

Initiating Session

Introducing the Words and Rating Word Knowledge

- Ask students to open their notebooks to the vocabulary words selected for this set of study and refer to your own display of the words.
- Using the board, chart paper, or a document camera to illustrate, create the “Word Evaluation” chart for the class. Give students time to recreate the chart in their notebooks (or, you may decide to create a handout for students).

Note: After students have become accustomed to the chart, you may find it easier to convert it to a numbering system, with “1” as the lowest level and “4” indicating thorough knowledge of the word.

Word Evaluation

Word	I know it, can explain it, and use it...	I know something about it and can connect it to something...	I have seen or heard it...	I have never seen or heard it...

- Explain to the class that researchers have noted that there are “levels” of word knowledge. In other words, it’s not as simple as “you either know it or you don’t.” Take a minute to explain the differences between each level on the chart. Tell students that some researchers who study vocabulary development recommend that students analyze their level of word knowledge before studying new words.
- Model for students how they should fill in the chart by listing the words and placing an “X” or check on the continuum to indicate their knowledge of each word.

- Take a minute to survey the class's ratings of each new word. You might, for example, ask students to raise their hands if they rated more than two words at the highest level. Use this feedback to guide your decisions about how much time to devote to individual words.
- Tell students that over the next few days they will engage in some study activities that will help them turn less familiar words into ones they can explain and use.
- Provide students with accessible definitions for the chosen words. Dictionary definitions tend to be ungainly and often result in awkward misuse of new words; instead, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan recommend that teachers "(1) Characterize the word and how it is typically used. (2) Explain the meaning in everyday language" (35). For example, they note that the word "morbid" has a dictionary definition of "not healthy or normal," which could easily mislead students in its use. For a student-friendly definition, they suggest something like, "showing a great interest in horrible, gruesome details, especially about death" (38).
- After class, review the rating forms from each student. Be sure to return these prior to wrapping up or assessing a round of vocabulary instruction.