

A VOCABULARY TEST

The only way to find out the exact number of words for which you know the meaning is to go through the dictionary and count them. But that is likely to take more time than the knowledge is worth. A college professor has devised a way to estimate the size of anyone's vocabulary. It has been used as a test for hundreds of schools, and has proved accurate enough for all practical purposes.

Here is a list 100 words selected from a dictionary containing the 18,000 most frequently used words in the English language. Read over the list slowly and carefully. After every word, the meaning of which you know perfectly, place the sign x. After every word you are sure you do not know, place sign --. When you find a word you think you know, but of which you are not quite sure, write it on a sheet of paper, and after it write the meaning you think is the right one. The words on this sheet make up the doubtful list.

When you have gone through the 100 words in this way, verify your definitions of the doubtful words by the use of a dictionary. Mark each correctly written definition with a plus sign, each incorrect one with a minus sign. Count the total number of plus sign in the entire list, and multiply that number by 180. The result will be the number of words in your vocabulary.

To illustrate: If there are 60 plus signs in all, you know the meaning of 60×180 , or 10,800 words. If the number of plus signs is 45, you know about 45×180 , or 8,100 words.

One other point: It is not necessary in order to be correct that your written definitions should read exactly like those in the dictionary. Mark a definition x if it gives a good general idea of what the word means. Moreover, it is not necessary to know all the meanings of a word; one correct meaning is enough. But take care not to mark the word x unless you are sure you know at least one correct meaning of it.

When you try this list on yourself, or test a child by it, you will find that the words in the first part are fairly easy, but that they get harder as you advance. This is the principle to remember if you choose a list of your own.

Arrange, bonfire, envelope, gown, haste, afloat, eyelash, copper, guitar, curse, health, mellow, rule, straw, tap, scorch, puddle, pork, plumbing, impolite, roar, treasury, noticeable, outward, southern, civil, easterly, lecture, quake, reception, ramble, skill, stave, muzzle, misuse, insure, brunet, regard, shrewd, crunch, juggler, hysterics, repose, Mars, majesty, dilapidated, mosaic, nerve, forfeit, peculiarity, artless, avarice, bewail, charter, conscientious, depredation, frustrate, gelatinous, milk-sop, philanthropy, priceless, promontory swaddle, tolerate, irony, lotus, coinage, drabble, embody, snip, flaunt, harpy, sportive, disproportion-ate, apish, achromatic, ambergris, cameo, casuistry, complot, declivity, exaltation, fen, hookah, incrustation, infuse, laity, limpet, ochre, paleology, parterre, perfunctory, piscatorial, precipitancy, retroactive, sapient, selectman, shagreen, sudorific, theosophy.