

The aim of this leaflet

Most learners find that it's very important to have an idea of whether they're making progress or not. Finding that you are actually making progress can really increase your confidence. This leaflet suggests ways of evaluating your vocabulary learning and checking how much vocabulary you know.

Evaluating your progress

Here are some tips for evaluating your own progress:

- **Test yourself** or ask a friend to test you — and do this **frequently**. See the Advice Sheet **Remembering Vocabulary (V4)** for information about a method of repeated testing that focuses on the words you find most difficult.
- Test yourself or ask a friend to test you on your knowledge of a set of words over a period of time (e.g. one or two months) — how well do you know the words now?
- **Do a 'before' and 'after' test:** at the beginning and end of a period of learning (e.g. when you start and a couple of

months later) do the same test, hold a conversation or write a report on the same topic etc. — this is a good way to see if you've improved. If you are learning vocabulary of a certain frequency range (e.g. the most common 3,000 words) **try reading a book of the same frequency level** after a certain period of time — do you find it easy to read the book now? Simplified readers are a good source of vocabulary that's restricted to a certain frequency. You'll find them on the *Readers* shelf in the Language Commons, Room 3018. They can be borrowed for two weeks.

- If you are recycling your vocabulary by reading widely (see the Advice Sheet **Remembering Vocabulary (V4)**) you can **record how often you meet a word or phrase** by simply putting a tick next to the word every time you come across it — either on paper or in an *Excel* file. This can help you see which words are common and whether reading words often helps you remember them — in other words, it will help you

evaluate how successful your recycling strategy is.

- Keep a diary as you learn. Write down your feelings and comment on your progress as you go. This will help you to see evidence of progress and detect problems.
- If you are practising speaking or writing, ask a fluent or advanced speaker or writer of English to comment on your use of vocabulary. If you are in touch with them over a few months, they should be able to tell if you have made progress, at least if you have concentrated on a few topic areas only.
- If you are learning vocabulary from a Vocabulary textbook, use the exercises in the book to test your knowledge.
- To see how other learners evaluate their vocabulary learning, check out Learning to Learn English, pp. 30-32 (*Study skills* shelf, Multimedia Area).

Checking your vocabulary knowledge

Here are some sources for finding out how much vocabulary you know at different frequency levels or what your total vocabulary size is. To check how much you know at different frequency levels, try:

- *The Compleat Lexical Tutor: Vocabulary Levels Tests On-line*

<http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/levels/>

An excellent site for testing your knowledge of vocabulary at particular frequency levels. The site divides words into the following frequency levels:

2,000 (common words, e.g. 'game')

3,000

5,000

University Word List (words common in university textbooks, e.g. 'generate')

10,000 (uncommon words)

To find your vocabulary level, start with the 2,000 test, and keep going on to the harder tests until your score drops below 83%. (You will see parts of words in a sentence, and have to complete the word: i.e. you are tested on your ability to use the word, not just know the meaning when you read it. Note that if you make

spelling or grammatical errors, you will be marked 'wrong'. Don't worry if your score seems low: if you were testing your knowledge of words that you read, your score would undoubtedly be higher.) When your score drops below 83%, the site suggests that you learn words at this level before retaking the test. This is where the site becomes really useful. It generates a list of all the words at that frequency level. You can then identify the words that you want to learn. Once you click on a word, you can see concordanced lines which show you examples of the word in many different contexts, and see *WordNet* definitions, synonyms etc. Seeing how the words are used in context will help you learn them.

Your test score gives you a rough idea of how many words you know in that frequency range. For example, if you score 90% on the 5,000 test, that indicates that you know roughly 90% of the words in the 3,000-5,000 range. In other words, there are probably about 10% or (in this case) 200 words in that range that you do not know. You might want to go on to the next level, or perhaps stay at the same level and learn

some of the words you don't know before moving on.

Another useful learning activity would be to use simplified readers whose vocabulary has been limited to the range you want to focus on. You can find many simplified readers on the *Readers* shelf in the Language Commons. The vocabulary levels range from c. 1,000 to 5,000 words.

To get a rough idea of your level of vocabulary knowledge, try:

- Unit 8 in *Increase Your Vocabulary* (*Vocabulary* shelf). This will give you a rough indication of whether your overall vocabulary level is Intermediate, Upper Intermediate or Advanced.

- *Transparent.com (American) English Language Proficiency Test*
www.transparent.com/tlquiz/proftest/english/tlengttest.htm

This is mainly a grammar test (30 MCQs) but also contains 10 vocabulary questions and 10 reading comprehension questions. The test gives you a simple Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced rating. Answers provided.

And now...

If you would like any help or advice, or just a chat about your progress, please get in touch - **we are here to support your independent learning!** To contact us:

- Make an appointment to see an adviser. For details of advisers and their availability, please go to <https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-adviser-timetable/>.
- E-mail your questions to **iLANG** (lcilang@ust.hk).
- Ask at the reception counter of the Language Commons — if the receptionist cannot help you directly, s/he will pass your query on to one of the advisers.

What else can you do?

- Browse the many physical (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-commons/#resources>) and online materials (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/resources-vocabulary/>) for Vocabulary.
- Join a Vocabulary activity or short course (<http://ilang.cle.ust.hk/vocabulary/>).

Last Updated: May 2017