

Purpose:

DISSECT is a word identification strategy that helps students decode multisyllabic words, identify words in context and build vocabulary.

Steps of the DISSECT strategy:

Note: It may not be necessary to move through all the steps described in the DISSECT strategy. When you can pronounce the word and understand its meaning, move on to the next term or passage.

D: Discover the content:

Read the entire sentence, skipping over any unknown words. Using the context of the passage, guess the word and meaning that makes sense in the sentence. If the guessed word is incorrect, proceed to the next step.

I: Isolate the prefix:

Using the first few letters of the word, determine if a prefix can be identified and pronounced. If so, isolate the prefix by drawing a box around it. Refer to your list of commonly used prefixes and suffixes.

S: Separate the suffix:

Using the last few letters of the word, determine if a suffix can be identified and pronounced. If so, isolate the suffix by drawing a box around it.

S: Say the stem:

If the stem can be identified, pronounce it along with the prefix and suffix. For example, in the word “inseparable,” “in” is the prefix, “able” is the suffix and the remaining “separ” forms the stem. If you are unable to pronounce or identify the stem, then move to the next step.

E: Examine the stem:

Dissect the stem into simpler, readable portions using the rules of twos and threes:

1. If the stem begins with a vowel, separate and pronounce the first two letters. If the stem begins with a consonant, separate and pronounce the first three letters. If this rule cannot be applied to the stem, then move on to Rule 2.
2. Isolate the first letter of the stem and apply Rule 1 again.
3. When two different vowels appear together in a stem, pronounce them together and apply the rules of twos and threes again until the end of the stem is reached.

C: Check with someone:

Check with someone else to find out what the word means and how it is pronounced.

T: Try the dictionary:

Try the dictionary to identify the word and pronounce it using the pronunciation guide. Read the definition and examples provided to gain understanding and use of the word.

Directions for teachers:

1. Assess the students' oral reading and word comprehension to establish a performance baseline and monitor their progress over time.
2. Discuss the results with each student and ask them to create a learning goal.
3. Display the DISSECT strategy using a poster or visual aid. Explain the purpose, steps, expected results, and situations in which the strategy can be applied.
4. Use a think aloud to demonstrate and verbalize each step of the process.
5. Guide students through the process in pairs or small groups while scaffolding and supporting their learning. A DISSECT checklist can be used at each step to provide additional support.
6. Once the students gain more experience and confidence, allow them to independently practice and demonstrate the strategy.
7. To facilitate word part recognition, students are provided and taught a list of commonly used prefixes and suffixes.
8. It may not be necessary for students to move through all the steps described in the DISSECT strategy. When students can pronounce the word and understand its meaning, they move on to the next term or passage.
9. Have students create a journal or notebook to record new words, identifying the prefixes, suffixes, and stems. Include word definitions, using word matrices, word banks, etc.
10. Collaborate with grade-level educators to support students' generalization of the strategy by displaying the DISSECT mnemonic in classrooms, encouraging students' application of the strategy in other content areas. Facilitate discussions on its use and effectiveness, providing opportunities for student reflection and feedback.

References:

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