





Core Vocabulary

What is it
Why is it important
How can we teach it



What is core vocabulary

Core vocabulary is the small set of high frequency words that make up most of what we say.

With these few hundred words we can create up to 80% of the messages we need to say in any given day.

Research on the importance of core words dates back to 1987

Use of core vocabulary is an essential skill for people who rely on AAC to communicate

Low use of core vocabulary is associated with reduced communicative effectiveness.

Nouns and specific action words are considered low frequency vocabulary.

What is core vocabulary

Verbs (go, stop)

Adjectives (good, bad)

Prepositions (in, under)

Pronouns (me, they)

What is core vocabulary examples

Like	Not	I	You	It	Where
Want	Go	He	She	Here	What
Get	Look	Open	That	Can	Why
Make	Turn	Do	Up	On	Who
Good	Help	Put	All	In	When
More	Different	Same	Some	Finished	Stop

Core vocabulary in practice

I like that

What you like

I can do

Not go here

I finished, want different

I turn go

You do it

You help

You stop that

Typical Fringe Vocabulary

Bat

Home run

Base

Pitcher

ball

Grass

Plate

Hat

Strike

out

So let's talk about baseball

Core Vocabulary

1. He turn go
2. It go up
3. Finished, he go
4. He good
5. Who go
6. I like that
7. Look it go

Fringe Vocabulary

1. Ball out
2. Strike
3. Strike out
4. Ball
5. Home run
6. Base
7. Hat

So let's talk about baseball

Core Vocabulary

1. He turn go
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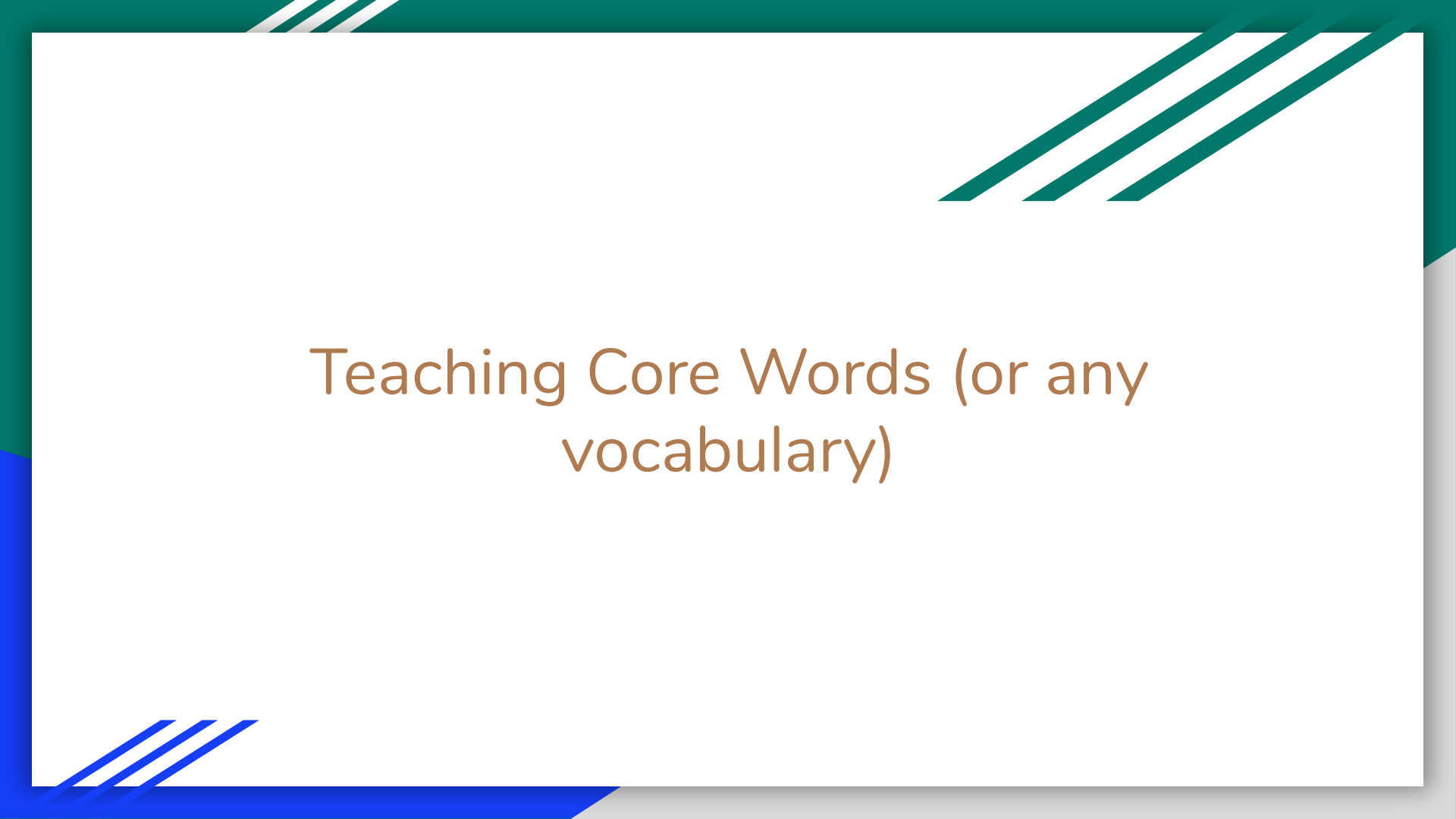
With the core vocabulary we see commenting, narrating, expressing preference, and multiple word combinations

With fringe vocabulary we see mostly labeling of single items.

Both have a place, but we can see how teaching core vocabulary creates space for more natural and specific communication.

Fringe Vocabulary

1. Ball out
2. Strike
3. Strike out
4. Ball
5. Home run
6. Base
7. Hat



Teaching Core Words (or any vocabulary)

What do we know about learning new vocabulary

Context is so important for real world, generalizable learning

Exposure is key- the more we see a new word used in maybe contexts the better we will learn it

What does this look like: Choose a reason

One way to think about modeling core words can be to look at reasons to communicate.

Just like the word maps we made for activities different communicative functions, or reasons to communicate, can help you choose core words to model. Here are some examples:

Asking for things	Want, need, my
Asking for information	What, who, where, when
Giving directions	Go, more, my, on, in, there, up
Expressing preferences	Like, don't, stop, no, more

What does this look like: Choose a word

Conversely we can choose specific words to model. When I meet a family that has a large team I like to recommend this as a place to start. Everyone on the team has a word or two that they focus on for a week or a month. This allows everyone to continue with their activities, just add a little modeling here and there.

There are some great resources for word of the week on the internet.

Don't forget

- Work combinations: phrases and sentences
- Use core to expand on reasons to communicate
- Use core + fringe to make more specific messages

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