

PART 1: A Closer Look at Vocabulary

The material in this folder is intended to be used at the beginning of each lesson to help students develop the vocabulary needed for the Section. The folder contains:

- Vocabulary Lists (Core and Supplemental)
- Graphics for the Core Vocabulary

Graphics for the Core Vocabulary

The graphics pages are provided to help instructors introduce health literacy terms and concepts to students. They are often thematically linked, so one graphic may be used to represent several vocabulary terms. For example, “physician,” “doctor,” “patient,” “treat you,” “diagnose your problem,” and “prescribe medication” are all taught using the same picture. The pages can be printed out, and, if possible, laminated on card stock. They can also be used to make overhead transparencies. Corresponding **Flashcards** (one set with a label and one set without a label) are also provided for student practice.

Vocabulary Lists

In every Section there are two separate lists.

1. **Core Vocabulary** – These are the words and phrases on which the basic Section content is based, and for which graphics are provided.

On our website you will find a link to view and print a complete list of the Materials’ **Core Vocabulary**, sorted alphabetically and sorted by Section.

The truth is that for most native English speakers, this vocabulary will not be new or unfamiliar. The majority of intermediate level ABE students will not need to engage in special activities to learn the Core Vocabulary because the words will be, for the most part, already in their oral (spoken and listening) vocabularies. **Each lesson, do a quick oral check of students’ knowledge first**, so you don’t waste time “teaching” terms they already know well. English Language Learners, on the other hand, may need to actively engage in activities and exercises to master some of the Core Vocabulary. For more discussion of this, please see the Instruction Guide **Part 4: A Closer Look at ESL Activities.**)

Check students’ Core Vocabulary knowledge by displaying the corresponding graphic and asking questions like:

What is this a picture of?

Where (or when) would I hear someone talk about ‘x’?

Who might use/need/want ‘x’?

What is your experience with ‘x’?

Can you use ‘x’ in a sentence?

If you are satisfied that students already have a good grasp of the Core Vocabulary for that Section, there is no need to address it any further. If you hit upon a word or phrase that needs more elaboration, you will generally find help defining and explaining it in the Reading Passage for that Section.

PLEASE NOTE: You will notice that definitions for certain medical terms from the Core Vocabulary list, such as “blood pressure” and “allergy,” are provided. These have been added as a support for instructors, should they wish help in explaining the terms more fully to students.

2. **Supplemental Vocabulary** – In several Sections, a great many medical terms appear in the Supplemental Activities. Often instructors will be familiar in general with the concepts, for example “coma,” “diabetes,” or “colonoscopy,” but will need some support in defining or explaining these terms to students. Other terms may be new even to instructors, for example “MAOI Drugs,” or “phytochemicals.” Fairly technical definitions are included in the Supplemental Vocabulary List **as a support for instructors**. It is **NOT necessary to pre-teach all of the terms in the supplemental lists**, or for students to learn them all. Which, if any, of the terms students should study and learn is up to the instructor’s discretion. If there is relevance to a student’s life and/or there’s a need to know the term, then by all means use and learn these words. Lean towards selecting words that are more commonly known or whose roots appear in other words, such as respiratory tract, respirator, respiration.

Potentially new and more challenging vocabulary terms may also arise naturally in oral discussions related to the core lesson. For example, in Section 1, the words “procrastinate” and “proactive” could easily be incorporated into a discussion about adults having preventive medical check-ups, even though the words do not appear in the text. Don’t shy away from introducing students to such words if they come up.

What to Do with Unfamiliar Vocabulary

Depending on how many hours students attend class and what their reading levels are, choose anywhere from 2-10 new words per week. Briefly introduce, explain, and give quick definitions and examples of new vocabulary PRIOR to reading a text, or DURING reading if necessary. Of course vocabulary can often be learned incidentally, just by reading the text itself. It is therefore also advisable to let students use context clues to figure out a word’s meaning, as long as the text adequately reveals it. Here’s an example from one of the supplemental reading activities, in which the meaning of “bombard” is revealed by the text itself:

Whether it’s an ad for a cold medicine or one promising to clear up your skin in 24 hours, Americans are bombarded with drug information. “Even Saturday morning TV is full of commercials for drugs, vitamins and herbal remedies,” says Dr. Montagne.

Research strongly suggests that you learn new vocabulary by experiencing the new concepts and new words many times in different contexts. The key to real vocabulary learning is engagement, NOT rote memorization or copying. The key to engagement is helping students elaborate upon a word, in other words expand it in detail; use it in different contexts; draw upon their own background knowledge and experiences; and make multiple “connections” to the word. **But save these more detailed Word Elaborations for AFTER reading.**

Use important new vocabulary orally in context as much as possible. The more encounters we have with a word, the better it can become embedded in our knowledge base. Since most

adult literacy students are not likely to do extensive reading, giving them opportunities to HEAR and/or SAY a new word in context is especially important. Find ways to creatively weave vocabulary words your students are studying (and have studied) into your oral conversations with them. (e.g. “Remember when I gave you that confusing homework assignment and you all bombarded me with questions?”)

If they are ready for it, we suggest having a special place in a designated notebook for students to record **Word Elaborations**. Three-ring binders work best because students can rearrange the pages in alphabetical order as they expand their entries.

Here are the steps in creating **Word Elaborations** with students:

1. Print the word in syllables, and mark its syllables and phonetic attributes (such as vowel teams, silent letters etc.) according to whatever system you have taught with respect to decoding. **Make a special note of prefixes, suffixes and base or root words** if relevant.
2. Give a **paraphrased dictionary definition** which captures the core idea or gist of the word’s meaning. Usually the instructor is responsible for generating this.
3. Give **examples of the word’s application**. Instructors should make every effort to **connect examples to their students’ experiences and knowledge**. Elicit students’ help in generating these. For example, if the term is “blood pressure,” you and students might generate analogous terms such as “water pressure,” “oil pressure,” “pressure-cooker,” and “working under pressure.”
4. Encourage **students to generate their own examples of the word in context** by asking a specific question which incorporates the word. For example, if the word is “procrastinate,” you might ask – “What sorts of things might people procrastinate over?” If the word is “respirator,” you might ask - “What are two reasons why someone would need to use a respirator?”
5. Additional Word Elaboration Options: Some words lend themselves to illustrations or sketches. By all means, encourage students to incorporate simple drawings whenever relevant, if they are comfortable with this. Other words lend themselves to acting out or dramatizing. Be prepared to ham it up with students, and encourage them to mimic you. And finally, you can decide if you want to include any RELATED words, such as words with the same root, or words that are synonyms or antonyms of the target word. For example, if the word is “immunization,” the root word would be “immune”, and related words might include “immunity,” “auto-immune” and “immune system.”

Sample elaborations of Supplemental Vocabulary words.

anēmic

anemia + ic = anemic

anemia: not enough red blood cells in the blood (There are many different reasons that someone may be anemic.)

The doctor recommended that Joe eat more meat and take supplements because he was anemic.

How an anemic person feels or looks:

- tired
- weak
- short of breath
- pale

What else can be described as anemic?

- an old car
- a paint color
- a weak attempt to do something

extraction

extract + tion

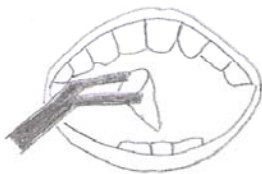
extract: to pull out; to remove

Maria had a painful tooth extraction.

Some other examples:

- extract a splinter
- extract information from a book
- extract information from someone
- vanilla extract
- herbal extract

Opposite of: inject, insert, to put in

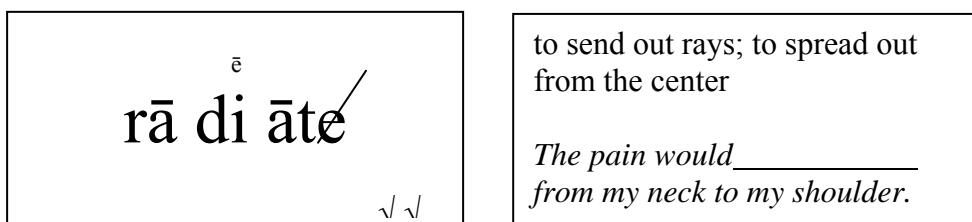


The Health Literacy Materials provide some activities for practicing Core Vocabulary, such as crossword puzzles and cloze (fill-in-the-blanks) activities. However, instructors will need to create their own reinforcement activities for words which fall outside of the Core Vocabulary.

Quick Study Cards

Quick study cards are similar to Word Elaborations described above, but far less detailed. These index cards have the target word printed on one side, with relevant phonetic and syllable markings. On the other side there is a brief definition and a “cloze”-type sentence (in other words the target word is left out and a blank line substituted). The sentence should be student-generated, with instructor assistance given as necessary.

Here’s an example:



Instructors and students go quickly through the cards looking randomly at **either** one side or the other. If the student looks at the word, then he supplies the definition. If he is shown the definition and cloze sentence, then he supplies the word. Check marks on the card itself allow you to keep track of how many times the student was able to supply the correct answer.

┌ To watch a Literacy Solutions’ [Tutoring Techniques](#) video clip showing how to use Quick Study Cards to practice new vocabulary, [CLICK HERE](#).

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Activities Can Assist Vocabulary Learning

Phonemic awareness is the ability to grasp that our speech can be broken into smaller units of sound. Individual sound segments are called phonemes. When we hear the word “tooth” spoken, we can detect three distinct sounds, and the order in which they come: /t/, /oo/, and /th/. Each of those three sounds is a separate phoneme. Similarly, when we hear the word “toothache,” we can distinguish two distinct beats: ‘tooth’ and ‘ache.’ The second beat has two phonemes, /ā/ and /k/.

Phonemic awareness is an auditory skill that supports beginning readers as they learn to link spoken sounds to their written form – in other words specific letters or groups of letters. Those letters appear in a sequence which represents the sequence of the oral sounds.

Research has shown that the most effective way to help struggling students unlock the sound-symbol system of the language is a combination of phonemic awareness and systematic phonics instruction. Systematic phonics means a program that works its way logically and methodically through the sound-letter coding system, syllable patterns, and word structures that underlie the language.

PLEASE NOTE: The [Beginning Level Health Literacy Materials](#) provide a number of activities designed to support and reinforce phonemic awareness and phonics skills in the context of health information. These activities are found in the folder labeled “Basic Skills and Vocabulary.”)

Hearing “Beats” (Syllables)

One of the greatest challenges facing readers in a health-related context is the abundance of medical terms, which are, more often than not, highly multi-syllabic. Practice breaking a long word down into its syllable chunks or “beats” is a key step to pronouncing, decoding and spelling it, all important if a student is going to adopt that word into his or her vocabulary. For this reason, a useful phonemic awareness activity is encouraging students to orally repeat words from the Section, then chunk them into syllables. An effective way to do this is to say, **“Let’s clap the beats”** in a given word, then model the correct response along with students. The more automatic the chunking becomes on an oral level, the easier it will be to tackle the actual words in print, syllable by syllable.

Instructors can choose to focus on words with 2, 3, 4, or even 5 syllables, ranging from a word like “fever” (2 beats) to a word like “antibiotics” (5 beats). **It is suggested that in every lesson instructors combine this oral phonemic awareness activity with vocabulary review.** This can be as simple as –

Repeat this word - ‘emergency.’ (Students say “emergency.”)

Good. Now let’s clap the beats together. (All say/clap “e – mer – gen – cy.”)

Good. What are some examples of an emergency?

Instructors are also urged to link the oral activity to phonics instruction, by printing a few selected words on the board and showing students directly and explicitly how they are decoded and encoded (spelled). We recommend you “scoop” (underline in a sweeping motion from left to right) one syllable at a time, and analyze the sounds and letter patterns “beat by beat.” Ideally, the words chosen for analysis should allow you to **review** the phonics concepts being taught/learned in a systematic phonics program. For example, if a student has only been introduced to short vowel sounds, which appear primarily in closed syllable words, you might choose to analyze the words “clinic” or “dentist” on the board.

Example 1

Students repeat the word “dentist,” then clap it in beats, “den – tist.”

Ask: **How many beats are there?** (2)

What’s the first beat? (den)

What vowel sound do you hear in the middle of ‘den’? (/ĕ/)

What letter makes that sound? (‘e’)

“den” is spelled ‘d’ ‘e’ ‘n’

Print the syllable on the board. Use a separate color for vowels, so they stand out:

dĕn

Say the next beat. (tist)

Is the vowel sound the same or different? (different)

What vowel is making the /ĭ/ sound? (‘i’)

Help me pull apart the sounds in ‘tist’: /t/- / ĭ /- /s/- /t/. Print the letters.

Remember, since there must be a vowel in every beat, there are obviously two beats in this word. We scoop them like this.

Draw the scoops under ‘den’ and ‘tist’ as you read each beat.



Can you think of three reasons why someone would visit a dentist?

Example 2

Students repeat the word “poison,” and then clap it in beats, “poi – son.”

Print the word on the board using a different color for vowels. Scoop the syllables.



Ask: **What’s the first beat?** (poi)

What letters are making the /oi/ sound? (‘oi’) **Yes, the vowel team ‘oi.’**

What sound do you hear at the beginning of the second beat? (/z/)

Yes, I hear a /z/ sound too. What letter is making the /z/ sound? (‘s’)

That’s right. Sometimes ‘s’ can sound like /z/.

Let’s read the word. Run your finger along the scooping lines as you read. (poison)

How are the sounds /zun/ spelled? (s-o-n)

What happens when someone swallows poison?

Vocabulary Charts

Several of the Sections contain articles for extended reading. As a pre-reading activity, instructors give students a list of vocabulary terms from the article (suggested words are provided in the Supplemental Vocabulary List), then ask them to categorize each word according to the following levels of knowledge: I don’t know the word at all; I have seen or heard it but don’t know the meaning; I think I know the meaning; or, I know a meaning. Encourage students, whether working in pairs, groups, or with the whole class, to share what they know (and don’t know) with each other. Not only does this serve to increase interaction it can also build confidence and camaraderie.

Supplemental Activities

Look for additional Vocabulary practice in the Supplemental Activities Folder. Vocabulary activities such as fill-in-the-blank, matching words with definitions, and crossword puzzles are all denoted with the code **(V)**.