		
to ride		✓		✓	

- Her mother a truck for 15 years, but now she's retired.
- Have you ever a plane?
- a motorcycle can be very dangerous.