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Language: English ▾

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[Home](#) [Test](#) [Practice](#) [Example sentences](#) [Blog](#) [FAQ](#)

Your results...

You know at least 10,200 English word families!

What do my results mean?

In general, there is no minimum vocabulary size. Language ability is related to vocabulary size, so the more words you know, the more you will be able to understand. However, if you want to set a learning goal, [Paul Nation's \(2006\) research](#) suggests that the following sizes might be useful:

How large a vocabulary is needed for reading and listening?

Skill	Size estimate	Notes
Reading	8,000 – 9,000 word families	Nation (2006)
Listening	6,000 – 7,000 word families	Nation (2006)
Native speaker	20,000 word families	Goulden, Nation, & Read (1990) Zechmeister, Chronis, Cull, D'Anna, & Healy (1995)

What is a word family?

There are many different forms of a word, so this test measures your knowledge of the most basic form of a word and assumes that you can recognize the other forms. For example, *nation*, a noun, can also be an adjective (*national*), a verb (*nationalize*), or an adverb (*nationally*). There are also forms which can be made with an affix such as *de-* or *-ing* which also modify the way that the word is used or adds to the basic meaning. For a test of *receptive* vocabulary knowledge such as this one, word families are considered to be the most accurate way of counting words. [You can read more about how this test measures your vocabulary size in the FAQ section.](#)

Where are the answers?

The *English Vocabulary Size Test* was designed to estimate the size of your current vocabulary knowledge, not your knowledge of individual words. Since each word in the test represents 100 words, just learning a single word from the test doesn't really increase your vocabulary size by 100 words. So don't worry about the meaning of any specific words you encountered in the test. You should focus on increasing your vocabulary in general.

How can I improve my vocabulary?

The most common recommendation for improving vocabulary is usually to read as much as possible. While that will help, the more words you already know, the less likely it is that you will encounter any new words when you read unless you really challenge yourself with difficult reading material. When you do come across a new word, it is also very unlikely that you will read it again by chance any time soon. So one of the best ways to help improve your vocabulary is to use word lists and study them. There are many, many ways to do this, from traditional paper to smart phone apps. There are hundreds of web sites that can help. We have created [a very simple program which gradually gets harder as you practice, and also helps you learn the multiple meanings of many common words](#). This program uses the same word family lists that were used to create the English Vocabulary Size Test, so it may help you improve your score!

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Colophon