

Building Word Power: Learning the Rules of Language



Vocabulary is more than 'one
word with one meaning'



- KISS (Keep it Short and Simple)—She's a woman.
- KISS (Keep it Short but Sophisticated)—She's a tall, attractive and intelligent woman.



Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Take any semantic field (group of related words) and learn a base word which overall describes the meaning of the field. For example, take the following semantic field called 'anger'. Related words are: irritated, upset, pissed off, peeved, mad, angry, furious, irate, livid and 'seeing red'. The most representative word would probably be 'angry'	Learn the following words/ phrases to describe 'more than angry' and 'less than angry'. super (do not use often) extremely very (really) - somewhat slightly a bit (or little bit)	Add two words to your active use of vocabulary, one which might be substituted for 'extremely angry' and one which might be substituted for 'slightly angry'. In certain cases, you can apply Step 2 to these words also.	Learn more words which can be added to your passive vocabulary knowledge.
Example: angry	super angry extremely angry very angry angry somewhat angry slightly angry a bit (or little bit) angry	furious angry irritated	'seeing red' livid irate mad pissed off peeved upset

UNDERSTANDING OF APPROPRIACY



- There are 'right words' for 'right occasions'.
- The words we choose must be governed by **gender correctness, courtesy, register and culture.**

Gender correctness



<u>Gender</u>	Facial Features	Body Build
<u>Male oriented words</u>	handsome	stocky, brawny, lean
Female oriented words	pretty, beautiful	full-figured, voluptuous, svelte

Courtesy



Certain words, though common to the language, are considered impolite when used to describe people. The words 'fat', 'skinny' and 'old' are three such examples. In the sentences below, these words are considered impolite.

- *'A fat woman sat next to me on the bus'.* A better choice of words would be to say 'An overweight woman'. Likewise, 'full-figured' is desirable to 'heavy'.
- *'A skinny boy asked me to dance'.* Using the words 'thin' or 'lean' would be more courteous.
- *'Old people tend to be forgetful'.* The word 'elderly' would make for an appropriate substitution.

Register



- It refers to the correct use of formal and informal language. HOWEVER informality is slowly but surely creeping into formal expression.
- phrasal verbs: to put up with = tolerate; to put down = suppress; to put forth = propose; to put in for = submit/request; etc.
- slang: kid(s) = child/ children; bucks = money; cops = police, etc.
- vulgarity

Cultural appropriacy



- It refers to understanding how certain words change in meaning depending upon the culture to which they apply. Several examples appear below:

Word	Difference	SAE	SBE
smart	same words but different or additional meanings (refer to handout SAE vs. SBE)	intelligent	nicely dressed
sick		ill	nauseous
-		pants	trousers
-		stove or range	cooker
-		boot	trunk



- The best and cheapest way to learn authentic language is to read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read,

What is language?

Language is more than just communication,
it is the primary method by which we do things together.

Language is the accumulation of
shared meaning - of common ground.



