CLASSROOM WORKSHEET · FREE TO COPY

The 20 English words learners find hardest to remember

These words took learners the most misses before they finally stuck, in a study of more than 280,000 mastered flashcards. Most of them are abstract: you can't picture them, so they need a phrase, a sentence and more reviews.

1. Make them yours

Write the word in your language, then a short sentence that is true about your life.

#	WORD	IN MY LANGUAGE	MY OWN SENTENCE
1	**to reckon**		
2	**ultimately**		
3	**certainly**		
4	**to acquire**		
5	**to doubt**		
6	**particularly**		
7	**additional**		
8	**fraught**		
9	**to convince**		
10	**to approve of**		
11	**frustrating**		
12	**suddenly**		
13	**accidentally**		
14	**seldom**		
15	**approval**		
16	**to assume**		
17	**certain**		
18	**on purpose**		
19	**by all means**		
20	**scattered**		

2. Match the phrases

Abstract words are easier to remember in a common phrase. Join each start with its ending.

1. ultimately	a. a new skill
2. particularly	b. it
3. to acquire	c. means
4. I doubt	d. responsible
5. on	e. purpose
6. by all	f. important

3. Look-alike words

Learn one word first, then add its look-alike and write down the difference. Fill in the gaps.

1. I'm _____ that I locked the door. *(certain / certainly)*
2. She will _____ come. She promised. *(certain / certainly)*
3. I _____ he'll come. He hates parties. *(doubt / suspect)*
4. I _____ he'll come. His car is outside. *(doubt / suspect)*
5. I love fruit, _____ apples. *(especially / particularly)*
6. She broke the glass _____. It was not on purpose. *(accidentally / ultimately)*

4. Six tips for remembering the hard ones

1. **Learn abstract words in a phrase:** *ultimately responsible*, not just *ultimately*.
2. **Write your own sentence** once you recognise the word.
3. **Look for a cousin in your language** (*to acquire* = *adquirir*), but watch out for false friends.
4. **Learn look-alike words one at a time,** then compare them.
5. **Meet rare words on purpose:** add sentences you find in articles or series.
6. **Test yourself and grade honestly:** say the word before you turn the card.

Answers. Part 2: 1d, 2f, 3a, 4b, 5e, 6c. Part 3: 1 certain, 2 certainly, 3 doubt, 4 suspect, 5 especially (particularly is also possible), 6 accidentally.