This activity helps create a more comfortable learning environment and combat imposter syndrome. Students who may otherwise feel as if their peers know the relevant vocabulary already and who may feel reluctant to ask about it as a result can see that other students share the confusion about particular terms and learn those terms alongside others. Those who may otherwise find learning the material difficult because of their confusion about vocabulary are more likely to be engaged in class and with the material, including jargon-dense primary sources, as a result of being better positioned to comprehend what exactly is being communicated.
**THINGS WE LIKE**

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**Procedure - Before Class:**

The instructor chooses an appropriate paper for the class type and level and distributes it to students. She explains her goals, then gives students time to read the article and compile a list of terms they cannot confidently define to a friend.

**Procedure - During Class:**

Students form small groups and compare their lists of terms, which they individually generated. Then, the class reunites to make a master list. Discussion of this list is often lively. This list is revisited throughout the semester, and terms are checked off as they are defined. **The instructor emphasizes when she is defining a list term.** This list guides students through key topics and vocabulary and provides them a metric for measuring their understanding and progress during the semester.

**Procedure - After Class:**

At the end of term, students revisit the original article to see how much they have learned. A group discussion is held to summarize the activity.

**Materials:**

The most important material is the selected paper. The paper should be relevant to the course material, contain most of the key vocabulary terms of the subject area, address core methods of the subject area, and be of general interest to students. At the start of the semester, the instructor should review the syllabus with the selected paper to ensure that she covers all of the key terms, adjusting the syllabus or the paper as necessary.

This activity was submitted by Jennifer Cole.

**WAYS TO ADAPT**

If class time is scarce, or if the reading is particularly long or dense, have students complete the reading and initial word list outside of class. Students should feel that they have as much time as they need to comfortably think through their understanding of the terms so that they can construct a comprehensive list.

**WAYS TO ADAPT**

If you can’t find a paper that encompasses all the key terms in the particular area, you can modify by using excerpts from different papers or passages from a wide-spanning book. One benefit of drawing on different sources is that students can see the same terms used in different contexts, helping them determine whether they have a consistent understanding of the term that is not based entirely on context clues, as can sometimes be the case when students are learning new vocabulary.

**THINGS WE LIKE**

It is crucial that the instructor regularly connect list terms to class material. Students retain vocabulary better when they can draw on examples and cases, and this is particularly true where the term has a different meaning in a different context or field and lends itself to confusion. One way to strengthen this retention is to identify moments where students can apply the term. So, for example, you can call on students to generate other examples of a particular concept. Also consider extending discussion of the terms outside the classroom by starting an online, student-centered vocabulary discussion board.