

**WORDS
FOR
READING
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ELTON F. HENLEY

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Words for reading.

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To the Instructor

Today's colleges and universities provide remedial instruction for entering students who evidence minimal competence in reading and writing; at the other extreme, exceptionally bright and well-prepared students are often exempted from the traditional first year of composition. I have written this book for the great majority of students who fall between these extremes. They are fairly fluent orally and seem to possess more general knowledge than, say, the students of several decades ago. For these students, however, printed English is almost a second language. They rarely read beyond their assignments; they give newspapers and magazines only a cursory glance—if that. Their pitifully small vocabularies contribute significantly to finding reading a distinct onus. Thus, any vocabulary textbook designed for the needs of this vast majority of college and university students can no longer artificially separate vocabulary building from that ultimate fundamental: reading. My textbook places these students squarely in the “natural environment” of words: *meaningful printed contexts*.

The vocabulary herein is the vocabulary that is actually being used “out there” in diverse printed sources to which a student motivated to read will probably turn, for example: *Argosy, Car and Driver, Consumer Reports, Dog World, Esquire, Gentlemen's Quarterly, Good Housekeeping, Money, Ms., National Geographic, Newsweek, People, The New York Times, Parade, People, Popular Science, Psychology Today, The Reader's Digest, Rolling Stone, Soap Opera Digest, Sports Illustrated, Time, and TV Guide*. These and other readily available magazines, newspapers, and paperbound books are the sources of the numerous quoted contexts within this textbook. They are sources that address students' interests, such as contemporary events, conservation, rock stars and diverse sub-

cultures. In addition to more traditional vocabulary, they use recent entries into the language, such as *Macho*, *The Third World*, *Eurocommunism*, *Catch-22*, and *hospice*.

This book is structured upon vocabulary found contextually. Unit 1 begins by showing the inseparable interrelationship between new vocabulary and printed contexts, directing students to obvious places where new words are encountered—contexts so obvious as to be frequently overlooked. Unit 2 stresses learning to use a dictionary. Also in Unit 2 and in all subsequent Units, I drive home the motif of reading-for-words in a novel way. At the bottom of many pages students see a parade of words culled from readily recognized printed sources. These words form a unique subtext; and although they are not part of the text proper,¹ students—importantly—will soon begin discovering among them vocabulary that they have recently learned. Each Unit begins with a boxed citing of all sources of quoted printed contexts used within that Unit. The student then moves to a systematic presentation of new words, introduced contextually within paragraphs of varying length and organized into manageable *groups*. To facilitate smooth reading of these new words, definitions appear at convenient intervals. Then—*most importantly*—students discover an accumulation of their new words used within quoted printed contexts in sections entitled *Words in Action: Vocabulary Within Printed Contexts*. (Here, also, mastery of vocabulary is tested.) Exercises (required and optional) end each Unit. Even here the contextual emphasis continues, for students must insert their new words into contexts composed by me or into further quoted printed contexts.

In any nonremedial college-level vocabulary textbook, roots are a must. However, I delay their formal introduction until Unit 8, for the focus of earlier Units is to encourage the student to read more and to develop a keen word-awareness. Also, most of the vocabulary in these earlier Units is essentially non-Latinate (and, thus, does not lend itself to a roots approach). In a textbook that is carefully gradated, I am convinced (in spite of my training in the Classics) that early introduction of Greek and Latin etymology is overly difficult. However, before Unit 8, I begin to introduce etymology *passim*, implicitly suggesting its value. When I formally introduce roots, I avoid cold, mechanical lists. Rather, I (as an almost built-in teacher) *guide* the student, *discussing* how prefixes, roots, and suffixes work together to generate words. As a student develops a “knack” for dealing with etymology, I slowly give him independence in making synthetic relationships. (For teachers electing to emphasize etymology very early in the book, I make many suggestions in the *Teacher’s Manual*.)

¹In the *Teacher’s Manual*, I suggest ways to use these words as supplemental vocabulary within a Unit.

A cardinal rule for vocabulary textbooks has been an insistence upon impersonality, oppressive methodology, and, frankly, the infusion of unmitigated dullness. To break away from this pattern, I have made every effort to establish a noticeable author-reader rapport. Of course, this book is highly structured; but I interrupt format with words of encouragement, cajolery, and even light reprimand. Educative respites, frequently off-beat and humorous, add diversity. Most Units begin with a light, thematic quasi-essay, mitigating the student's upcoming work.

If this book serves as an ancillary textbook within the traditional freshman composition sequence (or within an advanced expository writing course), *it verges on being self-instructional*. However, I adamantly feel that vocabulary building cannot be wholly a do-it-yourself proposition. Although I provide highly readable phonetics throughout, I aver that a student must actually hear words pronounced by a living instructor, who also must monitor exercises and clarify nuances.

This textbook supplies a wealth of material for the teacher who wishes to use it in a full-fledged, lower-level vocabulary course or as a supplement to an advanced English course. In the accompanying *Teacher's Manual*, I provide even more exercises and suggest additional vocabulary that can be infused into the class at appropriate places. Of course, the ability of a specific class will determine pace. Much care should be spent on teaching the student to use his dictionary (Unit 2). Because I have avoided making early Units too demanding (adhering strictly to the principle of gradation), you may want to assign Units 3 through, say, 5 with relative rapidity. Later units will require an increasingly slower pace.

Students who use this textbook will readily perceive their progress, will appreciate their increasing word-awareness, and will conclude that word building can be enjoyable and leads to greater ease in reading.

I owe especial thanks to Bill Grimshaw for his support and enthusiasm from the very beginning of this project, and to Bill Oliver for his trust in Grimshaw's judgment and for his sage advice throughout all stages of my writing. Thanks to my colleague Frank Mason for his assiduous proofreading and to another colleague, Bill West, for his astute professional evaluations and suggestions. Thanks to Ruth Anderson for her patience and professionalism. The companionship of Ms. Shibui Yukihime and Mr. Dai-Okii Kuro Senshu persisted, doggedly, even at protracted times of neglect.

Elton F. Henley

Unit



Preview: Evidence of students' wishes to improve their vocabularies/ Some recent proof of a steep decline in students' verbal abilities/ Some reasons for this decline/ Surprisingly common sources for seeing vocabulary in action/ Questions for testing word-awareness/ Importance of learning words contextually/ Reading as a major step in improving one's vocabulary/ Tips on how to begin an orderly study of vocabulary/ Suggestions for buying a good dictionary/ Brief diagnostic test/ Test on words appearing within this Unit's text

An Unusual Way to Begin a Book: The Story of the Beginning of a College Course

As a professor of English at the University of South Florida, I do what most university professors do: I teach classes at various levels; I carry on research in my area of specialization, British drama; and I counsel both undergraduate and graduate English majors. But the routine of my teaching was interrupted in an odd manner about a year ago; this interruption led to the publication of this book.

The seed for this book was planted when I found taped to my office door, over a period of a week, notes from students familiar and totally unfamiliar. A typical note read: "I would like to see you during posted office hours to discuss your starting a course in vocabulary improvement. I'm not alone in asking for such a course; several of my friends, too, see a need for a vocabulary course." Because the notes suddenly appeared in large numbers and all requested a new course, I sensed a conspiracy. But this was a conspiracy of highly motivated students seeking self-improvement. Since I had mentioned the possibility in my literature and freshman composition courses of my starting a vocabulary course, the conspiracy was to strengthen my intention of getting it under way.

I had conferences with all the students who had left me notes. Two threads ran through their requests for a vocabulary course: (1) All recognized that they were in great need of improving their vocabularies, and (2) all were eager to enroll as soon as possible in a vocabulary course to give direction to their enthusiasm. Now, here on the office door, was evidence of more than enough student demand!

Within a week, my chairman agreed to schedule a vocabulary course for the next academic quarter. Both he and I agreed to limit the initial enrollment to twenty students, for I convinced the chairman that I intended to experiment with methods for teaching it. For example I did not want to use a textbook. Rather I wanted the students, under my close guidance, to find unfamiliar words in their readings and then to share these words among themselves. The chairman was eager to allow me to experiment in such a manner after hearing some of the details of my plans.

The course was offered. Within one hour at registration, the enrollment limit of twenty students was reached. The course was successful, and I have offered it routinely each quarter since this initiation. Its continued success was apparent when, with each succeeding quarter, enrollment increased to the point where some classes now have over 130 students. Encouraged by the response, I have authored the book that you are now reading as a result of my teaching techniques and as a re-

sult of student reactions to those techniques. In this introductory chapter, I shall detail for you the specifics of the course in which I used no textbook.

FIRST CLASS MEETING

In our first class meeting (in early September 1977), I read to my eager twenty students two magazine articles that were written two years before: "Can't Anyone Here Speak English?" in the August 25, 1975, issue of *Time*, and the feature article, "Why Johnny Can't Read," in the December 8, 1975, issue of *Newsweek*. From page 35 of the *Time* article, I read to the class that "in 1957, the average verbal score on the National Scholastic Aptitude Tests was 473 (on a scale from 200 to 800). In 1973, the average was down 33 points, to 440." From page 58 of the *Newsweek* article, I read aloud that in November 1975, "the College Entrance Examination Board announced the formation of a panel of top educators who will study the twelve-year-long decline in Scholastic Aptitude scores; the fall-off has been especially sharp in verbal skills." Two years later, in the September 5, 1977, issues of *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines, the panel announced its findings. I proceeded to outline briefly some of the contributing factors that the panel found to have influenced the steadily declining scores.

However, I saw impatience written on the students' faces. They quickly informed me that the figures were "interesting" but that no one needed to tell them that students' verbal abilities had been going steadily downhill. Two students mentioned that many states were beginning to require reading and math competency tests—tests in which students had to show minimal competence in order to graduate from high school.

Therefore, I decided to stop reading additional data that emphasized the extent of students' verbal incompetence, and I threw the class open to discussion: "Why do you have the problem with language that you all seem to admit having?" Fred Sanders readily admitted, "I just don't read enough to feel at ease with words." (By the way, the students in this class have permitted my using their names in this book.) "I would rather listen to my stereo or go to a movie than read a magazine or a novel," Fred added. "I'm a TV addict," Jane Chapman openly confessed. After a few more "confessions," I saw that the students had hit upon one major point of agreement: Few college students read beyond what is assigned in courses. I quickly took a poll: "How many of you subscribe to at least one magazine, right now?" We were all shocked at the response: Out of the twenty freshmen, sophomores, and juniors in the class, only *three* students raised their hands. I probed deeper: "How many of you have read through an entire book of fiction or nonfiction, say, over the last year?" No hands went up! Both the students and I were stunned. The silence was broken by Craig Fisher, who stated that

he had heard in a radio interview program with the famed contemporary American novelist John Cheever, that in the United States 90 percent of the population had never bought a hardcover book. The class soon uniformly concluded that instead of reading of any sort, they preferred watching television or listening to radio, records and tapes. "Mere reading seems to be a dying activity," I sadly commented.

I concluded the first meeting with a summary of the spirited discussion: "You all seem to agree that your vocabularies are small because you don't read routinely. Thus, reading seems to be the key to improving your vocabulary. During my discussions with some of you in my office before this course was officially offered, you hinted that you wanted a quick, easy, painless way of gaining an 'instant' stock of words. Sorry! There's no 'instant vocabulary transfusion' that I can give you three times weekly over the quarter. I do, however, have some practical suggestions about how to get a vocabulary improvement program under way—immediately. As you know, I'm not going to use a textbook. Nor am I going to give long lists of unfamiliar words and have you look up definitions. We will in essence begin our second class meeting by making a list of unfamiliar words from everyday printed sources."

SECOND CLASS MEETING

The next class meeting was, to be truthful, one of the most surprising sessions that I have ever held. I immediately asked: "Where can we conveniently find reading sources from which we can gather words that any literate college or university student should know?" Joyce Barron startled the class by stating that she had found many new words yesterday morning—on her parent's driveway! We were momentarily puzzled! *Driveway?* Then Joyce quoted her father: "Joyce, why not look more closely at the two newspapers that we subscribe to?" Obviously, Joyce had done some homework for our second meeting, for she held up three newspaper clippings for the class to see: (1) **PRINCE BERATES SOCIETY'S ILLS**, a headline to an article reporting the words of England's Prince Phillip while in Ottawa, Canada; (2) **CARTER CONCEDES NEED TO CLARIFY PANAMA CANAL PACT**, a headline about President Carter's troubles trying to convince the Congress and the American public to accept a new treaty between the United States and Panama; and (3) **OIL EMBARGO VULNERABILITY VEXES CARTER**, the headline to one of columnist Jack Anderson's early October 1977 articles.¹ Strange to say, Joyce had indeed found on her driveway

¹Most University of South Florida students commute. Therefore, they read the newspapers of the immediate area: *The Tampa Tribune*, *The Tampa Times*, and the *St. Petersburg Times*. (The first headline appeared in *The Tampa Times*; the second and third headlines appeared in *The Tampa Tribune*.)

words that were either new to her or that she had seen before but could not define with certainty: *berates*, *concedes*, *embargo*, *vulnerability*, and *vexes*.

Joyce was not the only student who pointed out the everyday newspaper as a good source for gleaning (*gleaning?* to *glean?*) unfamiliar words. Stan Lawrence quoted from a column by Milton Moskowitz, a nationally known economics writer, one sentence that appeared in the October 15, 1977, issue of *The Tampa Times*; “Ralston Purina has now carried anthropomorphism to a logical extremity with its ‘Great Meow [cat] Mix Meow Off,’ a competition that appeals to the cupidity and egomania of cat owners.” Stan had some problem pronouncing *anthropomorphism*, *cupidity*, and *egomania*, but I assured him and the rest of the class that when learning new words, one often naturally stumbles with pronunciation. “Don’t be embarrassed. In a sense, any teacher of a foreign language expects less than perfect pronunciation, and let’s face it, you will find many English words that are as new to you as Russian words would be!”

Tim Moore and Sophie Hogan found new words in another unexpected place—in a source closely associated with that enemy of a reading vocabulary, the ever-present television set. Sophie told the class that when she was thumbing through an old issue of *TV Guide* (for the week of March 26–April 1, 1977), she was shocked to find words such as *unpretentious*, *saga*, *attenuated*, *ludicrous*, *diatribes*, *macabre*, *inaneities*, *melange*, *hiatus*, *forensic*, and *iniquities* (I’m cutting short Sophie’s listing of about twenty additional words). Sophie expressed her embarrassment that she had been unaware that such a commonly available magazine as *TV Guide* used words beyond her knowledge.

Marsha Pratt had another surprise for the class: She told of having a vocabulary lesson in her dentist’s office, where she found herself turning pages in the March 1977 issue of *Reader’s Digest*—one of the most widely read magazines in the world. She scribbled on the back of an old bill some of the new words that she discovered: *tumultuous*, *epochs*, *inexplicably*, *devotees*, *macadam*, *paradoxically*, *demise*, *mystique*, *topographies*, *euphoria*, *inexplicable*, *phlegmatic*, *badgering*, *balm*, and about ten additional words.

Similar findings of vocabulary in strange locations began pouring into the class. Don Klein was in a grocery store, thumbing through a copy of *Sports Illustrated* and was amazed at some of the words that he saw. He told us of returning home to start looking through a stack of old issues of *Sports Illustrated*. He gave the class some sample words from the March 14, 1977, issue: *decimated*, *pedestrian*, *demise*, *hucksters*, *incipient*, *macho*, and many more. Don, an active pitcher on the USF baseball team, said that he had not associated vocabulary with sports reporting. (Someone in the class asked Don if he had heard some of the words used by the national sports broadcaster Howard Cosell!) Don

continued: "I also checked through several old copies of *Popular Science*, which I occasionally buy at the same grocery store." From the March 1977 issue, Don listed on the blackboard these words: *tantalizing*, *burgeoning*, *rationalizations*, *incipient*, *entrepreneur*, *esoteric*, *ambient*, and *cosmological*. (Evidently, Don had done some homework, for his pronunciation of these words was perfect.)

Elizabeth Reeder had her introduction to vocabulary studies at the hairstylist's. While awaiting her turn, she told the class of looking closely at a copy of *The Ladies' Home Journal* and of finding the following words: *moribund*, *atrophy*, *solicitude*, *leitmotif*, *harbinger*, *self-effacing*, *parameter*, and *ameliorate*.

More students volunteered unfamiliar words which they had found in magazines located at unexpected places; for example, a barber shop, a hospital waiting room, a travel agency, and the law office of a student's father. But the second meeting was almost over. Quickly, I tried to summarize the significance of the student testimony: (1) Reading material surrounds you; you will become aware of magazines in the most unexpected places. (2) After discovering these surrounding sources of words, merely open their covers! You will immediately discover unfamiliar words in printed contexts.² (3) There are some quality magazines for any individual taste. Here are the titles of magazines that students talked about during the second meeting: *Reader's Digest*, *TV Guide*, *Sports Illustrated*, *People*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, *Ms.*, *Harper's*, *Motor Trend*, *Esquire*, *Consumer Reports*, *National Geographic*, *Popular Science*, *Stereo Review*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. Most of these titles reflect areas of specialized interests, but I emphasized that magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* routinely touch upon a wide range of subjects: current national and international politics and events, sports, medicine, movies, television, biography, economics, and books.

Here I shall ask you, the reader of this book, several questions that concluded our second class meeting:

Do you read only what is assigned in your school classes?

Do you subscribe to even *one* magazine?

Have you ever read any of the magazines that were discussed above?

Have you ever thought of joining a book club?

Do you ever read with any regularity a daily newspaper?

When was the last time that you browsed through books or magazines in a shopping mall, bookstore, or newstand?

Do you own a dictionary?

How is your "word-awareness"?

²*Context* is a word's use in a sentence or phrase that gives its particular meaning.

Have you been motivated to look up the definitions of any of the unfamiliar words that you have read to this point in this book?

THIRD CLASS MEETING

I opened the third class meeting with a word that was new to all the students in the class: *heuristic*. Students were now coming to the class with dictionaries. I requested Don Klein to read the definitions of *heuristic* from his *Random House College Dictionary* (rev. ed., 1975): "1. serving to indicate or point out; stimulating interest as a means of furthering investigation. 2. (of a teaching method) encouraging the student to discover for himself." The class realized that I was using a *heuristic* method of teaching.

Then I asked the class if they had taken time to learn the definitions of any words that their fellow students had found in the "discovery" readings. Only a few students had copied down all the words. Immediately, I requested that each student submit to me all the new words that he or she had related to the class during the second class meeting, including each sentence in which each word appeared. "Do not learn a word except within a meaningful context." **(And this advice applies equally as well to you, reader!)** I promised the class that I would have all of these words (within their contexts) mimeographed for distribution to the whole class.

Meanwhile, during our third meeting we explored further the possible sources for collecting vocabulary from printed contexts. I brought to this meeting copies of a wide variety of novels, ranging from "best sellers" to some works by contemporary "serious" writers. Most of the class had heard of E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, Taylor Caldwell's *Captains and the Kings*, and Thomas Tryon's chilling *Harvest Home*. (Many students had seen an NBC-TV series based on the Caldwell book.) As examples of highly regarded American novels of this century, I discussed F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (which had been made into a movie several years ago) and Robert Penn Warren's *All The King's Men*, published in 1946 and made into an Academy Award winning movie in 1949. I instructed the class to buy copies of each of these novels. As a preview to the words that they would be meeting in these works, I isolated the vocabulary appearing on ten randomly consecutive pages of each book:

E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*³
(pages 17–27): 17: *consign, riffraff*; 18: *derelict, culvert, pinafore*; 19: *petite*; 20: *degeneracy, indignant*; 21: *swarthy, eminent, facade, atria, robust, burly, balustrade, parquetered, refectory*; 22: *dismantle, exorbitant*; 23: *disembark*; 24: *culmination, emboss*; 25: *dowager, regal*; 26: *effulgence, laudanum, imperious*; 27: *tacit*.

³(New York: Bantam Books, 1976).

Thomas Tryon's *Harvest Home*⁴

(pages 152–162): 152: *plaintive*; 156: *convolutions*; 158: *malediction, demoniacally, to encroach*; 159: *pinioned, doleful, lament*; 160: *apparitions, diffident, to allay*.

Taylor Caldwell's *Captains and the Kings*⁵

(pages 366–376): 366: *discerned, relentlessly, contemplative, ruthlessness*; 367: *voluptuously*; 368: *courtliness, deference, ardently, witticisms, effrontery, vitality, coy, indulgence, amenities*; 369: *flippancy, impertinence, ameliorate, indulgent, presumptuousness, proprieties*; 370: *arrayed, lavishly, soignée, agitated, inquisitive, self-deprecating*; 371: *dire, bemused*; 372: *disheveled, incoherent, anguish, swathed, tendrils, blotched*; 373: *convulsively, discreet, emerged, to intrude, compassionate, frantic, distraught*; 374: *avidly, agonized, keening, lamentations*; 375: *muted, canopied, acrid*; 376: *certitude, pathetic, Litany, flaccid*.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*⁶

(pages 11–21): 11: *deft, incredulously, reciprocal, wan, imperatively*; 12: *languidly, unobtrusively, bantering*; 14: *pathetic, complacency*; 15: *extemporizing*; 16: *vigil*; 17: *turbulent*; 20: *peremptorily, corroborated, banns*; 21: *intimidation*.

Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*⁷

(pages 94–104): 94: *sluicing, incandescent*; 95: *punctilious, immitigable*; 96: *litigation*; 98: *pundit*; 99: *arbitrary, tweedy*; 102: *tentative, apologetic, swarthy, snobbery, supercilious*; 103: *distraction, turgid, bilious*; 104: *stylized, decisive, fabricator, bas-reliefs, rigor, portentous*.

Are you surprised that a student may find such unfamiliar vocabulary in inexpensive, widely read books that are available in paperback editions in drugstores, department stores, and newsstands at airline terminals?

Just after the middle of the third class meeting, I discussed with the class how we would proceed with our *heuristic* study of vocabulary as it appears in printed contexts. Exactly how we were to use our magazines and novels consumed the remaining minutes in the hour-long class. Of course, there is no need to detail our discussion, for *you* have this textbook in your hand, and, therefore, your vocabulary study is mapped out for you. This book, your textbook, is a distillation of the teaching techniques I used in the experimental course discussed in

⁴(Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1973).

⁵(Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1976).

⁶(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925, 1953).

⁷(New York: Bantam Books, 1963 [12th printing]).

this introductory chapter. This textbook, as you will readily notice, emphasizes that **reading is the key to improving one's vocabulary**, and, therefore, it stresses vocabulary that appears in printed sources (for example, magazines and books, fictional and nonfictional) that you, for the most part, readily recognize. You have an advantage over my first vocabulary class—you have in your hand a book that the author believes is a manageable work reflecting the actual experience of having taught students to find for themselves unfamiliar words.

Below are some valuable general points to keep in mind as you begin your orderly learning of new words. (I gave my class the same advice.)

1. Determine the extent of your present vocabulary. Up to this point in this book, for example, you have seen listed many words that you flatly do not know and words that you know already to some degree. In other words, you have been subconsciously testing yourself already. Many people test themselves in the valuable monthly feature, "It Pays To Enrich Your Word Power," in the *Reader's Digest*. Read from cover to cover, for example, an issue of any of the magazines mentioned so far in this book. (At the end of this chapter, you will find a short diagnostic test for you based on some of the vocabulary that my class found with great frequency in its early stages. By the way, do you now know the words *diagnostic* and *frequency*? Do you remember the meaning of *heuristic*? In other words: **How is your word-awareness developing?**)

2. Make an immediate pledge to read more. If you read to some extent presently, determine to read even more extensively. Do not limit your reading just to school assignments! Remember the drugstore, the dentist's office, the beauty shop, and your driveway? Shop around a bookstore or a newsstand—they are certainly not difficult to find! Subscribe to at least one quality magazine. Some students choose to subscribe to a magazine that competently covers wide fields of knowledge, such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. The same students, too, subscribe to magazines that appeal to their specialized interests, for example, *Dog World*, *Gourmet*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Popular Science*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, and *Today's Woman*. Take advantage of the magazines that offer discount subscription rates to students.

3. Establish a method of regularly recording your discoveries of new vocabulary. Some people (not only students!) keep a notebook handy while they read in order to jot down new words, leaving sufficient space to insert later pronunciation keys and definitions. Some students use index cards with great success to record new vocabulary.

4. Avoid breakneck speed in attempting to learn new words. For example, your eyes have been exposed in this chapter to many words that perhaps are unfamiliar to you. Maybe you have been curious

enough to find the definitions of some of them. However, most of these words have lacked contexts. Be patient, for you will be seeing many of them in contexts later in the book. Start your learning process slowly, gradually building up the pace of acquiring new words. To be overly eager is frequently to experience overwhelming frustration. Thus, you may have tried to find definitions of all of the vocabulary that you have seen so far in this book. If you are shocked at the number of words that you do not know, remember that the process of improving one's vocabulary is gradual and that you should not merely memorize definitions without meaningful contexts. There is a distinct value in learning a few words at a time—thoroughly: Be sure of pronunciations, possible multiple meanings, and in many cases, roots.

5. Become immediately aware that there are essentially two types of vocabulary: (1) *working vocabulary* and (2) *recognition* (or passive) vocabulary. Usually, you employ your *working vocabulary* in day-to-day activities—personal, social, and business. It is the vocabulary that you use in everyday conversation and in informal writing (as in personal letters). Formal situations, however, may call for a more formal vocabulary, but one that your listener (or reader) feels at ease with. This principle is important: Know the verbal level of your listener or reader! Of course, your largest vocabulary is your *recognition* (or passive) *vocabulary*—the words that you find most often in printed sources. Obviously, your passive vocabulary is much larger than the vocabulary you use in ordinary conversation. Thus, the average college or university student may readily understand a less than familiar word from its context. Remember that this textbook emphasizes that as you read more, your recognition (passive) vocabulary will grow. How strange you will seem if you try constantly to put this recognition vocabulary into your conversation! Your listeners or readers will accuse you of being “showy” with such a vocabulary.⁸

In her *Word Resources*, Professor Frieda Radke has some very good advice for students beginning a serious attempt at vocabulary improvement:

Many times simple everyday words, if used with precision, are often more effective in making your writing and speaking clear and forceful than are longer ones. Some students have the mistaken idea that the use of polysyllabic or unusual expressions is a criterion of word proficiency. Avoid the use of such pompous words if you can substitute with exactness more practical, simple terms.⁹

⁸Debra Cohen, in *Psychology Today* (May 1977), p. 98, wisely warns: “You wouldn’t tell a child to perambulate across town, or ask him to procure comestibles for dinner. If you said it was precipitating, you’d get a funny look.”

⁹(New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1961; rev. ed.), p. 9.