

Who is this for?

This leaflet is for anyone who wants to learn vocabulary from a prepared wordlist (e.g. a list of the 2,000 most common words of English, or a set of words provided in a chapter of a vocabulary textbook) rather than from normal daily listening or reading.

If you prefer to learn vocabulary from newspapers, TV programmes etc., check out the advice sheet **Learning Vocabulary by Reading or Listening (V7)**.

The aim of this leaflet

The aim of this leaflet is to introduce you to materials that you may find useful if you like learning from wordlists or vocabulary textbooks, and to suggest learning techniques that you may like to try.

Useful materials in the Language Commons

There are a number of wordlists available that you may find useful. Some people find them boring, but the advantage is that they often list words of a similar frequency or a similar topic together, so that it doesn't take as long to find useful words as it does when you're reading through books or newspapers.

- **Textbooks**

- There is a wide selection of Vocabulary textbooks for you to browse through on the 'Vocabulary' shelf. Here are some which you may like to try out:
English Vocabulary in Use, More than Words, The Heinemann English Wordbuilder, Wordperfect.
- **Dictionaries**
 - For **examples** of how words are used in context:
COBUILD English Dictionary, Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (the latest editions are the best ones)
 - To **hear the pronunciation** of words:
The American Heritage Dictionary
 - To learn vocabulary to **improve your writing or speaking**:
Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English, Longman Language Activator (both list similar words together so you can see what the difference is between them)
- **Other reference materials**
Another reference source gives extra information about what words normally

go together with the words you are learning:

The English Collocations Dictionary online <https://www.ozdic.com/> (see glossary below for 'collocations')

Learning tips

Here are some tips for learning vocabulary from lists. You may already have your own method that works well for you. If so, that's great — stick with it. If not, you may like to:

- Find lots of examples of how the words you are learning are used in context (e.g. check dictionaries and concordancers). This is very useful for learning the meaning of words, and vital if you want to learn to use the words in your own writing or speaking.
- Read Chapter 7 of *How to Learn a Language* (Study skills shelf).
- For tips about organising your learning so that it's systematic and you don't become overloaded, check out the Advice Sheet **Organizing Your Vocabulary Learning (V3)**.
- For tips about remembering words that you have learned, check out the advice sheet **Remembering Vocabulary (V4)**.

N.B. The important thing is to find out what works/does not work for you and why. Do your methods help you learn effectively? If not, what could you do that would help you learn more effectively?

If you do use an effective technique, please contact a Speaking or Writing Adviser or e-mail **lcommons** (lcommons@ust.hk) to let us know about it — we would like to hear from you!

Evaluating your progress

Here is a method for checking your progress in learning from lists that you may like to try:

- If you are learning words of a certain frequency range (e.g. the most common 3,000 words, or the University Word List) try reading a book of the same frequency level (e.g. simplified readers or academic textbooks) after a certain period of time — is it easy to read the book now?

For more information, see the leaflet **Evaluating your vocabulary learning (V5)**

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/>).

Glossary	
Collocation	When two words often go together (i.e. one often follows the other in speech or writing), they are said to collocate with each other. For example, an adjective that often collocates with <i>rain</i> is <i>heavy</i> (not <i>big</i>). <i>Heavy rain</i> , therefore, is a collocation.
Concordancer	A computer program that searches through a large collection of texts and then lists all the examples of a particular word in context.
Frequency level/range	This indicates how common the word is. A word in the 1,000-2,000 frequency range will be one of the second thousand most common words in English — i.e. very common. A word at the 10,000 frequency level will not be common. Knowledge of the 3,000 most common words in English is considered to be essential for understanding texts at university level.
GSL	The General Service List — a list of the 2,000 most frequent words in English.
Synonym	A word similar in meaning to another word.
UWL	The University Word List. This contains approximately 800 words which are very common in university textbooks, but not in the most common 5,000 words of English (e.g. <i>analyse</i>). A scale indicates how frequent each word is in university textbooks.

Last Updated: May 2017