

# One Effective Way to Learn Vocabulary

## Introduction

For most English tests, like TOEIC, TOEFL or IELTS, it is helpful to have a good vocabulary. This can make every part of the test easier, which will probably increase your score. However, most students do not know how to study vocabulary well. This short article will suggest one way to do that: make connections between words. By doing this you will not only learn those words more easily, but also remember them for longer.

The human brain is very good at making connections between things, and very good at remembering those connections. The human brain is not so good at remembering **isolated** pieces of information. So, if you try to learn new vocabulary by connecting a new word with other words that you already know, you will probably remember it easily and well. If, on the other hand, you try to learn new words **individually**, you may find it hard to remember them. In a test situation, this will probably reduce your score.

## Making Connections

There are many types of connections you can make when you learn new vocabulary. For example, you could try to connect a new word to some personal experience of your own. This is especially effective if the personal experience is something funny or stupid, as your brain is more likely to be interested in and remember such experiences so you are more likely to remember that word. However, this article will focus on a different technique for remembering vocabulary and making connections between words: the "**reverse** crossword".

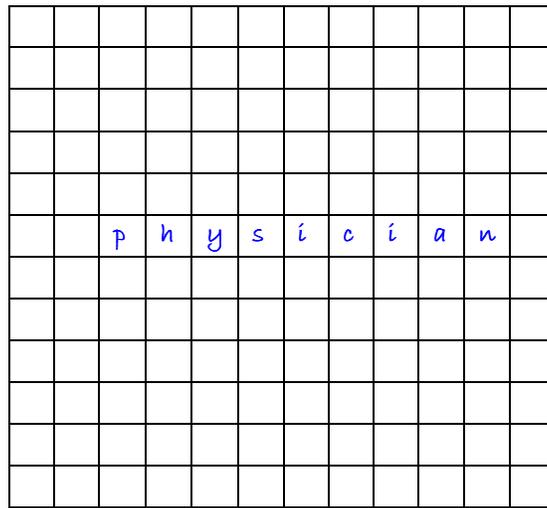
Imagine that you are learning a new word – physician – which is a formal word for a doctor. Obviously it might be useful to know that a physician and a doctor have the same meaning, but the word “doctor” is about four times more common than “physician”, so it might be difficult for you to remember the second word. By using the “reverse crossword” method, you will be able to make connections between “physician” and many other related words that will help you to remember it.

## The Reverse Crossword

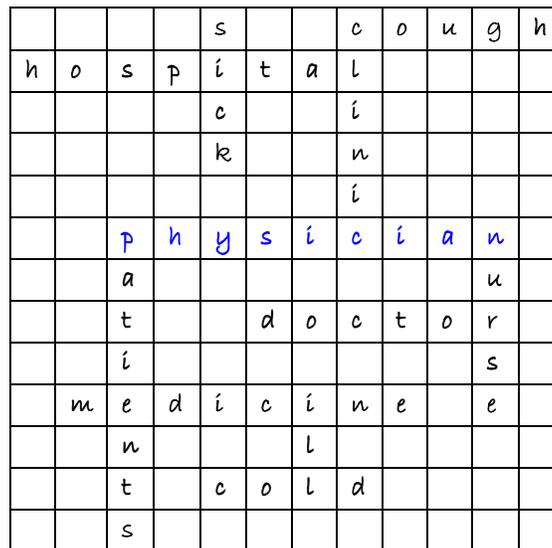
A crossword is a common and popular puzzle that can be found in newspapers and magazines. In a crossword, readers can see clues to many words, and using those clues they have to understand that word and write it in the correct space on a grid. The system of reverse crosswords is a little different. You will choose your own words and write them on the grid to help you make connections between words in order to remember those words.

This is how it works. First, draw a grid of 12 squares by 12 squares on a piece of paper (you can make a larger grid, if you like). Then write the word “physician” in the middle of that grid.

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Next, think of other words that are connected with “physician” in some way, and connect them like in a crossword puzzle.



Keep adding as many words to the grid that are connected to “physician” as you can until there is no more space. If you need more space, simply use a larger grid! Then, look at the grid and write or say some sentences to describe the connection between the words. For example, you could say:

*A physician works in a hospital or clinic to help patients who are sick.  
If you have a cough or a cold, you should see a physician to get some medicine.*

Create as many sentences as you can and continue to do this regularly. In this way, you will remember vocabulary better and improve your test score.

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### Useful Words

The following list defines some of the difficult words used in this article.

Something which is **isolated** is separate from other things or alone. For example, if there is only one problem with something, we can say it is an isolated problem because it is not connected to any other problems.

The adverb **individually** means one by one, or alone. For example, if you want to buy some apples, you might look at each apple individually to make sure it is not damaged. If you look at all of the apples together, you might not notice one of them has some damage.

The word **reverse** means the opposite of the usual way, often backwards. For example, if you drive a car in reverse, you drive backwards, which is the opposite of the normal way of driving.

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