

Tools for Instruction

Make Connections to Words

Making meaning is an active process. Students build understanding of new words and incorporate them into their vocabulary by connecting the words to their own experiences, background knowledge, and schemas about the world. Help students identify real-life connections to words and explore how they can be used in different contexts at school, at home, and in the larger world.

Step by Step 30–45 minutes

1 Model making connections to words.

Note: The word *quietly* is a suggested target word. Replace as needed with a word that would be more appropriate for your students.

- Display the word *quietly*. Ask, *What does the word quietly mean? What are things you do quietly?*
- Call on volunteers to provide examples of things people do *quietly* at home, at school, and in the world. When possible, ask volunteers to act out their examples.
- Display the **Connections to Words** chart (page 3) and write the word *quietly* in the first section. Model how to record a connection to the word *quietly* in each section using words and illustrations.

Word	At Home	At School	In the World
quietly	When the baby is asleep, Dad asks me to play quietly.	We walk quietly down the hall.	People sit quietly in a movie theater.

2 Guide practice in making connections to words.

- Display these sentences. Ask volunteers to read them aloud and discuss the meaning of the underlined words.

- Alex was brave when she spoke in front of the whole school.
- A helpful neighbor carried the heavy box out to our car.

- Have partners take turns sharing examples of times people were *brave* at school, at home, and in the world. For each example, ask them to describe what the person did to show they were *brave*.
- Model how to create a sentence that uses the target word and describes behavior that shows the meaning of the word. (*I was brave at the park when I climbed to the top of the jungle gym.*) Have students take turns sharing their connections using this model.
- Have partners repeat the activity with the word *helpful*. Then ask volunteers to share their connections and sentences with the larger group.

3 Provide independent practice making connections to words.

- Display a list of adjectives that could describe a person.

cheerful	generous	fearless
funny	honest	kind

- As a group, discuss the meaning of each word.
- Provide students with copies of **Connections to Words** (page 3).
- Have students choose two words from the list and write them on their charts. Ask partners to take turns describing a connection to their words at school, at home, and in the world. Ask them to create sentences that include the target word and details that illustrate its meaning.
- Have students record their connections in each section of the graphic organizer using sentences and drawings. Ask volunteers to share their examples with the larger group.

Check for Understanding

If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty using descriptive words correctly	using the word in several examples that clarify the meaning. Use synonyms that might be more familiar to students.
difficulty connecting a word to different contexts	reviewing a word's meaning by having students describe it or act it out. Then ask leading questions to help students connect the word to other people and situations. For example, say, <i>I see you drew a picture of your big sister being <u>helpful</u> at home. Can you think of anyone at school who has helped you?</i>

Connections to Words

Name _____

Word	At Home	At School	In the World