

How to learn vocabulary

1. Do you NEED this word?

Before you choose to study a new word, you should check if it is a word you will use? Do you see it often? Is it a common word, or quite unusual? Many learner dictionaries will tell you how common a word is (if is in the top 2000 English words, for example). Your dictionary may also tell you if the word is more common in written or spoken English.

2. Record information in English

Don't just translate into Japanese – many words will not translate directly anyway. The nuance of meaning, the part of speech or the grammar of the word might all be different in English. Don't forget that words often have more than one meaning. Which one do you want to learn?

3. Learn word families

It also helps if you know some simple grammar terms. Is a word a noun, a verb, an adjective...? Are all the meanings similar?

noun	safety	collection / collector
verb	X	collect
adjective	safe	collective
adverb	safely	collectively

4. Learn collocations

Collocations are words which often go together. You probably have a special setting for this on your electronic dictionary.

	fair-trade	COFFEE	shop
	black		bean
	a cup of		grinder
	organic		machine

5. Memorize common prefixes and suffixes

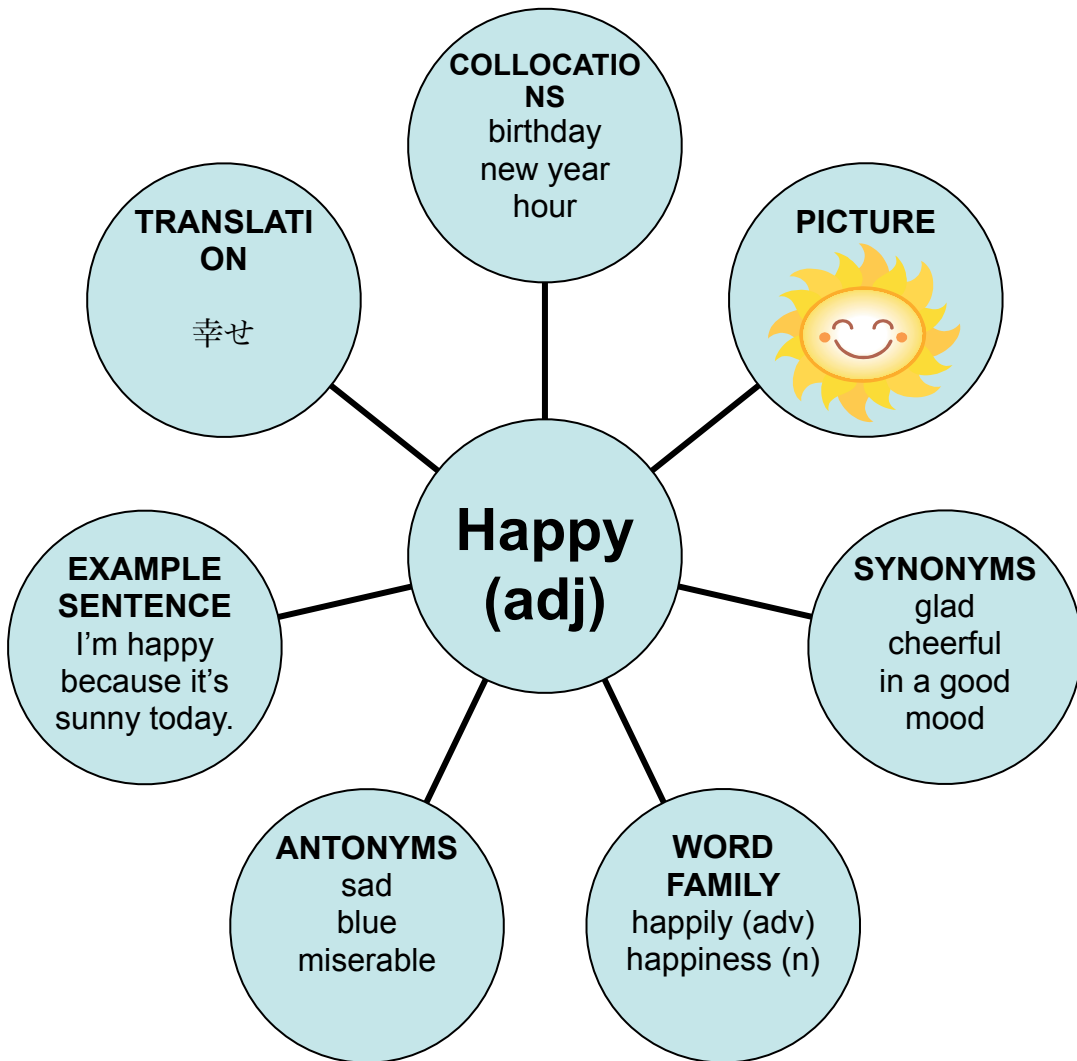
If you see a word that starts “un-”, you can probably guess that it is a negative word. For example, “unhappy”. This is a prefix. A suffix (at the end of a word) can also give you a hint. For example, we can guess that “unhappily” is an adverb because it ends with “-ly”.

6. Pronunciation

Many online dictionaries have audio samples. You can also write the word in phonemic script, or mark syllable stress. DO NOT use katakana to mark pronunciation.

i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ	'	
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j

7. Create a word web



You can approach this in two different ways. You can choose a word you already know and surround it with new words. Or you can use a word you don't know at all and use familiar words around it. If you don't know ANY of the words in the web, you might get confused!

8. Review often.

Make a notebook or cards with all the words you are learning. When you first learn them, try to check them and use them every day or two. Then, check them once a week, then once a month. You can move them from your short term to your long term memory. We will check them in class sometimes, too. Please come and ask me if you need some help!

Please start collecting words now. Each student will be tested on their own unique list. One week before each test, please give me a list of 15 words you have learnt.