



We already teach classroom routines and learning processes at the beginning of each school year in order for students to build successful and efficient learning patterns in our classrooms.

Why not also prepare you students for finding words they don't know. Add this routine to the mix and model it in a way that helps students see its value.

Make it a game and a fun challenge to find unknown words:

Materials -

- Students may use individual white boards, or large index cards which they will hold high for you to see, or just use hand-raising.
- You'll use a timer to see how many unknown words the entire class can locate within the time set, using multiple texts.
- You'll need to have multiple difficult texts available.

The Game -

1. Provide students with difficult texts so it is easy to find unknown words. Students skim through and quickly write any word they don't know on their white board or card for you to see (or just raise their hands and share the word when called on). Set the timer.
2. You quickly list all their words for everyone to see, stopping when the timer goes off. You will raise their enthusiasm simply by making it clear they won't have to learn them, at this point, just find them. Keep it lively and fun.
3. Number the words you've listed so the numbers are visible to all.
4. Ask students to work with a partner in writing down the numbers associated with the 5 (or 10 if you have lots) words they think are likely the most common unknown words for the class as a whole. This could again be a timed activity.
5. When done, compare their thinking to reality by quickly going over the visible class list and asking for hands of all those that don't know each word. Write down the number of students who don't know it, next to each word.
6. Partners put a check by the number(s) on their partner list which match the top 5 (or 10) unknown words. Winning partners are those whose choices match the most.

Extensions -

Add another step by explaining what [Tier II and Tier III words](#) are and the value of the two types of words for reading, talking, and learning. Model the process of labeling your listed words, by thinking out loud how you would decide whether each word was Tier II or Tier III, as you label each word on the brainstormed list.

The next time you practice **Word Find**, have student teams label the words on the list as Tier II or Tier III on their own first. Without definitions this takes lots of guessing, but it can be surprising how accurate they can be. Compare their decisions to yours. Celebrate their good sense and intuition. (Keep in mind that there is a fuzzy line of distinction between these two classes of words.)

Next, explain that it is more difficult to find unknown words in easier texts, because your brain can guess meanings. Make it a challenge to find unknown words in easier and easier texts. Don't worry if they pick words that are too easy. Over time, by using this process, they will want to pick words that matter.

And most of all, get them excited about all the words they will be able to learn.