

CCR Vocabulary Word Tiers

Tier one words are the words of everyday speech usually learned in the early grades or at home. These words are extremely important to early learning since teachers tend to use these very words to define more unusual words. They are learned largely through conversation, and are not often considered challenging beyond the early grades.

- **Nouns:** Boy, girl, dog, car, chair, book
- **Verbs:** Run, jump, eat, play, go
- **Adjectives:** Happy, sad, big, small, red
- **Common phrases:** What, who, where, why, how

Tier two words are words that characterize written and especially academic text—but are not so common in everyday conversation. Tier two words are far more likely to appear in writing than in speech. The Standards refer to tier two words as *academic vocabulary*. They are often vital to comprehension and are frequently part of word families or semantic networks. Tier two words can carry disproportionate weight in conveying the meaning of a text, and a reader who doesn't understand even a single such weighty word might have his or her comprehension thrown off track.

- **Academic Texts:** relative, vary, formulate, specify, accumulate
- **Technical Writing:** calibrate, itemize, structure
- **Literary Texts:** misfortune, dignified, faltered, unabashedly
- **General Academic Words:** character, setting, plot, even numbers, country
- **Words with Connections:** between, among, by, combine, estimate
- **Words for Precision:** sets, tables (for math or science), shy, ashamed, stubborn

Tier three words are far more common in informational passages than in literature. They are specific to a domain or field of study (*lava, fuel injection, legislature, circumference, aorta*) and key to understanding a new concept within the text. Because of their specificity, tier three words are often explicitly defined by the text and repeatedly used. In addition, as they are the words that contain the ideas necessary to a new topic, teachers often define and reinforce tier three words prior to and after students encounter them in a text.

- **Science:** osmosis, photosynthesis, abiotic.
- **History:** Revolutionary War, Constitution, monarchy.
- **Math:** parabola, hypotenuse, isosceles.
- **English:** onomatopoeia, simile, thesis.