**Vocabulary Learning Strategies: Helpful Tips for Students**

Learning vocabulary is far from being the whole of language learning, but it is a significant and necessary task. Many students struggle with learning vocabulary, and do so because they have not found effective strategies. **Different people learn best in different ways – you need to experiment to find the strategies that work well for you.**

Here are four broad recommendations for vocabulary learning, and then a collection of specific strategies that will hopefully help you.

1. BE ACTIVE. Sitting staring at lists of words is not the best tactic nor is very enjoyable. Instead fins ways of actively working with the words – rearranging them, sorting them, thinking of contexts where you could use them, etc. Also, just reading them may help you learn to read Spanish better but practicing aloud will help with your speaking ability.
2. BE ALERT. Plan your work with your levels of mental energy in mind. If vocabulary learning is a chore for you, it may be tempting to complete more interesting tasks first then come to the learning task when your mental energies are low. Instead, plan to work on memorization at a time when you can invest the energy needed. Are you a morning or an evening person? Find the times and places that work well for you.
3. BE CRAFTY. Avoid the brute force method of simply plowing through the list of words one by one. Look for shortcuts like cognates. Look for patterns. Look for timesavers like removing the words you already know well to make a new and shorter list.
4. BE FAITHFUL. Short and frequent study times are much more effective than hours of studying all at once. Learn a few words at a time, and then revisit them again the next day. Review words often, and give yourself small amounts to work with each time.

Specific Learning Strategies

1. **Meaningful Context**: Put words in a meaningful context of a sentence, conversation, or situation.
2. **Together**: Vocabulary learning does not have to happen alone. Find a friend and quiz each other.
3. **Competition**: Make learning a competition or a game and compete for speed (how fast you can get through the words), accuracy (how many you get right on the first try), or both!
4. **Flashcards**: Write each word on a separate notecard with Spanish on one side and English on the other side. As you learn the words, remove them from your study pile until you have them all eliminated and therefore memorized. These are also easy to carry around and pull out on the way to school, in the lunch line, or during the commercials of your tv show.
5. **Word lists**: Write the list of words with Spanish on one side and English on the other. Fold the list in half vertically so you can only see one side or the other. Put a check by words that you have memorized.
6. **Staggered lists**: Put the Spanish words on one side, and the English words on the other, but one line higher. If you cover all but the top line with a piece of paper and move it down line by line you can test yourself from English to Spanish. If you cover all but the bottom line with and piece of paper and move it up, you test yourself from Spanish to English.

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| --- | --- |
|  | Hello |
| Hola | Good morning |
| Buenos días | Good bye |
| Adiós |  |

1. **Audio learning**:
   1. **Aloud**: Some people remember better when they hear the words. Say them aloud. Use the quizlet app to hear them being said. Record the words yourself and quiz yourself as you play them back.
   2. **Rhythms or tunes**: With the words that just don’t seem to stick, chant them to a rhythm or sing them to the tune of a familiar song.
   3. **Pitch/volume**: Say the words in high or low pitches or funny voices. Whisper the words, or shout them!
2. **Visual learning**:
   1. **Colors**: Write the words out in different colors. If you have a pattern such as masculine words are in blue and feminine words are in red, consistency will help your learning.
   2. **Sizes**: Write the words you are having trouble with in large or unusual text and place them in places you will see them such as around your bedroom, bathroom, locker, etc.
   3. **Imagery**: Write out a key word in the middle of a paper and arrange the other words around it (example: like the rays of the sun). Practice the words then put the sheet aside and try to reproduce your word picture from memory.
   4. **Visualize**: Visualize an image with each word, or draw a picture next to each word that might help you remember it. You could even make flashcards with the Spanish word on one side and a picture on the other.
3. **Kinesthetic learning**:
   1. **Body movements**: Give each word a hand motion, gesture, or action. As you say the word aloud, make the movement.
   2. **Exercise repetitions**: As you exercise, say that word you can’t remember. With each step while jogging, say a syllable of the word. With each sit-up or push-up or jumping jack, say the word. The more times you say it, the more it will stick.
4. **Make it fun**: Play games with the vocabulary words like hangman, word searches, crossword puzzles, and pictionary.

Vocabulary Studying Examples

1. Write down the words on index cards – Spanish on one side, English on the other.
2. Go through the flash cards looking at the Spanish side, and make two piles: one for cards you know really well, and the other pile for cards that took you a minute to remember or you had to look at the back to remember.
3. Go back through that pile of cards that was difficult for you, separating them out again. Keep going through until you have no more cards in the difficult pile.
4. Give yourself a break/small reward then do the pile one more time! ☺

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1) This is harder – look at the English side of the cards, and WRITE DOWN the Spanish word. Double check after you wrote your answer to make sure it is also spelled correctly with all the accents.

2) Make piles again of ones you got and difficult ones and continue on like the last activity.

3) Remember a small break/reward when you got them all!

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1) If there are certain cards that you just can’t seem to get, don’t get frustrated. Give the word an action and say it out loud. I know it will feel silly but saying the word out loud and doing an action will engage different parts of your brain which will help the word stick with you better.

2) Colors can also help trigger memory. If there is a card you always get stuck on, write it on a different card with a new color marker or pen. Throw out the old card and now when you see this new color, you can remember that it is the tricky one.

3) Sounds can also trigger memory. If you have a word that is hard for you, give it a beat, tune, rhythm, rhyme, or pitch (high voice, low voice).

Examples:

Descansar (to rest): Say it slowly like you are going to sleep: dessss-cannn-sarrrrr

Bailar (to dance): say with a tune, maybe in a lively way: bai-lar, bai-lar, bai-lar!

Colegio (school): imagine a deep-voiced teacher and say with a low voice: col-e-gi-o