

To the Instructor

In all likelihood, the students you teach have severely limited vocabularies. Some have come to this country as adults, and their day-to-day struggles in an unfamiliar culture have left them little time to acquire more than the most basic vocabulary. Others, although born in this country, have been short-changed by the educational system. Often with undiagnosed or poorly understood learning problems, they were pushed from grade to grade and missed consistent instruction in vocabulary development. Still others received a solid enough education but never developed strong vocabularies because they were raised in homes where television—not reading or conversation—was the favored pastime.

In the long run, it makes no difference why your students have limited vocabularies. The results are the same: *Self-conscious about their limited vocabularies*, students hesitate to take steps on their own behalf—like continuing in school or applying for a better job. *Not knowing enough words*, they are unable to meet the demands of school and the workplace.

Vocabulary Basics provides a practical answer to your students' vocabulary problem. In the course of 30 chapters, *Vocabulary Basics* teaches 240 critical words—the words that ESL, adult-literacy, and pre-GED students need to get ahead in today's competitive world. Here are the book's distinctive features:

- 1 An intensive words-in-context approach.** Studies show that students learn words best by encountering them repeatedly in different contexts, not through rote memorization. The book gives students a concentrated in-context experience by presenting each new word in *seven different settings*. Each of the thirty chapters takes students through the following series of steps:
 - Students start by inferring the meaning of each word as it appears in two sentences. On the basis of their inferences, they choose the closest meaning from three multiple-choice options.
 - Then, armed with a basic understanding of the new words, students are ready to match each word to its meaning.
 - Next, they strengthen their understanding of the word by applying it in four different words-in-context practices, including sentence-completion activities and high-interest fill-in-the-blank passages.
 - Last, to lock in their mastery of the new words, students are asked to come up with their own endings for eight practice sentences, each of which includes one of the new words. At this point, students will be so comfortable with the words that they will have little trouble using them in this challenging writing-speaking activity.

Each encounter with a word brings it closer to becoming part of the student's permanent word bank. *No comparable vocabulary book gives such sustained attention to the words-in-context approach.*

- 2 Abundant and varied practice.** Along with extensive practice in each chapter, unit tests at the end of every six chapters provide students with *three additional chances* to work with the words in a unit. By the end of the book, then, students will have worked with each new word *ten times*. Moreover, Chapters 2 through 30 repeat words from earlier chapters (such repeated words are marked with small circles like this^o), allowing for even more reinforcement. Many unit activities—for example, synonym and antonym practices and crossword puzzles—are completely different from those found in the chapters. This variety keeps students motivated and ensures their mastery of the words. All this practice makes it possible for students to learn in the best possible way: by working closely and repeatedly with the new words. *No comparable book provides so much and such varied reinforcement.*
- 3 Focus on essential words.** A good deal of time went into selecting the 240 words featured in the book. We started by consulting word frequency lists, along with lists in a wide range of vocabulary books. In addition, each of us—as well as our editors—prepared a list of words. A computer was used to consolidate these many word lists. Then a long process of group discussion led to final decisions about the words that would be most helpful for students working at a basic level.
- 4 Sensitivity to students’ needs.** The book gives careful attention to the special needs of basic students.
- The simplified pronunciation guide at the front of the book and in each chapter is free of the strange-looking pronunciation symbols that many people, particularly basic students, find so confusing. Instead, easily understood letters and letter combinations are used to show students how to sound out each new word.
 - Throughout, we have aimed for a tone that is friendly and accessible, but never condescending.
 - Recognizing that basic students often have difficulty processing long sentences and paragraphs, we have kept sentence structure uncomplicated and paragraphs brief.
 - Whenever a word has multiple meanings (for example, *delicate*, meaning “easily broken” or “requiring care and skill”), we use the meaning that basic students are most likely to encounter and thus find helpful. (In this case, the meaning “easily broken” is the one we use.)
 - Many basic students have difficulty with verbs: they have trouble remembering the correct form of the third-person singular in the present tense and the correct endings of the past and progressive tenses. Their tendency is to omit, respectively, the *-s*, *-ed*, and *-ing* endings. For example, when adding a new verb, such as *insist*, to their vocabulary, they will often write (and sometimes say), “My friend always *insist* I drive when we go out,” “Last night, I *insist* that we buy a new radio,” and “I got tired of *insist* that my kids clean their rooms.” So in the “Learning Eight New Words” section, whenever a new word is a verb, we usually provide the verb’s base form (*insist*) in the first sentence and the third-person singular present tense, past tense, or progressive form in subsequent sentences. Through repeated exposure, students become familiar with the correct way to form verbs. To help them even further, we include at the end of the book (see pages 249–251) a chart summarizing the more troublesome verb forms.
 - To dispel students’ belief that the words in *Vocabulary Basics* are removed from their everyday lives, we deliberately use the second-person point of view in many of the book’s activities and passages. Seeing unfamiliar words in material that refers to “you” helps students see the relevance of the words to their own lives.

- Finally, the last activity in each chapter and in each unit review encourages students' ownership of the words even further. These activities ask students to use the new words when writing and speaking. Indeed, what better way is there for students to "own" a new word than to use it on paper or in conversation? However, basic students are often at a loss when asked to write or say a sentence using a new word. Throughout the book, then, we provide considerable help when it's time for students to generate their own material. For example, the last activity in each chapter has students devise only endings for partial sentences already containing the new words. Such a structured approach gives students the help they need to get moving in the right direction. Similarly, the final activity in each unit review provides students with help as they get ready to create their own sentences—this time, from scratch. In this instance, we provide suggested topics that students can draw upon when writing or saying their sentences.

Consider, for example, our item for the word *comfortable*: "Using the word *comfortable*, write or talk about a time you made someone feel relaxed and at ease. Perhaps you invited a new neighbor to dinner, took the time to show a coworker around on the first day on the job, or helped a relative feel less nervous about going into the hospital." If students were simply told "Make up a sentence using the word *comfortable*," they might come up with something like this: "I feel comfortable in my English class." Of course, such a sentence doesn't demonstrate students' understanding of the word. *Comfortable* could mean "upset" or "angry" or "bored." Our suggestions encourage students to generate sentences that show they *truly understand* the new words. Some students may follow our suggestions closely; others may use our suggestions to spark topics of their own. In either case, our "prompts" help students write or say sentences that demonstrate their genuine understanding of the new words.

- 5 Appealing content.** Dull practice exercises work against learning, while relevant, lively, even humorous materials grab students' attention and enhance learning. For this reason, we put considerable effort into creating activities and passages with widespread appeal. Throughout, we have tried to make the material enjoyable for teachers and students alike. Look for a moment at the sentences on pages 10 and 28, and at the reading passages on pages 12, 30–31, and 42. When field-testing the material, we found that students especially enjoyed the often playful quality of the "Showing You Understand the Words" activity (see pages 11 and 17, for example).
- 6 Clear format.** *Vocabulary Basics* has been designed so that its very format contributes to the learning process. Each chapter consists of three two-page spreads. In the first two-page spread (see pages 8–9), students can easily refer to all eight new words when completing the matching activity. In the second two-page spread (see pages 10–11), students can refer to a box that shows all eight words while working on the "Adding One Word" and "Adding Two Words" activities. In the third two-page spread (see pages 12–13), they can cross out the words in the box when filling in the blanks in the reading passages. The book's format is equally attentive to the needs of the instructor. For instance, to facilitate grading, including use of the Scantron, students can mark answer spaces with the letter of the word or with the word itself.
- 7 Helpful supplements.** An *Instructor's Edition* containing answers to all the activities and tests in the student book as well as teaching guidelines is available at no charge to instructors adopting the text. Also available is a computer disk containing additional tests for each vocabulary chapter; these tests feature actual pronunciations of the words.

- 8 Realistic pricing.** While *Vocabulary Basics* is comprehensive enough to serve as a primary text, its modest price (\$7.90 net) also makes it an inexpensive supplement in basic reading, writing, pre-GED, and ESL classes.
- 9 One in a sequence of books.** *Vocabulary Basics* is the most fundamental book in the Townsend Press vocabulary series. It is followed by *Groundwork for a Better Vocabulary* (a slightly more advanced basic text), *Building Vocabulary Skills* (an even more advanced basic text), *Improving Vocabulary Skills* (an intermediate text), and *Advancing Vocabulary Skills* (an advanced text). There are also short versions of the last three books. Suggested reading levels for the books are included in the *Instructor's Manual*. Together, the books create a comprehensive vocabulary program that will make any student a better reader, writer, and thinker.

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