



Figure 1 The Writing Center and Academic Resource Center logo

IMPROVING YOUR VOCABULARY



Figure 2 A drawing of a little girl reading a book while sitting on a stack of books

Have you ever learned a new word and then forgotten it immediately, only to see it again and kick yourself for not learning it well the first time? Well, do not feel bad because learning new words takes practice.

Here are some tips to help you:

- 1) Whenever you see a new word, stop everything. Look up the definition of the word. ***Look at all the definitions of the word; they may be different.**
- 2) It can help to learn the **origin** of the word. Many times, there is something interesting that can help you remember it. Try to tell yourself a story associated with the word, or make a sentence with it to stick in your brain.
- 3) If you see that a word has a **root, prefix, or suffix**, recognize the root and remember its own meaning.
- 4) Take notice of **synonyms** and **antonyms**, so you can become familiar with similar words and their opposites. You may find a word you know already, which will help your comprehension of the new word.

- 5) **Write some sentences** with your new word. You can also type the word into the search engine on your Internet browser and read articles that use the word. Practice using the word's synonyms and antonyms.
- 6) Believe it or not, **learning a new language** helps your English. For example, the word for "teeth" in Italian is "i *denti*," like the English word for "dentist."
- 7) Try writing **creative sentences** with the new word. You can even write a story!
- 8) **Use your new word in conversation** that same day, with a friend in person or chatting online. If your friend does not know the word, define it for them. Teaching a new word to someone else will help you understand and remember more quickly, because you will be using your own words.
- 9) **Read, read, read!** Reading improves your vocabulary immensely. Just make sure to follow these steps to remember the words.

Imagine you come across this sentence whilst reading:

Ex. "Assiduous and frequent questioning is indeed the first key to wisdom... for by doubting we come to inquiry; through inquiring we perceive the truth..." –Pierre Abelard

- 1) *assiduous*- adjective- Perseverance showing care and effort.

- 2) **assiduous (adj.)**

1530s, from Latin *assiduus* "attending; continually present, incessant; busy; constant,"

*from *assidere* "to sit down to," thus "constantly occupied" at one's work; from *ad* "to" (see **ad-**) + *sedere* "to sit" (see **sedentary**). The word acquired a taint of "servility" in 18c.

Related: *Assiduously*; *assiduousness*.

*When using etymology, we can see the origin of the word, which helps to remember it. Think of someone “sitting” at his or her desk, working hard, and is therefore persistent.

3) Synonyms: diligent, careful, meticulous, or thorough

4) Here are some sentences using the word “assiduous” pulled from articles on the Internet. When learning new words, it is important to see how it is used.

- a. Because Jane took *assiduous* notes, she outperformed every student in class.
- b. With an *assiduous* attitude, we will finish the project on time.
- c. If you give up easily, then you do not have an *assiduous* mindset.
- d. His *assiduous* cancer research won him the AACR Award.

Notice how the word “assiduous,” as an adjective, is followed by a noun (The nouns are underlined).

The sentences above were found using the website, Wordsinasentence.com. This is just one of many helpful tools on the Internet.

Exercise:

Find an article in a newspaper or magazine with a new word. Try to guess the word’s meaning before looking it up in the dictionary. Then, go through steps 1-8. Use the space below for your work.

This handout uses information from these sources:

Online Etymology Dictionary. 2012. Web. 9 January 2014. <http://www.etymonline.com/>

Words in a Sentence.com 2013. Web. 9 January 2014.

<http://wordsinasentence.com/assiduous-in-a-sentence/>

Helpful Handouts at the Writing Center: See *Synonyms and Antonyms*.

For more handouts, please visit our website at www.lavc.edu/writingcenter.

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