Vocabulary Building Strategies

Learn Words from Context
- How is the word used in the sentence? What does it seem to mean in this situation? Does it appear to have a positive or negative meaning?
- This is not a precise way of learning the word, but it will usually help you figure out a general meaning.
- Be careful, though! Sometimes context will lead you to a completely different meaning.

Use New Words Frequently
- Like anything else, the more you use new information, the better you will learn and remember it.
- Try to use the new words in your daily conversation.
- If you use the new words in your writing, use a dictionary to make sure you are using it correctly.

Look Up Words
- Look up new or unfamiliar words before you use them in your writing.
- Keep a list of unfamiliar words in a notebook.
- Look up those words in the dictionary or at dictionary.com.
- Write the definitions next to the words in your notebook.
- Review the notebook every so often.

Learn Synonyms
- When you learn a new word, you should learn its synonyms (words with similar meanings) so that you better understand the word—and you may learn even more new words.

Learn Antonyms
- When you learn a new word, you should learn its antonyms (words that have opposite meanings) so that you better understand the word—and you may learn even more new words.

Learn Groups of Related Words
- Many words are related to each other and may even sound alike and/or have similar spellings.
- By learning these words in groups, you can learn more effectively.
- Flash Cards can help you learn the connections among these related words.

Learn Prefixes and Suffixes
- Many (but not all) words have prefixes, suffixes, or both.
- A prefix is the beginning of a word.
- A suffix is the end of a word.
- If you know the prefix or suffix, you can figure out the word’s meaning.
  - For example: “Pre” means before. Therefore “prefix” means something that comes before something else. “Preview” means something before a “view.” “Pre-trial” means before trial.