10 Laws of Word Power

A Big Test In the Cold of Mongolia

Saran walked in the icy Mongolian wind. Her face hurt from the cold. "Our winters are so cold here," she thought. At last, she reached the building and went inside. I gave her the English test. This test was important. If she passed, she could go to school for free for four years! If she failed, she would stay in Mongolia and wait to try again.

Saran looked down at the test. Her hands were shaking. She tried her best, but the test was hard. And Saran did not pass. She felt sad and worried. Were her dreams over? What about you? Do you dream of going to another country, getting a great job, or making your English better?

Law #1: Big Vocabulary = High Scores

Why did Saran fail the test? What can we learn from her? Saran had a small vocabulary. She didn't know enough words for university study. She didn't know enough words to

pass the test. Saran's story shows us something important: **word power matters.**

If you have a big vocabulary, you can get a high score on big tests. But to build word power, you need to know the 10 Laws of Word Power. These laws can help you pass big tests like TOEFL, TOEIC, or IELTS. These laws can give you more word power.

Here is Law #1: The bigger your vocabulary, the better your test score. But be careful. If you only study hard words, you may make a big mistake. Why? Because hard words are also rare words. Do you know these rare words: "*innuendo, jubilation, notoriety, perjury, and solace*?" Maybe not. That's normal. Even if you read a lot, you won't see these words often. For example, if you read for 365 hours, you might see "jubilation" only 5 times. And if you only see it 5 times, you probably won't remember it. To solve this problem, see Law #3: Learn the Top Words First. But first, you need to know your level – your vocabulary size.

Know Your Word Power Level — and Move Up

Law #2: Know Your Vocabulary Level

Do you know your word power level? If not, this is a problem. You might study the wrong words, waste time, or feel stuck. But there's an easy solution! Take a free test at my.vocabularysize.com. The test will show you how many words you know and which ones you need to learn. This helps in three ways: (1) **Focus on the right words**—study useful, common words instead of rare ones. (2) **Set clear goals.** Spend 5 minutes a day and learn 10 words a week. Write your goals and check your progress weekly. (3) **Track**

your progress. Test again later to see how much you've improved. Know your level, and start learning smarter today!

Law #3: Learn the Top Words First

English has over a million words. But English speakers only use a small number of words often. Native speakers may know 20,000 words. But they use the top 2,000 words 80% of the time for writing and 88% of the time for speaking.

If you know the top 2,000 words, you can understand a lot of what people say and write. These words are basic, and native speakers learn them first. Why? Because they hear

and read these words all the time. You may know many of the top 2,000 words, but you may have some missing words. If so, you need to learn them. To see if an unknown word is in the top 2,000, use this [tool at Lextutor](#).

Law #4: Master Academic Words for Success

Do you know the top 2,000 words? What's next? If you want to study abroad, take a big test, or read news, you need academic English. The Academic Word List (AWL) has the top 570 words for education and news. If you know the top 2,000 words, you can understand 80% of academic texts. If you learn the [AWL](#), your understanding jumps to 90%. Start with just 5 words today. Small steps lead to big success! Use word cards to practice. You can also learn the AWL with special quizzes at [ReadOasis.com](#). Remember, the 570 AWL words can help you succeed with academic English.

Law #5: Use Word Cards or Tools – with Retrieval

How can you study words? Use word cards or apps. (1) Write the English word on one side of the card. Write the meaning in your language on the other side. (2) Look at the meaning in your language. Then **try to remember and speak** the word in English. (3) Turn the card over to check. If you are right, put the card at the back of your cards. If you are

wrong, put it in the middle and try again. We call this "retrieval practice." It helps you remember better.

You can also try retrieval by using mind maps, drawings, or even acting out words. For example, draw a simple picture to show the meaning of "run" or "jump." Start with the 2,000 most common words. Again, you can check a word's level using the [tool at Lextutor](#). Review your words once or twice a day, and carry them to practice anytime. You can also try apps like [Quizlet](#) or [Anki](#) to help you learn faster!

Law #6: Repeat Words to Remember Them

When you learn new words, you'll easily forget them. Your brain forgets if you don't see the word many times. But you can stop forgetting by repeating the word! Research shows you need to see a word about 10 times to remember it. Review new words every day, then every few days, and later each week. Each time you review the word, you remember better. Repeating with retrieval works best – with timed spacing. We call this spaced repetition with retrieval.

Law #7: Use Spacing to Remember Words

Do you want to remember words for a long time? Try spacing! First, learn a word, then wait some time before reviewing. If you wait a space of time, your brain must work harder to remember. Effort helps you remember it longer. As you start to forget, review the word again. Each time you do this, the word becomes stronger in your memory. Start by reviewing a few hours after learning. Then review every few days, and later once a week. Spaced practice gives your brain exercise and helps you remember better!

Law #8: Mix Words to Remember Better

Do you want to power up your learning even more? Try mixing! Don't study one group of words or one topic for a long time. Instead, mix words from different groups, topics,
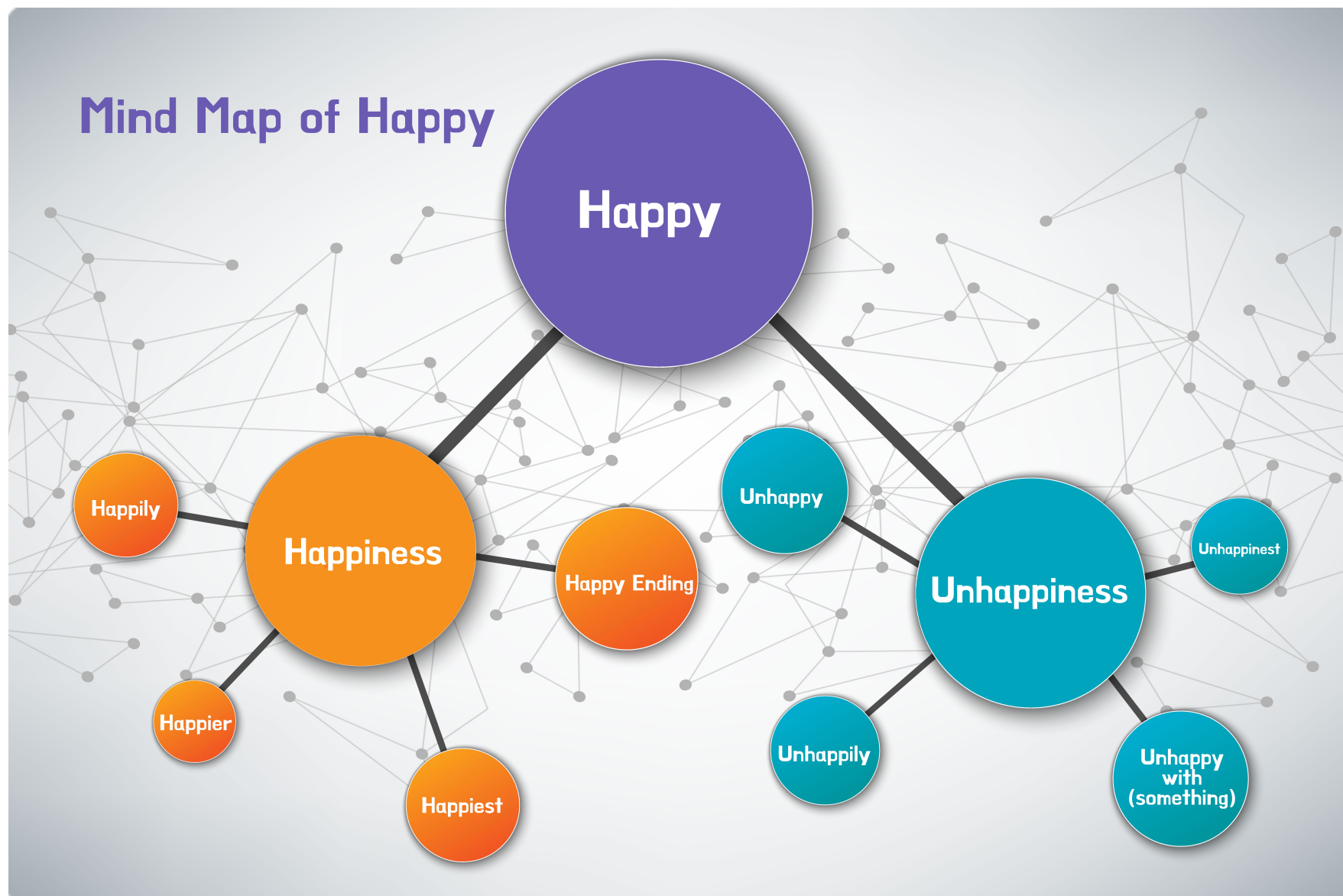
or chapters. Study a few words, then switch to a new group, topic, or chapter, and then go back later. Mixing feels hard, but it makes your brain work harder. When you work harder, you remember words better and longer!

Law #9: Learn Parts of Words

Learn parts of words to remember them better. For example, English puts "re-" at the beginning of words. This is called a "prefix," and it means "again." You can see it in words like "redo," which means "do again." Another common part is "dis-," which means "not." For example, "dislike" means "not

Mind Map of Happy

Happy
- Happiness
  - Happily
  - Happier
  - Happiest
  - Happy Ending
- Unhappy
- Unhappiness
  - Unhappiest
  - Unhappily
  - Unhappy with (something)

like." Start with simple parts like "re-" and "dis-." There aren't many, so you can learn them fast.

Word parts don't give you the full meaning, but they help you guess and remember words. To grow your word power more, connect new words to known ones. For example, if you learn "redo," think of "rebuild" or "remake." Draw a map of related words with parts (e.g., "happy," "happiness," "unhappy"). Linking new words to known ones helps you remember and grow your word power! (See the chart in the back of the book for examples of words and parts.)

Read big and enjoyably to get more word power.

Law #10: Read Big for Word Power, Fluency, and Confidence

Let's be honest—studying words can feel boring. And it's not enough. Is there a better way? Yes! If you read big, you can grab new words and enjoy it too. Big readers grow big word power. They score higher on big tests. They learn words in many contexts. They have more fluency and confidence.

How do you read big? The key is **BEE**: **BIG, EASY, ENJOYABLE.** Read **BIG** by reading lots of words—maybe 300,000 or more in a year. Read **EASY** by picking books and stories where you know 98% of the words. Read

ENJOYABLY by choosing topics and stories you like. When you read like this, your English skills grow fast!

Think about Saran. She didn't read big, so she didn't have the words to pass her test. But Mr. [Tanaka](#) read every day for one year. He spent 217 hours reading and 30 hours listening to stories. He didn't study grammar or test prep. He just enjoyed stories. What happened? His TOEIC jumped 180 points—.73 points for every hour he read! He learned the natural way. You can do it too! Start reading big today.
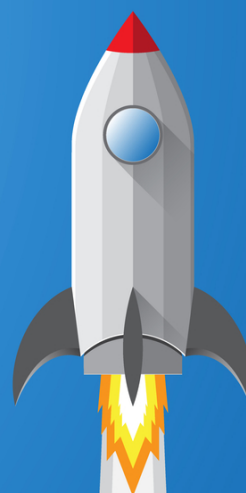
Examples of Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example Word	Other Forms
re-	back, again	redo	re-
un-	not	unable	un-
in-	not / in(to)	inactive	ig-, il-, im-, ir-
dis-	not	dislike	di-, dif-
pre-	before	preview	pre-
ex-	former	ex-president	e-, ef-
non-	not	nonviolent	non-
over-	above	overpower	o-, oc-, of-, op-
mis-	wrong(ly)	misinform	mis-
sub-	under	subway	suc-, suf-, sug-, sum-, sur-, sus-
inter-	between, among	international	il-, im-, ir-
trans-	across, beyond	transfer	tra-, tran-