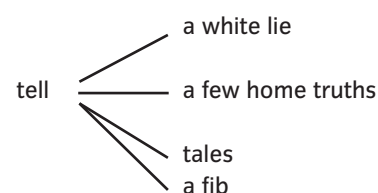


Working with vocabulary

1 Stress the importance of phrases and collocations

Advanced students often mistakenly assume that in order to make their vocabulary sound more advanced, they need to know a lot of complex, long words: the danger of this is that their speech and writing will start to sound very unnatural. Point out to students that it is often a question of adding more 'unusual' word combinations to their existing knowledge, for example 'tell' not only collocates with 'a lie', 'the truth', 'a story', etc. but can also be used with the following, more unusual words and phrases:



(See Module 10: *Truth and lies*)

Similarly, show students that in discussion activities, they can sound more sophisticated by simply adding one or two words to a phrase they already know, for example: 'We agreed that ...' 'We agreed **unanimously** that ...' 'Do you expect me to believe that...?' 'Do you **seriously** expect me to believe that...?' '...It's unprofessional behaviour' ... It's **considered** unprofessional behaviour...'

It will be helpful to students if you get into the habit of writing word combinations on the board wherever appropriate, rather than just individual words, for example instead of *ransom*, write up *demand / pay a ransom*. When writing up sentences, highlight collocations in colour or by underlining them – this is particularly important when the associated words are not actually next to each other in the sentence, for example: 'To **give** your children **a head start** in life, sit them in front of the television'.

2 Encourage students to use – but not overuse – a monolingual dictionary

A good monolingual dictionary is an invaluable tool for an advanced student. Encourage students to bring a dictionary to class, and remind them of the information it can provide, for example different meanings, word stress, phonemic script, part of speech, example sentences. Students should use their dictionaries 'little and often', for example for checking the pronunciation of a word, or finding a dependent preposition. However, it is important to point out that overuse of a dictionary can distract students from the overall meaning of a text and make them dictionary 'dependent'.

3 Encourage students to guess meaning from context

Advanced students need to practise guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases during class time, so that they become more efficient and independent readers outside the classroom. It will also be important for students preparing for examinations where there is a large amount of reading material and dictionary use is not permitted. Many of the reading texts in *Cutting Edge Advanced* have an accompanying exercise where students are required to guess the meaning of certain words/phrases, sometimes with the help of definitions to match. This vocabulary is not very high frequency, and is not intended to be activated: it is more important that students learn to use the surrounding text to help them determine its meaning. You could show students how to do this by doing an example with a 'nonsense' word, for example:

'We put the *grubble* back in its box and closed the lid carefully, so that it couldn't escape.'

- 'grubble' is a noun, because it has 'the' in front of it.
- a 'grubble' is alive, because it could escape – it must be a type of animal, insect or bird.
- a 'grubble' is small enough to be put into a box.

4 Encourage students to select vocabulary to remember

Students can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the amount of new words and phrases in their coursebook, and frustrated because they can't remember them all. Point out that this is an unrealistic expectation, and encourage students to select vocabulary, that they particularly want to remember and learn. This could be vocabulary that they feel will be particularly useful for them, or that they find interesting/unusual. As students' needs and interests are likely to be quite diverse, they will probably select different words and phrases: you could therefore encourage regular discussion in pairs or groups where students compare the words they have selected from a particular section or module, and explain why they have chosen them.

5 Help students to remember phrases by drilling them as 'chunks'

Phrases can be difficult to understand and specific to certain situations, so it is important that they are introduced in context. However, students may retain them better if you drill just the phrase, rather than a full sentence with problems which might distract from the phrase itself. For example: drill *lounging around* rather than *someone who lounges around doing nothing for hours on end*. Alternatively, use a very minimal sentence: *I have mixed feelings about it* rather than *I have mixed feelings about the government's environmental policy*. The drilling of such phrases will aid memorisation, as well as help students to sound more natural by focusing on features such as weak forms and linking.

6 Encourage students to keep a vocabulary notebook

It is important that students learn to record and organise new words and phrases in a way that will make them easily accessible and memorable. You might like to suggest that students keep a separate vocabulary notebook for this purpose. You could also remind them of useful habits to get into when they are recording new words and phrases. The following techniques will help students to record and memorise new vocabulary more effectively:

- writing the word or phrase in an example sentence.
- highlighting collocations.
- marking the stress on words of more than one syllable.
- including an explanation or translation of the meaning, if necessary.
- using an illustration if they find this helpful.

Each page of the vocabulary notebook can be organised around a topic (for example 'money') or a key word (for example 'tell'). Students can then add to the page when they come across new words or phrases related to that topic or key word.

7 Keep a vocabulary 'bank' in the classroom

Keeping a vocabulary 'bank' in the classroom is an excellent way of helping students to learn and remember new vocabulary. You can start building up a vocabulary 'bank' by copying new words and phrases from each lesson onto slips of card or paper and putting them into a box or large envelope. Write the word or phrase in a sentence on one side of the slip, and a definition or explanation on the other. Once the 'bank' is established, you can start getting students to add the new vocabulary: a few minutes before the end of the lesson, ask students to call out any words they would like to put in the 'bank' and hand out slips of paper as they call them out. You can get the words out of the bank for revision whenever you have a few minutes to spare at the beginning or end of a lesson. You can use the vocabulary 'bank' in a variety of different ways:

- read out the definition and give a point each time to the first student to call out the word or phrase.
- divide students into groups and give them a selection of slips – they take turns to read out the definition and see who is the first to guess the word (students 'collect' the slips they guess correctly).
- get students to write gapped sentences for each other, for example leaving out the first or second part of a collocation or a key word in a phrase.

You could also suggest that students make their own vocabulary 'bank' at home and use it for revision whenever they have a few spare moments.

Using the *Phrase builder*

1 Familiarise yourself with it!

Each module of the *Phrase builder* is linked to the same module of the *Students' Book* and contains:

- a list of phrasal verbs from the module, with definitions and example sentences, followed by a practice exercise.
- a list of idioms from the module, with definitions and example sentences, followed by a practice exercise. The definition of 'idiom' here is any phrase with language where the meaning is not 'transparent' or literal.
- a list of other useful phrases and collocations from the module, with definitions and example sentences, followed by a practice exercise.
- a practice activity for the *Useful language* related to the *Task* in the module: these involve either matching two halves of a phrase or choosing the best way to complete a phrase.

2 Use it as a testing/recycling device

The material is designed to be used when the class has completed the module in the *Students' Book*. You could:

- use it as a short test – students could prepare by reading through the definitions at home, then do the gap fill exercises as a test when they come to class. Alternatively, they could start by doing as much of the gap fill as they can without looking at the definitions, then look back through the definitions to refresh their memories, then complete the rest of the gap fill.
- get students to 'test' each other – one reads out a definition and their partner tries to guess the phrase.
- set it for homework – students read through the definitions, then choose which of the practice exercises they want to do.
- *Useful language* exercises can also be used after the *Task* (See *Making tasks work* point 8: *Provide further input and correction after the task*, on page 9) or even during the *Preparation for task* stage, if you particularly want to focus students' attention on it before the *Task*.

3 Use it as a glossary

Whenever students see the following symbol (► *Phrase builder*) in their coursebook, for example next to a reading text or a *Wordspot* section, they will be able to look up unfamiliar phrases in the *Phrase builder* (although you will need to ensure that they do not get sidetracked by the practice exercises at this point). NB as the emphasis is on phrases, they will not find every individual unknown word in a text.