

**TECHNIQUES INVOLVED IN VOCABULARY BUILDING, STRATEGIES
TO CRACK READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS, AND
DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING CORRECT SPELLING OF SOME SELECT
WORDS OF ENGLISH**

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Abstract

Large vocabulary is always a helping tool in both writing and speaking activities. Therefore, one should be in a position to improve it to validate oneself to cope up with the trendy world. Furthermore, spelling and comprehending the passages are another set that needs to be tackled more aptly than anything else. One does not know anything if one shows no ability in expressing that either in writing or in speaking. Vocabulary can be developed by frequent using of words and it is possible only after one knows the number of words that one uses. Reading comprehension is another nut hard to crack. This needs to be tackled promptly and diligently to crack through any competitive examinations. And, there are many words that I discussed in the paper that are wrongly spelt by many English speaking people for whom English is a lingua franca. These words are so embarrassing when they are misspelt that you cannot find another better choice than to improve your ability. I tried to put these three aspects together in this paper to enlighten the reader to get through the concepts of vocabulary, spelling and reading comprehension.

Keywords: vocabulary, spelling, reading comprehension, writing abilities, speaking abilities

This paper deals with three aspects, namely, *TECHNIQUES INVOLVED IN VOCABULARY BUILDING, STRATEGIES TO CRACK READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS, and DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING CORRECT SPELLING OF SOME SELECT WORDS OF ENGLISH*, that I would like to throw some light upon teaching the student fraternity.

I. TECHNIQUES INVOLVED IN VOCABULARY BUILDING

Vocabulary learning has been as important as any other subject in the recent past. Now-a-days, it is an established truth that learning, teaching too, vocabulary is a challenge. The more words the student learns the more fluent he finds himself confident. This, in turn, helps the students to understand what he hears or reads; and whatever you want to say, you can do better, I guarantee. Basically, the exact problem is lack of reading-and-writing habits. If a student is made to read and write then he can automatically and as a natural process learn good number of words easily and effectively. So, the process of learning vocabulary also invariably includes in it the process of reading and writing habits.

“Vocabulary acquisition is the largest and most important task facing the language learner.” (Swan and Walter 1984)

“Without grammar very little conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed.” (David Wilkins)

“All I know is what I have words for.” (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

The above quoted lines elucidate the most important place ‘vocabulary’ has in developing language ability. So, learning English language, grammar, and for that matter any other subject are never out of vocabulary. The student should be well aware of the following with regard to a ‘word.’

- Spelling
- Pronunciation
- Inflection (forms of words (VAAN)/parts of speech)
- And other grammar information
- Root, prefix, suffix, etymology, topic to which the word is related
- Contextual meaning

How teaching vocabulary is done?

- Aim – which & where the word is fit to be learnt
- Need – target the needs and interests of the students
- Repetitions – this works like miracle
- Presentation – it should be clear
- Relationship - Relate to an appropriate object (visual vocabulary)
- Mnemonics - Use mnemonics to remember them accurately and perfectly

Learning vocabulary lies in the grasping abilities of the children. Every student learns differently and the teacher should adapt himself to the child’s way of perception, should mould his teaching technique and should use the tools of teaching in a congruous way.

There are of course many kinds of vocabulary

- Academic and non-academic
- Active and passive
- Archaic

- Basic
- Cognate
- Common
- Concrete and abstract
- Dialect
- Form and content
- Graded
- Recall
- Recognition & reproduction
- Technical
- Writing, reading, speaking vocabulary

There are again of course many methods of making the children learn vocabulary

- Read, read, read, ...
- Associate the word with as many other words, et. GARANGUTAN (very large)
- Contextual skills to be inculcated
- Create your own vocabulary note book
- Habit of knowing new words (open dictionary at random and learn a word)
- Memory tricks (EGG REACHes US) (i.e., very bad) EGRAGIOUS
- Play with words
- Practice, practice, practice, ...
- Vocabulary lists (dirty dozen, sweet sixteen, email words, etc.)
- Vocabulary tests (crosswords, puzzles, mazes, challenging others, etc.)

What benefits students get with vocabulary?

Students who build their vocabulary skills will be able to recall them automatically, read & spell words accurately, improve their learning in leaps and bounds, recall meanings of words they learnt, transfer their knowledge to others, etc; the list is very big, indeed!

Student's Plan

List out all the key/nucleus words that you think are necessary from the lesson you are intending to learn and as a next step plan some vocabulary activity to decide how you learn the words. After this, brainstorm for identifying the structure of the words, like root, prefix, suffix, etymology, etc.

So, remember the following

- Say words accurately
- Read words comprehensively
- Spell and write them (to give visual effect)
- Get contextual meaning for better understanding
- Link the words to other words, objects or any imaginary thing
- Create new words from out of any word

There are so many time tested and proven methods of improving vocabulary. If we can take up any of them, the process of learning and teaching vocabulary becomes easier more time saving.

- Root words
- Suffixes
- Prefixes
- Topic wise words
- Etymology
- Active learning (By observation and doing work) (reading, writing, discussion)

- Break up of a word and creating words from a bigger word (eg. *floccinaucinihilipilification*)
- synonyms
- analogies
- sentence completion
- reading comprehension

II. DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING CORRECT SPELLING OF SOME SELECT WORDS OF ENGLISH

Spelling – a unique word of its own, after vocabulary. Many people misspell many words and they do not even know that they misspelled them. Spelling any word wrong many times does not make it right. I asked many lecturers in the past to spell the word ‘*bureaucracy*’, and in ninety nine percent of the cases they spelled it wrong, taking ‘s’ for the second ‘c’ and ‘u’ for ‘eu’, and so on.

The words *embarrassing, coolly, recommend, separate, paralyse*, etc. are always confusing to many students. Sometimes, it looks, it is hard to remember the spelling. In my personal experience in many classes, I have found out that any one of normal intelligence and average educational background can become a better speller in a very little time.

First – most of the spelling errors that educated people make are because of some unique words. These words are wrongly spelled many times, by many people and in all the cases the wrong spelling is dramatically the same.

Second – memory plays a major role in the correct spelling. The best way to train our memory to remember the spelling of these words is to associate or to use the technical terms, mnemonics.

Let us take the list of words that are to be remembered meticulously with the help of mnemonics.

Correct spelling	mnemonics
Absence	think of <i>absent</i> and you will not misspell
All right	remember, all wrong
Analyse, paralyse	the only two non-technical words ending in <i>-yse</i>
Anoint	think of <i>ointment</i> , hence no <i>double n</i>
Cede, precede, recede	three words that end with the final syllable <i>-cede</i>
Conscience	science add prefix <i>con-</i>
Coolly	cool, add adverbial ending <i>-ly</i>
Despair	think of <i>desperate</i> , thus avoiding <i>dispair</i>
Ecstasy	to <i>sy</i> with sigh
Irritable, inimitable	think of <i>irritate</i> and <i>imitate</i>
Procedure	one of the double <i>e</i> 's of proceed moves to the end in the noun form
Recommend	remember <i>commend</i> and add prefix <i>-re</i>
Repetition	first four letters are same as in the word <i>repeat</i>
Ridiculous	think of <i>ridicule</i> , thus avoiding <i>rediculous</i>
Separate, comparative	look for <i>a rat</i> in both words
Stationary	remember the word <i>stand</i> which contains <i>a</i>
Stationery	remember the spelling of <i>paper</i> which contains <i>e</i>
Succeed, proceed, exceed	these are the only three words that end in <i>-ceed</i>
Superintendent	the one who manages a department

Supersede

this is the only word in the language ending in *-sede*

Another TWENTY FIVE words that often confuse

- a. Argument
- b. Assistant
- c. Balloon
- d. Definitely
- e. Description
- f. Development
- g. Discriminate
- h. Dissipate
- i. Drunkenness
- j. Embarrassment
- k. Grammar
- l. Incidentally
- m. Inoculate
- n. Insistent
- o. Noticeable
- p. Occurrence
- q. Parallel
- r. Predictable
- s. Privilege
- t. Pronunciation
- u. Suddenness
- v. Surprise
- w. Truly
- x. Vicious
- y. Weird

At least, we are well aware of some of the most typical of the words that often put us in an embarrassing situation. We misspell them and funnily do not even know that they are not spelled correctly. The conquest of the hundred words is exactly half way now. And, we shall now go the next FIFTY words to make them familiar to us and to students.

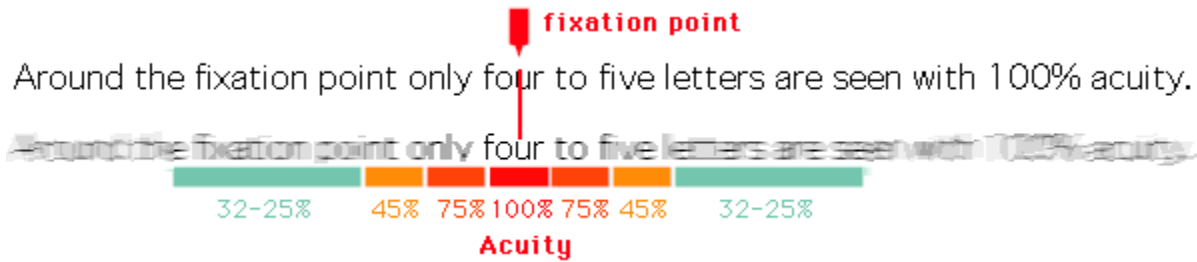
The next FIFTY devilish words often strike us so hard that we stumble and fumble in writing them, irrespective of the expertise we have in spelling words: watch them,

1. Accessible
2. Accommodate
3. Achieve
4. Benefited
5. Category
6. Changeable
7. Committee
8. Connoisseur
9. Conscious
10. Corroborate
11. Desirable

12. Dilemma
13. Dilettante
14. Disappear
15. Disappoint
16. Embarrassing
17. Exhilaration
18. Existence
19. Grievous
20. Indispensable
21. Irresistible
22. Leisure
23. Licence (n)
24. License (v)
25. Misspelling
26. Necessary
27. Newsstand
28. Oscillate
29. Panicky
30. Pastime
31. Perseverance
32. Persistent
33. Plebian
34. Possesses
35. Practice (n)
36. Practise (v)
37. Professor
38. Pursue
39. Receive
40. Rhythmical
41. Sacrilegious
42. Seize
43. Sergeant
44. Sheriff
45. Tariff
46. Tranquility
47. Tyrannize
48. Until (but till)
49. Vacillate
50. Vacuum

III. STRATEGIES TO CRACKING READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Reading comprehension is by itself mistakenly understood. Almost every teacher takes it with only one word ‘reading’ without making the child understand the word ‘comprehend’. So, we should first inculcate the proper definition of the two words ‘reading’ and ‘comprehension’.



The above image¹² explains clearly that the accuracy of looking at the words is very less and in a given sentence with around ten words, we see only one word with hundred percent accuracy and other words go blurred in our vision that makes those words difficult to understand.

‘Reading’ means a complex cognitive **process** of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. It is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. This process of reading can be made easier either by means of *fast reading* or by means of identifying the nucleus or key words in any given sentence (usually they are *subject* and *verb*).

In most of the competitive examinations, the students are tested on **NINE** types of questions and the student is supposed to comprehend the passage from the point of view of answering those questions only. Of course, the types are inexhaustive. The teachers of reading comprehension can find out other means and methods of making the student identify the answers.

In my experience that I acquired through the years, the student can, with comfort, answer all the questions with little difficulty if he can understand those **NINE** types of questions.

- Main idea of the passage
- Factual information
- Negative factual information
- Reference
- Vocabulary
- Sentence simplification
- Sentence insertion
- Inferential
- Summary

As a matter of fact, main idea and summary questions will be only one each in every passage. The passage cannot have more than one idea and one summary. Usually, main idea can be found in the beginning and ending of the passage. So, the **TWO** types can be answered if the student comprehends those two parts of the passage, as any passage begins with an idea and at the end concludes the idea; and, when the student understands this he can as well identify what is the summary of the passage.

Factual information question and Negative Factual information questions are of different kind. For the former, the student has to understand eliminating the wrong statements that do not correlate with the passage and thus increasing the chances of identifying the right statement, the factual statement. For the latter, the student has to understand eliminating the right statements that do correlate with the passage and thus increasing the chances of identifying the wrong statement, the negative factual statement. Again, for the factual statement question, the question does include the words like *except*, *not*.

For answering Reference questions, we should teach the students the **NOUN – PRONOUN** relation in a given sentence or one sentence to the previous sentence. Usually, the question is given with a pronoun and student has to identify the noun it refers to.

Vocabulary questions are always, I repeat always, contextual. However expert the student may be in his dictionary-knowledge, he must depend on the context of the sentence while answering this question. This question also always demands from the student the ability to understand the language part than vocabulary.

Sentence simplification and Sentence insertion questions are comparatively easier than other questions in the sense that these questions solely depend on the voracious reading habits and note taking and note making habits of the student. No less, beware!!

The last comes at the end, naturally. It is also the only type of question that depends on *logic* apart from depending on language, vocabulary and the ability of reading the passage in between the lines to know the hidden meaning of the sentence and to identify the author's point of view which is not presented in the passage, physically. In fact, in a simpler way, in a nut shell, the student needs to answer the question not by depending on the sentences of the passage but on his comprehension. This is truly a tough time not only for the students but also for the teachers in delivering their duties of teaching reading comprehension.

THE METHODS OF READING THE PASSAGE

There are two methods to go through the passage; the Questions First Method (QFM) and the Passage First method (PFM). In both the cases the passage is to be taken completely for reading. Many students believe that QFM is time saving. So, I advise them to go with that to let them enjoy the psychological advantage. In fact, there is no such benefit to them if they go with QFM. Rather, PFM is the best and proven method of identifying the answers. PFM requires the student to go through the passage by

Underlining

- the key/nucleus words of each sentence
- Years
- Principles or theories
- Some special words like, while, as a matter of fact, similarly, contrastingly, etc
- The Beginning and ending of each paragraph
- Any other word the student feels would help him in answering any question

One should also develop the habit of writing in a word or two the gist of every paragraph beside the paragraph, if it is paper based test or writing on a rough sheet, if it is computer based test. This would help answering all the questions accurately because the student can go to the particular paragraph where he can find the answer in.

At last, the voracious reading habits one should develop cannot be ruled out. And the teacher, as his sole responsibility, orient the students by any possible means to imbibe into the students' mind the zeal to read, read, and read. There is no other royal road to science (thanks to Karl Marks for his great quote in his mammoth book *Das Capital*).

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