

The following information was based on information from Judy K. Montgomery's book: *The Bridge of Vocabulary: Evidence Based Activities for Academic Success* (NCS Pearson Inc, 2007)

There are 4 types of vocabulary:

□ Listening □ Speaking □ Reading ✍ Writing

The first two constitute spoken vocabulary and the last two, written vocabulary. Children begin to acquire listening and speaking vocabularies many years before they start to build reading and writing vocabularies. Spoken language forms the basis for written language. Each type has a different purpose and, luckily, vocabulary development in one type facilitates growth in another.

Listening Vocabulary:

The words we hear and understand. Starting in the womb, fetuses can detect sounds as early as 16 weeks. Furthermore, babies are listening during all their waking hours – and we continue to learn new words this way all of our lives. By the time we reach adulthood, most of us will **recognize and understand close to 50,000 words**. (Stahl, 1999; Tompkins, 2005) Children who are completely deaf do not get exposed to a listening vocabulary. Instead, **if** they have signing models at home or school, they will be exposed to a “visual” listening vocabulary. The amount of words modeled is much less than a hearing child’s incidental listening vocabulary.

Speaking Vocabulary:

The words we use when we speak. Our speaking vocabulary is relatively limited: Most adults use a mere **5,000 to 10,000 words** for all their conversations and instructions.

This number is much less than our listening vocabulary most likely due to ease of use.

Reading Vocabulary:

The words we understand when we read text. We can read and understand many words that we do not use in our speaking vocabulary.

This is the 2nd largest vocabulary **IF** you are a reader. If you are not a reader, you can not “grow” your vocabulary.

Writing Vocabulary:

The words we can retrieve when we write to express ourselves. We generally find it easier to explain ourselves orally, using facial expression and intonation to help get our ideas across, then to find just the right words to communicate the same ideas in writing. Our writing vocabulary is strongly influenced by the words we can spell.

Think about it:

When reading, a child with hearing will say all the phonemes related to a word to sound it out. They will then guess a word they know. This is dependent upon their lexicon (mental

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dictionary). Children would not guess a word they didn't know. Deaf students do not use auditory memory to sound out a word. They mostly memorize spelling patterns. Therefore, students who are deaf typically use a reduced variety of words in writing while they are learning.

How many words are needed for Vocabulary Knowledge?

The English Language has a very large vocabulary, estimated to between **450,000** and **750,000** words (Stahl, 1999; Tompkins, 2005). English has evolved from contact with Anglo-Saxon English, Spanish, French, Greek and Latin to name a few.

Vocabulary learning can be demanding:

Students must learn **3,000** words per year by 3rd grade.
Only **400** words a year are directly taught by teachers to hearing students.

Children with learning difficulties learn an average of **45-50** words per year making the gap large. This number may be even less for students who are deaf or hard of hearing since they may need word lists reduced in order to memorize spelling patterns. And they may not get the extra listening/incidental vocabulary exposure to reinforce the new words. Think about how many times you may "overhear" conversations or might listen in on two conversations at once. "Overhearing" does not happen as frequently to deaf/hard-of-hearing students. They can only "overhear" what they can see.

Vocabulary Intervention involves three tiers:

Tier 1 – basic words (happy, clean, fast)

Tier 2 – high frequency words; mature language users; multiple meanings; used in many settings (cluster, sympathy, estimate)

Tier 3 – low frequency, specific to classes such as: science/math/social studies (lathe, chasm, warp)

There are approximately 7,000 words in Tier 2. Teach 400 per year or 10 per week. Research shows this will have an impact. For students who are on intervention or IEPs and need a reduced set of words and frequent repetition, 3 words a week should be chosen and reinforced in reading and writing.

Skip the dictionary! Typically words used in the dictionary to explain the target word are even harder to explain. Use student friendly definitions from context. Use Tier 1 vocabulary to explain a Tier 2 word. For more information, check out [The Bridge of Vocabulary](#).

Myth: There is such a thing as "grade level" vocabulary

Fact: Students learn words based on their experiences not based on their age or grade. A 2-year-old can know "periwinkle" from a crayon box (exposure).

Give your child as much vocabulary exposure as you can to help grow their vocabulary

Another Book suggestion: *Bringing Words to Life*, written by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002)