Did you hate learning Science Vocabulary as much as I did when you were a kid? Most likely, the answer is, "Yes!"

That's because most teachers taught (and still teach!) vocabulary in the old "Copy the words and Definitions" method.

I hated that way and always had a terrible time learning the vocabulary for each chapter!

As a teacher, I struggled for years trying to find a better method and finally came up with an active learning approach. The best part was my students actually learned their vocabulary and knew it for their vocab quizzes and tests!

The trick is to teach the vocabulary on a daily basis while you're teaching the unit, so students become familiar with the words and use them when doing labs, playing learning games, and filling out worksheets. Then the week of the test, I would finally play a Team Vocab Game in which each team had a set of cards, words on one set of cards, definitions on another set of cards. The cards were all mixed up together, each team having a different color, according to their Team Color. In the photo above, you are looking at the Orange Team playing a vocab matching game.

If you listen to my Team Game Podcast (email me for the link!) you will see that after each team has successfully matched up all the words and definitions and points have been given to the Teams who were done first and were most accurate, they are asked to scramble the cards.

Marcia’s Science Teaching Ideas was founded by Marcia Krech, a retired Earth Science Teacher from Missouri, who believes passionately in passing on what she knows about good science teaching. I encourage teachers to use the active learning model including team games and foldables which puts the student to work and assigns the teacher the role of facilitator.

Email me with questions!

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How to Teach Science Vocabulary with an Active Learning Approach

again and each Team Member then matches the cards by themselves to be sure that each Team Member knows their vocab words for that unit. After the Teams have returned their chairs and tables to the normal positions and everybody is back in their assigned seat, I had out the Vocab Handout and a long narrow strip that contains the definitions. Below in an image that shows what the vocab handout might look like. The blank spaces to the right of the words are where the definitions are to be glued. The long narrow strip is the same size as the right column but contains the definitions, out of order, of course!

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weathering</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erosion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deposition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Igneous Rock</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sedimentary Rock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metamorphic Rock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You’d be surprised how many of my students could easily match the definitions to the correct vocabulary words without any further prompting from neighbors or the teacher, and no peeking in their books or notebooks, either!

One of the most fun parts of this method, is that it works amazingly well with your included special education students! So well, in fact, that a couple of the special ed teachers in my building used this method for their self-contained classes, any time they needed a good way to do a hands-on review of their unit’s vocab, be it math, social studies, civics, you name it!

When each student was done with the Vocabulary Handout, they would Line Up for Points at the front of the room by my podium or Science cart and I got to where I would ask each student, "Are you confident of your gluing?" If they said yes, I wouldn’t even check their paper, just gave them the 10 points for the page! This boosted the confidence of my students and if someone wanted to be sure, I made it okay to be sure and did a quick check. Worked like a charm and moved the line along quickly.

I’ve included several blank templates for you to use for your own vocabulary terms, from a five-word to an eight-word list. Feel free to use them to add your own spin on this handout and game!

If you want the complete set of the Team Games Podcast Materials with blank vocab templates and other goodies, email me for a Dropbox link.

I am more than happy to share this method of teaching vocabulary because I hate to think of any student out there having to endure the boring, time-consuming, and ultimately non-working Copy the Words and Definitions method of learning vocabulary.

Why not make it ACTIVE, make it FUN, and MAKE IT WORK!

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