

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



general words like “go” and “make”. The students work on the text in pairs; the improved texts are then compared.

- A much expanded form of the alternative word exercise is the classic re-narration of a story or text. In this exercise, the students re-tell a text (story, factual text, episode, short fairy tale) in their own words after listening to the original 1–3 times. This form is not very attractive as an exercise, owing to its somewhat artificial nature, but it can be very beneficial for vocabulary building. Communicative and motivating variants: each student receives a short text, i. e., a newspaper article. They read the text twice and then repeat the content in their own words. The original articles are then numbered and displayed on the right side of the classroom. The re-narrated versions are labelled with letters (a, b, ...) and hung up on the left side. The students read the re-narrated texts and try to match them up with the original texts. They also take notes of anything missing or inaccurately re-narrated. The exercise concludes with a group discussion.
- See also #16.3: parallel texts/generative writing.

3. Other suggestions

- For playful vocabulary building, see the ABC-stories in #6.3 above (example: All bears climb down, elephants follow giraffes).

city	profession	verb	animal	adjective	points
Bern	baker	breed	bear	blue	5
Geneva	gardener	give	giraffe	great	5
London	lawyer	-	lion	lazy	4

- The same applies for the classic “geography-game”, in which for each letter of the alphabet, the players must write down a city, country, river, etc. (Rules: all players receive a chart with the rubrics, e. g. city, country, etc.. As a student calls out the letters of the alphabet, another one shouts “stop!”, and a word is chosen that begins with that chosen letter. The charts can be modified, of course, to include a noun, a verb, an adjective, a feeling, etc.