

“Vocab” Flag

When children begin to read more independently, they will continue to encounter words they don't know. “*Vocab*” *Flag* is a simple hands-on activity that focuses their attention on finding the meanings of those words.

Supplies:

- book
- Post-It™ Flags
- Vocab Flag chart
- dictionary
- computer (opt.)

Preparation: none

What to Do:

Explain to your child the importance of learning the definitions of the unfamiliar words they encounter while reading. These vocabulary words enhance the meaning of the story and, if glossed over, will impede their understanding and enjoyment of the book.

There are several ways readers can understand new vocabulary when they read. The goal is for them to be able to use these strategies interchangeably.

- Using Context Clues. The phrases that surround an unfamiliar word will often contain clues to the meaning of that word. Encourage your reader to pay attention to the vocabulary she *does* understand to help her unlock the meaning of those unfamiliar words.
- Use a Dictionary. Have your reader keep a pocket dictionary handy whenever she reads. She should get in the habit of looking up one out of every three or four unfamiliar words. (Note: Insisting a reader looks up *every* unfamiliar word will cause her to lose the gist of the story.)
- Ask an Adult. There is nothing wrong with asking an adult the meaning of a word. (Make sure, however, that this isn't the only vocabulary strategy your reader uses.)
- Computer Dictionary/Thesaurus. The computer is an excellent motivator for struggling readers! If you have a computer available (and your child is overwhelmed with defining new vocabulary), it's fine to give her a little latitude to use this strategy more frequently – at first! Have her go to www.thesaurus.com. There is both a thesaurus and dictionary option for finding the meanings of words on this web site. When your reader encounters an unfamiliar word while reading, have her type that word into the search box to get the definition.

Your learner will “flag” new (unfamiliar) vocabulary in his or her story by writing the unfamiliar words - and their page numbers - on Post-It flags. Stick the Post-It flags on the “Vocab Flag worksheet” as a record of new vocabulary learned and vocabulary strategies used. Discuss the chapter with your child after she has finished reading it.