



**SOME ADVICE FOR TEACHERS**  
(even those who have been participating  
in the Challenge for a very long time)

## WORDMASTERS

### A. Before The Meet

1. Your students will get much more out of the Challenge if you actively help them master their vocabulary lists. Dictionary definitions are a good start, but they may not make clear to a child a word's part of speech, the contexts in which it does or doesn't make sense, its positive or negative connotations, its nuances of meaning—in short, its usage. (From a dictionary a student may learn that "abridge" means "shorten, condense, or reduce," but unless you demonstrate the word's use in some sentences, he may assume that dieters eat less to "abridge" their weight or that barbers use scissors to "abridge" people's hair.)
2. If your students have not worked with analogies before, spend some time introducing them to this logical form. We think our "Demonstration Analogies" pages are a good place to start, but if you haven't ordered those, you can make up some simple analogies of your own to illustrate the kinds of logical relationships analogies are based on.
3. Once your students have become thoroughly familiar with their words, encourage them to make up their own analogies based on their lists, then to try their analogies out on one another. (Practical discussions about what makes one analogy more satisfactory than another will help students improve their analytical reasoning—and of course their performance in the Challenge meets.) You may also make up analogies of your own for your students using their WM words, but you should **not** familiarize yourself with the analogies in your students' meet ahead of time, or make up practice analogies that resemble the meet analogies.
4. Our "Teachers' Tips From Other Teachers" pages (included in this mailing) describe numerous activities, games, and other teaching strategies that may help you engage your students both in learning these new words and in thinking about possible analogical relationships among them. We are very grateful to the teachers who have sent us these suggestions over the years—they're wonderful evidence of the enthusiasm and creativity of teachers at every grade level all across the country.

### B. The Meet Itself

1. Meets should last about 20 minutes (we do not impose a strict time limit) and should be conducted silently; the teacher should not read the analogies aloud. Students should work unassisted; they should not consult their word lists or definitions and should not consult with one another.
2. There is one circumstance in which limited help is permitted: If your students find a word in their Challenge analogies which has not appeared on their vocabulary lists and yet is unfamiliar to them, you may define that word briefly, by writing its meaning on the board. We try not to introduce unfamiliar vocabulary in this way, but, especially in the case of ESL students, we can't always foresee the problems some children will have with simple terms. Please be certain that any definition you give is not only brief and simple but also without reference to the analogy in which the troublesome word appears. It is *not* permissible to define a word that appeared on an earlier list this year or one that is a derivative of any listed word.

### C. After The Meet

1. *Please* take the time to return your report forms to us, whether you think your team has done outstandingly well or not. Score-feedback is very important to our Challenge writers as they work to develop challenges that are appropriate for each grade level and each division. When you receive our summary of the results of each meet you will be able to show your students how they are doing (both as a class team and as individuals) compared with other students the same age around the country. Experience has shown that for many students the wish to "match that school in Virginia" can serve as powerful motivation during the later meets.
2. Please don't just hand corrected papers back to students without discussion. Once students have been told the answers, help them talk about what makes each analogy work (by asking, for example, "In what way is an aquarium being compared to a garden here?"). See if your students can articulate the general principle at work in each analogy—e.g., "The first word here names an action; the second word names the object receiving the action." For younger students, short discussions may be better than marathons; it isn't necessary to analyze 20 analogies in one sitting.
3. Allow your students to find fault with the analogies in their meets if doing so encourages them to think analytically. You can tell them that WordMasters promises a personal response to any student who writes us a letter thoughtfully questioning the logic of an analogy. A student who successfully challenges a test item (by persuading us that his or her reasoning about an analogy is superior to the Challenge writer's) will be granted a bonus point, to be added to his or her team and individual scores. (The authority on which we rely in matters of dispute is *Webster's New World College Dictionary*.)



# WORDMASTERS

Over the years, several of you have generously shared your favorite strategies for teaching either WordMasters words or the principles of analogical reasoning. Once again this year we're printing some of the best suggestions, in hopes that other participating teachers will find them helpful. We'd like to go on being a clearinghouse for teachers' good ideas. So we urge any of you who devise new word- or analogy-teaching techniques to let us know about them. (Just write a note on the back of your score-report form before sending it in.) We'll try to include at least one new Teacher's Tip with each meet's materials.

## WORD-TEACHING TIPS

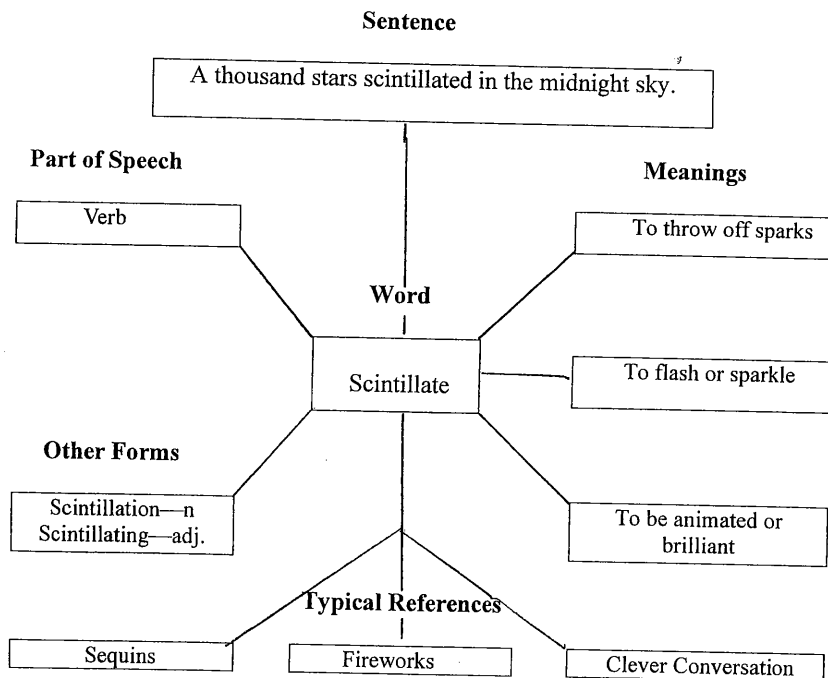
I allow each student to choose his/her own word. The student then teaches the class the word, acts it out (fun!), and makes a drawing or collage, which is posted.

Sue Pocock  
Chappell Public School, Chappell, Nebraska

There are three activities that I think really help my kids. The first is WordMasters Bingo. I read definitions at random and the kids cover up the appropriate word. The second thing we do is write a poem either about a WM word or simply using a WM word. Finally, I have the students find a comic strip that either uses or demonstrates a WM word. They really come up with some interesting results.

Kyla Schooling  
Kennedy Middle School, Grand Prairie, Texas

In my class each child is responsible for one word. He learns as much about it as he can and makes a Word Map, like this:



In small-group meetings, he teaches his word to the rest of the class; then we meet as a whole class to clear up any misconceptions and answer any questions.

Ann Doty  
Mesa School, West Covina, California

When we received our third-meet list this spring, we had just finished reading *Twelfth Night*—although you could take any story of play. We applied our WM words to the characters in the play. For instance, the fool Feste was “astute,” while Olivia’s servant Malvolio was considered a “pariah.” Identifying our words with particular characters allowed us to appreciate both the play and the words in new ways.

Diana Vera  
Carl Sandburg Middle School, Alexandria, Virginia

Third-grade students love illustrating the words. It’s especially challenging to illustrate the descriptive words, such as “chuckle,” “timid,” etc.

Playing Charades is another fun way of internalizing word meanings.

Our fourth-grade teacher plays Jeopardy with the words. First, students organize the words into categories. Then they choose a word in a certain category and have to ask a question about it. They play for fake money and take turns being the M.C.

Our third-grade class took a field trip to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The students’ task was to find each of the 75 words somewhere in the museum. This encouraged them to look at both the artwork and the building in a very different way. Each group took a clipboard and their word lists and spent two hours busily searching for the words. (Some words, such as “heron” and “broth,” required very creative thinking to find.) Because we split into groups, the competition made this activity even more exciting. Of course, each group finished successfully.

Jane Romansky  
Gesher Jewish Day School, Alexandria, Virginia

My students enjoy these projects:

**SCAVENGER HUNT:** Students bring in stacks of magazines (outdoor, home, sports, gardening, travel). Working in groups of 2-3, they hunt for an illustration of each WordMasters word. Pictures are mounted on 12”x 18” paper and labeled. Later, the pages are bound in a book.

**WORDMASTERS SNAKE:** Over a period of several days, the class works at creating WordMasters pairs, focusing on synonyms, antonyms, related objects, etc. We write the pairs on long strips of paper, trying to create a snake that will reach across the classroom. (This year our snake ended up 21 feet long.) Even our parents get involved, by counting pairs, measuring, bringing in thesauruses, etc.

**COOPERATIVE STORY:** Working in small groups, the children create a WordMasters story, in which each sentence contains at least one WM word. They highlight the WM words with colored pencils, then illustrate the story. Finished stories are mounted on 22” x 28” tag and then bound into a giant book.

Marilyn Harned  
Vista Grande School, El Cajon, California

I assign students to use as many WordMasters words as they can in a single sentence. The sentences can be silly, but they have to make sense. (Ex.: “The once massive, rotund behemoth became a svelte, sophisticated swindler and now walks with a cocky swagger.”)

Ada Getman  
Hanover Middle School, Hanover, Massachusetts

To earn extra credit, my students find ways to incorporate the exact sounds or letters of their WordMasters words into what we call “amusing sentences.” The following are examples from my 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders: “I will pacify study (*I will pass if I study*) and “The placate starred in was a big hit (*The play Kate starred in was a big hit*). They earn two points for an exact fit and one for making a reasonable attempt.

Nancy Marino  
Palm Beach School of the Arts, Palm Beach, Florida

I put up a WordMasters Bonus Board and reward students for finding their vocabulary words in print and bringing in the proof. Of the 25 words [on their 8<sup>th</sup> grade gold list recently], the students found all of the following: *qualm, missive, imbroglio, intrepid, uphold, ennu, disseminated, ambience, tawdry, fractious, bonanza, tether, unmitigated, dovetailed, equivocation*. Almost all were in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Margaret Deardorff  
Keith Valley Middle School, Horsham, Pennsylvania

## MORE WORD-TEACHING TIPS

Since memorization is not the best method of learning these new words, we brainstormed about ways in which the words could be learned more meaningfully. The students made up their own games and wrote them on the computer. The outcome was a booklet to be shared. Many of the games were adaptations of games the students already knew, such as Pictionary, Password, Wheel of Fortune, Monopoly, Memory, Jeopardy, and Tic Tac Toe. They even included "Word Football" and "Word Golf." Most of the games involved awarding points for correct definitions of words written either on a card drawn from a stack or on a game board—in other words, they were fun ways for students to review and internalize the meanings they had already learned. Here is one student's description of WordMasters Pictionary:

*"First the player must draw a picture illustrating a WM word without using words or letters. He cannot mouth the word to anyone! You have 30 seconds to guess the word he is drawing and then 20 seconds to think of the definition. If you guess the word he is drawing, you get 2 points. Then if you get the definition of the word, you get an additional 2 points. The person with the most points at the end of the game wins."*

This is a game that can be played simultaneously by several pairs of students, or by the whole class together if it's been divided into two teams.

Shirley Keyser  
Eric Smith Middle School, Ramsey, New Jersey

One of my fourth-grade students made up several different games that we could play with WM words. In "Face-to-Face WordMasters," two persons sit face to face. Person One says a WM word. Person Two responds with the definition, and if he's correct is given a point. They take turns until one of them has 10 points. "Definition-Card WordMasters" requires three people—two standing side by side and a "flasher," who holds up definition cards (which give the definition of a WM word but not the word itself). The first player to match five WM words with their definition is the winner.

Ann McAlister  
Clyde Campbell School, Hickory, North Carolina

I write the 25 words on 25 sheets of paper. Each student takes one, looks the word up in the dictionary, and fills out the sheet. [In addition to the word itself, the sheet asks for its definition, an illustration, and a sentence showing how the word is used.] I post the sheets all around the room, and we then use them to play Charades and guess-word games, to look for antonyms and synonyms, etc. Before the Challenge, I put the sheets in a booklet, which I save so we can review for the next Challenge!

Amy Rasmussen  
Talahi School, St. Cloud, Minnesota

Here's a version of *Steal the Bacon*: First I assemble two sets of index cards, one labeled Set A and the other Set B. (You could also use card sets of two different colors.) I make a Set A and a Set B card for each WM word. The class is then divided into two teams, which stand against opposite walls. I place a taped X midway between the two teams and place an eraser on the X. I distribute the A flashcards to the children on one team, the B's to the other team, so that each child is holding at least two cards. As moderator, I then read aloud **one** definition of one of the WM words (usually starting with a fairly obscure definition). Any child who believes she is holding the card which matches that definition runs to pick up the eraser and tries to get back to her team's line before being tagged by a member of the opposite team (who must believe he holds the matching WM card). If tagged, the runner must give up the eraser, and the tagger gets a chance to repeat the definition and display his card. If he's right his team gains a point. If he's wrong and the original runner can make a "save" with a correct match, then her team gains two points. If the runner wasn't tagged at all, her team gains one point if her match is correct but loses a point if she's wrong. The game continues until all team members have identified their words.

And here's a version of *Go Fish*: This also requires two sets of index cards—one set showing just the words, the other set just their definitions. The sets are shuffled together and then dealt so that each child who is playing gets 3-5 cards. Extras are piled in the center. Play proceeds this way:

"Shmuel, do you have the meaning for the word *abandon*?"

"No, go fish."

"Josh, do you have the word that means *an arid area of land*?"

Josh hands over the "desert" card as the word and its meaning are read aloud.

D. Schaer  
Hillel Academy, Passaic, New Jersey

(continued on next page)

We loved your idea of webbing for each word and piggybacked off your idea. Twenty children are masters of one word each. They try to use the word whenever they can, in conversation, class discussion, etc., and if possible even use it in an analogy. Each time one of the students at a group-work table successfully uses a WM word, the group gets one point. The strategy seems to help, and they have fun doing this as well.

Karla Pommer  
Turtle Rock School, Irvine, California

My class plays a game called "Wordo." I assign each student six words and give him a sheet of construction paper. The students divide their papers into six equal squares, writing one word in each square. I then collect the cards, shuffle them, and pass them out randomly. As I read aloud different definitions, the students cover any matching words they have on their squares. As soon as a student has covered two words horizontally or three vertically, he calls out "Wordo!" The student gets a piece of candy and becomes the next caller.

Ann McAlister  
Clyde Campbell School, Hickory, North Carolina

After preparing word maps in groups, my students write notes to one another—"passing notes in class"—using at least one WM word per sentence as they write back and forth. Then they sit in groups and attempt to have a conversation using as many WM words as possible. Others listen. A correctly used WM word earns the speaker one point, while a listener who hears a mistake and corrects it earns two points.

Dr. Shirlee Tremont  
Villa Victoria, Ewing, New Jersey

I developed a classroom activity based on a popular party game. The teacher takes 3x5 index cards and writes one WordMasters word on each card. Then the teacher tapes a card to the back of each student, so the student does not know what word he is wearing. The object of the game is for each student to figure out which word is on his or her back by asking questions of other class members. The only rules are that the students cannot use any WordMasters words in their questions or answers, and they cannot ask more than one question at a time of a classmate. As they go around the room asking questions of each other, they check off words they've eliminated from their WordMasters lists. My kids loved it!

Larry Dodd  
Saratoga Elementary, Springfield, Virginia

I used the MECC software called "Puzzles & Posters" to make a crossword puzzle for our students. (You specify the words to be used in the puzzle and you provide the definitions that will serve as the puzzle clues. The program then designs a puzzle which employs all of the words.) The students had to find each word on their word list or index card and match it with its definition before completing their puzzles. They really enjoyed this.

Mary Tyson  
C. H. Bird Elementary, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

There's a website that will custom-make Word Find and Crossword puzzles using WM words. The site's address is [www.puzzlemaker.com](http://www.puzzlemaker.com). All you have to do to have the site create a Word Find for you is type in the words on your list. For a crossword puzzle you will have to type in both the words and their definitions. (If you have a computer with internet access in your classroom, you can have your students take turns doing the typing.)

Donna Schaer  
Hillel Academy, Passaic, New Jersey

I had my students draw cartoons illustrating a dozen amusing captions I made up using WM words. The captions included such unlikely phrases as *bellicose bell*, *aberrant frog*, and *parrying pears*, and to judge by the comical drawings they came up with, my students had a lot of fun illustrating these odd notions. Some students said that they pictured their drawings when they were stuck on a word on the test.

Elizabeth Dwight  
Emerson School, Minneapolis, Minnesota

## MORE WORD-TEACHING TIPS

Here's a game ("WordMasters Team Jump") that can be played either indoors, in a large clear room, or outdoors on the blacktop. For either site, you need a timer with a loud bell and a set of word definitions on flashcards. For outdoor play you'll also need two pieces of chalk, for indoor play some masking tape and poker chips or other counters. Using either the chalk or the tape, set up the playing field so that there are two columns of four or five bases each, with the bases far enough apart so that a standing jump from one to the next will be a bit of a challenge. Draw a "Team Start" line at the bottom of one column (for Team A) and at the top of the other column (for Team B), so that when play begins, the two teams will be travelling in opposite directions. At the other end of each column, draw the "Home" square that is that team's destination. Leave a piece of chalk or the counters near the teams' homes for the scoring of "Home Runs."

The class is divided into two teams, which stand in single file behind their Team Start lines. A timer with a loud bell is set for two minutes—the length of an inning. Play begins with Team A's first player "up" and the "Umpire" reading a definition from a stack of flashcards. If the word has several meanings, all of them may be listed and read, though the player who is up can interrupt as soon as she recognizes the word. As quickly as she can, she calls the word out and jumps to the first base. The next player on her team comes up immediately, hears the definition of a new word, and calls out that word as fast as he can so that both he and the base jumper ahead of him can advance a base. When a base jumper reaches the Home box, he or she records the team's run by either drawing a chalk line or placing a counter in the box; then she returns to her team's line of waiting players.

Play continues thus for Team A until a player calls out a word that does not fit the definition or until the timer rings out the end of a two-minute inning. (Innings can also be ended prematurely in the event of "fouls," which occur when a teammate who isn't up "accidentally" calls out the word.) Team B will then have an inning to see if it can beat Team A's score, and play will continue thus for as many innings as the teacher has announced in advance. At the end, of course, the scores are compared and both teams congratulated.

D. Schaer  
Hillel Academy, Passaic, New Jersey

My students enjoyed making WordMasters Valentines for each other this February. They liked the chance to combine their creativity with learning the meanings of the words. Students used computer drawing programs, construction paper, lace, and a variety of pop-up designs to create their cards. Some of our favorites from the 6<sup>th</sup>-grade Blue list were these:

"If you won't be my Valentine, I'll have to *retract* that box of chocolates!"  
"No *qualms* about it—I'll never be *intermittent* with my love for you!"  
"I won't be *capricious* if you will be my Valentine."

Gail Moore  
K-Beach Elementary School, Soldotna, Alaska

The week that I receive the words, I ask the students to use dictionaries to look up the words. (I assign two or three words to each student.) They write the definitions on the back of the word list sheet and hand them in. I then type all the definitions and staple them to the word list sheet. (I try to do this by the next day, if possible. It's a little work on my part, but then each student has a complete study sheet of definitions.)

On the day they look up the definitions, I also have a large sheet of paper on the chalkboard with markers on the chalk ledge. After handing in their definitions, they write their words on this paper (which will later be used for SWAT THE WORD). I also have index cards on a desk, with a red and blue marker. They write each word they have looked up on two index cards, one with red marker, one with blue. (These will later be used for other games. See below.) Since each child works at a different rate, and some definitions are longer than others, the students complete their three tasks at different times. When they finish, they read a book until the end of the session.

I copy enough study sheets to allow each student to take one home and I keep a second set for class. The second week, I put the students into groups and, using a study sheet, they classify the words according to meaning, giving each category a title. This makes for some interesting discussions as they analyze the meanings of the words. They might create a category like this:

BODY SIZES: *slender, pudgy, solid*

Each category is written on a small poster in a different color, and the students are encouraged to be decorative and creative. After they share with the other students, they hang their posters on the wall.

We then play SWAT THE WORD. I hang up the large sheet of paper on which the students randomly placed their words on the first day and then I divide the students into two teams. Each team gets a fly swatter. The students sit on chairs and shift toward the center after each turn. The two center players hold the fly swatters, listen to the definition I read, and run to the board to swat the corresponding word. If the

(continued on next page)

