

Academic Vocabulary Building Activities

Vocabulary Strategies

Marzano's Six Steps to Effective Vocabulary Instruction

Purpose of academic vocabulary building:

Academic vocabulary is the vocabulary critical to understanding the concepts being taught in class. Vocabulary knowledge is critical to reading comprehension and research indicates that the intentional, explicit teaching of specific words and word-learning strategies can both add words to students' vocabularies and improve reading comprehension of texts containing those words. Teaching specific academic vocabulary enables students to develop in-depth knowledge of important words so they can know words well enough to access information about them from memory as they read. Marzano (2005) outlines a six step process that can help students learn critical subject specific vocabulary.

Explicitly teaching academic vocabulary using Marzano's six steps:

Step One:

The teacher gives a friendly, informal description, explanation or example of the new vocabulary term.

- Provide students with information about the vocabulary term.
- Create pictures, powerpoints or use video and computer images as a source of information.
- Describe your own mental picture of the word.
- Use current events and other media to connect the term to something familiar.
- Determine prior knowledge and find out what students already know about the term (see NBSS vocabulary rating scale, text features and other before reading strategy resources).
- Have students share what they already know and use this knowledge as a foundation for more learning.

Step Two:

Students give a description, explanation or example of the new term in his/her own words.

- Students record their explanation (see NBSS vocabulary notebooks and the activities in this resource).
- Remind students not to copy and only use their own words.
- Monitor to determine if any confusion still exists and correct misunderstandings with further explanation and example.

Step Three:

Students create a non linguistic representation of the word.

- Provide students with non linguistic methods to record the vocabulary term (see NBSS vocabulary notebooks and the activities in this resource).
- Students can work in pairs or groups to create a non linguistic representation e.g. picture, symbol, cartoon, dramatisation or play pictorial, charades, etc.
- Have students record their visuals and share their ideas.
- Continue to identify and clear up any misunderstandings about the new terms if necessary.

Step Four:

Students engage in activities to deepen their knowledge of the new word.

- Have students list related words.
- Highlight any prefixes and suffixes that will help them remember the word.
- Identify antonyms and synonyms.
- Discuss similarities and differences of two terms.
- Compare how the vocabulary term is used across subject areas and discuss and note any common confusions.
- Have students record this information.

Step Five:

Students discuss the new word with one another.

- Students think, pair and share their ideas by comparing explanations, describing and explaining drawings and discussing any new information they have learned, etc.
- Students can make revisions to their own work and add to their vocabulary explanation and visual if necessary.
- Continue to identify and clear up any misunderstandings about the new terms if necessary.

Step Six:

Students play games to reinforce and review new vocabulary.

- Develop deep understanding of academic vocabulary terms by engaging students in weekly review activities. For example students can play taboo, dominoes, wordo, pictorial, charades, I have, who has? word sorts, bingo, crosswords, hangman, card games, etc. (Contact the NBSS for powerpoint templates of games).
- Have students create and play their own vocabulary games and activities.
- After activities students can continue to make corrections, additions and changes to their explanation and visual.

*** Student subject vocabulary notebooks or journals can be created by combining the activities in this resource with the NBSS Vocabulary Journal resource.**

Word:

1) Teacher's description, explanation, examples.

2) My description, explanation, examples.

3) My picture, drawing, representation.

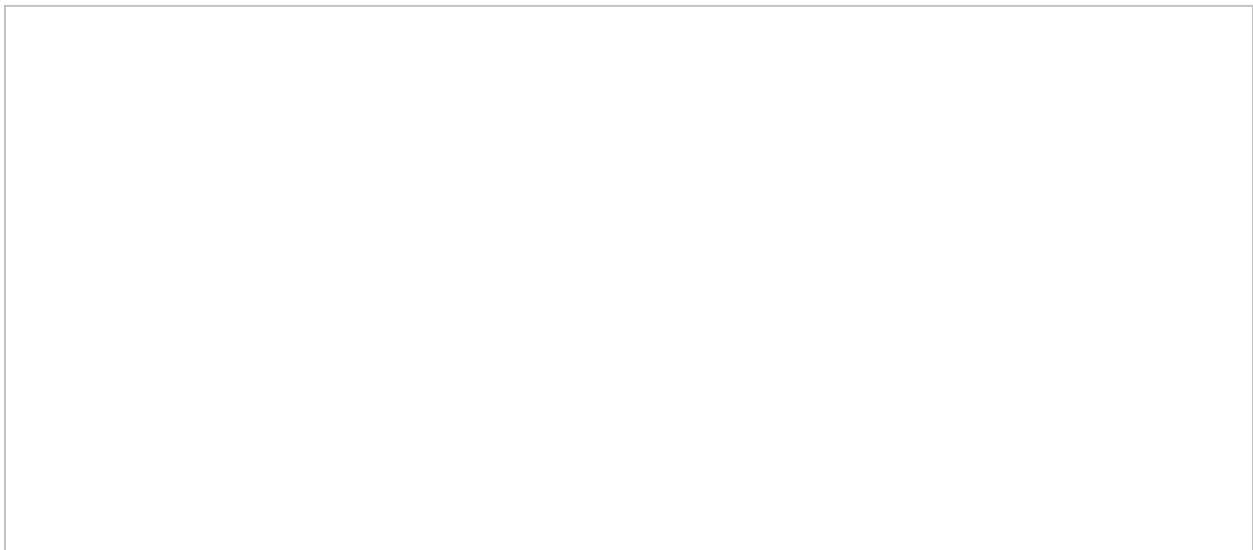
Vocabulary Term: _____

My Understanding: Low-----High

Topic:

My Description / My Examples:

Graphic / Picture:



Word and page number:

Sentence in which the word was used in the textbook:

My explanation of the word:

Synonyms
(similar meaning words)

Antonyms
(opposite meaning words)

Picture/Symbol

<p>Definition: (in own words)</p>	<p>Characteristics/Facts:</p>
<p>Word</p> <hr/>	
<p>Examples: (from own life)</p>	<p>Non Examples:</p>

In the first column, list all of the words you can think of that are related to the topic. When you have created your list, group the words based on their similarities. Label each group when you are finished.

<p style="text-align: center;">List</p> <p>Brainstorm and <u>List</u> all the words you think you know related to _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Group and Label</p> <p><u>Group</u> the words into categories based on shared features and <u>Label</u> the categories with titles.</p>

LIST GROUP LABEL:

BRAINSTORM AND LIST ALL THE WORDS YOU THINK YOU KNOW RELATED TO -

LIST GROUP LABEL:

GROUP THE WORDS ABOVE INTO CATEGORIES BASED ON SHARED FEATURES AND LABEL THE CATEGORIES WITH TITLES.

SYNONYM (similar meaning words)

ANTONYM (opposite meaning words)

WORD

MY EXPLANATION:

MEMORY CLUE (picture, symbol, etc):

What is it?

What is it like?

Word:

What are some examples?

My definition or picture:

Target Word

My Definition



What it is...	What it isn't...



I'd probably find this word in _____ (place – if applicable)

or in _____ (person – if applicable),

or when _____ (event – if applicable).



I'll remember this word by connecting it to _____

_____.

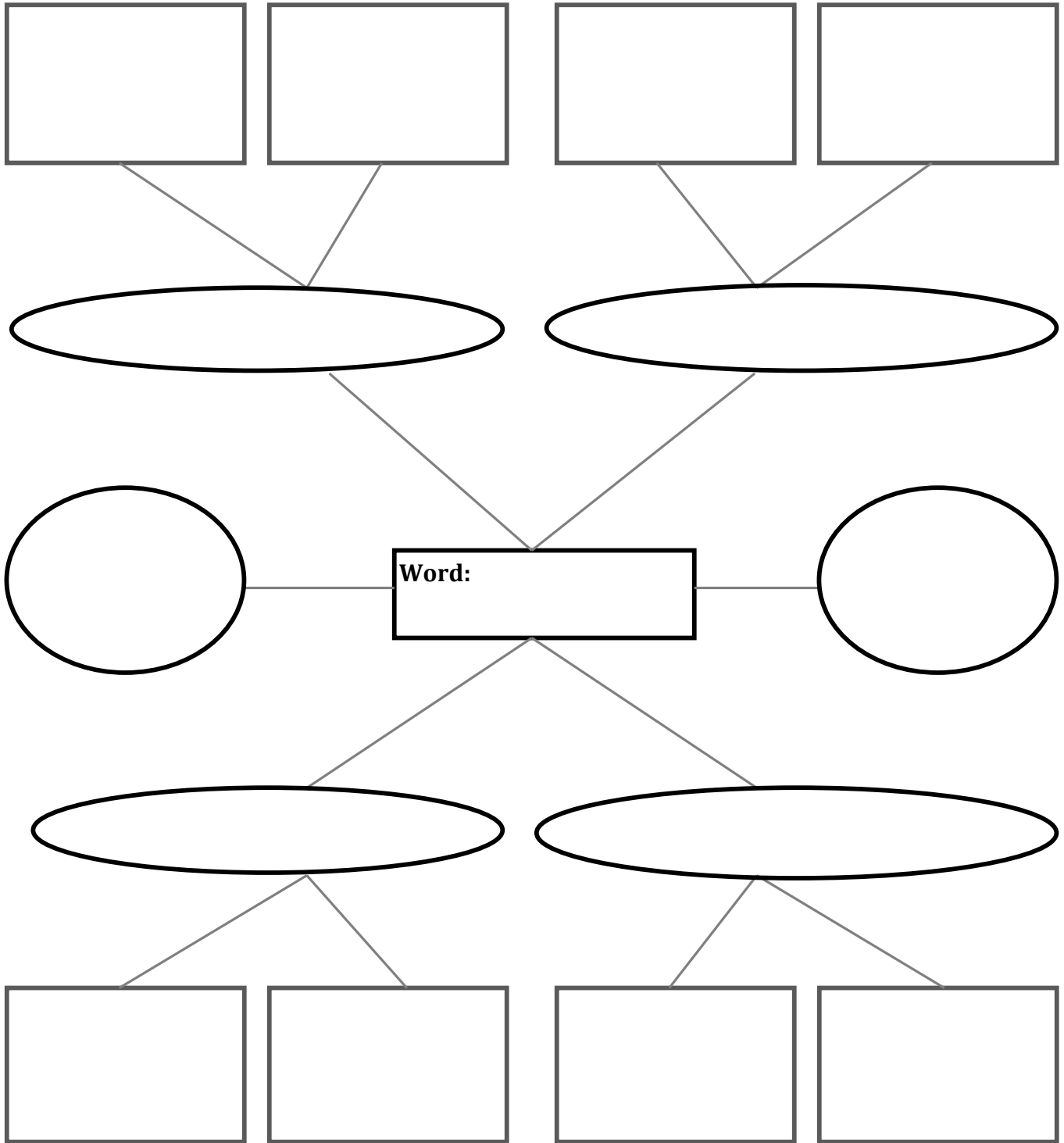
Word:

Your Definition:

Picture/Symbol:

Memory Hint (what will help you remember the meaning?):

My Word Web



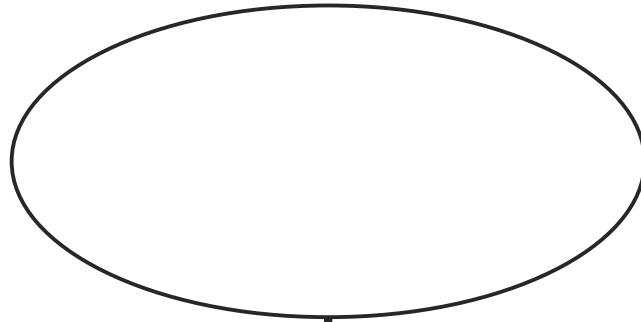
Word	Definition	Picture/ Symbol	Hint (What can help you remember the meaning?)

Semantic Features Grid:

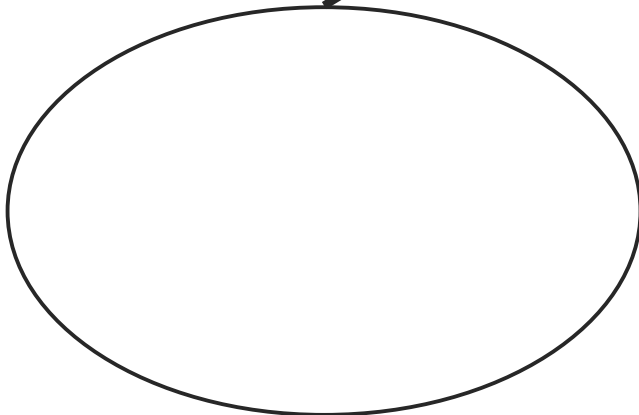
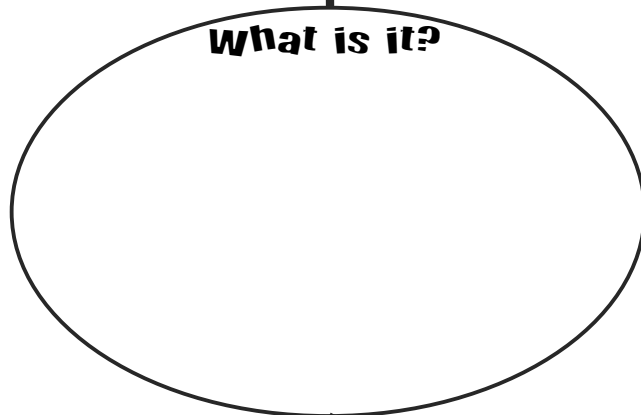
- 1) Identify the topic.
- 2) List the vocabulary words down the left hand column and the features of the topic across the top row of the chart.

Terms	<i>Features</i>					

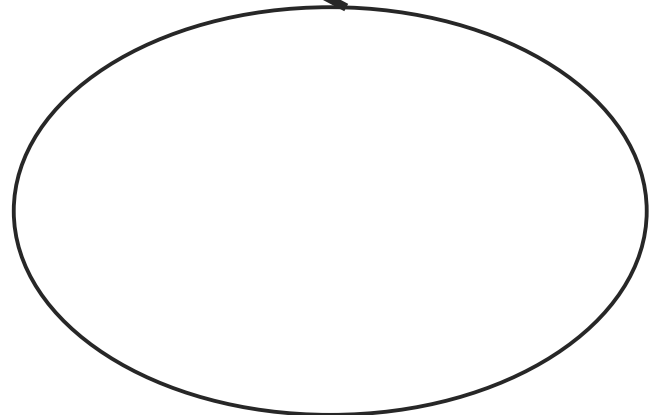
Keyword



What is it?



What are some examples?



What is it like?

Definition

Characteristics

Word

Example

Non Example

Graphic/Picture/Symbol

7. Synonyms/similar words e.g. new

8. Antonyms/opposite e.g. old

3. Description

1. Word:

4. Other Information

2. Sentence or phrase from the textbook

5. My own sentence

6. My symbol or drawing

Word:

In my own words:

Picture:

is the same.

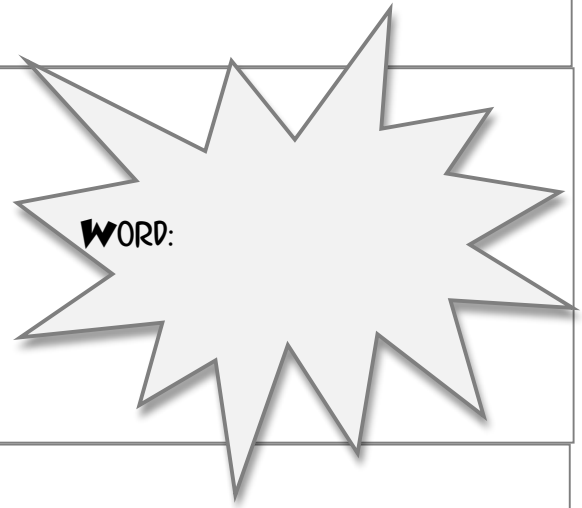
is the same.

is the opposite.

is the opposite.

DEFINITION OR **S**YNONYM:

ANTONYM:



USE IN A SENTENCE:

Four sets of horizontal dashed lines for writing a sentence.

DRAW A PICTURE OR RELATE IT TO YOURSELF:



<p>Vocabulary Term</p>	<p>Visual Representation</p>
<p>Definition</p>	<p>Personal Association or Characteristic</p>

K KEY IDEAS	I INFORMATION/YOUR DEFINITION	M MEMORY CLUE/PICTURE
<p>Your Sentence:</p>		

K KEY IDEAS	I INFORMATION/YOUR DEFINITION	M MEMORY CLUE/PICTURE
<p>Your Sentence:</p>		

K KEY IDEAS	I INFORMATION	M MEMORY CLUE

K . I . M

Vocabulary Bookmark

K = Keyword

I = Information

M = Memory Clue

Your Sentence:

K . I . M

Vocabulary Bookmark

K = Keyword

I = Information

M = Memory Clue

Your Sentence:

DEFINITION:

EXAMPLES

NON EXAMPLES

ILLUSTRATION

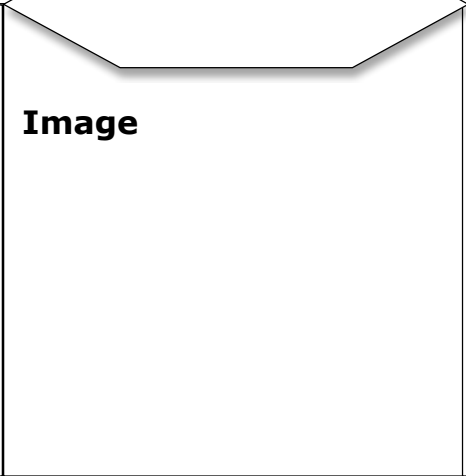
Word and definition:

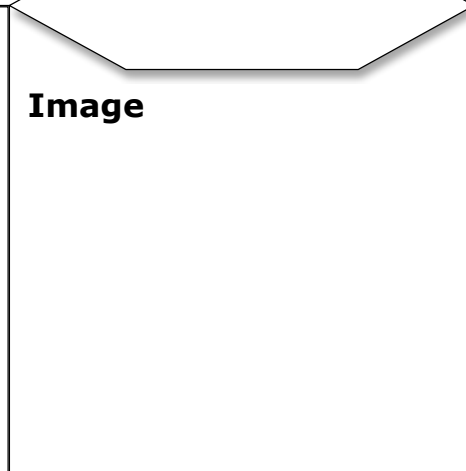
In my own words:

Makes me think of:

Makes me picture:

Questions I have:

Definition (own words)	Characteristics/Facts	
Examples	 Image	Non Examples

Definition (own words)	Characteristics/Facts	
Examples	 Image	Non Examples

Word:	Picture:
Meaning:	Sentence:
Word:	Picture:
Meaning:	Sentence:

Word:	
Sentence from the Text (Page:)	
My Definition	
Quick Draw	
A Connection I Can Make	
Word:	
Sentence from the Text (Page:)	
My Definition	
Quick Draw	
A Connection I Can Make	

List all of the words you know about _____ (topic) in the AlphaBoxes.

ABC	DEF	GHI	JKL
MNO	PQR	STUV	WXYZ

ABC	DEF	GHI	JKL
MNO	PQR	STUV	WXYZ

List all of the words you know about _____ (topic)
in the AlphaBoxes.

TOPIC: _____

A-B

C-D

E-F

G-H

I-J

K-L

M-N

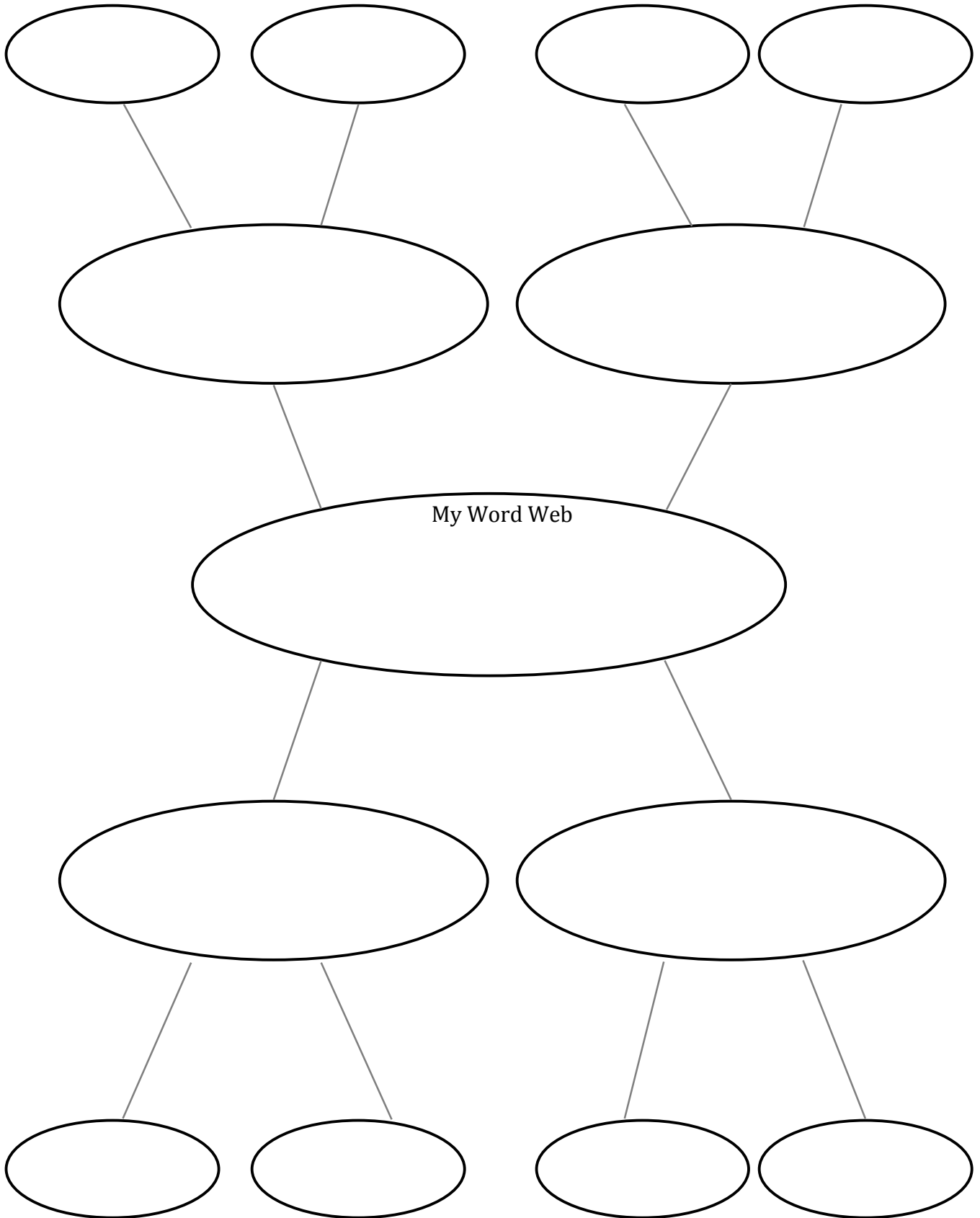
O-P

Q-R

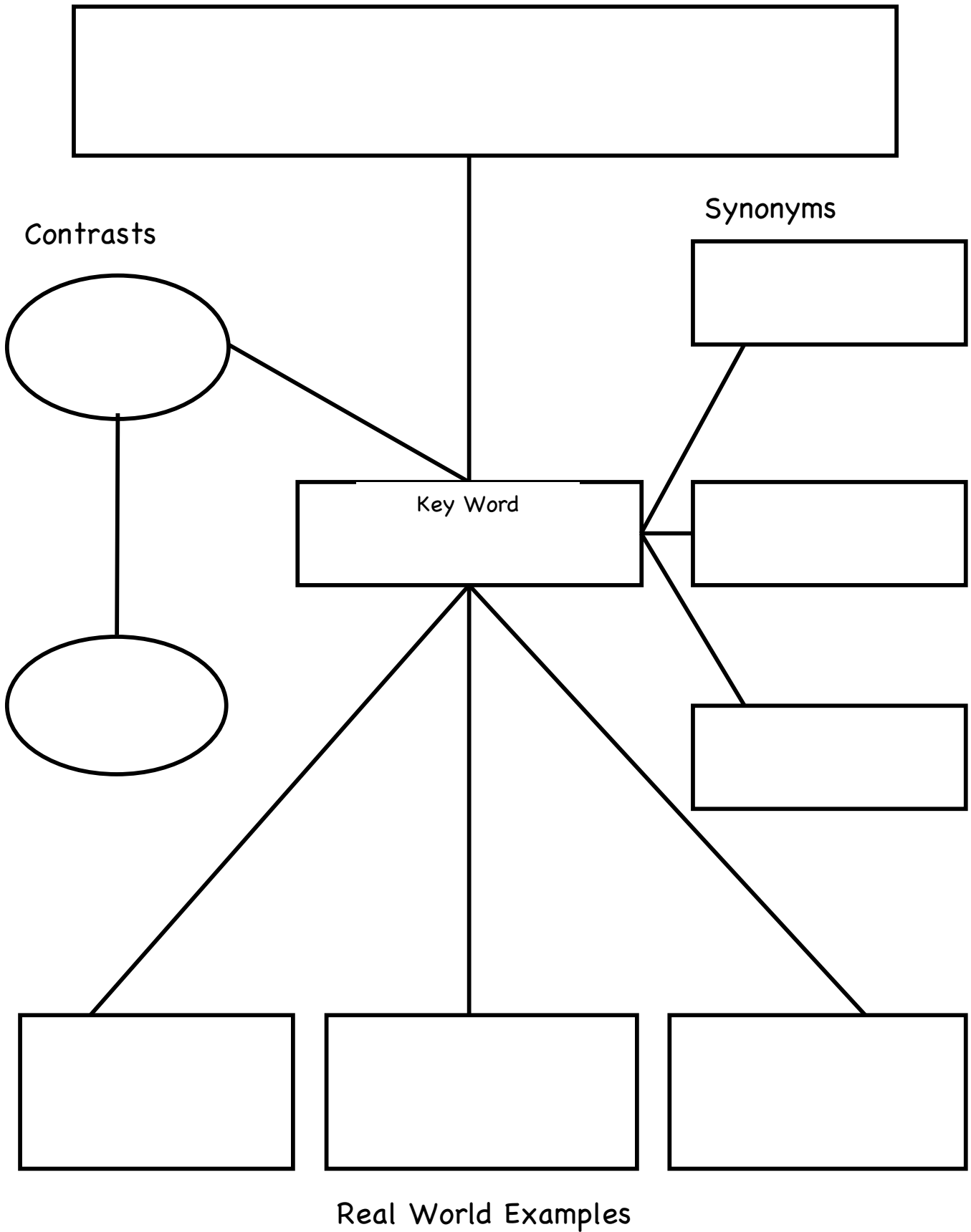
S-T

U-V

WXYZ



Definition in your own words



Words/Terms	Know it well	Have seen/ heard it	No clue!

'Know it Well' Words – my definitions:

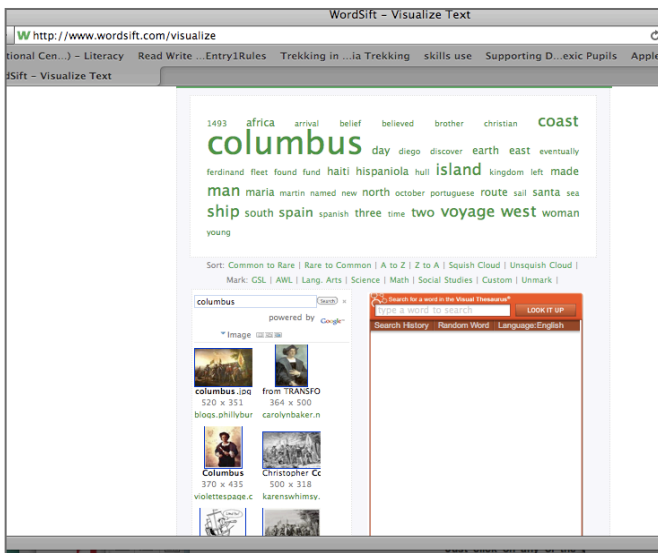
Useful Websites for Vocabulary Activities



Wordle

<http://www.wordle.net/>

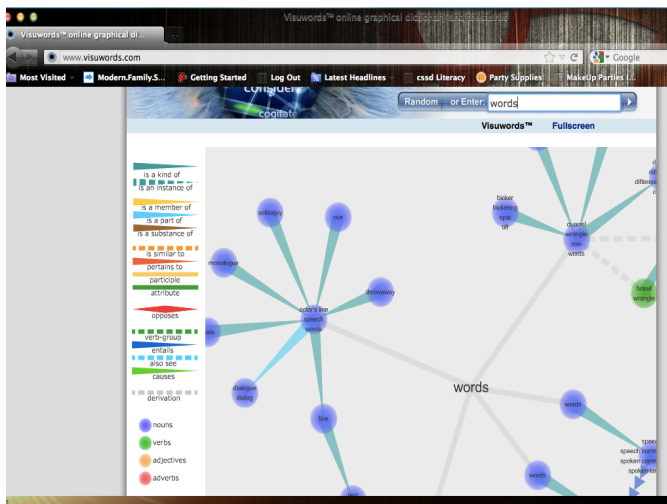
A great tool to use for vocabulary building and main idea teaching. You paste in a piece of text or specific words and a 'word cloud' is generated. This can be used to highlight and summarise the key vocabulary and the main ideas of a topic, used to introduce a concept, or in language teaching generally. On YouTube you can see examples of its use in the classroom – type 'wordle' in the search engine to find the clips e.g. [here](#)



Wordsift

<http://www.wordsift.com/>

Another good site to use for teaching key vocabulary and summarising the main ideas in a passage. Paste in a passage and the most frequently used words are highlighted, as well as images related to the main idea that can then be printed out and used as visual links or memory clues for the word.

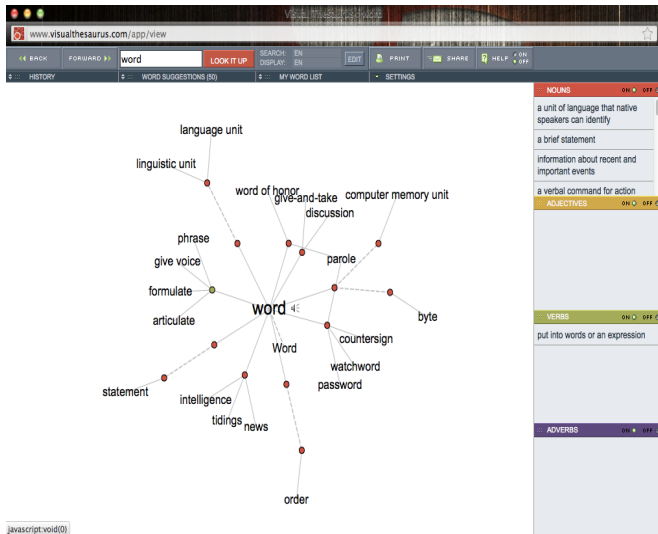


Visuwords

<http://www.visuwords.com/>

Visuwords is an interactive dictionary and thesaurus that creates word maps. It looks up words to find their meanings and associations with other words and concepts. It also provides synonyms and antonyms.

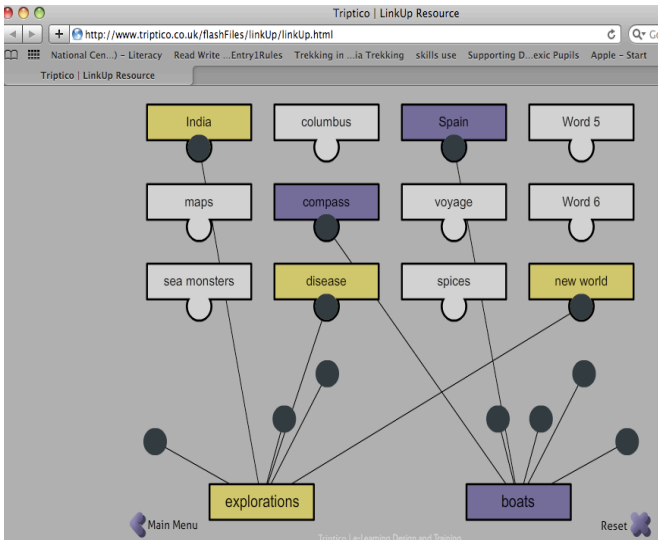
Useful Websites for Vocabulary Activities



Visual Thesaurus

<http://www.visualthesaurus.com>

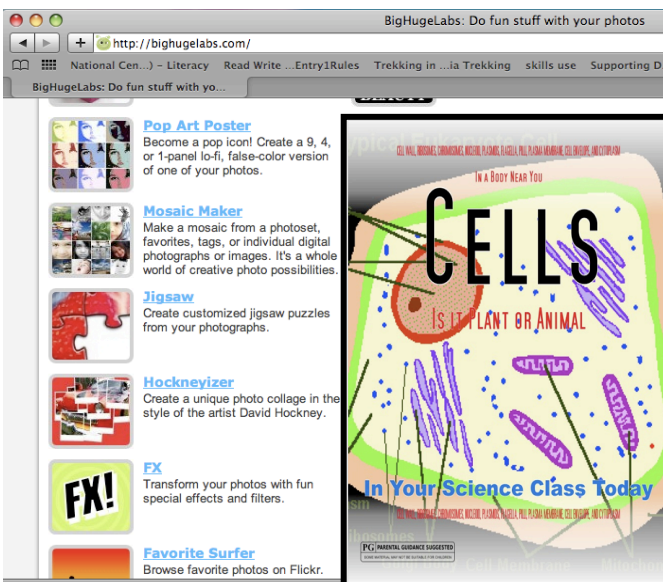
The Visual Thesaurus is an interactive dictionary and thesaurus that allows you to discover the connections between words. Pronunciation of the word is also available.



Triptico

<http://www.triptico.co.uk/>

This site provides a library of interactive classroom tools and resources. The vocabulary games allow you to type in any key terms and students then have to use these words in the interactive games e.g. LinkUp is a game which requires students to connect words to categories.



BigHugeLabs

<http://bighugelabs.com/>

On this site you can create a range of materials such as movie posters, cards, magazine covers etc. These can be used for a variety of classroom activities such as using the movie poster maker to introduce a new topic by pasting an image and using key topic vocabulary as the 'actors' and 'production team' for the 'movie', as in the 'Cell' example here.

Games for Learning

Wordo/Bingo

- 1) Have students draw a 3x3 grid.
- 2) They write in 9 key words from a wordlist.
- 3) Call out some clues and if the clue matches a student's keyword, s/he crosses it off.
- 4) Once all keywords are crossed off the student shouts "bingo!"
- 5) If two students complete their grid at the same time, the winner will be the one with the most words.

Example: Fill in your bingo card by choosing 9 words from this key vocabulary list

Energy	Potential	Renewable	Generator
Kinetic	Sound	Tidal	Joules
Chemical	Electrical	Hydroelectric	Geothermal
Gravitational	Fossil Fuel	Wind	Biomass
Heat	Solar Cell	Coal	Acid Rain
Light	Solar Panel	Natural Gas	Mineral Oil

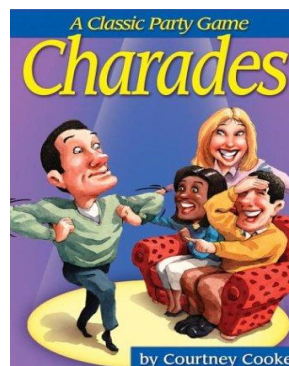
Dominoes

- 1) Put the dominoes face down on the table and mix them up. Each player takes 6 dominos; for a game with more than 3 players, each player has 3 dominos.
- 3) The remaining dominoes are left on the table.
- 4) The first player places one of their dominoes on the table.
- 5) The second player tries to put a domino on the table that matches e.g. a definition to a word that's already there. If a player cannot go, the player picks a domino from the pile and skips that turn.
- 6) Continue taking turns putting dominoes on the board until someone wins.
- 7) The winner is the first person to get rid of all of their dominoes. But if no one can go, then the person with the fewest dominos left is the winner.

 Recycling	Used to make jewelry, it is known as a precious metal. Its purity is measured in karats.	 Aluminium	Once the material has been used/burnt it cannot be replaced. The quantity of material is quickly reducing and will eventually run out.
 Repair	These are deposited in a bank at the recycling centre or donated to charity shops for resale.	 Rethink	The material being used can be replaced and will not run out. We can continue to use it for creating energy
 Reduce	These can be recycled or reused, if they are deposited in a bank it is important to tie them together as a pair.	 Reuse	Mined from underground and used on domestic fires or on steam trains. Also used in power stations to generate electricity

Charades

- 1) Students are given a keyword and must act out the word to communicate what it is without speaking. Can be played in teams or as a whole class. A variation is to have the entire team act out as many words as one person can guess in 60 seconds.



Games for Learning

Taboo

- 1) Write a keyword and 2/3 other words which would make it as difficult as possible to describe the 'taboo' keyword.
- 2) In teams or as a whole class activity a player takes a card and has 30 seconds to describe the taboo word to their team or class, without using the 'taboo' word or the 2/3 related words.
- 2) If the team guesses correctly they score 1 point.

Mean Average Midpoint Centre	Mode Most Order Average	Median Middle Midpoint Average
Range Smallest Biggest Average	Average Mean Mode Median	Data Statistics Information Numbers
Random Chance Data Sample	Sample Example Experiment Section	Frequency Amount Occur Regular

Scattegories

- 1) Students pick any letter and must think of one word (or as many as possible) beginning with that letter, per category listed.
- 2) Students only get the points if they think of something that nobody else thought of.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

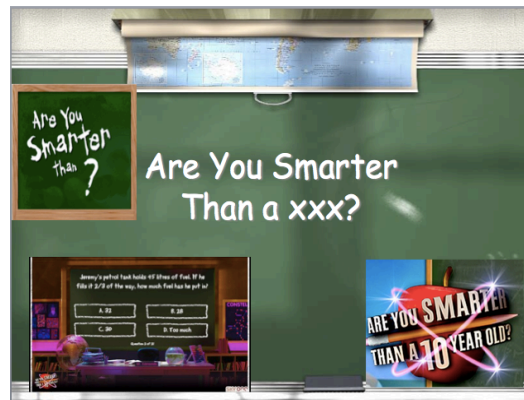
Pick a letter and think of a word beginning with that letter for each topic listed below.

- Parts of a Cell
- A five letter word that means xxx
- Lab equipment used when doing an experiment on xxx

Smarter than a ten Year Old

- 1) Play as per TV show. Question can be on keywords and their meaning e.g. if studying exam vocabulary a question could be 'What exam word means to show how using examples.' Is it A, etc.

Similar vocabulary games can be played using the Weakest Link, Who Wants to be a Millionaire, etc. **Contact the NBSS for powerpoint templates for these games.**



Pictionary

- 1) Students are given a card with a keyword and must draw a picture to communicate what it is without speaking.
- 2) Can be played in groups, teams or as a whole class.

respiration	growth
Excretion	Nutrition

Games for Learning

I Have, Who Has?

I Have, Who Has? is an engaging way to practice and reinforce key vocabulary and concepts. The game can also be used to reinforce maths skills. It can be played with the whole class or in small groups. *I Have, Who Has?* is also used as a quick assessment of students' understanding of a topic or concept.

One player starts by reading his or her "Who has" question card/page. All players look at their cards. The player with the correct answer responds with their "I have" answer, followed by their "Who has" question.

I have **ecosystem**.
Who has examples of decomposers?

I have **meanders**.
Who has what forms when a river overflows its banks and deposits sediment on the land?

I have a **reflection**.
Who has the definition of congruent?

I have



I have **parallel lines**. Who has perpendicular lines?

Who has 11/12

Password

Divide the class into two teams and have each team send a representative to the front of the room. These two students face their teams, while the teacher writes a word on the board behind them. Each student repeatedly chooses one person from their team with their hand up to give ONE clue about the word behind them. They may not say any part of the word or say things like, "Rhymes with..." or "Sounds like..." but must give a clue about the meaning of the word.

The student has 5 seconds to guess what the word is. If they do not make a correct guess, it is the other team's turn. Go back and forth between teams until a student guesses the word.



Other activities that reinforce vocabulary terms:

- Crosswords
- Wordsearches
- Hangman
- Cryptograms
- Word Scramble
- Fill in the Blanks
- Alphabetical Order
- Word Jumbles
- Word Mazes

Many websites are available that allow you to create these activities and puzzles. For example:

[Puzzle Fast](#)

[A to Z Teacher Stuff](#)

[Puzzlemaker](#)

[Crossword Puzzles](#)

[Lesson corner](#)

[ESL Galaxy](#)

[Ed Helper](#)



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