### **Build Vocabulary Muscles**

Just like a body workout, a brain workout for vocabulary should not be boring. Doing the same activity over and over will not help the brain develop the necessary new neural connections. Teachers should expose students to the same vocabulary words in a variety of ways: visual, audio, tactile, kinesthetic, graphically, and orally. The list below of 17 different types of exposures follows the design of the [Six Steps for Effective Vocabulary Instruction](http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/104017/chapters/An-ASCD-Study-Guide-for-Building-Background-Knowledge-for-Academic-Achievement%40-Research-on-What-Works-in-Schools.aspx), a set of recommendations by education researcher [Robert Marzano](https://www.marzanoresearch.com/). These 17 repeated exposures begin with introductory activities and end with games.

1. Have students start with a "sort" by having them separate out the words in ways that make sense to them. (Ex: "words I know vs. words I don't know" or "words that are nouns, verbs, or adjectives")

2. Provide students with a description, explanation, or example of the new term. (Note: Having students look up words in dictionaries is *not useful* for teaching vocabulary. If the vocabulary word list is not associated with or taken from a text, try and provide a context for the word or introduce direct experiences that can give students examples of the term.)

3. Tell a story or show a video that integrates the vocabulary word(s). Have students create their own videos using the word(s) to share with others.

4. Ask students to find or create pictures that explain the word(s). Have students create symbols, graphics or comic strips to represent the word(s).

5. Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words. According to Marzano, this is an important "repetition" that must be included.

6. If applicable, use [morphology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morphology_%28linguistics%29) and highlight the prefixes, suffixes, and root words (decoding) that will help students remember the meaning of the word.

7. Have students create lists of synonyms and antonyms for the word. (Note: Students can combine #4, #5, #6, #7 into the [Frayer model](http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/frayer-model), a four-square graphic organizer for building student vocabulary.)

8. Offer incomplete [analogies](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/analogy) for students to complete or allow students to write (or draw) their own analogies. (Ex: Medicine:illness as law:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_).

9. Have students engage in conversation using vocabulary words. Students can be in pairs to share and discuss their definitions ([Think-Pair-Share](http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/using-think-pair-share-30626.html)). This is particularly important for EL students who need to develop speaking and listening skills.

10. Have students create a "concept map"or graphic organizer that has students draw an illustration representing vocabulary words to help them think about related concepts and examples.

11. Develop [word walls](http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/World_Walls_-_A_Support_for_Literacy_in_Secondary_School_Classrooms.pdf) that display vocabulary words in different ways. Word walls are more effective when they are interactive, with words that can be easily added, removed or rearranged. Use pocket charts, or index cards with peel-and-stick Velcro, or peel-and-stick magnetic strips.

12. Have students use the activities on mobile vocabulary apps: [Quizlet;](https://quizlet.com/) [IntelliVocab for SAT](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cls.power&hl=en), etc.

13. Cover a wall with paper and have students create word posters or graffiti the walls with vocabulary scribbles.

14. Create [crossword puzzles](https://www.puzzle-maker.com/CW/) or have student design their own crossword puzzles (free software programs available) using vocabulary words.

15. Have students interview a word by teams as a class or small group activity. Give one team a word and list of interview questions. Have students “become” the word and write answer to questions. Without revealing the word, someone acts as the interviewer and asks the questions to guess the word.

16. Organize the activity "[Kick Me](https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/making-vocabulary-lesson-interactive)": Students find answers to blanks on a worksheet by looking at the words that the teacher has put on students’ backs using labels. This encourages movement in the lesson thus increasing student focus, engagement, and retention of information.

17. Have students play games that are adapted for vocabulary words and definitions: Pictionary, Memory, Jeopardy, Charades, $100,000 Pyramid, Bingo. Games like these help teachers energize students and guide them in the review and use of vocabulary in collaborative and cooperative ways.