How to Develop a Personal Glossary

Personal glossaries are a tool that will help students make sense of and remember new terminology. Encourage students to enter any words that are in bold or that are unfamiliar to them into their personal glossaries. Although some activities specifically instruct students to enter terms into their glossaries, it is a good habit of mind to have students enter bold or unfamiliar words every time they find them.

Students can keep their personal glossaries in their digital notebooks. If they are using a paper-based notebook, they can use the last 25 pages of their notebook for their glossary. Another alternative with paper-based notebooks is to turn them upside down and backwards, then begin their glossaries on the first page. This will help them find their glossaries more easily. Glossaries should be organized according to activities and chapters rather than alphabetically to help students as they both enter new terms and look up older entries.

Explain to students that their glossaries will help them learn and retain important terminology. For this reason, it is their responsibility to maintain the glossaries, though you should give them reminders for the first several weeks until it becomes a habit. It is important for you to allow students some flexibility in choosing the words they enter into their glossaries. Giving students long lists of terms to enter and memorize will work to counter the overarching purpose of having students adopt this learning strategy as a way to help themselves. We do not recommend the use of vocabulary tests as a way to assess student understanding.

A five-column chart and description is provided in the student version of *How to Develop a Personal Glossary* as a guideline for students on creating their glossaries. If there are additional columns that you or your students feel would be helpful, add those as well. Give students some flexibility related to the columns of the chart that they complete for each entry. Although all of the columns should be helpful for many words, your students may find that they are unable to draw a picture or make a personal connection in some instances.

With your students, review the procedure for constructing a personal glossary using the example in the student version of *How to Develop a Personal Glossary.* A sample entry is shown. You may wish to complete an additional entry to help students think about how to complete the columns.

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