Building an adequate vocabulary usually comes slowly. It requires a strong desire to build word power, wide reading, practice in mastering words and using the words in oral and written communication. Most important, it requires a systematic, deliberate attempt to develop word power on a daily basis. Every student should know his dictionary well and consider it his most important reference book. Our vocabulary work will be limited to commonly used words (from the text mainly) and to be specialized vocabulary of reading.

Distributed or spaced practice, even for a few minutes throughout the day, is a very effective and painless way of building a good vocabulary. Unless you can readily learn from lists, the card method best serves frequent practice.

Using 3x5 cards or paper, write the vocabulary word with its syllabic breakdown and diacritical markings on one side. On the reverse side, write the meaning appropriate to the verbal context (phrase or sentence in which the word appears). Add other meanings as most words have multiple meanings. Write a phrase or sentence using the word.

Keep a few of these cards on you and review them quickly while waiting throughout the day. Replace the learned words with new words throughout the week. This way you will really master words instead of just possibly doing well on the test but forgetting them in a few days. What a waste of time this would be!

The most practical way to get at the meaning of a word while reading is:
• Try to determine the meaning from the verbal context (this may extend beyond the immediate words to the paragraph or article).

• Analyze the word structurally. What does the root or base mean? the prefix(es)? suffix(es)? Put them together. This will give you a clue to the word's meaning.

• Say the word. Sometimes pronouncing it will help you to recognize it. It may be a word you have heard many times but never saw in print.

• Unless the meaning of a word is absolutely central to understanding the idea discussed, put off the interruption of looking it up immediately. Instead, make a light pencil check in the margin. When you finish the article or chapter, look up all the words check and make cards. As most words have multiple meanings, consider the verbal context in which they appear so that you will select the correct meaning. The first one mentioned in the dictionary may not be the appropriate meaning for the context.

There are four kinds of vocabularies.

• The **listening vocabulary** is the first to be developed and remains the largest until we begin to read.

• The **speaking vocabulary** begins to develop at about age one and can continue to grow throughout our lifetime out of listening and reading vocabularies.

• The **reading vocabulary** can be as meager or as great as you wish to make it.
• The **writing vocabulary** usually is more limited.

Should the words you learn this semester as part of your reading vocabulary be utilized in your writing and speaking vocabularies, you will be that much richer for it. I will be satisfied if you increase your reading vocabulary by several hundred words.

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