



Evaluating the Collins Vocabulary Card Assignment

The Collins Vocabulary Card Assignment is a perfect homework assignment, especially after it is taught and explained so that students know exactly what to do—no wasted time trying to figure out the expectations. It can be done independently, is easily broken into parts so that students can do it over time, is creative (illustration, original sentence), requires no materials other than a pencil, can be used in all subjects, and produces a product that can be used repeatedly for review and self-quizzing.

Most students will not do homework or will do it in a haphazard manner unless it “counts” or is evaluated. But how to evaluate hundreds of cards?

Here are some guidelines and tips:

1. Keep evaluation simple and easy to complete. I recommend breaking the card into three parts: the illustration, worth 20%; a sentence that conveys the meaning, 60%; and the teacher’s choice, 20%.
2. Don’t try to read and evaluate them all. For each student, collect one random card from each set of cards.
3. Keep the evaluation a low percent of the total grade. For example, if students had eight cards per week for an eight-week term, the grade for each week’s set could count as one percent of the total grade, or eight percent.

Tips

- On the day vocabulary cards are due, encourage students to peer edit cards for three criteria: illustration, sentence conveys meaning, and teacher's choice.
- While students are peer editing, do a quick check to see if all students have completed cards.
- After peer editing, ask if there is a volunteer who wants to share a card about a particularly difficult word (hard to illustrate, hard to use). The volunteer's card is evaluated publicly and, if it did not get a perfect score, is edited by teacher and class until it does—guaranteeing the volunteer a perfect score.
- Comment on effective illustrations and sentences, and hand out a blank card. Have student substitute new class-developed card for one that was troublesome.
- For words that are especially difficult to illustrate, ask for volunteers to put their illustrations on the board and explain them. Other students may use these illustrations on their cards or create a new card with the illustration.

When determining how to make the vocabulary card assignment count, keep in mind the purpose is to get students *engaged* with the words—thinking about them, remembering them, using them, and practicing a life-long study skill. The evaluation process should do just enough to encourage these behaviors without becoming a major source of stress for you and your students.