POSSUM Graphic Organizer

For Effective Vocabulary Instruction

Effective vocabulary instruction activates all four areas of language processing: phonology, orthography, meaning, and context. This graphic organizer can be used to help students engage all of these areas while learning new vocabulary words.

When a new word is being taught in the classroom, educators should explicitly teach it using all POSSUM elements: phonology, orthography, syntax, semantics, understanding, and morphology. Instruct students to fill out each section of the graphic organizer and engage the class in discussion about what to write down in each section as you go along. Once students have mastered the skills encompassed within POSSUM, they may progress to using the graphic organizer independently during vocabulary learning, independent reading, or other relevant activities.

Caregivers may also guide children in the use of this organizer so they may better understand new words encountered during independent reading or read alouds at home.

As a reminder, the skills associated with each of the six POSSUM elements all require explicit and systematic instruction before they can be utilized effectively by students. For an in-depth example of how to fill out this graphic organizer, watch our [modeling video](#). For more information on the POSSUM framework and how it can support vocabulary learning in the brain, see our blog post **"Explicit Vocabulary Instruction Using the POSSUM Approach,"** by Meg Mechelke.

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Core Word: _____

P
honology - What does it sound like?

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O
rthography - How is it spelled?   Syllable type/spelling rule?

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S
yntax - What part of speech is it?

Noun   Verb   Adjective   Adverb   Preposition   Conjunction

S
emantics - What does it mean?

U
nderstanding - Where have I heard this word before?

M
orphology - What are the word parts?

_____   _____   _____   _____
Prefix   Root Word   Base Word   Suffix