

# *Teaching Vocabulary using Flashcards in Elementary School*

## **Abstract**

*Vocabulary is very important for young learners. Young learners start to learn vocabulary since they are in play group. They can learn new vocabulary by media Flashcards. Flashcards will help the student keep their interest to follow the lesson. This paper starts by showing the definition of vocabulary, the characteristics of Elementary school, the definition of flashcard, the advantages of using flashcard for teaching vocabulary in Elementary school, and explain how to teaching vocabulary using flashcard.*

**Key words: Elementary School, Teaching Vocabulary, and Flashcards**

## **A. Introduction.**

English is one of the subject matters in schools in Indonesia. English is a foreign language, which has important roles to the benefit the development of the country. Apparently, the government understands the essential of learning English. The establishment of the 1994 curriculum has made a path for English to be taught in elementary schools, especially on the vocabulary mastery.

English has several advantages when it has been taught since in an elementary school, three of which are the intensity of learning the second language since elementary school, preparation English in the junior high school, and preparation to face the globalization era. Students would study English as a compulsory subject when they are on secondary or high school.

In Elementary school, the students learn about four skills such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing. And learn about three components such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Vocabulary make the students understand about the meaning of the language. Thus, vocabulary should be learned in teaching Elementary School. Hatch and brown (1995) argue "Vocabulary is the

foundation to build language, which plays a fundamental role in communication". It means that children and adults can express their thinking and understand basic competence.

Vocabulary in Elementary school is easier than in other grades. Thus, the teacher should use a media such as picture, flashcard, and others. The young learners should understand the object of the topic, the color of the topic, and how to pronounce of the topic. The teacher has to use the media in teaching elementary school.

### **B. Elementary school**

Based on my experiences during my Teaching Practice at Mandala II Elementary School, I noticed several characteristics of young learners. I had two classes when I did my research.

The students from the first grade have the characteristic of processing a short span of very short attention. Young learners can only give their attention to the teacher's explanation for 5 up to 10 minutes. If they think the activities are boring, they will not pay attention to the lesson anymore. It is the teacher's responsibility to make the lesson activities fun for the young learners that the teacher can attract their attention. Using flashcard is an effective way that can be used in the teaching and learning process.

Meanwhile, the students from the fifth grade have shown the characteristic that they sometimes have difficulty in understanding what is fact and what is fiction. Based on my experience during teaching practice,, they showed their fondness towards fictional things. Therefore, the teacher uses a video about something when the children interest is such as animals, traveling, transportation, etc.

There is a difference between the first graders and the fifth graders. The children are more mature when they are on the fifth grade. In first grade, the children are more childish, thus the teacher should be active when she teaches in the classroom.

Other source of information from blog page by Brenda (2012) is stating about the characteristic of elementary school.

The children on first grade have short attention span. Thus, teachers should vary their techniques to break the boredom. They should give varied activities as handwriting, songs, games etc. They are very active. They should try to ask them to play games, role play dialogues and involve them in competitions. The children respond well to praising and always encourage them and praise their work.

The children on the fifth grade are imaginative. When the teacher uses flashcards to teach new vocabulary related to concrete meanings, but the children may have some difficulties distinguishing between imagination and real world. Children will be enthusiastic if they are taught using fun activities or being involved in activities.

### **C. What is Vocabulary?**

Vocabulary is all about words – the words in a language or a special set of words you are trying to learn. Vocabulary is so important for the children because they have to learn a new word. In second language, the children should understand about the new words in other language.

According to Clark (1993) in “*Teaching Vocabulary*”, words are the starting point without which children cannot talk about people, places and things, about actions, relations or

states. Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together. Without understanding vocabulary first, young learners cannot say simple sentences.

At the first, the teacher should consider the learner's needs. Allens(1983) pointed out that that it is useful to provide the learner with words for "classroom language" just at the early stages of the course. She continues that it is important for the teacher to predict the words the students needs to know talking about everyday life, people and things surrounding them. " When such words are learnt, the new language can immediately be put to use". (Allen 1983: 108)

When the teacher should teaches in the classroom and has point for the children. The children should understand the object of the topic, the color of the topic, and how to pronounce of the topic. For the example: the topic is things at home, thus the teacher should prepare flashcard of the object from things at home, the color of the object more interesting and when the teacher teaches in the classroom, the teacher should spells the word and mends of the pronunciation. The teacher has to use the media in teaching elementary school such as pictures, video, computers, etc. In my researches take one media, the media is flashcards.

#### **D. Why using Flashcards?**

Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory reminds teachers that there are many types of learners teachers that there are many types of learners within any on class. Gardner's research indicates that teachers should aim to appeal to all the different learner types at some point during the course. It is particularly important to appeal to visual learners, as a very high proportion of learners have this type of intelligence. Flash cards can be bright and colorful and make a real impact on visual learners. Many of the activities outlined below will also appeal to kinesthetic learners.

Flashcards are really handy sources to have and can be useful at every stage of the class. They are a great way to present, practice, and recycle vocabulary. Flashcard is one of the easy media for teaching in the classroom in any technique.

Different students learn in different ways, and it is important to make use of visual teaching methods since studies show that the majority of students learn through visual means. Flashcards are clear and colorful, and they can have a positive effect on the visual learning process of the students.(Gelfgren, 1:2012)

### **E. Type of flashcards**

According to Gelfgren 2012, there are some types of flashcards:

#### **a. Quiz cards**

Quiz cards can be used to vary the methods used to test students' skill, making the test itself into a fun game. Quizzes are suitable for students and can be compiled on various subjects and themes for different levels. To simply test the students' knowledge, try using the cards. It can give students a different perspective and stimulate discussion around theme. One student has ability to learn while listening to the other students' comments about the theme.

## **Quiz cards**

**What protect our  
eyes from the sun?**

what is your daily  
routines in the  
morning?

my daily routines  
in the morning is  
having a breakfast

b. Role-play cards

The teacher can encourage students to learn with fun activity using role play cards. The students can use existing vocabulary and learn new words. Role play cards can also provide support in developing imagination and improvisation. These flashcards can be informative and improve communication skills. The students have to follow the instruction from the situation and they improve the words by themselves.

*Role play card*

*in the morning, you forget  
to make a homework and  
you do not have much  
time to do the homework.  
when start the lesson, you  
have to say sorry with  
your teacher*

c. Flashcards with association, synonym, and opposite

Teachers can use flashcards with association, synonym, and opposite to enrich the students' vocabulary. These games develop both vocabulary and language fluency. In these games, students are encouraged to independently develop their vocabulary.

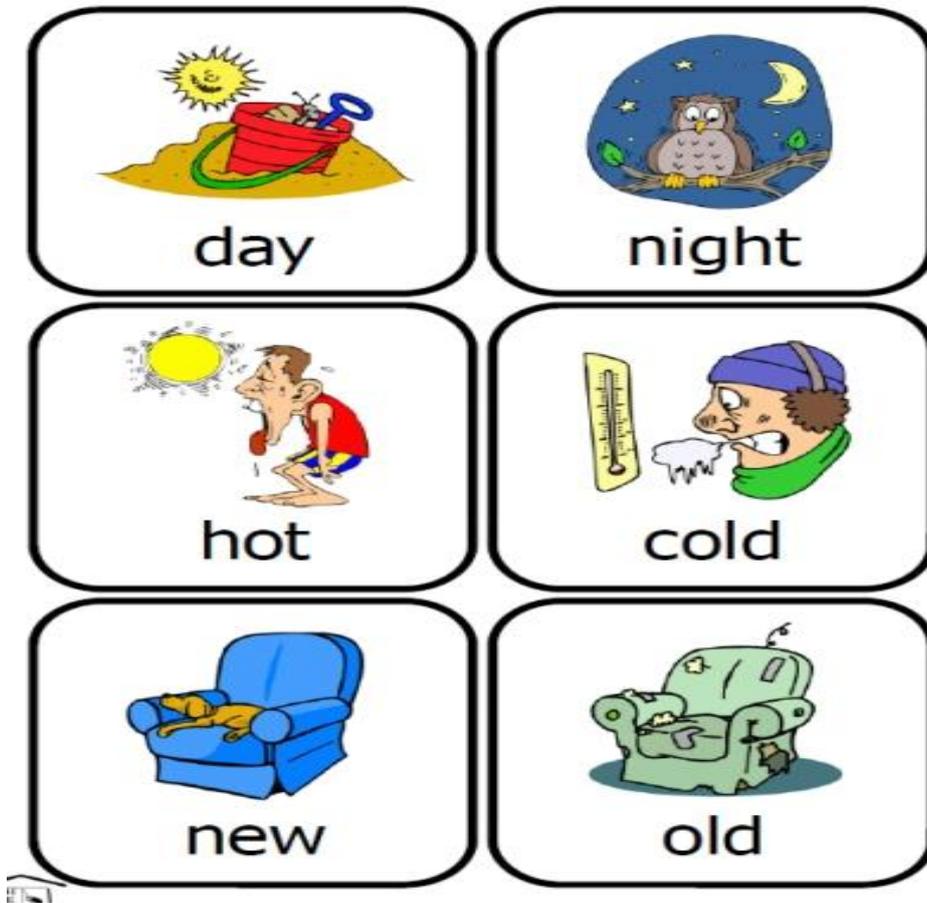
a. Synonym flashcards

Teacher usually uses this flashcard for teaching young learner. The teacher should use a new word for the synonym. This card is very easy for children to understand. Here is the example one from synonym:



b. Opposite flashcards

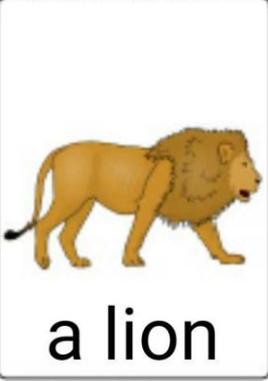
This card is same as the synonym card, it is easier when the teacher teaches young learner and introduce the new vocabulary in classroom. This card can be used for playing game. For example the teacher asks one student to open one card and another student guess the opposite of the card.



c. Association flashcards

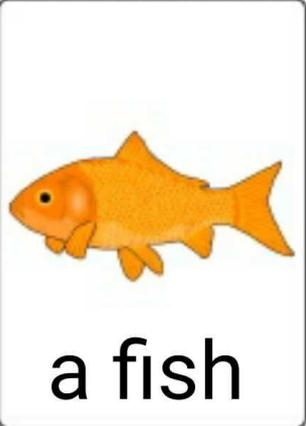
This card is suitable with the topic, for example, the teacher gives the topic about animals. Thus, the teacher should prepare association of flashcards such as a lion, a fish, giraffe, etc. Association means a set of an object.

Safari animals flash cards

 <p>a lion</p>	 <p>a giraffe</p>
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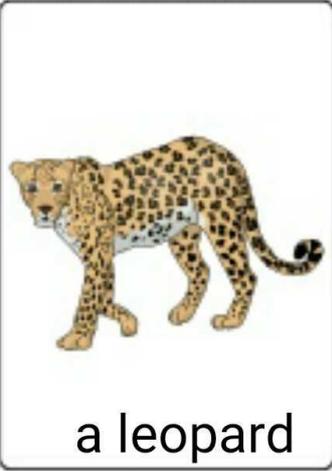
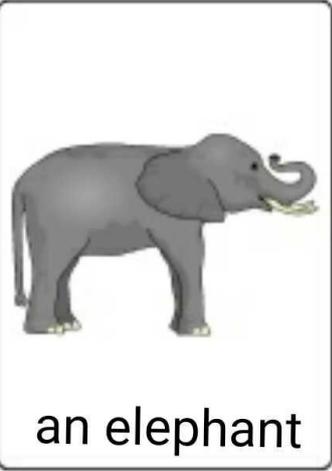
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Pet animals picture flash cards

 <p>a fish</p>	 <p>a budgie</p>
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Safari animals flash cards

 <p>a leopard</p>	 <p>an elephant</p>
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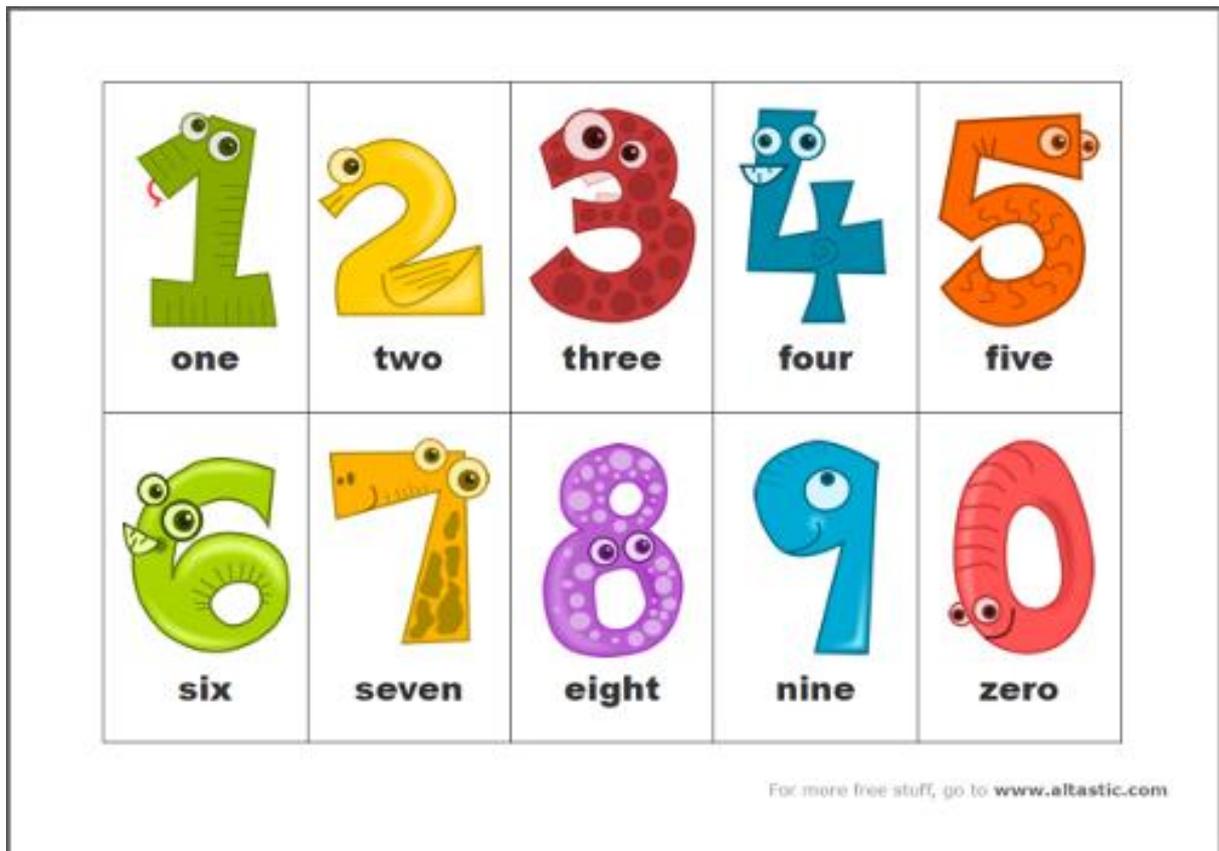
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d. Flashcards about numbers and times

It is important for students to understand about number and time. It makes a various exercise or games with these cards. The example of each flashcard:

a. Numbers flashcards

When I had teaching practice in the elementary school, the students did not understand the difference between number six and nine especially the ones from first grade. Thus, the teacher can use this flashcard for the children to be more understand about number.

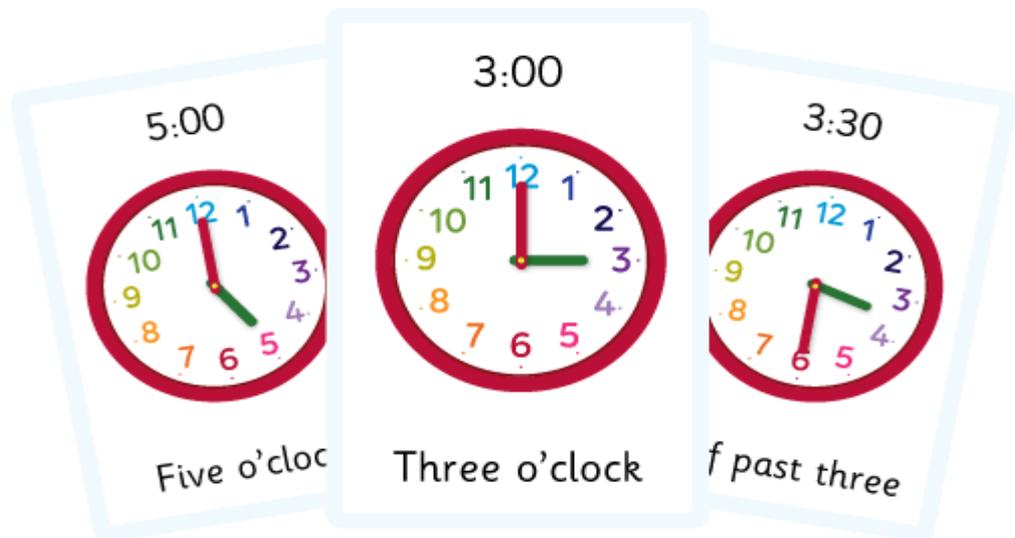


b. Times flashcards

Time is precious and priceless for everyone. Thus, we never waste time and we should use our time properly in positive manner. Students should understand about the value

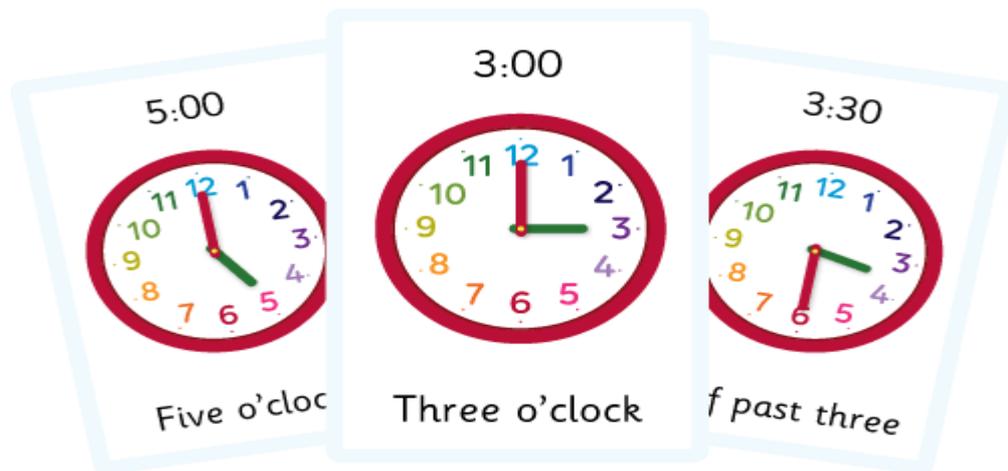
of time from their childhood using such simple and easily written essay on value of time.

This card may help the teacher teach in the classroom



e. Flashcards for dictation and reading

The purpose of the dictation cards is to make it easier for students to learn spelling by reading the cards first. Ready-made cards with text can be a great way to prepare for lessons. Text cards can be a great tool for both teachers and students. The teacher will notice that it is easy to learn with text cards. For example in teaching activity, the teacher should prepare the topic and the teacher asks the students to read text in the card. After wards the students read the text but have wrong pronunciation. Thus, this can be a great chance for the teacher gives good pronunciation. The example of each flashcard:



## F. How to make a Flashcard?

This part explains on how to make a flashcard. You can even personalize them by using your own picture and turn them into baby flash cards too using some free online photo-editing software. Of course, if you have got your own software you are more comfortable with then you can use that instead. The steps of how to make a flashcard:

### 1. Gather materials .

To make your flashcards resilient you will need cardstock and laminating pouches. Do not use actual photo paper when you print out your cards, just use good quality paper. We tried to laminate store-printed photo and got loads of bubbles under the plastic surface. Our guess is that the surface of the photo is not as air-permeable as paper, and as do not the rollers of a laminator to squish out all the air one direction we could not avoid bubbles. If you have a laminator machine if someone sure it is fine to use photo paper.

### 2. Choose pictures. Either from the internet, or your own photos

To find images, you can search the web from google image search for “large” images of all sorts of things. You can use the filter in the image search to make sure they’re large

images that will print at good resolution. It is really easy to find amazing images online and sure you will be able to think of many possible flash card ideas depending on each particular child and what they are interested in. Unfortunately if someone does not hold copyright on the images, they could not make a ready-to-print set. But the writer surely you will not have any trouble finding images.

3. **Add text** to pictures and print them as 6x4"

If you are a whizz with Photoshop or other photo-editing software then you will find it quite straight forward to make labeled flash cards from your digital images. All you need to do is make a 6"x4" template and add your particular image and a label at its base.

4. **Glue pictures.**

Glue the pictures on the paper or you can print out the picture in photo paper or glue the flashcard into backing card

5. **Laminate** your flash cards

This step can be a bit labor intensive, so obviously if you have laminators then use. You can also pay for laminating services at your local stationery store if that is more convenient or you have decided to make many cards.

**G. Flashcards in the classroom**

Flashcard told in the classroom express the object of the topic, the color of the topic, and pronunciation of the object. For children in the classroom using flashcard is more interesting that they are paying attention to the teacher.

In practice, we should have a planned flashcards (1), semi – planned flashcards (2), unplanned flashcards (3) in the classroom

First planned flashcards, the teacher should get the topic of any object such as things at home, things at school, transportation, job, and others. The teacher should prepare the topic before they use other planned flashcards. The teacher prepared about the flashcard and how to pronounce of the flashcard, how to use flashcard correctly, and prepared the exercises.

Semi – planned flashcards, the teacher should use the interesting topic for the children more interesting and pay attention to the teacher when the teacher is explaining. The teacher asked to the students about the flashcard for example “can you guess the object of the flashcard?”. It is important to consider the purpose.

Unplanned flashcards come up naturally in the flow of classroom activity and are spontaneously activated by response.

#### **H. The Advantages of Using flashcards in Teaching Vocabulary for Young Learners**

There are several advantages of teaching vocabulary using flashcard that I found when I did my Teaching Practice to young learners at Mandala II Elementary School:

Teaching vocabulary to young learners using flashcard was a fun activity for young learners. They can enjoy the lesson and did not feel bored when listening to the teacher’s explanation.

Young learners showed enthusiasm when the teachers explained the lesson using the flashcard. The flashcard helped the students to understand more about the new vocabulary that have been taught by the teachers. Young learners can directly know the meaning of the new vocabulary although they cannot read it correctly when they looked at the flashcard.

Using media or flashcard in teaching vocabulary can help young learners memorize the words easily. Young learners can learn to remember the meaning of the word by looking at the flashcard.

### **I. Disadvantages of Using flashcards in Teaching Vocabulary for Young Learners**

Flashcards have another disadvantages, there are several disadvantages based on my experience in teaching activity:

Firstly when the teacher prepares the flashcard, but the other source some flashcards made by other users could have misspelled words and wrong information. Second, if the picture is not making bigger, the students will never see the pictures. Third, the teacher should good pronunciation, in this case students can imitating the teacher form body language, expression, and character. Thus, as the teacher should be good expression the teacher teaches in the classroom.

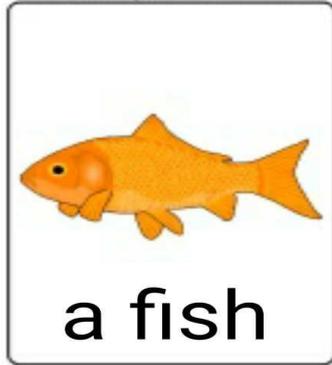
However flashcards have disadvantages, almost the teacher needs flashcards for teaching activity in the classroom as media visual.

### **J. How to Teach Vocabulary Using flashcards**

When a teacher wants to use flashcard in teaching vocabulary to young learners, they need to have some preparations to make the teaching learning activities successful. Here are several steps to teach vocabulary using flashcard for young learners or elementary school:

First the teacher decides the topic. The teacher prepares the interesting picture or flashcard for the teaching learning materials related to the topic. The teacher uses his/her creativities to choose the flashcard that make young learners pay more attention when listen to the teacher's explanation. The example of the topic is Animals, thus the teacher should make a flashcard appropriate from the topic.

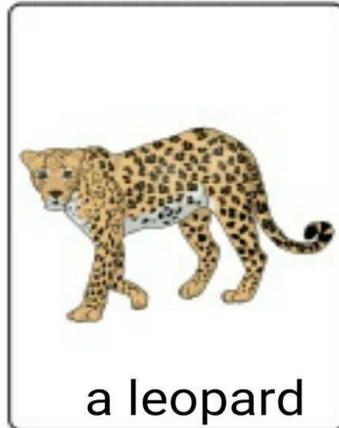
Pet animals picture flash cards



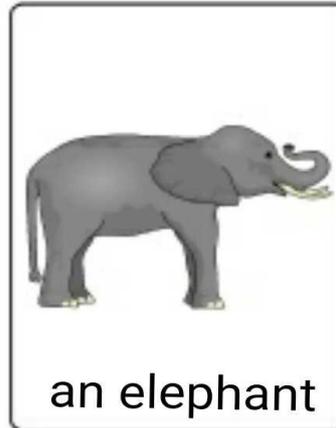
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Safari animals flash cards



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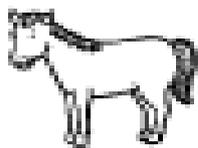
Second, the teacher starts the lesson by giving some explanation related to the topic. They should explain about what young learner will learn using the flashcard. The teacher shows the flashcard one by one to the young learners then they pronounce the words correctly three times and after that the teacher asks the young learners to repeat the words together. The teachers can use the repetition drill method to teach vocabulary. They can correct the wrong pronunciation done by the young learners during the repetition drill method.

Third the teacher can ask young learner to make a sentence using the words that they have listened to. Teachers should not forget to give the young learners examples of complete words before asking them to make complete words.

*Read and match.*

Name:

10

	<b>cow</b>	
	<b>donkey</b>	
	<b>duck</b>	
	<b>goat</b>	
	<b>goose</b>	
	<b>hen</b>	
	<b>horse</b>	
	<b>pig</b>	
	<b>rabbit</b>	
	<b>sheep</b>	

The last, after this activity, the teacher gives a question or an exercise based on the topic for memorize. Teacher should ask to the students one by one based on the topic. This gives hint to the teacher whether the students pay attention or not in the classroom

**K. Things to consider while using flashcards**

I believed flashcards are enjoyable, interesting, and motivating for both teachers and students; however there are points that need to be considered in order to use them in productive and successful way:

- a. Teacher should understand the good topic for the children interesting in. the teacher should use a real object or flashcard when the teacher teach a new vocabulary in young learners.
- b. When the teachers use a flashcard in classroom, they should always be able to point out of the purpose. The children should understand or get point of the teacher teaches in the classroom
- c. The length and timing of the flashcard are very important. The teacher should focus of the length and timing in the classroom. How many times teacher should repeat the flashcard and others. Thus, the teacher should carefully about the timing.
- d. Not only from the flashcard can be helpful for the learning activity. But also the teacher and the students are more helpful. The teacher should have a question for the students answer. It makes the students be more interested in learning activity. If the teacher is quiet enough in the classroom, classroom activity cannot be interesting for the students.

## **L. Conclusion**

Flashcard is one of best media to be used teaching elementary school students; as a result flashcard is good way for the teacher when they teach new vocabulary. Flashcards are a simple, versatile, yet often underexploited resource. I would like to offer some reasons for using flashcards and a selection of activities for use in the young learner classroom, although some of the activities could also be used with fun-loving, lower level adult classes. In my experience, my students are more active and exciting when I used flashcard in my learning activity.

When the teacher uses flashcards for teaching vocabulary, the students get some point of learning vocabulary using flashcard. They should understand about the object of the topic, the color of the topic, and pronounce of the words.

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