

# Defining 'fingertip' words

## 5A – Define 'fingertip' words and general vocabulary with short explanations and examples

In most texts that pupils encounter there will probably be a few unfamiliar words and phrases.

Some might be words relating to the particular topic being covered or to the wider curriculum in general, while others might only really be relevant to the meaning of the given text.

These are essentially '**fingertip**' words – words or phrases pupils need to have to hand *in the moment*. They have relatively short-term utility because they are mainly intended to help pupils understand the bigger idea contained in a sentence or paragraph.

The fleeting or transitional importance of these words necessitates an approach to defining them that ensures pupils know enough about the meaning of a word (the smaller unit) to understand the meaning of a passage (the larger unit), ideally while preserving fluency.

### Teaching 'Fingertip' vocabulary

- 1 Give the simplest, most relevant pupil-friendly definition **during** reading
- 2 Integrate the definition within the flow as much as possible
- 3 Check understanding of the passage by asking follow-up questions

▼ Step	▼ Example
<b>Give</b> a simple pupil-friendly definition during the reading of the text	'Meagre' means a small amount of something, such as food.
<b>Integrate</b> the definition within the flow of reading as much as possible	Sarah had a meagre wage... 'Meagre' here means a small amount of... ...She lived alone in small house near me
<b>Check</b> understanding of the passage by asking follow-up questions	Was Sarah wealthy? How did you know? How do the details of Sarah's home link with the information about her wages?