

- Before beginning a descriptive task (describing a picture or a landscape), students should collect location identifiers, places, positions, with the appropriate prepositions (“in front of the house stands...”, “in the background I can see...”, “above the mountains...”, or possibilities to express one’s feelings (“I like particularly...”, “I think it is nice that...”, “I don’t quite understand why...”, “I could imagine that the artist...” etc.
- Before writing a text in which, for instance, the advantages and disadvantages of life as an immigrant are considered, a great variety of phrases should be collected to express one’s feelings in a more nuanced way than just “I think...”, such as: “I believe that...”, “In my experience...”, “In my view...”, “In my perspective...”, “I am convinced that...”, “I doubt that...” etc. Here as well, it is recommended that students first practice these expressions orally. In their subsequent writing assignments, they should then have to apply at least three of the phrases from the collected list.

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Suggestions for vocabulary building II: working with gap-fill exercises and alternative word tests, etc.

Goal

In contrast to the suggestions referenced in #14, the following are more structured with very clear guidelines.

1. Texts with gap-fill exercises

1st – 9th grade

15 minutes



Materials:
Prepared gap-fill exercises.

Working with gap-fill exercises is a more traditional, rather passive-reproductive type of approach, which can also be used to assess how much learning has taken place. This type of exercise contributes to increasing students’ active vocabulary only with additional practice of the target words in an applied context.

Procedure: The instructor prepares a worksheet with a text that has some gaps, which must be filled with the missing words. (“Tina picks _____ in the garden”; “Madrid is the _____ of Spain”). It is also possible to use illustrations which must be labelled.

Tina picks _____ in the garden.
 Madrid is the _____ of Spain.
 Mother buys bread at the _____.
 I like to _____ a glass of milk.
 An exciting film is being shown at the _____.
 The doctor _____ some medicine.
 In the _____ we are going to the beach.
 A knight wears _____.
 The flag _____ in the wind

bakery	prescribes	cinema
drink	capital	raspberries
armour	summer	flutters

- Simplified variant: fill in the gaps with the appropriate word from the list below. This approach is suitable for 1st–2nd graders (simple sentences and words), as well as for factual topics where a specific vocabulary word is required. Example: a factual text about farming, or a diagram of

the human body; a map of rivers where the correct word can be written in the correct place. Prerequisite: the materials must have been previously discussed in class.

Follow-up: the students then write their own sentences, using the words from the exercises.

- More difficult variant: the students must find the missing words themselves to fill the gaps. Here, too, the prerequisite is that the material has been studied previously (including the terms in the standard language and orthography). If it is clear which terms have to be inserted into the gaps, this approach is suitable for learning assessment (e.g. for terms from national history). In other cases, various answers may be possible and can be discussed (e.g. "Dini _____ through the bushes, he was very frightened". Answers: hurried, sneaked, ran...).
- Variant "poems/rhyming words": filling the gaps with words that rhyme. The difficulty level can be increased, depending on the level of student proficiency. Example (for the lower levels): "In a house/ there lives a _____".
- Gap-fill exercises can fulfill special and interesting functions in language diagnostics when grammatically important elements, such as case endings, or articles are left out and must be filled into the gaps. Example: "Toni is afraid __ the dog"; "I am going to give ____ mother a kiss". For this exercise, the base form of a verb may be given in brackets, which then has to be changed into the correct form: "Zuza was in Italy. She (to spend)_____ her vacation there"). The results provide valuable information about the students' grammatical competence in their first language.

2. Working with alternative word tests

2nd–9th grade

30 minutes



Materials:

Prepared exercises (see right).

With alternative word tests, certain words must be replaced by others (often synonyms). This provides an active vocabulary extension – whereby all students are included and the vocabulary is repeated and practiced.

Variants (appropriate for lower level and above, depending on the complexity):

- The instructor provides a sheet of paper with a table and a sentence on top, which reads, for example "it is snowing heavily today" or "my mother often drinks water from the blue glass". There is a column for each word or sentence. In the next column of the table, the students should write similar sentences or sentence parts (or the opposite), such as: "it rained a little yesterday", "your sister never slurps her tea from a red bottle" etc.
- The instructor provides a short text (½ page; wide linespacing) with the following instructions: "replace all underlined words (or: all nouns, verbs, adjectives) with words that have approximately the same meaning!"
- As above, but with instructions to replace all words with their opposites, example: "the tiny dog" → "the giant cat"; "the man ran through the woods" → "the woman crawled across the meadow"). An entertaining extension, which is ideal for working in pairs, is writing "opposite texts" i.e. re-writing an entire story or newspaper article in the opposite sense).
- As above, but grammatically oriented: change all nouns from the singular to plural form and make the verbs agree!", "change all verbs from the present to the past tense", "replace all adjectives with their comparative forms (good → better)" etc.
- Teaching stylistics: The students receive a text (prepared by the instructor) which comprises many repetitions of the same words and other flaws (e.g. each sentence begins with "and then" and there are too many

