

Guidelines for Teaching Vocabulary

As you plan lessons and activities to teach new words, consider following these nine guidelines that grew out of the model you just read about. And consider the teacher-contributed ideas that support them.

Nine Guidelines for Teaching Vocabulary

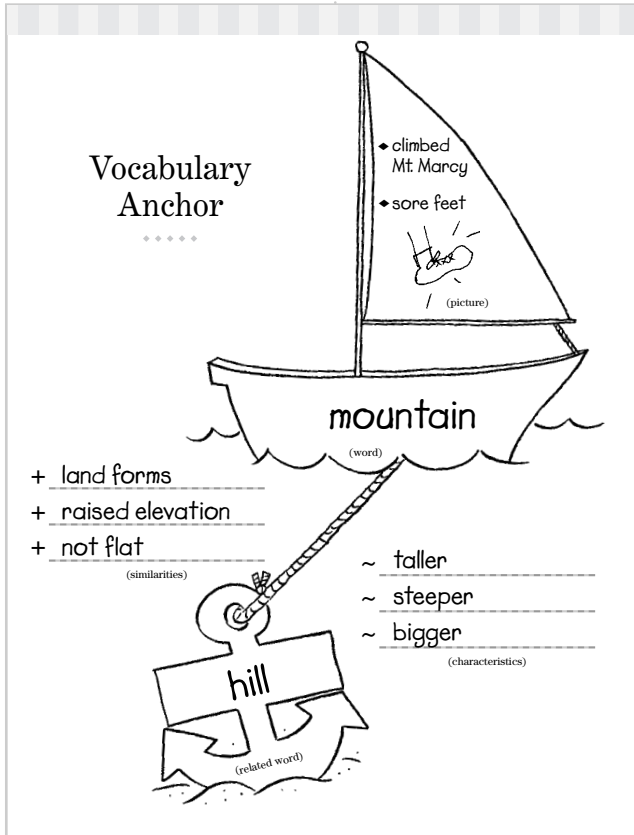
- © Connect Prior Knowledge
- © Share Metacognitive Knowledge
- © Actively Engage Students in a Variety of Ways
- © Create a Word-Rich Environment
- © Don't Fall Into the "Pre-Teaching Vocabulary" Trap
- © Apply Strategies Across the Curriculum
- © Teach Strategies for Independence
- © Share Benefits of Word Learning
- © Don't Forget Mnemonics

Connect Prior Knowledge

Simply repeating a new word isn't enough to help students like Lakeisha and Mary Beth learn it. Instead, it's important to tap into their personal schema, the prior knowledge they have stored in their long-term memories (Rumelhart, 1980). This means connecting the word to—or differentiating it from—what they already know (Rumelhart & Norman, 1981). For example, Lakeisha may link the unfamiliar word “traverse” to www.travelocity.com on the Internet, where she and her mother get airline tickets. She may differentiate it from “travois,” the term for the pole and hide carrier used by Native Americans to transport belongings behind a horse. Mary Beth may not immediately connect “traverse” to anything and may, therefore, need a nudge to make a connection to a word she already knows, such as “travel.” When students link new information to existing schema, the learning “sticks” because it has personal meaning. Here are two ideas to help build on your students' schema:

- © **Vocabulary Anchors** (especially good for verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, and logical learning) is a graphic strategy that helps students make connections between concepts that are new to them and concepts they already know (Winters, 2001). It is especially helpful to struggling readers and ESL students who may have problems with technical vocabulary in science and social studies. To introduce Vocabulary Anchors, show students a photo or drawing of a boat at rest in calm water

and talk about how a boat can drift away if it doesn't have an anchor. (See Appendix, page 118.) Then, explain how we come to understand something new by "anchoring" it to something we already know. Now, show students what you mean:



- ◆ Draw a simple boat and write a term on it your students probably know, like *mountain*.
- ◆ Choose a related word, such as *hill*, that students probably also know and write it inside a rectangular anchor under the boat.
- ◆ Connect the boat and anchor with a line to represent the rope.
- ◆ Talk about similarities between the words and write them below to the left of the anchor, keying them with a plus sign (+).
- ◆ Talk about the characteristics that set the words apart and list them below the box to the right, keying them with a tilde sign (~).
- ◆ Discuss a memorable experience you associate with the main word.
- ◆ Add a sail to the top of the boat and list a few key words or draw pictures to represent your memory.
- ◆ Summarize by reviewing the drawing and talking about what the words mean and why they cannot be used interchangeably.

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A Vocabulary Anchor for "mountain"

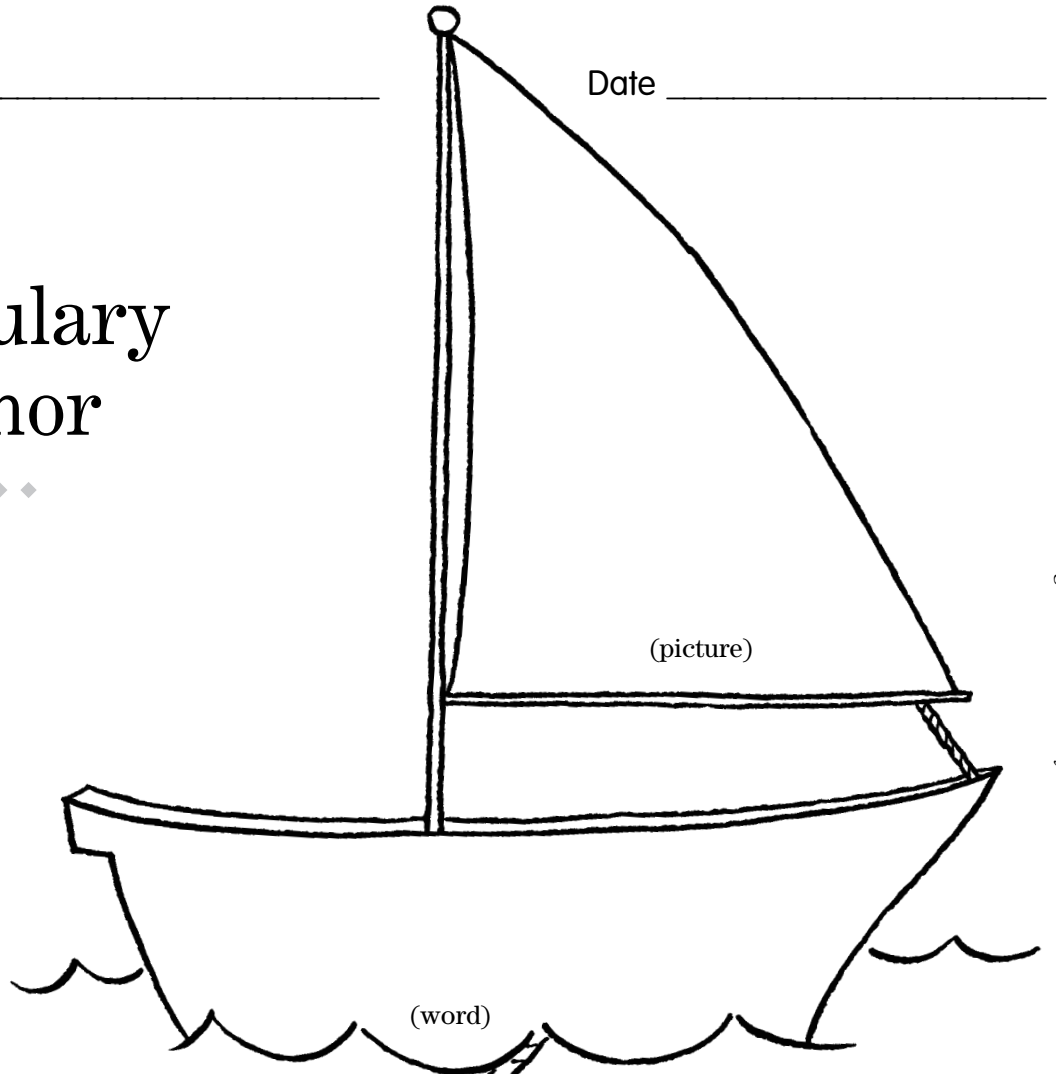
Now lead students, as a class, through the construction of a few Vocabulary Anchors for difficult words you have pre-selected that they will encounter in their next science or social studies unit. Creating these anchors together allows students to share their experiences and prior knowledge as they build schemas for the new words. Students might complete Vocabulary Anchors you have partially constructed for them as they read, then share their work in small groups or with the class.

- ◎ **Picture Walk Words** (especially good for visual, interpersonal, and intrapersonal learning) connect students' prior knowledge to a new story, and, in the process, help them learn new words. Choose a picture book to read aloud. Before reading, introduce it by talking about the cover illustration and asking children to predict what the story may be about. Continue to encourage the children to predict as you take a "picture walk" through the book by looking at each page together without reading the text. As students talk about what may be happening in the story, they share their prior knowledge with one another. Through this discussion they begin to learn and use new vocabulary naturally.

Name _____

Date _____

Vocabulary Anchor

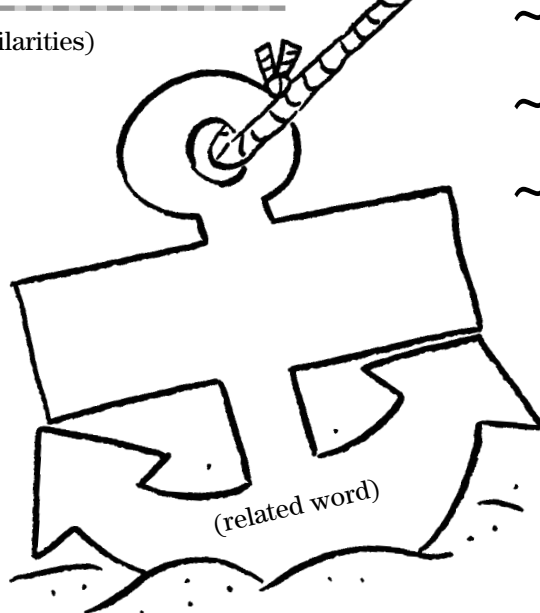


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(similarities)



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(characteristics)