



Learn English Through Stories

**Adopted and modified by
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A New Word Changes Everything by K S Sandhu

Amarjeet had lived in the UK for two years, but he still felt shy when speaking English at work. One day, his manager, Sarah, said during a team meeting: “We need to undertake a new project to improve our customer service. It’s important to express our opinions openly and take sides when necessary.”

Amarjeet wrote down “undertake”. He knew it meant “to start or do something”, but he decided to learn it properly this time. He remembered his teacher’s advice: “Don’t learn words alone. Learn them in phrases and notice how they behave.”

He looked in his notebook and wrote:

- undertake a project / a task / responsibility
- undertake → undertook → undertaken (irregular verb!)
- We undertook the work last month.
- It’s quite formal – we don’t say “I undertake to go shopping” in everyday talk.

Next, Sarah used another phrase: “Let’s stay in touch with our clients and keep them informed.” Amarjeet liked “stay in touch”. It sounded friendly and useful.

He noted:

- stay in touch with someone (preposition “with”)
- keep someone informed (verb + object + adjective)
- It’s neutral – good for work and friends.

Later, at lunch, his colleague David said, “Amarjeet, you have a great sense of humour! You always make us laugh.” Amarjeet smiled. He had heard “sense of humour” before but never really learned it.

He added to his list:

- a sense of humour (noun phrase – always with “of”)
- She has no sense of humour.
- It’s neutral, positive.
He practised saying it.

In the afternoon, Sarah asked, “Who can make a decision about the deadline?” Amarjeet wanted to answer but hesitated. He knew “make a decision” was the correct collocation – not “do a decision” or “take a decision” (though some people say that).

He thought: “This is what my teacher meant. Knowing the meaning isn’t enough. I need the collocations, the grammar, the register, and the pronunciation.”

That evening, Amarjeet sat with a cup of tea and reviewed his new words in phrases:

- undertake a project
- stay in touch with friends
- keep someone informed
- have a sense of humour
- make a decision
- express an opinion
- take sides in an argument

He read them aloud slowly, checking pronunciation. Some words felt formal (like “undertake”), others neutral and friendly (like “stay in touch”). The next day at work, when Sarah asked for ideas, Amarjeet spoke confidently: “I think we should undertake this task together and stay in touch with everyone. I have a suggestion – let’s make a decision by Friday.”

Sarah smiled. “Great contribution, Amarjeet!”

Amarjeet felt proud. Learning words in real phrases and noticing their special features had made his English stronger and more natural. From that day, he never learned a word in isolation again.

Study unit 1

Learning vocabulary

A

What do you need to learn?

Did you know that there are over half a million words in English but that the average native speaker only uses about 5,000 in everyday speech? You already know many of those 5,000 words. This book will help you to learn many of those that you do not yet know and it will help you to use them appropriately and accurately.

B

What does knowing a new word mean?

It is not enough just to know the meaning of a word. You also need to know:

- which words it is usually used with;
- its grammatical characteristics;
- how it is pronounced;
- whether it is formal, informal or neutral.

So when you learn a word you should make sure that you:

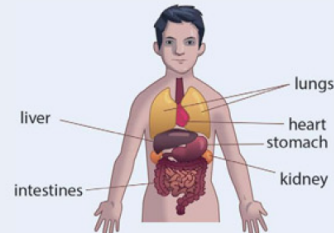
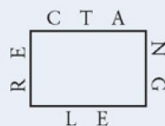
- Learn new words in phrases not in isolation.
- Notice how words commonly go together. These are called **collocations** and include:
adjectives + nouns, e.g. *rich vocabulary, classical music, common sense*;
verbs + nouns, e.g. *to express an opinion, to take sides*;
nouns in phrases, e.g. *in touch with, a train set, a sense of humour*;
words + prepositions, e.g. *at a loss for words, in particular*.
- Notice special grammatical characteristics of new words. For example, note irregular verbs, e.g. *undertake, undertook, undertaken*; uncountable nouns, e.g. *luggage*; or nouns that are only used in the plural, e.g. *scissors*.
- Notice any special pronunciation problems with new words.
- Check if the word is particularly formal or informal in character, in other words if it has a particular register.

C

How can you help yourself to memorise words?

Research suggests that some students find it easier to learn words if they (a) learn them in groups and (b) make use of pictures, as shown here.

You can group words in any way you like – topic, grammatical feature, word root, and so on. The unit titles in this book might give you some ideas.



D

How can you help yourself learn more words?

This book will help you to learn vocabulary in a systematic way. However, you can also help yourself to learn more words and expressions by reading and listening to as much English as possible. Here are some ideas about things you can read or listen to:



Exercises

1.1 Here are some aspects of grammar to be aware of when learning new vocabulary. Give two examples of words that reflect this aspect of grammar.

- 1 a noun only used in the plural *scissors*
- 2 an uncountable noun
- 3 an irregular verb
- 4 a noun with an irregular plural

1.2 What aspect of pronunciation should you notice about the following words?

- | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|
| 1 subtle <i>the b is silent (not pronounced)</i> | 3 chemistry | 6 photograph / photographer / photographic |
| 2 catastrophe | 4 answer | |
| | 5 a record / to record | |

1.3 Read the text. Use words from the box to complete each 'collocations fork'.

English has a remarkable range of words. Thanks to periods of contact with foreign languages and its readiness to coin new words out of old elements, English has a particularly large vocabulary. For example, as well as *kingly* (from Anglo-Saxon) we find *royal* (from French) and *regal* (from Latin). There are many such sets of words, which make it possible to express subtle shades of meaning.

coincidence	difference	family	likeness	palace	a phrase
range	shade	suggestion	a term	welcome	new words

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 a remarkable <i>range</i>
<i>likeness</i>
<i>coincidence</i> | 2 to coin
.....
..... | 3 a royal
.....
..... | 4 a subtle
.....
..... |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|

1.4 Write *i* by the words that are informal and *f* by those that are formal.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 guys <i>i</i> | 4 to alight (from a bus) | 7 to bug someone |
| 2 a minor | 5 to feel gutted | 8 to zone out |
| 3 Awesome! | 6 a felon | |

1.5 A student learnt each of these sets of words as a group. What is the unifying factor for each group? Can you add one more word to each group?

- 1 king, queen, prince, princess *royalty - duke*
- 2 sunshade, shady, shadow, shade, to shadow, shadowy
- 3 articulate, communicate, convey, express, put across
- 4 noun, verb, adjective, adverb
- 5 subtle, comb, lamb, crumb, debt, plumber

1.6 Draw a picture to help you remember each of the following vocabulary items.

- | | | | |
|----------|---------------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 circle | 2 to coin new words | 3 screwdriver | 4 to drip |
|----------|---------------------|---------------|-----------|



1.7 Over to you

Look at the suggestions in D. Can you think of any other ideas to add to the list? Think about the ways of learning vocabulary that you use now, and think about ways you could use more in the future.

Answers

Unit 1

1.1 Possible answers:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 trousers, clothes, tights | 3 teach, read, write, put |
| 2 furniture, information, advice, luggage | 4 tooth, foot, mouse, goose |

- 1.2
- 2 the final e is pronounced as a syllable
 - 3 the *ch* is pronounced like a *k* rather than like the *ch* in *church*
 - 4 the *w* is silent (not pronounced)
 - 5 the stress is on the first syllable in the noun and the second syllable in the verb
 - 6 the stress is on the first syllable in *photograph*, the second in *photographer* and the third in *photographic*

- 1.3
- 2 to coin a phrase, new words, a term
 - 3 a royal family, palace, welcome
 - 4 a subtle suggestion, shade, difference

- 1.4
- 1 *i* (it can mean men or it can be used to address a group of people which includes both men and women)
 - 2 *f* (it means a person who is legally under-age)
 - 3 *i* (it means Wonderful! / Amazing!)
 - 4 *f* (it means to get off a bus)
 - 5 *i* (it means very upset)
 - 6 *f* (it means someone who has committed a serious crime)
 - 7 *i* (it means to annoy or disturb someone)
 - 8 *i* (it means to lose concentration)

- 1.5
- 2 words in the *shade* word family - lampshade, eye shadow
 - 3 synonyms of *express* - state, say
 - 4 parts of speech - preposition, conjunction
 - 5 words with a silent *b* - dumb, limb

1.6



2 to coin new words



screwdriver

3 screwdriver



4 to drip