

3 Tier Vocabulary Words

Not all words require instruction equally:

Tier 1 – Basic Words – Most cannot be demonstrated and do not have multiple meanings, but students will need to know them. Sight words would be found at this level. Estimates indicate that about 8,000 basic words need no instruction.

Tier 2 – Words occur in high frequency. Found in a variety of domains. Estimates indicate that there are about 7,000 words for tier 2 or 700 words per year. These words can have a powerful impact on verbal functions.

Criteria:

- Importance to understanding the text
- Characteristic of mature language users
- Used across a variety of domains
- Potential for building rich representations of the words (multiple meaning words)
- Words that allow students to provide precision and specificity in describing the concept

Words like: merchant, tend, fortunate, maintain, required, performed, benevolent

Tier 3 – Words with a low frequency of use, often limited to special, specific domains.

They are best learned when a specific need arises. (Content area words)

Words like: igneous, metamorphic, Revolutionary War, economics