

## HOW TO KEEP BUILDING YOUR VOCABULARY

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At commencement exercises, whether in elementary school, high school, or college, at least one of the speakers will inevitably point out to the graduates that this is not the end—not by a long shot. It is only the beginning; that’s why it is called “commencement,” etc., etc.

Of course the speaker is right—no educative process is ever the end; it is always the beginning of more education, more learning, more living.

And that is the case here. What has happened to you as a result of your reaction to the material and suggestions in this book is only the beginning of your development. To stop increasing your vocabulary is to stop your intellectual growth. You will wish, I am sure, to continue growing intellectually as long as you remain alive. And with the momentum that your weeks of hard work have provided, continuing will not be at all difficult.

Let me offer, as a summary of all I have said throughout the book, a recapitulation of the steps you must take so that your vocabulary will keep growing and growing.

**STEP ONE.** *You must become actively receptive to new words.*

Words won't come chasing after you—you must train yourself to be on a constant lookout, in your reading and listening, for any words that other people know and you don't.

**STEP TWO.** *You must read more.*

As an adult, you will find most of the sources of your supply of new words in books and magazines. Is your reading today largely restricted to a quick perusal of the daily newspaper? Then you will have to change your habits. If your aim is to have a superior vocabulary, you will have to make the time to read at least one book and several magazines *every week*. Not just this week and next week—but every week for the rest of your life. I have never met a single person who possessed a rich vocabulary who was not also an omnivorous reader.

**STEP THREE.** *You must learn to add to your own vocabulary the new words you meet in your reading.*

When you see an unfamiliar word in a book or magazine, do not skip over it impatiently. Instead, pause for a moment and say it over to yourself—get used to its sound and appearance. Then puzzle out its possible meaning in the context of the sentence. Whether you come to the right conclusion or not, whether indeed you are able to come to any intelligent conclusion at all, is of no importance. What is important is that you are, by this process, becoming superconscious of the word. As a result, you will suddenly notice that this very word pops up unexpectedly again and again in all your reading—for you now have a mind-set for it. And of course after you've seen it a few times, you will know fairly accurately not only what it means but the many ways in which it can be used.

**STEP FOUR.** *You must open your mind to new ideas.*

Every word you know is the translation of an idea.

Think for a few minutes of the areas of human knowledge that may possibly be unknown to you—psychology, semantics, science, art, music, or whatever. Then attack one of these areas methodically—by reading books in the field. In every field, from the simplest to

the most abstruse, there are several books written for the average, untrained lay reader that will give you both a good grasp of the subject and at the same time add immeasurably to your vocabulary. College students have large vocabularies because they are required to expose themselves constantly to new areas of learning. You must do the same.

**STEP FIVE.** *You must set a goal.*

If you do *nothing* about your vocabulary, you will learn, at most, twenty-five to fifty new words in the next twelve months. *By conscious effort you can learn several thousand.* Set yourself a goal of finding several new words *every day*. This may sound ambitious—but you will discover as soon as you start actively looking for new words in your reading, and actively doing reading of a more challenging type, that new words are all around you—that is, if you're ready for them. And understand this: vocabulary building *snowballs*. The results of each new day's search will be greater and greater—once you provide the necessary initial push, once you gain momentum, once you *become addicted* to looking for, finding, and taking possession of new words.

*And this is one addiction well worth cultivating!*

## APPENDIX

### SOME ESOTERIC PHOBIAS

(You will recognize many of the Greek roots on which these words are constructed)

**air:** aerophobia

**animals:** zoophobia

**beauty:** callophobia

**birth:** genophobia

**blood:** hematophobia

**breasts:** mastophobia

**burglars:** sclerophobia

**burial alive:** taphephobia

**cats:** ailurophobia

**change:** neophobia

**childbirth:** maieusiophobia

**children:** pedophobia

**colors:** chromophobia

**crowds:** ochlophobia

**darkness:** nyctophobia

**death:** thanatophobia

**depths:** bathophobia

**disease:** pathophobia

**doctors:** iatrophobia  
**dogs:** cynophobia  
**dying:** thanatophobia  
**emptiness:** kenophobia  
**everything:** pantophobia  
**eyes:** ophthalmophobia  
**fear:** phobophobia  
**feces:** coprophobia  
**feet:** podophobia  
**female genitals:** eurotophobia  
**filth:** mysophobia  
**fire:** pyrophobia  
**fish:** ichthyophobia  
**fog:** homichlophobia  
**food:** cibophobia  
**foreigners:** xenophobia  
**freaks:** teratophobia  
**frogs:** batrachophobia  
**ghosts:** phasmophobia  
**hands:** chirophobia  
**hair:** trichophobia  
**healers or healing:** iatrophobia  
**heat:** thermophobia  
**hell:** stygiophobia  
**horses:** hippophobia  
**insects:** entomophobia  
**knives:** aichmophobia  
**knowledge:** gnosiophobia  
**large things:** megalophobia  
**light:** photophobia  
**lightning:** astrophobia  
**males:** androphobia

**many things:** polyphobia  
**marriage:** gamophobia  
**medicine:** pharmacophobia  
**mice:** musophobia  
**mirrors:** spectrophobia  
**mobs:** ochlophobia  
**motherhood:** metrophobia  
**motion:** kinesophobia  
**nakedness:** gymnophobia  
**needles:** belonophobia  
**newness:** neophobia  
**night:** nyctophobia  
**oceans:** thalassophobia  
**odors:** osmophobia  
**old age:** geraphobia  
**old men:** gerontophobia  
**pain:** algophobia; odynophobia  
**people:** demophobia  
**plants:** botanophobia  
**pleasure:** hedonophobia  
**poison:** toxicophobia  
**poverty:** peniophobia  
**prostitutes:** pornophobia  
**punishment:** poinophobia  
**rain:** ombrophobia  
**red:** erythrophobia  
**rivers:** potamophobia  
**robbers:** harpaxophobia  
**sameness:** homophobia  
**sex:** genophobia  
**sexual intercourse:** coitophobia  
**sinning:** peccatophobia

**skin:** dermatophobia  
**sleep:** hypnophobia  
**small things:** microphobia  
**smothering:** pnigerophobia  
**snakes:** ophidiophobia  
**snow:** chionophobia  
**solitude:** autophobia; monophobia  
**sounds:** acousticophobia  
**speaking:** lalophobia  
**speaking aloud:** phonophobia  
**speech:** logophobia  
**spiders:** arachneophobia  
**stairs:** climacophobia  
**stars:** siderophobia  
**stealing:** kleptophobia  
**stillness:** eremiophobia  
**strangers:** xenophobia  
**strength:** sthenophobia  
**study:** logophobia  
**sunlight:** heliophobia  
**tapeworms:** taeniophobia  
**taste:** geumophobia  
**teeth:** odontophobia  
**thieves:** kleptophobia  
**thinking:** phronemophobia  
**thirteen (the number):** triskaidekaphobia  
**thirst:** dipsophobia  
**thunder:** brontophobia  
**time:** chronophobia  
**togetherness:** synophobia  
**travel:** hodophobia  
**ugliness:** cacophobia

**voices:** phemophobia  
**vomiting:** emetophobia  
**walking:** basiphobia  
**watching:** scoptophobia  
**water:** hydrophobia  
**weakness:** asthenophobia  
**wealth:** plutophobia  
**wind:** anemophobia  
**women:** gynephobia  
**words:** logophobia  
**work:** ergophobia  
**writing:** graphophobia

## **Books by Norman Lewis**

*30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary*  
(written with Wilfred Funk)

*Word Power Made Easy*