Word Walls

A word wall is a collection of words which are displayed in large visible letters on a wall, bulletin board, or other display surface in a classroom. The word wall is designed to be an interactive tool for students and contains an array of words that can be used during writing and reading.

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| When to use: | http://www.readingrockets.org/sites/all/themes/rr_at_sub/images/bullets/strategy_1.gifBefore reading | http://www.readingrockets.org/sites/all/themes/rr_at_sub/images/bullets/strategy_1.gifDuring reading | http://www.readingrockets.org/sites/all/themes/rr_at_sub/images/bullets/strategy_1.gifAfter reading |
| How to use: | http://www.readingrockets.org/sites/all/themes/rr_at_sub/images/bullets/strategy_1.gifIndividually | http://www.readingrockets.org/sites/all/themes/rr_at_sub/images/bullets/strategy_1.gifWith small groups | http://www.readingrockets.org/sites/all/themes/rr_at_sub/images/bullets/strategy_1.gifWhole class setting |

**More vocabulary strategies**

* [**Word Maps**](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word_maps)
* [**List-Group-Label**](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/list_group_label)
* [**Possible Sentences**](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/possible_sentences)

**Why use word walls?**

* They provide a permanent model for high frequency words
* They help students see patterns and relationship in words, thus building phonics and spelling skills
* They provide reference support for children during reading and writing activities.

**How to use word walls**

* Make words accessible by putting them where every student can see them. They should be written in large black letters using a variety of background colors to distinguish easily confused words.
* Teachers and students should work together to determine which words should go on the word wall. Try to include words that children use most commonly in their writing. Words should be added gradually — a general guideline is five words per week.
* Use the word wall daily to practice words, incorporating a variety of activities such as chanting, snapping, cheering, clapping, tracing, word guessing games as well as writing them.
* Provide enough practice so that words are read and spelled automatically and make sure that words from the wall are always spelled correctly in the children's daily writing.
* New information should be added on a regular basis.
* Use content-area material from the curriculum rather than randomly selected words.
* Word walls should be referred to often so students come to understand and see their relevance.
* Wondering what words to put on your word wall? Your grade's scope and sequence and curriculum manuals should provide good content guidance for words. Other resources exist too, for example, Jordan School District created lists of words by grade level and content area.  
  [**See word wall lists >**](http://departments.jordandistrict.org/curriculum/mathematics/elementary/vocabularyhome.html)

More printable word wall lists by content area and vocabulary units can be found on the Teach-nology website.  
[**See word wall lists >**](http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/language_arts/wordwalls/)

**Examples**

**Language Arts**

See how word walls can be used to help students build their concept of word skills. The Santa Rosa County School District (FL) website provides tips on word choice as well as many examples of real-life classroom word walls.  
[**See language arts word wall examples >**](http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/World_Walls_-_A_Support_for_Literacy_in_Secondary_School_Classrooms.pdf) (230K PDF)\*

Ask students to hunt for words in their reading and writing that fit the phonic or word study pattern being studied. These words can create a word wall that illustrates examples of the different patterns studied. Students could keep a word study notebook to record the known patterns and their new understanding about words, and can play games and activities that apply their word knowledge.

Follow this link for many suggestions for word wall activities, including activities to do in class and activities to do at home.  
[**See language arts word wall activities >**](http://www.teachingfirst.net/wordwallact.htm)

Pinterest has an extensive collection of word wall resources for teachers.  
[**Language arts word wall resources on Pinterest >**](http://www.pinterest.com/search/boards/?q=word+wall+idea+for+classroom)

**Math**

**Word walls in math can provide visual cues and graphic representations of content.** Consider using a math word wall that has three parts: key vocabulary, "in your own words" definitions, and a variety of ways to portray a function. For example, multiplication is portrayed by the following symbols: x, \*, and ( ).

**Number sense, concepts, and operations word wall**  
The purpose of the mathematics word wall is to identify words and phrases that students need to understand and use so as to make good progress in mathematics. Mathematical language is crucial to children's development of thinking. If students do not have the vocabulary to talk about math concepts and skills, they cannot make progress in understanding these areas of mathematical knowledge. They need to be familiar with mathematical vocabulary and mathematical terms to understand written and spoken instructions.  
[**See math word wall resources >**](http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/MathWordWall.pdf)

**More ideas for word walls in math**  
Many teachers are familiar with basic word wall strategies including the use of a flashlight (to put the light on words) and a fly swatter (to highlight words). Teachers are also familiar with tested favorites like bingo; I Have, Who Has; and Mind Reader, but they really wanted other ideas. The purpose of this post by Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom is to identify additional ways to use word walls with mathematics content.  
[**More math word wall ideas >**](http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/001-word-wall-post-for-blog.pdf)

**Science**

**Using interactive word walls in science**  
Science is a vocabulary-intense subject that is dependent on students learning new and often times difficult vocabulary to increase comprehension and help them make connections between and among concepts. When science students are given the opportunity to interact with the vocabulary, they are more likely to remember it.

Ideas for using the words on your wall are only limited by your imagination. Some examples include:

* Students categorize and sequence from largest to smallest (cell, bacteria, yeast, tissue, ribosome, organ, organism, organ system, protozoa, virus) Variation: Students are given vocabulary words, and their classmates must arrange them in the correct order and justify the placement.
* Students remove words from the wall and make connecting statements about the words. The class can then create a summarizing statement, for example: cells make up tissues, and tissues make up organs.

For more ideas like these, read the full post by Toni Enloe.  
[**See science word wall ideas >**](http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs059/1101655984209/archive/1102452549149.html#LETTER.BLOCK9)

**Social Studies**

Many teachers build their social studies word walls from the curriculum for their grade level.  
[**See a collection of social studies word walls>**](http://wiki.fms.k12.nm.us/groups/middleschoolteachingideas/wiki/8761a/Social_Studies_Word_Wall_Photos_09-10.html)

**Special Occasion**

Create a word wall for your Valentine's Day writing prompts. Ask your students to brainstorm all the valentine-related nouns and adjectives they can think of — love, friendship, family, friends, hearts, happiness, kindness, Cupid, bow and arrow, roses, flowers, chocolate, hugs, kisses, letters, pink, red…. Need inspiration? Check out this Valentine's Day adjective word study with an example of a magnetic word wall (you'll find lots of other ideas on this web page, too).  
[**See Valentine's Day adjectives >**](http://www.squidoo.com/adjectives)

**Differentiated instruction**

**for second language learners, students of varying reading skill, and for younger learners**

Word walls are a great support for ELLs, and may be organized around a number of concepts, including the alphabet and phonetic sounds, new vocabulary words, sight words, grammar rules, conversational phrases, and writing structures. Words can also be organized by category (for example, academic words, words used often in your classroom, new words students have come across and love).

Copying words from word walls may be difficult for some students. For these students, supply them with the words written on piece of paper. Tape the word wall paper to their desk or writing folder for easy reference.

**See the research that supports this strategy**

Bear, D. R., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2000). Words their way: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Morris, D. (1981). Concept of word: A developmental phenomenon in the beginning reading and writing process. *Language Arts*, 58, 659-668.

Source: http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word\_wall