

# SELECTING TIER TWO VOCABULARY TO TEACH

## About this resource

This is for guidance. It is intended to help teachers identify which words to highlight at the start of a new topic.

### Choosing words to teach

#### Selecting Tier 2 words

**Importance and utility:** Words that are characteristic of mature language users and appear frequently across a variety of domains.

**Instructional potential:** Words that can be worked with in a variety of ways so that students can build rich representations of them and of their connections to other words and concepts.

**Conceptual understanding:** Words for which students understand the general concept but provide precision and specificity in describing the concept.

Source: Beck, Isabel L. McKeown, M., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Choosing Words to Teach*. In *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (15-30). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

#### Three things to keep in mind when deciding which words to teach

As pupils progress, their understanding of Tier 2 words becomes increasingly important. Tier 2 words have the following characteristics.

1

How generally useful is the word? Is it a word that learners are likely to meet often in other texts? Will it be of use to learners in describing their own experiences?

2

How does the word relate to other words, to ideas that learners know or have been learning? Does it directly relate to some topic of study in the classroom? Or might it add a dimension to ideas that have been developed?

3

What does the word bring to a text or situation? What role does the word play in communicating the meaning of the context in which it is used?

If the word can be explained in known words and can apply to what students might talk or write about, it is an appropriate word to teach regardless of the pupil's age.

Alex Quigley author of *Closing the Vocabulary Gap* highlights how words that will be used throughout a child's education have a better chance of being used in exams if instilled from Year 7.

### You try it

Select a text that your students will be reading. It can be a story, a textbook, or an excerpt from a chapter, book or novel.

List all the words that are likely to be unfamiliar to students.

#### Analyse the word list:

- Which words can be categorised as Tier 2 words?
- Which of the Tier Two words are most necessary for comprehension?
- Are there other words needed for comprehension? Which ones?

#### On the basis of your analysis, which words will you teach?

- Which will need only brief attention?
- Which will you give more elaborate attention to?

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