

# Teacher's Guide for Advanced Words I Use When I Write

How many students have you encountered that fit the following description? They appear bright and capable in conversation, and they can complete detailed journal entries about their weekend activities, the latest movies they've seen, their sports heroes, or their favorite computer game. However, after several weeks of studying a subject such as colonial America, they have difficulty recalling and using the vocabulary needed to discuss the subject or write a good paragraph with supporting details.

Teachers frequently experience this phenomenon—students who have an obvious gap between their *social* language (language of everyday life) and their *literate* language (language encountered in the classroom and in textbooks). Many students “compartmentalize” subject area vocabulary and rarely use it outside the classroom, except for homework, of course. So, it does not become *their* language.

You've also probably had students who rush through writing assignments, so intently focused on written expression that their writing is full of spelling errors. These students find it difficult to stop and pay attention to spelling while trying to get thoughts down on paper. As a result, many spelling mistakes need to be corrected.

An adequate vocabulary and good spelling skills are needed to succeed in every upper elementary and middle school classroom. *Advanced Words I Use When I Write* can help students continue to improve both their vocabulary and their spelling. And the book can help you, the teacher, guide both vocabulary development and spelling development.

This book is the latest in the *Words I Use When I Write* series and is designed to meet the specific needs of older students. It provides alphabetized lists of appropriate words, many of which the students will come in contact with while doing content area reading and writing. In addition, there are also plenty of blank lines where students (with or without teachers' input) can create and expand their own collections of other important words, thus making the book a

valuable personal resource. Whether the words are content area vocabulary or general spelling “demons,” the book's format allows students to access words or record words with ease.

Because older students often move from classroom to classroom, and because units of study and individual students' interests are so varied, specific how-to ideas for the use of this book may have limited effectiveness. Instead we offer four broad categories of suggestions—team use, initial introduction, improving vocabulary, and improving spelling.

---

## Team Use

If you are in a team-teaching situation, we suggest that your team decide on some basic guidelines for use that will be consistent across subject areas. This will encourage students to take ownership of the book and will minimize any difficulties that could result from mixed messages or differing rules. Here are some general guidelines:

- Determine where the students will keep their individual copies of the book.
- Be consistent in asking students to bring the book to class. Should it travel to all classes? On a daily basis?
- Decide which team member will introduce the book to students.
- Decide which team member will ask students to enter new vocabulary words that will be used across the curriculum.
- Establish a specific symbol (such as a checkmark) for identifying vocabulary words that are already in the book.
- Use a consistent color for students to highlight their own spelling “demons.”
- Make sure students understand that *Advanced Words I Use When I Write* can travel with them and become a customized resource in every class.

---

## Introducing the Book

As with most tools, *Advanced Words I Use When I Write* needs a well-planned and careful introduction in order for users to get the most out of it. **The introduction of *Advanced Words I Use When I Write* will set the tone for its use throughout the school year.**

When introducing this personal dictionary to students, it may be helpful to emphasize its unique features and benefits. The following is a suggested presentation to students after they have received their copies.

*“Read the title and thumb through the book. Based on its title and the structure of the pages, how do you think we will be using the book in class?”* (Hopefully, students will infer that words can be entered on the blank lines and that it will be used in conjunction with written work.)

After allowing time for suggestions and discussion from the students, you might respond with:

*“This book is a tool that will help you in several important ways. It will help you with your spelling when you write, because it includes many words that are commonly misspelled by kids your age. It will be a quick reference you can use to check on those tricky words that you often miss when you write. It also has plenty of blank lines so you can add the words that seem like ‘demons’—those words that haunt you over and over.*

*“This book will also help you with the vocabulary words you need in all your subjects. Many of the words in this book already are related to subjects that we study. Your teachers will also have you add new vocabulary words throughout the year. So, when you have to write an experiment report in science class, you will be able to find the science words you need. When you write story problems in math class, you will be able to find the math words you need.*

*“And coolest of all, each of you will develop a totally different book as the year progresses. If you love history and write a lot about it, you will probably end up with lots of history words. If you love the rain forest and write about that, your dictionary will end up with lots of words relating to it. You could then help your friends with words in your area of interest.”*

---

## Improving Vocabulary

Creating personal word lists supports the vocabulary development needed for older students to succeed in reading, as textbooks take on greater importance and become the context in which new words appear. Likewise, writing fluency is dependent upon vocabulary development. This book makes recognizing, learning, and using complex new words easier, because the words remain a familiar part of a personal resource.

- While content area words are being introduced, discussed, and learned in the classroom, have students enter them into their personal dictionaries.
- If a word is already in the book, the student may simply place a checkmark or another agreed-upon symbol beside the word, to show that it has been found.
- Each time an assignment is given that requires writing in a content area, it would be helpful to review vocabulary and discuss new words that should be added to students’ personal dictionaries.
- Once the words are in the dictionary, students should be reminded that they can now work more independently and will be held responsible for appropriate usage and spelling of the words in any writing related to that class.
- Students who continue to struggle with or not use the vocabulary in their dictionaries will need to be worked with individually or in small groups. The teacher should review the words and their position in the dictionary, and then guide the students towards its use when writing.
- Encourage students to develop a personal vocabulary. They should add the words they use in their own writing to this book. In this way, each student’s dictionary becomes a personal collection of words that reflect his or her interests and expertise.
- Also encourage students to learn each other’s strengths and affinities. The students can then use one another as vocabulary resources.

---

## Improving Spelling

The structure of *Advanced Words I Use When I Write*, with its word lists and blank lines, accommodates the wide range of spelling competencies at these grade levels. Here are some key points to consider and review with your students:

- Stress that the book is a quick reference tool for spelling. *Advanced Words I Use When I Write* should be at a student's side whenever that student writes.
- Inform students that the book contains many of the words that are commonly misspelled by both students and adults.
- Have students begin to identify their own spelling "demons." You may want to have them highlight (in a consistent color) the words that trouble them most.
- Encourage students to locate spelling errors in their writing, and then check for those words in their dictionary.
- When correcting or editing students' work, circle the misspelled words so that they can be corrected and placed in *Advanced Words I Use When I Write*. If the word is already in the book, the student may simply place a checkmark or another agreed-upon symbol beside the word to show that it has been found.
- If you use a weekly spelling program, have your students enter their weekly spelling words.
- Encourage your students to use one another as spelling resources.

---

## Conclusion

*Advanced Words I Use When I Write* is a tool that will help you accomplish your instructional goals as a teacher, while also encouraging your students to take responsibility for their own learning. This book allows you to direct vocabulary and spelling lessons when you wish to do so, but it also enables your students to edit, correct, and improve their own writing, as well as increase their reading comprehension.

By making content area words and general spelling demons increasingly relevant, meaningful, and familiar to students, *Advanced Words I Use When I Write* makes the words easier to spell and use correctly when the student is writing, as well as easier to recognize and understand when the student is reading. Through this process, the book encourages independence and responsibility at a time when most students are ready and anxious for it. In addition, the use of this book can also stimulate cooperative learning, if students are encouraged to use one another as spelling and vocabulary resources. This cooperation, in turn, reinforces the competence and confidence of the book's users.

Students who continue to write with their dictionary at hand soon develop a sense that spelling, writing, and reading are all part of a seamless process of communicating with words. In addition to helping students with each of these specific language arts, this cyclical process of using words in context also supports the overall development and use of the literate language of the classroom.

**MODERN** —————  
**Learning**  
————— **PRESS**

Box 167, Rosemont, NJ 08556  
1-800-627-5867 or Fax 1-609-397-3467

Copyright ©2000 by Alana Trisler & Patrice Cardiel  
Advanced Words I Use When I Write – for Grades 5-6, Item #724

All rights reserved. For information, address  
Modern Learning Press, Inc., Rosemont, NJ 08556.