

# Preface

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The problem is all too familiar: *students just don't know enough words*. Reading, writing, and content teachers agree that many students' vocabularies are inadequate for the demands of courses. Weak vocabularies limit students' understanding of what they read and the clarity and depth of what they write.

The purpose of the Townsend Press vocabulary series is to provide a solid, workable answer to the vocabulary problem. The short version of the series consists of three books, each of which teaches 200 important words. Within each book are twenty chapters, with ten words in each chapter. Here are the distinctive features of *Improving Vocabulary Skills, Short Version, Third Edition*:

**1 An intensive words-in-context approach.** Studies show that students learn words best by reading them repeatedly in different contexts, not through rote memorization. The book gives students an intensive in-context experience by presenting each word in six different contexts. Each chapter takes students through a productive sequence of steps:

- Students infer the meaning of each word by considering two sentences in which it appears and then choosing from multiple-choice options.
- On the basis of their inferences, students identify each word's meaning in a matching test. They are then in a solid position to deepen their knowledge of a word.
- Finally, they strengthen their understanding of a word by applying it three times: in two sentence practices and in a selection practice.

Each encounter with a word brings it closer to becoming part of the student's permanent word bank.

**2 Abundant practice.** Along with extensive practice in each chapter, there are a crossword puzzle and a set of unit tests at the end of every five-chapter unit. The puzzle and tests reinforce students' knowledge of the words in each chapter. In addition, most chapters reuse several words from earlier chapters (such repeated words are marked with small circles), allowing for more reinforcement. Last, there are supplementary tests in the *Test Bank* and the computer software that accompany the book. All this practice means that students learn in the surest possible way: by working closely and repeatedly with each word.

**3 Controlled feedback.** The opening activity in each chapter gives students three multiple-choice options to help them decide on the meaning of a given word. The multiple-choice options also help students to complete the matching test that is the second activity of each chapter. A limited answer key at the back of the book then provides answers for the third activity in the chapter. All these features enable students to take an active role in their own learning.

- 4 Focus on essential words.** A good deal of time and research went into selecting the 200 words featured in the book. Word frequency lists were consulted, along with lists in a wide range of vocabulary books. In addition, the authors and editors each prepared their own lists. A computer was used to help in the consolidation of the many word lists. A long process of group discussion then led to final decisions about the words that would be most helpful for students on a basic reading level.
- 5 Appealing content.** Dull practice materials work against learning. On the other hand, meaningful, lively, and at times even funny sentences and selections can spark students' attention and thus enhance their grasp of the material. For this reason, a great deal of effort was put into creating sentences and selections with both widespread appeal and solid context support. We have tried throughout to make the practice materials truly enjoyable for teachers and students alike. Look, for example, at the selection on page 19 that closes the third chapter of this book.
- 6 Clear format.** The book has been designed so that its very format contributes to the learning process. Each chapter consists of two two-page spreads. In the first two-page spread (the first such spread is on pages 8–9), students can easily refer to all ten words in context while working on the matching test, which provides a clear meaning for each word. In the second two-page spread, students can refer to a box that shows all ten words while they work through the fill-in activities on these pages.
- 7 Supplementary materials.**
- a** A convenient *Instructor's Edition* is available at no charge to instructors using the book. It is identical to the student book except that it contains answers to all of the activities and tests.
  - b** A combined *Instructor's Manual and Test Bank* is also offered at no charge to instructors who have adopted the book. This booklet contains a general vocabulary placement test as well as a pretest and a posttest for the book and for each of the four units in the text. It also includes teaching guidelines, suggested syllabi, an answer key, and an additional mastery test for each chapter as well as an additional mastery test for each unit.
  - c** *Interactive computer software* also accompanies the book. Free to adopters of 20 or more copies, this software—in both Windows and Macintosh format—provides two additional tests for each vocabulary chapter in the book. The tests include a number of user- and instructor-friendly features: brief explanations of answers (thus the software teaches as well as tests), a sound option, mouse support, icons, color, dialog balloons, frequent mention of the user's first name, a running score at the bottom of the screen, a record-keeping file, and actual, audible pronunciations of each word. Students can access their scores at any time; instructors can access student scores by selecting Administrator mode and entering the appropriate password.

Probably in no other area of reading instruction is the computer more useful than in reinforcing vocabulary. The Townsend Press vocabulary software takes full advantage of the computer's unique capabilities and motivational appeal. Here's how the program works:

- Students are tested on the ten words in a chapter, with each word in a sentence context different from any in the book itself.
- After students answer each question, they receive immediate feedback: The computer indicates if a student is right or wrong and why, frequently using the student's first name and providing a running score.
- When the test is over, the computer supplies a test score and—this especially is what is unique about this program—a chance to take the test a second time. Students then receive a separate score for the retest. The value of this approach is that the computer gives students immediate added practice in words they need to review.
- In addition, the computer offers a second, more challenging “Definitions” test in which students must identify the meanings of the chapter words without benefit of context. This test is a final check that students have really learned the words. And, again, there is the option of a retest.

By the end of this program, students' knowledge of each word in the chapter will have been carefully reinforced. And this reinforcement will be the more effective for having occurred in an electronic medium that especially engages today's students.

To obtain a copy of any of the above materials, instructors who have adopted the book may write to the Reading Editor, Townsend Press, 1038 Industrial Drive, West Berlin, NJ 08091. Alternatively, instructors may call our toll-free number: 1-800-772-6410; send a fax toll-free to 1-800-225-8894, or e-mail our Customer Service department at <townsendcs@aol.com>.

**8 Realistic pricing.** As with the previous editions, the goal has been to offer the highest possible quality at the best possible price. While *Improving Vocabulary Skills, Short Version* is comprehensive enough to serve as a primary text, its modest price also makes it an inexpensive supplement.

**9 One in a sequence of books.** The most fundamental book in the Townsend Press vocabulary series is *Vocabulary Basics*. It is followed by *Groundwork for a Better Vocabulary* (a slightly more advanced basic text) and then by the three main books in the series: *Building Vocabulary Skills* (also a basic text), *Improving Vocabulary Skills* (an intermediate text), and *Advancing Vocabulary Skills* (a more advanced text). The most advanced book in the Townsend Press vocabulary series is *Advanced Word Power*. There are also short versions of the *Building*, *Improving*, and *Advancing* books, one of which is this book, *Improving Vocabulary Skills, Short Version, Third Edition*. Suggested grade levels for the books are included in the *Instructor's Manual*. Together, the books can help create a vocabulary foundation that will make any student a better reader, writer, and thinker.

## NOTES ON THE THIRD EDITION

A number of changes have been made in the third edition of *Improving Vocabulary Skills, Short Version*:

- Material on how to solve word analogies has been added to the introduction, and a new unit test consisting of twenty word analogies has been prepared for each unit in the book. These tests provide practice in a format widely used in standardized tests.
- The remaining unit tests have been extensively revised, and a new multiple-choice section, using the words in realistic situations, has been added to Test 1 throughout.
- A new section, "Topics for Discussion and Writing," provides six high-interest items for each of the vocabulary chapters. Each item uses one or more of the vocabulary words in the chapter in a brief scenario suitable for class or small-group discussion, writing, or both.
- Finally, a number of practice items throughout the book have been revised or updated to ensure that each item works as clearly and effectively with students as possible.

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