

11.1 Building vocabulary

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 16 marks

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **building vocabulary** 积累词汇 — learning words in a way that makes them available when you write.

You must be able to:

- record a word with the information you will actually need
- use collocation and word families to multiply what one word gives you
- choose a precise word instead of a vague one plus an adverb

1 Worked examples

■ Record more than the translation

A word list of English and Chinese alone will not help you write. Record four things:

Word	Part of speech	Collocation	Your sentence
reluctant	adjective	<i>reluctant to do something</i>	She was reluctant to admit she was lost.
decline	verb	<i>decline an invitation</i>	He declined the invitation politely.

The **collocation** is what stops you writing *reluctant of doing*. The preposition is part of the word.

■ Word families multiply one word

decide (v) → decision (n) → decisive (adj) → decisively (adv) → indecisive (adj)

Learning the family costs a few minutes and gives you five words, plus the ability to vary a sentence: *He decided quickly → He was decisive.*

■ Precision beats intensifiers

Vague + intensifier	Precise
very tired	exhausted
very hungry	starving
very surprised	astonished
very big	enormous
very small	tiny
very good	excellent

An examiner sees *very* many times a day. A precise word is what earns the vocabulary credit.

■ Learn words from your own reading

The words worth learning are the ones you meet in something you were reading anyway. A word met in context, in a sentence you understood, is remembered; a word from a list of fifty is not.

2 Practice

2.1 Replace each phrase with one precise word.

[4]

(a) very cold

(b) very happy

(c) very frightened

(d) very interesting

2.2 Complete the word family.

[3]

(a) succeed (v) → _____ (n) → _____ (adj)

(b) strong (adj) → _____ (n) → _____ (v)

(c) analyse (v) → _____ (n) → _____ (adj)

2.3 Give the correct preposition.

[3]

(a) It depends _____ the weather.

(b) She is good _____ chemistry.

(c) He apologised _____ being late.

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Rewrite this paragraph, replacing every vague word with a precise one.

[4]

The trip was very good. We saw some very nice buildings and the guide was very interesting. It was a very long day but we were all very happy.

3.2 Explain why recording only the English word and its translation is not enough to be able to use the word.

[2]

Solutions

2.1 (a) freezing. (b) delighted / overjoyed. (c) terrified. (d) fascinating / gripping.

2.2 (a) success, successful. (b) strength, strengthen. (c) analysis, analytical.

2.3 (a) on. (b) at. (c) for.

3.1 One mark per successful replacement, up to four, e.g. “The trip was memorable. We saw several magnificent buildings and the guide was genuinely knowledgeable. It was an exhausting day, but we came back delighted.”

3.2 A translation does not tell you the grammar the word needs — its preposition, whether it takes a noun or a verb after it, or which words it normally goes with — so the word is likely to be used incorrectly. It also gives no sense of register or of the situations the word suits, so a word may be technically right but wrong for the context.