

The 10 Most Important Words

The 10 Most Important Words is a vocabulary development strategy which fosters an understanding of the importance of prior knowledge and helps students to see the connections among various topics within a content area. It can be used prior to reading a specific selection or during the initiating phase of a unit; it can also be used at the conclusion for reflection or evaluation.

Procedure:

1. Ask student to think about what you already know about strengthening vocabulary development (in other words, activate their prior knowledge).
2. Introduce the reading and its topic
3. Ask students to write down the 10 most important words or phrases they think will be in this lesson.
4. After reading the content of the lesson, ask students to make a final decision as to what they think are the 10 most important words or phrases in this lesson and why. They may find that they've changed their mind or encountered some new words or phrases.
5. Discuss and/or post their lists and their rationales for each of the 10 most important words.

Variations for classroom application of the 10 Most Important Words Strategy:

- * While the strategy specifies 10 words, a smaller number can be used just as effectively.
- * Some teachers help students develop criteria for selecting the most important words.
- * Some teachers ask students to list the 10 most important words in a specific content area or lesson, such as math or geography.

Adapted from *A Handbook of Content Literacy Strategies: 75 Practical Reading and Writing Ideas* (2000) by Elaine Stephens & Jean Brown.