

Vocabulary

Name: Building a glossary

Aim: to collaboratively build a glossary of key terms and definitions

Contexts: any (apart from very young learners) in which the students' course is supported by a LMS (see also variations)

Level: B1 – C2

Type of tool: LMS glossary feature

Type of materials: OWN/Student-generated

Planning: quick to set up or if used as a single writing activity; on-going if extended and used across an entire course

Preparation:

Familiarise yourself with the operation of the glossary feature of your institution's LMS.

This feature allows users (teachers and students) to add items and definitions to a glossary. The items are automatically arranged into alphabetical order. There is usually also a feature that means that whenever an item added to the glossary appears in the text elsewhere within that course, it automatically becomes a hyperlink to the relevant glossary entry.

Decide on the topic of the glossary. It could be:

1. Language terms (eg, general terms such as grammar or specialised such as for a EAP writing course).
2. Key vocabulary (eg, for general English or exam preparation courses).
3. Specialist vocabulary (eg, for ESP courses such as legal or business English).

Write two or three example entries.

Procedure:

1. In the classroom:

Use your example entries to demonstrate the operation of the glossary.

There are three options for how to set the task:

1. Brainstorm possible glossary items then assign an item to each student.
2. Provide a list of possible items (prepared in advance) and allow students to choose.
3. Announce a free-for-all in which anybody can choose and write any appropriate entry they wish.

Set writing the entry and adding to the glossary as homework.

2. Outside the classroom:

Students write their glossary entry and add it to the glossary on the LMS.

Monitor and use the comment feature if necessary (i.e. if there is a major error in the definition or it is incomplete).

3. In the classroom:

Allocate further or outstanding items for a subsequent homework.

Use the glossary for reference in lessons.

Variations:

This can also be done with a wiki (although you need to build the initial pages: one for each letter of the alphabet) and it lacks the automatic linking.

Notes:

Most LMS glossaries allow users to comment on entries made by other users. If you decide to encourage your students to do this, make sure you precede it with an in-class discussion on how and when this should be done and what language and behaviour is and is not appropriate.