

# Vocabulary Practice

(Teaching Reading & Vocabulary)

**Instruction:** Read the article below and fill in the blanks using the correct words from the box.

relationship

scanning

increases

silent

literature

benchmarks

contexts

extensive

gist

reciprocal

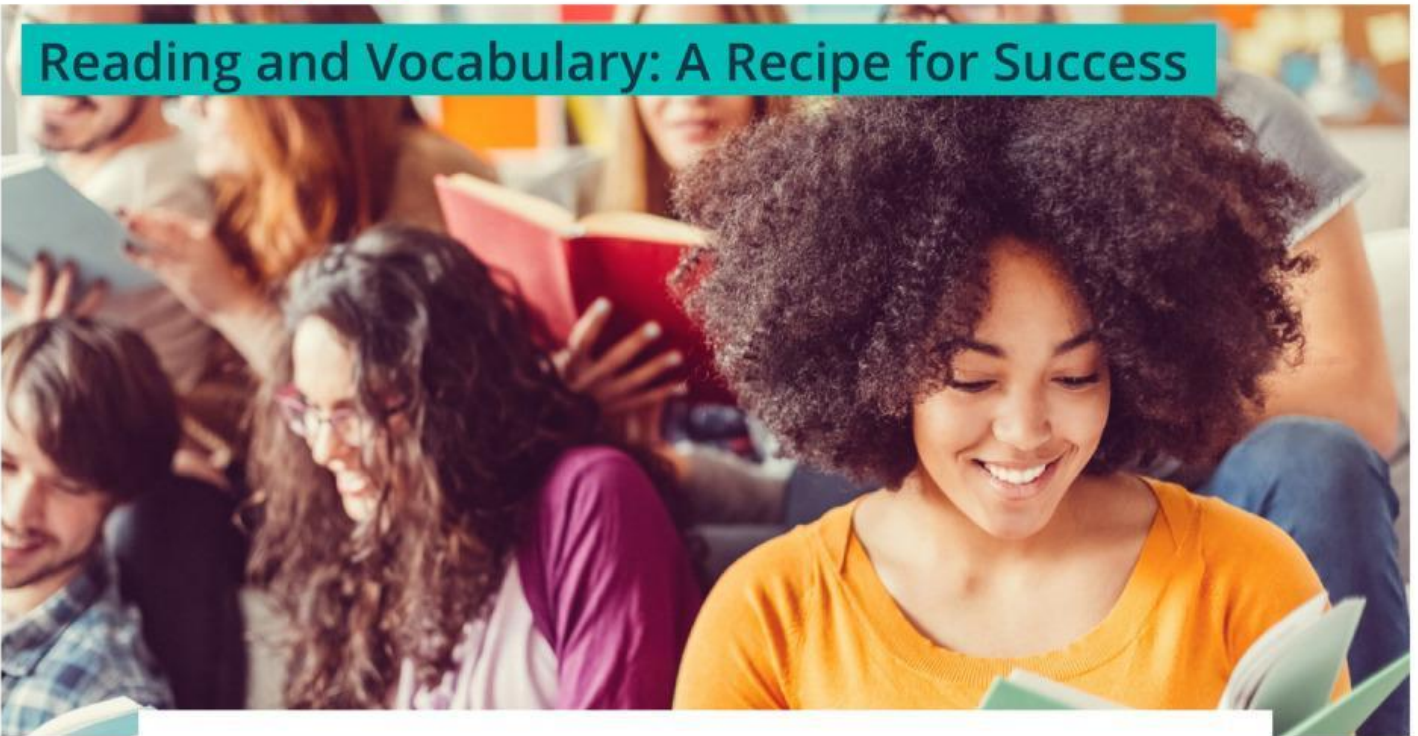


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## Reading and Vocabulary: A Recipe for Success



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It's no surprise that research shows a very strong \_\_\_\_\_ between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. After all, we need to be able to understand the words that we encounter when reading in order to understand what we're reading. As Grabe and Stoller so succinctly stated back in 1997, "reading improves vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary knowledge supports reading development" (p.119). It's a \_\_\_\_\_ relationship: the larger your vocabulary, the easier it is to read, and the more you read, the more your vocabulary increases.

So how do we get learners to increase their vocabulary to make reading easier (and more pleasurable!)? Research tells us that to read with adequate comprehension, 95 – 98% of the words in the text need to be known (Nation 2001: 147). But what does it mean to **know** a word when a single word can have many

different senses/meanings? Take a simple word like *green*. Now put yourself in your student's shoes. Imagine first encountering this word in a story about someone who lost their green jacket. Then in a different context you read about someone who was green – instead of a color this could mean that the person was feeling sick, or envious, or a novice, or eco-conscious. Not so simple, is it?

We also know that reading texts on different topics \_\_\_\_\_ the chances that our students will encounter different words and come across new meanings of known words. But how can we get them to do this consistently? One effective way is to combine “intensive” and “extensive” reading practice. This approach can both fine tune reading skills and increase vocabulary knowledge, all while making reading more pleasurable.

- **Intensive Reading**

Intensive reading activities typically take place in class and involve different ways of interacting with a text. Examples include timed readings, scanning for information, or skimming to get the \_\_\_\_ of the text before diving in to read.

Newspaper articles offer great resources for \_\_\_\_\_ activities since they often include dates and names. If your school has a campus paper (print or online), use it as a resource for scanning activities. Rather than focusing on just one article, have your students scan the entire school paper for when or where certain events are taking place. This has the added benefit of being directly relevant to their daily lives.

I'm also a fan of timed readings using short texts (200 – 400 words) that cover a wide range of topics. These increase the opportunity for students to encounter more different words and to see words they already “know” in different \_\_\_\_\_ and with different meanings (as our example above of the word *green*).

- **Extensive Reading**

Extensive reading usually happens outside the classroom, but there are benefits to including a dedicated time for this type of reading in class. When I teach reading, I always have 10 – 15 minutes of \_\_\_\_\_ sustained reading as part of class. During that time everyone, including me, reads something of their choice. I set a timer so that we don't lose track of time while reading.

With \_\_\_\_\_ reading, students choose texts of high interest to read every day for a predetermined amount of time. It's important that students are reading for pleasure during this time and NOT reading textbooks. Graded readers or young adult \_\_\_\_\_ are great resources for extensive reading.

You can help motivate your students by keeping track of their reading. Here are two suggestions:

1. **Reading logs** – Have your students keep reading logs of how much time they spend reading each day. They should also write a sentence or two about what they read.
2. **Reading progress tracker** – Have a place in your classroom to show their reading progress. For example, if students commit to reading 15 minutes a day, create a board showing student progress in 15-minute increments. As students accumulate reading time, you can have \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., an hour, five hours) for when students receive different rewards, such as a certificate, time for an in-class game, or even a free book.

Combining intensive and extensive reading activities has long been a recipe for success in my classrooms. I have no doubt that it will help you help your students become more successful, and happier, readers, too.

**Reference:**

Reppen, R. (2025, March 13). *Reading and Vocabulary: A Recipe for Success*. Cambridge University Press & Assessment. <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2025/03/13/reading-and-vocabulary-a-recipe-for-success/>