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## Word Wizard

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Let's get students excited about words by making word-learning fun! The Word Wizard matrix is fun if you select words to learn that are important, interesting, and that students are likely to encounter.

After investigating the words with this strategy, students will be more likely to remember and use them. Once students are fairly familiar with the Word Wizard, they'll be able to use it on their own with unfamiliar, interesting, or intriguing words that they choose.



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### STEP-BY-STEP

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#### Teacher Prep

- As you preread a text, select three meaningful words that are important, interesting, and/or appear somewhat frequently.
- Write one word in each Word box at the top of the matrix (see page 33).
- Write the sentence where you found each word in the box below the word. It may be helpful to also write the sentence that comes before or after the original sentence.
- Duplicate one copy of the Word Wizard matrix for each student and make a transparency for yourself.

#### Explain

- Just do a quick introduction to the Word Wizard matrix. Show the matrix on the overhead and briefly explain each cell in the first column.
- Move right to modeling and keep your presentation lively and at a reasonable pace.

#### Model

- This is the important part. We suggest that you carefully model the first word and use a Think Aloud (see page iv) as you do.
- To begin, read the first word and read the word in context.
- Show students how you would use a thesaurus to find synonyms that you write in the next cell. The synonyms should be words with which students are familiar. If you can show how to find synonyms on the Internet, that would be great. Here's a good website: [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)
- Use the context and your synonyms to write what you think the word means in the next box. Here's another excellent place to Think Aloud.
- Now, find the word in the dictionary and write the definition. Make sure the definition corresponds to the way the word is used in the sentence in the second row.
- The fun factor is pumped here. You get to draw a picture that represents the word. It doesn't have to be a work of art, but your sketch should be representative of the word's meaning in some way.
- And this is the best part—the memory clue. Write a key word or phrase that will jog your



#### Mary Says,

"Here's a note of caution. There is no one method or graphic that works for teaching all words. Please, try out the words you select to be sure they fit this graphic."

memory and cue you to the word's meaning. Your memory clue can be silly, serious, or personal. For example, if your word is "dilemma," your memory clue could be "two lemons." Di- means two, and a dilemma is two difficult, or sour, choices.

- Be sure to explain your rationale for your memory clue.

### Guide

- Now move to the next word. Begin by reading the word and then read the word in rich context.
- From this point, have the students help you. Ask them to find information or suggest what to write in each cell.
- Consider having students come to the overhead and write synonyms or draw the picture, and so on.
- Be sure the memory clue is explained clearly to everyone.

### Practice

- Since this is a fairly straightforward strategy, students—working in pairs, perhaps—should be able to fill in the column for the next word with minimal guidance. Just circulate to lend a hand when needed.
- Don't forget to have students share their work! If you have a document reader, project student work for all to see.



### Jane Says,

"Try to avoid selecting words that represent unfamiliar concepts. Some background knowledge will help students be very successful using this strategy on their own."

## APPLICATIONS AND EXAMPLES

This strategy works well with words that are slightly familiar to students. Want to extend the strategy? Here are a couple of suggestions. Use one or use them all.

- Add a "bonus" row that asks for the word's origin. Here, students can write the word's origin and what the word meant a long time ago. This often helps students remember how the word is used today.
- Check out the Online Etymology Dictionary website at [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)
- Add a row where students write the word in an original sentence. This, of course, only happens after students have had plenty of opportunities to learn the word and all of its meanings. In other words, you shouldn't ask students to write a word in a sentence until they have a strong understanding of the word.
- Create a Word Wizard Wall where you display student-selected words. To get a word on the Word Wizard Wall, students have to fill in a column for their word. Challenge them to see who can find the most interesting words, bring them to class and add them to the Word Wizard Wall.
- Have students use the Word Wizard to teach their favorite words to the class.

# WORD WIZARD

	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3
Word in context			
Synonyms			
What I think it means			
What it means			
Picture			
Memory Clue			