There is a strong relationship between vocabulary and comprehension, and student achievement. Effective vocabulary instruction across grade levels and content areas is key increasing student learning and achievement.

The following ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ provide a great place to start when implementing effective vocabulary instruction in your setting.

**Do’s**

- **You should** provide multiple exposures to words. New words are learned and meaning is shaped through many exposures over time.

- **You should** have students create nonlinguistic representations for key words - images, pictographs, and acting out new words supports word learning.

- **You should** focus on academic vocabulary for instruction - Tier 2 and Tier 3 terms. See "No Tears for Tiers: Common Core Vocabulary Made Simple" for guidance.

- **You should** support independent reading in a variety of genres and text types. Wide reading builds a rich, useful, and diverse vocabulary.

**Don’ts**

- **You should not** have students only look up words in the dictionary and copy definitions. Don’t over-rely on dictionary definitions.

- **You should not** teach too many words at one time. Students will only learn words at a cursory level and quickly forget them.

- **You should not** introduce words and promptly forget about them. New words are learned over time through a variety of exposures.

- **You should not** think you need to assess every single word. Use a variety of assessment methods to determine word learning.

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integrate word walls into vocabulary instruction and practice. See "Top Tips for Word Walls" for great ideas.

You should harness the power of digital tools for practice, review, and to connect words to images. See "21 Digital Tools to Build Vocabulary" for ideas.

You should directly teach individual words. Pronounce each word, spell it, provide a kid-friendly definition and encourage elaborations & nonlinguistics.

You should read aloud to students - picture books, trade books, and informational text. Reading aloud exposes students to higher-level vocabulary.

You should create semantic maps and webs of words to make word learning visible. It is critical to discuss the relationships of words to support word learning.

You should teach students independent word-learning strategies. These include context clues, word parts, reference tools, and strategies for personalized word learning.

You should not arbitrarily assign lists of words for students to learn. Connect vocabulary to a context - text, language, writing - in order for word learning to be rooted in meaning.

You should not rely solely on leveled books for word learning. Children's literature, including picture books, will introduce students to advanced vocabulary within context.

You should not forget the power of a print-rich environment to support word learning. Classroom libraries, books, read alouds & discussion flood students with language and new vocabulary.

You should not forget that context clues are more reliable for informational and expository text than for fiction and narrative.

You should not get overwhelmed with the amount of words students need to know. Focusing on cross-curricular terms (Tier 2 words) can make an important difference in academic growth.

You should not arbitrarily assign lists of words for students to learn. Connect vocabulary to a context - text, language, writing - in order for word learning to be rooted in meaning.