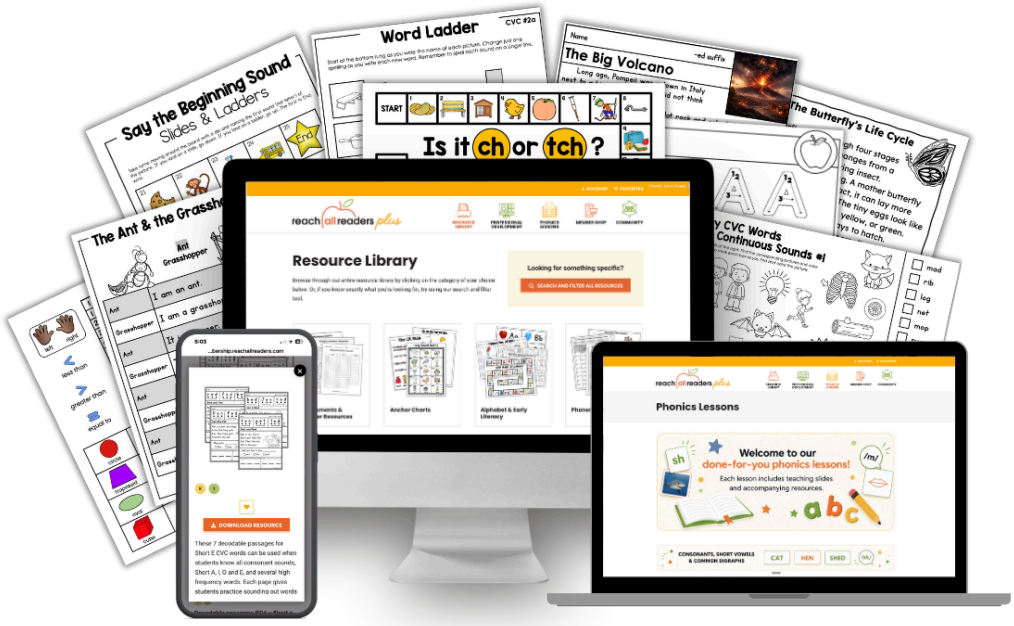
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Vocabulary Fast Facts

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Vocabulary
Fast Facts

› INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and their meanings.

Meaningful vocabulary instruction includes discussions of words, using words in a variety of contexts, and teaching students to learn words on their own.

› WHY TEACH VOCABULARY?

Vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension throughout the grades.

› RESEARCH SUMMARY

- Vocabulary knowledge is closely related to reading comprehension.
- Children learn many words without formal instruction.
- Robust vocabulary instruction, in which teachers directly teach words and use them in a variety of ways over time, is effective for learning word meanings.
- It's important to teach students to use context to discern word meanings. However, having students infer meaning through context is less effective than directly teaching the meanings of words.
- Teaching word meanings through dictionary definitions alone is not adequate.
- Teaching word meanings through shared read-alouds can increase knowledge of specific vocabulary.
- It's important to review vocabulary words over days and weeks.
- Teaching morphemes (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) can help students understand the meanings of words.
- Specific vocabulary instruction increases the comprehension of texts that contain that vocabulary. However, it has smaller effects on improving general comprehension.
- One of the best ways to promote vocabulary growth is to promote wide, regular reading after students are automatic at word-reading skills. Wide reading is the independent reading of a variety of fiction and non-fiction text genres.

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› IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

- When choosing words for general vocabulary instruction, choose words that represent a concept students already understand. (For example, since students understand *tired*, you could teach *fatigued.)*
- Follow a routine for teaching new words in which you introduce the word, have students repeat it, present the word in context, provide a kid-friendly definition, provide an additional context for the word, and give students many opportunities to process the word's meaning.
- Teach your students a procedure for what to do when they encounter an unfamiliar word when reading. They can reread the sentence and examine the context. If still unsure, they can see if the word's parts help with its meaning. If the meaning is still unclear, they can check a dictionary and read all the definitions to find the word that makes the most sense in the context. If still unsure, they should ask someone for help with the word's meaning.

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