

Confidence and dictionary skills-building activities

1.11 Navigating the dictionary: Labels

Aim	To familiarize students with dictionary labels
Focus	Style and usage labels
Level	Lower-intermediate–Intermediate
Time	15–20 minutes
Preparation	Check that the dictionary you are using labels the words on the list as in Box 4. If it doesn't, substitute suitably labelled words from your dictionary.

Procedure

- 1 Explain that learner dictionaries give us a lot of useful information about when and where to use a word or phrase.
 For example, there are words that are formal or informal, words that are used mainly in literature or in specialized subject areas, and words that may be old-fashioned.
 Because English has so many words that mean the same, or almost the same thing, this extra information helps language learners find the right word.
- 2 Use the list in Box 4 or dictate the list of words (saying and spelling the words, without the labels), or write them on the board or an OHT.
 Ask students to look them up in their dictionaries and find out what special usage labels they have. (This will vary from one dictionary to another, but any good learner dictionary will have labels. The list in Box 4 is based on *CLD*.)
- 3 Give students the lists and ask them to match the definitions with the label each describes.

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Box 4

A Match the words with the labels.

Word

- 1 abode
- 2 freebie
- 3 hey
- 4 Hoover
- 5 slumber
- 6 snail mail
- 7 wireless

Label

- a *humorous*
- b *formal*
- c *informal*
- d *literary*
- e *old-fashioned*
- f *spoken*
- g *trademark*

B Match the definitions with the labels.

1 formal

a a way of writing a word that is used in conversation

2 informal

b not used in modern English – you might find these words in books, used by older people, or used in order to be funny

3 spoken

c the name of a product that is made by one company but which has become used as a general word

4 trademark

d used in books and poems, not in ordinary conversation

5 literary

e used in order to be funny or make a joke

6 humorous

f used in serious writing or for communicating with people about things like business or law

7 old-fashioned

g used when you are speaking or communicating with people you know but not normally in serious writing

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Dictionary Activities

2.7 Word building 1

Aim	To present and practise negative prefixes
Focus	Prefixes
Level	Intermediate–Upper-intermediate
Time	30–45 minutes
Preparation	Prepare lists of words of the same word class that take different negative prefixes – one list per group or pair. Alternatively, you may wish to use the lists opposite.



Procedure

- 1 Start by writing a familiar word on the board, for example *tidy* or *happy*. Ask students what the word means. Now ask how the negative is formed – add the prefix ‘un’. Now write another word, one that takes a different negative prefix, for example, *possible* and elicit the negative.
- 2 Explain that learning negative prefixes is important because:
 - knowing how to use them is a quick way to increase active vocabulary
 - they are some of the most common prefixes
 - there are a few rules, but not many, and because there are exceptions to all of them, these words have to be learned.
- 3 Put students into groups. Give them the lists of words you have prepared or use the ones below. They will need to look up ‘their’ words, find out what they mean and what prefixes are used for each one. Ask them to write

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two-line dialogues using both the base word and the negative. For example:

A: I think Luke is very mature for his age.

B: Oh no, he's very immature.

- Form new groups, keeping one person from each original group. Ask students to 'teach' their words to the other students.
- In conclusion, ask which negative prefixes they found. (The lists below yield 'un', 'im', 'il', 'ir', 'dis', 'mis' and 'in'.)
 Tell them that it is a good idea to make a note of the negative (or opposite) when they are learning a new vocabulary item.

1	2	3	4
fortunate	able	necessary	reasonable
patient	possible	mature	perfect
legal	legible	literate	logical
responsible	regular	replaceable	reversible
trust	like	honest	respectful
discreet	visible	expensive	adequate

Note

You may wish to take this a step further and ask them to try to find patterns that can be used as rules of thumb, or you may want to tell them yourself. For example, 'im' is used before some words beginning with 'p' or 'm', 'il' is used before some words beginning with 'l', etc. It is a good idea to emphasize that there are exceptions.

2.8 Word building 2

Aim	To present and practise other common prefixes
Focus	Prefixes
Level	Intermediate–Upper-intermediate
Time	30–45 minutes
Preparation	Prepare cards or a worksheet like the one in Box 13 for the matching activity. Alternatively, select only those prefixes you want to focus on in this lesson.

Procedure

- Ask students to work in pairs to find prefixes in the dictionary and match them with their meanings. (*CLD* and *CALD* have the prefixes listed at the back in the endmatter.) You can decide whether to direct students to this list, or ask them to look up each one in the dictionary. Ask them to find an example of each prefix (not one that is used as an example in the entry or list).